

**Second-Generation Afropolitans' 'Return'
Migration in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* and
Nana Brew-Hammond's *Powder Necklace* (*)**

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Abstract

In the context of globalization and transnational mobility, return migration has emerged as a significant theme in contemporary African diasporic literature. Rather than a simple reversal of migration, second-generation 'return' functions as a dynamic and transformative process that contributes to the reformation of Afropolitan identities through their first physical engagement with Africa. For second-generation Afropolitans, 'return' journeys are not merely homecomings but exploratory processes through which national identities are reconstructed. This paper examines the complex interplay between Afropolitanism and return migration, with a particular focus on second-generation returnees. Using Taiye Selasi's

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Ghana Must Go (2013) and Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond's *Powder Necklace* (2010), the article analyzes how second-generation female characters, Taiwo, Sadie, and Lila, navigate their 'return' to Nigeria and Ghana. Employing Afropolitanism in conjunction with return migration theories, it explores both the overlaps and divergences in their 'return' experiences. The article also considers how factors such as the motivations behind return and its typologies shape second-generation 'return' journeys to ancestral homelands and reform their Afropolitan identities.

Keywords: Afropolitanism, Return Migration, Second-generation Afropolitans, National Identity, African Literature

الهجرة العكسية للأفروبوليتانيين من الجيل الثاني في روايتي (على غانا
الرحيل) لتاي سيلاسي و(قلادة من غبار) لنانا برو هاموند

الملخص:

في سياق العولمة والتنقل والترحال العابر للحدود، برزت الهجرة العكسية باعتبارها موضوعاً مهماً في أدب الشتات الأفريقي المعاصر. بدلاً من كونها مجرد عكس لمسار الهجرة، تُعد "عودة" الجيل الثاني عملية ديناميكية تُسهم في إعادة تشكيل الهويات الأفروبوليتانية من خلال التواجد الفعلي في القارة الأفريقية. فبالنسبة للأفروبوليتانيين من الجيل الثاني، لا تُعد رحلات "العودة" مجرد عودة إلى الوطن، بل هي عمليات استكشافية يُعاد من خلالها تشكيل الهويات الوطنية. يتناول هذا البحث التفاعل المعقد بين الأفروبوليتانية والهجرة العكسية، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على العائدين من الجيل الثاني. ومن خلال تحليل روايتي (على غانا الرحيل) لتاي سيلاسي (٢٠١٣) و(قلادة من غبار) لنانا إكوا برو هاموند (٢٠١٠)، يستعرض البحث كيف تتعامل الشخصيات النسائية من الجيل الثاني (تايو وسادي وليلا) مع تحديات "عودتهن" إلى نيجيريا وغانا. واعتماداً على نظرية الأفروبوليتانية بالإضافة إلى نظريات

الهجرة العكسية، يستكشف البحث أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في تجارب "العودة" للشخصيات الثلاث. كما يأخذ بعين الاعتبار العوامل المؤثرة مثل دوافع العودة وأنواعها في تشكيل هذه الرحلات، ودورها في إعادة تشكيل الهوية الأفروبوليتانية لدى الجيل الثاني من العائدين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأفروبوليتانية، الهجرة العكسية، الجيل الثاني من الأفروبوليتانيين، الهوية الوطنية، الأدب الأفريقي

Afropolitanism and the broader concept of 'return to Africa' are intricately linked, providing a nuanced perspective on understanding migration and identity in contemporary African context. The term 'Afropolitanism' encompasses two equally important components: African denoted by 'Afro' and 'cosmopolitanism'. Thus, the Afropolitan experience signifies a connection to Africa, which is strengthened through return journeys, since (re)visits, whether short or long, denote the Afropolitan's profound connection to the African continent. Although considerable scholarship has been directed towards first-generation returnees, the experiences of the second-generation individuals, those born or raised in host countries, necessitate further examination, particularly in reference to identity, belonging, and cultural reintegration. In contrast to their parents, second-generation returnees frequently 'return' to homelands they have only experienced through stories or occasional visits, rendering their journeys less about returning to something familiar and more about navigating unknown landscapes. The concept of return, particularly in the context of Afropolitanism, provides a profound perspective to examine how African identity is actively reconstructed through transnational encounters. Drawing on Taiye Selasi's concept of Afropolitanism, alongside Russell King and Anastasia Christou's theorization of second-generation 'return', this

article examines how 'return' journeys shape second-generation Afropolitan identity in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013) and Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond's *Powder Necklace* (2010). It analyzes the types of 'return' undertaken by second-generation female Afropolitans based on Nilay Kılınç's classification of return migration, as well as the typology of return visits proposed by Md Farid Miah. Focusing on the experiences of Sadie and Lila in Ghana, and Taiwo in both Nigeria and Ghana, the article explores how these characters confront questions of home, identity, and belonging. It ultimately argues that return journeys serve as pivotal moments of transformation, enabling the reformation of Afropolitan identities through physical and emotional engagement with ancestral homelands.

The concept of return is central to Afropolitan identity. Taiye Selasi in "Bye-Bye, Babar" (2005) depicts Afropolitans as individuals profoundly linked to several locations, including their ancestral origins. She underscores that their journeys encompass not only departure from the continent, but also continuous, dynamic interactions with their countries of origin as they "engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them" (para. 7). Selasi's statement emphasizes that Afropolitans perceive return not merely as a straightforward homecoming, but as a deliberate and purposeful engagement with their ancestral roots. This process of re-engagement underscores their 'multi-local' identity⁽¹⁾, since they are not solely anchored in one location, but are linked to various locales by personal, familial, and emotional connections. Consequently, Afropolitans' return journeys do not entail complete assimilation into a singular homeland, but rather an ongoing negotiation of many homes and locales across various cultural and national spaces.

In a similar manner to Selasi, Achille Mbembe in "Afropolitanism" (2007) contends that Afropolitanism deliberately engages with Africa, both historically and contemporaneously, as a

lived-in space. Africa, as a geographical entity, is an essential component of Afropolitan journeys, characterized by departures from the continent that are consistently accompanied by frequent temporary returns or relocations within its boundaries. Therefore, as Salah Hassan (2012) notes, the movement of Afropolitans “is not a one-way affair”, but their movement rather “offer[s] a fresh look at the continuing importance and changing practice of exodus ... [which] provides a sense of a circular, rather than only unidirectional, movement” (p. 27). Along the same vein as Selasi and Mbembe, Hassan maintains that Afropolitans do not emigrate from Africa permanently. Their movements are dynamic and continuous as they traverse between Africa and various global regions, sustaining robust connections to many locations. This pattern of movement opposes the traditional notion of migration as a definitive departure and instead emphasizes a novel form of mobility where return, reconnection, and fluid movement are integral components of Afropolitan identity.

The terms ‘second generation’ and ‘return’ to a ‘home’ pose certain challenges when combined together. First, there are ambiguities regarding the exact definition of who constitutes the second generation. In their review article on the second generation in American-European comparative context, Mark Thomson and Maurice Crul (2007) define the second generation as “children born in the host country of one or more immigrant parents or those who arrived before primary-school age” (p. 1038). Other terms that denote the second generation include the ‘post-immigrant generation’⁽²⁾ (Rumbaut, 2002, p. 47) and ‘post-migrant generation’⁽³⁾ (Wessendorf, 2007, p. 1084). Additionally, ‘second-generation migrant’ is contradictory because based on Thomson and Crul’s definition, these individuals are born in the host country to immigrant parents. As such, their journeys to their ancestral homeland do not constitute return migration in the traditional sense, but instead represent initial migrations to a country they have not previously inhabited (Kılınç, 2022). This disjunction blurs the boundaries between origin and

destination, complicating their understanding of home as a fixed or singular concept. As per Kılınç, scholars frequently use the term 'return' in quotation marks to denote second generation's 'return' migration, as it is not a conventional kind of return migration and can be seen as a 'new' migration in its own right.

The existing literature on return migration remains under-theorized with regard to second-generation returnees, offering limited insights despite acknowledging a variant termed '*ancestral return*'. Russell King (2000) initially uses the term 'ancestral return' to describe "the 'return' of the Jews to Israel or the *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans) to Germany" (p. 10). Building up on this, Russell King and Anastasia Christou (2010) refer to second generation's 'return'⁽⁴⁾ as a 'particular form' of 'ancestral' or 'counter-diasporic migration' (p. 181), referring specifically to 'return' of the offspring of first-generation immigrants to their parental country of origin. They conceptualize this process as a temporal-spatial phenomenon, or a '*chronotope*', characterized by genealogical time and the navigation of two locations: the homeland and the hostland. This dynamic contrasts with the direction of the 'parental migration' (King & Christou, 2010, p. 168). In a similar vein, Susanne Wessendorf (2007) highlights the complexity of second-generation return journeys by noting that the destination of these journeys is simultaneously their point of origin, as returnees seek to go back to their roots. Taken together, these perspectives underline the notion that second-generation 'return' is not merely a reversal of migration, but rather a unique and complex form of mobility, shaped by multifaceted temporalities and multiple affiliations, rather than a simple reversal of their parents' migration.

According to Nilay Kılınç (2022), second-generation return migration is classified into two main categories: voluntary return migration and forced or involuntary return migration. On the one hand, voluntary return signifies that second-generation diaspora individuals have a clear intention to return, despite perhaps lacking social networks and competencies, including cultural and linguistic

understanding. On the other hand, involuntary return refers to individuals exposed to deportation programs due to criminal offences or lack of legal residency status. However, there is a third category, which is semi-forced or semi-voluntary return migration, where return is imposed on children via their families' return. In this category, youngsters may possess minimal control or no agency over the return decision indicated in Helen Lee's (2016) study on the Tongan second generation. According to Nancy Foner (2002) ⁽⁵⁾, immigrant parents send their children of school age to reside with relatives, often grandparents, for a period of time. The motivations for this could be relieving themselves from childcare duties, familiarizing their offspring with the values of their ancestral culture, or, perhaps most significantly, protecting the youths from the perils of urban high schools and street influences. According to Tania Ghanem (2003), and Zana Vathi and Russell King (2017), involuntary return poses a significant impediment to personal growth and reintegration, since these persons often encounter marginalization and psychological issues. While Ghanem as well as Vathi and King only focus on involuntary return's impact on growth and reintegration, it can be argued that semi-forced or semi-voluntary 'return' of the second generation has the capacity to obstruct the two processes upon return. However, they eventually result in a fresh perspective on the ancestral homeland, enabling second-generation returnees to become Afropolitans who reform their identities.

For the second generations of migrants born in the host country, visits serve as a rite of passage, facilitating the transmission of cultural knowledge and heritage from one generation to the next. Return visits enable the second generation and other diasporic migrants to forge personal connections to their ancestral past through this process. David Timothy Duval (2004a) defines return visits as a form of "periodic, but temporary, sojourn made by members of diasporic communities" to their homeland (p. 51). Duval distinguishes between return visits and other types of short-term mobility, such as

tourism, asserting that the former is predicated on “significant social ties” (2004b, p. 51).⁽⁶⁾ According to Russell King and Aija Lulle (2015)⁽⁷⁾, visits constitute a specific ‘space-time’ phenomena representing mobilities between a diasporic location and a homeland, frequently and meticulously organized to align with significant cultural events such as weddings, childbirths, funerals, Eid, and Christmas (p. 599). The frequency and duration of return visits rely on a plethora of factors, including geographical closeness, the strength of familial and personal relationships, affordability, and leisure or business interests. Spatial proximity holds equal significance to timing. Visits occur with relative frequency and brevity when there is close geographical proximity. Return visits are generally less frequent, more expensive, and longer in duration in other remote geographical situations (Miah, 2022). All return visits, irrespective of their frequency, duration, spatial proximity, and cost, are significant and essential for sustaining transnational familial, social, and cultural connections.

Md Farid Miah (2022) offers an extended and updated eightfold typology of return visits, of which two are applicable to second-generation Afropolitan returnees: ritual visits and roots visits.⁽⁸⁾ Ritual visits entail that migrants must attend and engage in significant life events and family rituals, including childbirth, weddings, funerals, and anniversaries, as they have a moral obligation to execute their commitment by being physically there to participate in these events. Such visits are comparatively few and last longer than regular or routine visits. Ritual visits are also typically meticulously planned and precisely scheduled. As visitors frequently travel with their families, their visits often align with holidays or vacations. These ritual visits offer a unique occasion for extensive networks of relatives and friends to meet. In family emergencies, such as abrupt severe illness or death, visits may occur at short notice, but they will likely be succeeded by a formal ritual and include extended family members. Roots visits provide transnational migrants with the opportunity to

establish personal connections with their ancestral origins and roots. The identities of migrants are consequently influenced by their travels between locations of origin and destination, and vice versa. For the second and subsequent generations, roots visits to the ancestral homeland can affirm and redefine their ethno-national identity. Roots visits present a more intricate and dynamic portrayal compared to other types of return visits. Depending on the migrant communities, their geographical proximity, the robustness of cultural connections, and the degree of socio-economic disparity, some members of the second generation may experience a heightened sense of identity and belonging to their ancestral heritage, while others may encounter feelings of rejection or develop a hybrid amalgamation of multi-ethnic and national identities.⁽⁹⁾

The two second-generation female characters in *Ghana Must Go* (2013), Taiwo and Sadie, along with Lila in *Powder Necklace* (2010), undergo what King and Christou (2010) describe as the second-generation 'return'. They are the descendants of first-generation African migrants who are born and raised in the West, and temporarily 'return' to their parents' countries of origin, whether on the mother's or father's side. In *Ghana Must Go*, Taiwo 'returns' to Africa on two occasions: first, Nigeria then Ghana. Her younger sister, Sadie, 'returns' to Ghana once. Likewise, in *Powder Necklace*, Lila 'returns' to Ghana once. Although the three second-generation female characters share the experience of 'return' to their parents' countries of origin, their destinations, reasons for 'return', types of return as well as return visits vary. This shows that second-generation Afropolitans are not a homogenous group; instead, their 'return' journeys are influenced by diverse geographies, motivations, and sociocultural contexts, leading to different approaches of reconnection, belonging, and identity negotiation with their ancestral homelands.

Taiwo, in *Ghana Must Go*, contends with her national identity, which is fragmented due to her diverse roots and upbringing across

various countries. She is the offspring of a Ghanaian father (Kweku) and a Nigerian mother (Fola), and is born and raised in the United States. This reflects an aspect of her Afropolitan identity as Selasi (2005) maintains that “[s]ome of [the] [Afropolitans] are ethnic mixes” (para. 3). Taiwo spends nine months in Lagos to attend high school and, at some point, also resides in Oxford, England for two years to study law. Her diverse background and continuous movement emphasize the global experiences of Afropolitans, as Selasi notes that the “modern adolescent African is tasked to forge a sense of self from wildly disparate sources” (para. 8). Nevertheless, rather than feeling enriched by this diversity, Taiwo frequently feels disoriented and uncertain of her place. This fragmentation illustrates the difficulties encountered by second-generation Afropolitans maneuvering through the convergence of various national and cultural identities. Taiwo’s conflict with national identity manifests in her ongoing quest for a home. She feels that her family, the Sais, own a house and not a home. This is clear in comparing the Sais’ household to others from the same affluent neighborhood of Brookline where they reside. The narrator’s commentary on her feelings expresses her sentiment towards her lack of home:

Those houses had seemed so impressive, imposing, set back from the road on low slopes or with gates, Brookline brick with black shutters or Tudors with turrets, ten bedrooms at least as compared to their five. But it wasn’t this grandeur that dazzled her mute. What bewitched her was all those warm windows. The glow. All those warm, wealthy people she peered at inside, with their dining rooms yellowed by chandelier light or their bedrooms turned amber against the night darkness, against the outsideness. The families implied. For though they, too, lived there—*her* family, in Brookline, not five or ten minutes from where she now passed—she had ever once felt what she saw in

those windows, that warm-yellow-glowing inside-ness of home. (Selasi, 2013, p. 123)

Here, Taiwo's profound desire for belonging and security materializes, highlighting her persistent search for an authentic home. The disparity between the physical grandeur of the mansions and the emotional solace she yearns for underscores her sense of loss and estrangement. Although she resides in the same affluent neighborhood, she is disconnected from the familial intimacy and warmth she observes in the houses of others. Her reference to the 'warm windows' and 'glowing inside-ness' represents the nurturing and intimate family life she desires but has never had.

Taiwo's feeling of loss and her search for a sense of home also stems from perceiving herself as part of a carefully constructed performance by her family, where love and belonging are contingent upon appearances and success rather than actual emotional support:

[T]here was the sense in her house of an ongoing effort, of an upswing midmotion, a thing being built: *A Successful Family*, with the six of them involved in the effort, all, striving for the common goal, as yet unreached. They were unfinished, in rehearsal, a production in progress, each performing his role with an affected aplomb, and with the stress of performance ever-present for all as a soft sort of sound in the background. A hum. (Selasi, 2013, p. 123)

Taiwo feels that her family is putting on the façade of a successful family to prove their success in the West. This performance and absence of an authentic emotional foundation drives her ongoing quest for a space characterized by unconditional acceptance and true familial intimacy. In light of Selasi's acknowledgment that Afropolitanism was initially not a 'utopian' ideal but emerged from a 'stranded place' aimed at providing the new African diaspora⁽¹⁰⁾ with a name and sense of identity (Bosch Santana, 2016, p. 122), Taiwo is thus a true Afropolitan. The Sais and Taiwo's constant effort to prove their success appears to be a fervent endeavor to persuade the world of

their worth in order to mitigate the sense of 'strandedness' associated with the absence of stable roots. Thus, Taiwo's drive to succeed arises from a fragmented and uncertain sense of self, akin to the African identity crisis that Afropolitanism aims to address. Furthermore, the Sais' genealogy included in the novel's paratext may assist readers in orienting themselves, while also functioning as a remedy for the family's lack of roots; when contextualized within their lineage, the family acquires stability, significance, and a history.

As per King and Christou's (2010) definition of the second-generation 'return', Taiwo's 'return' to Lagos exemplifies the second generation's ancestral 'return' to parents' homeland. It reflects what Kılınç (2022) describes as semi-forced or semi-voluntary 'return', where the return is dictated by familial circumstances, leaving the children with little to no agency over the decision to 'return' (p. 287). Although Fola does not personally return to Lagos with Taiwo, likely due to her traumatic experience⁽¹¹⁾, she sends Taiwo there at the age of thirteen to attend high school, prompted by emotional and financial difficulties following Kweku's disappearance. Fola cannot manage the disintegration of the family and her personal challenges with desertion and survival, thereby displacing Taiwo and Kehinde under the guise of their welfare. Consequently, Taiwo's 'return' to Lagos is semi-forced, as she lacks agency at that young age. According to Foner (2002), immigrant parents often send their school-age children to live with relatives (p. 247); hence, Fola sends Taiwo and Kehinde to reside in Lagos with her half-brother, Femi, who consents to cover their tuition fees. Fola's motivation for sending her twins diverges from Foner's argument, since its purpose is not to acclimatize them to the cultural values of their home society or to shield them from the perils of the host country's high schools, but rather due to emotional and financial insecurity. Taiwo's absence of agency in this decision, coupled with Fola's emotional detachment and silence, engender a feeling of being semi-forced into a situation she neither chooses nor comprehends, given her young age.

Taiwo's journey of 'returning' to Lagos profoundly hinders her capacity to perceive Nigeria as her ancestral homeland. This homecoming, rather than fostering a sense of belonging or connection to her Nigerian roots, transforms into a source of trauma and alienation, thereby disrupting her identity formation and relationship with her lineage. First, her semi-forced 'return' obstructs the process of reintegration because it is characterized by trauma, absence of agency, and emotional alienation, rendering her incapable of establishing significant connections with her surroundings or restoring a sense of belonging. Second, Taiwo's 'return' to Lagos is tainted by deep betrayal. Femi's questionable lifestyle⁽¹²⁾ exposes Taiwo and Kehinde to adult situations. Kehinde is coerced into violating his sister under Femi's supervision for a week, resulting in the siblings being traumatized and estranged. The abuse is never discussed, and their relationship remains fractured even after they return to America, as they are threatened into silence. This incident undermines Taiwo's belief in familial frameworks that are expected to offer security. It results in her hatred towards Fola, since she is responsible for sending her there and it also damages her relationship with her twin brother, Kehinde, who is integral to her familial identity. Kehinde's subsequent emotional detachment and ultimate separation from Taiwo intensifies her emotions of isolation and estrangement. Thus, for Taiwo, Lagos epitomizes this betrayal, linking her Nigerian background with anguish and abandonment rather than pride and belonging. This reflects the Afropolitan notion that a migrant's identity may not be directly linked to their origin, but should be defined by their chosen home or the location where their identity is cultivated, namely within the cosmopolitan cities of the world.

Unlike her traumatic and semi-forced 'return' to Lagos as a teenager, which deepens her estrangement from her Nigerian roots, Taiwo's adult 'return' to Ghana offers an opportunity for healing and reconciliation. Unlike her earlier experience, this journey is both voluntary and undertaken with greater emotional maturity. The

combination of age and agency plays a pivotal role in transforming her 'return' to Ghana into a meaningful and restorative experience, contrasting sharply with the failure of her earlier, semi-forced 'return'. While Taiwo's 'return' to Lagos does not fall under any of the categories of return visits and is more of a temporary residence, her 'return' to Ghana qualifies as a ritual visit because it is motivated by a moral obligation to attend her father's funeral and reconnect with her estranged family through a significant life event, fulfilling the cultural expectation of physical presence and familial duty as per Miah's (2022) explanation. Taiwo's visit then evolves into a roots visit, as she begins to forge personal connections with her father's homeland. This journey allows her to reflect on and gradually reshape her ethno-national identity, aligning with the transformative purpose of roots visits for second-generation returnees.

The idea of journeying back to ancestral homelands to acquire the wisdom and knowledge of past generations is a well-established theme among individuals of the African diaspora. The Akan people, residing in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, embrace the concept of Sankofa, which entails reflecting on the past by going backwards to advance into the future and move forward. The Akan symbol of Sankofa is represented by a mythical bird that moves forward, while bending its neck backward. The bird holds an egg in its beak, symbolizing the gem or valuable lessons of the past that form the foundation of wisdom and serve to guide and benefit future generations. This symbol is frequently linked to the proverb, "Se wo were fin a wosankofa a yenyi," which is translated as: "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten" (Kanu, 2011, p. 35). Kokrobite, Taiwo's father's hometown, serves as a venue for her to confront her anguish and comprehend her family's past, providing a means to reconcile the fragmented bits of her identity. Taiwo finally confides in her mother about the sexual abuse she and Kehinde endured from their uncle in Lagos. This talk aids Taiwo in addressing her trauma while also reconciling the estrangement between Taiwo

and Fola that has persisted since the abuse. She is also able to reconnect with Kehinde after drifting apart since what happened in Lagos. Selasi chooses Ghana rather than Nigeria as a space of healing and reconciliation, since the former first manifests the Akan People's concept of Sankofa, who are Ghanaian in origin. Second, the choice of Ghana benefits both Fola and Taiwo. Lagos represents an experience of trauma for Fola, because of her forced migration and the loss of her parents there, and for Taiwo who is sexually abused and metaphorically loses her mother and brother there. Thus, Ghana provides both with the perfect space not to remember their past traumas.

Taiwo's 'return' visit to Kokrobite, her father's hometown in Ghana, reshapes her connection with her Ghanaian roots opening up a space to reconcile with Kweku, and forgive him for abandoning them. Ghana signifies Taiwo's father, Kweku Sai's homeland and his legacy, both as an individual and as an emblem of her Ghanaian heritage. Her 'return' to Ghana enables her to first perceive and engage with the physical and cultural milieu of Kweku's life, thereby cultivating a profound comprehension of the adversities and shortcomings he faced: "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: that he'd never find a home, or a home that would last" (Selasi, 2013, p. 273). Through her physical presence in the country, Ghana transcends being merely an abstract notion associated with her father and evolves into a vibrant, integral component of Taiwo's identity. This link enables Taiwo to perceive her Ghanaian heritage as a source of strength and pride, rather than as a remote or alien facet of her identity. Thus, 'return' plays a vital role in reshaping second-generation Afropolitan identity. Returnees undergo different types of 'return' with experiences that vary every time, which in turn gives more weight to the Afropolitan identity. A failed first 'return' does not dictate a failed Afropolitan experience and further 'return'

journeys may transform the second-generation ties with the African continent, as shown in the case of Taiwo.

Similarly, in *Ghana Must Go*, Sadie, the youngest of the Sai siblings, struggles with her national identity. This struggle is illustrated in her profound sense of alienation, notably stemming from her identity as the offspring of a Ghanaian father and a Nigerian mother, raised in the United States. Her feeling of alienation is exacerbated by her belief that her family lacks stable roots and a firm foundation. Sadie is haunted by the feeling that her family lacks history, a discernible pedigree, as she believes they have no “roots spreading out underneath them, with no living grandparent, no history, a horizontal—they’ve floated, have scattered, drifting outward, or inward, barely noticing when someone has slipped off the grid” (Selasi, 2013, pp. 146-147). Her lack of a stable home is clear in comparing her family to that of her best friend Philae’s White Anglo-Saxon Protestant family, which represents stability in her eyes. Sadie criticizes her own family in contrast to her friend’s, asserting that “Philae’s family is *heavy*, a solid thing, weighted, perhaps by the money, an anchor of sorts?” whereas her own family epitomizes the opposite, being “weightless, the Sais, scattered fivesome, a family without gravity, completely unbound” (Selasi, 2013, p. 146). The sharp difference highlighted by the narrator sheds light on Sadie’s envy and intensifies her internal conflict regarding her family’s tumultuous background which makes them not a real family. Sadie believes that having a history and being rooted would provide her with the affection, security, and validation she lacks. Even though Selasi (2005) emphasizes that Afropolitans are not tied to a specific nation-state and that they do not necessarily share the same origins with their parents, Sadie portrays the opposite of that belief. She clearly laments her family’s lack of history and roots to shed light on the importance of her ‘return’ experience, which would in turn help shape her national identity.

Similar to Taiwo’s, Sadie’s ‘return’ visit to Ghana at the age of

twenty shapes her national identity, manifesting in the Akan concept of Sankofa. By ‘returning’ to Ghana, she finds a profound connection to a concrete place and history that she lacks, grounding her and offering a solid comprehension of her Ghanaian heritage. It is in Ghana that she experiences a positive sense of belonging upon acknowledging the resemblance between herself and her aunt, Ekua, which provides her with a sense of anchorage and belonging. She also realizes her proficiency in dancing; during Kweku’s funeral and upon hearing the African drums, she begins to dance “as if she’d been born doing traditional Ga dance” (Selasi, 2013, p. 269). She recognizes that her previous feelings of exclusion and loneliness stemmed from a lack of connection to her familial heritage. The traditional Ga dance serves as a symbolic affirmation of Sadie’s identity as her feelings of inferiority are alleviated when she discovers her exceptional dancing abilities, where she:

[s]tarts dancing. Slowly at first, with her eyes on the ground, on the feet of the girl, which she follows with ease—then a spark, something clicking, a logic inside her, a stranger inside her that knows what to do, knows this music, these movements, this footwork, this rhythm, the body relaxing, eyes trained on the feet, she is moving, not looking, afraid to stop moving, afraid to look up at the small cheering crowd, she is moving, she is sweating, she is crying ...Crack! The drum stops. Sadie stops. Sweating, breathless. The small gathered crowd ceases clapping and stares. (Selasi, 2013, p. 270)

Sadie’s body, responding intuitively to the rhythm and movement, reflects the concept of *Sankofa* in action. Through her ‘return’ to Ghana, she reconnects with a buried cultural identity, allowing her to recover a sense of belonging and move forward in her life. Sadie also finally reconciles with Fola in Ghana, after they had been estranged for a long time. Earlier in the novel, Sadie favors celebrating holidays

at Philae's. During a dispute with Fola, Sadie asserts, "I want to celebrate Christmas with a *family*" (Selasi, 2013, p. 156). She also tells Fola that she is not a baby anymore since she is nineteen years old and that she wants to live her life. Since that altercation, Sadie and Fola remain distant until their reunion in Ghana. Thus, Ghana, in the case of Sadie, is portrayed as an anchor and a space of healing with her mother.

Like Taiwo, Sadie's journey to Ghana can be classified as a voluntary 'return' migration under Kılınç's (2022) typology, as she is willing to attend her father's funeral. Initially, her 'return' functions as a ritual visit, aligning with Miah's (2022) concept of visits driven by moral obligation to participate in a significant event and fulfill familial duties. Over time, however, Sadie's journey transitions into a roots visit, as she begins to redefine her ethno-national identity through newfound connection and belonging. Unlike Taiwo, Sadie experiences a more immediate and affirming sense of cultural rootedness in Ghana, likely due to her young age and visiting Africa for the first time. Her discovery of self-worth and talent during the visit further cements her attachment to the homeland. In contrast, Taiwo's visit marks her second 'return' to the African continent that was haunted at the beginning by her traumatic memories of Lagos.

Taiwo and Sadie's experiences in Ghana illustrate Taiye Selasi's notion of the Afropolitan's readiness to complicate Africa. According to Selasi (2005), Afropolitans adopt a diverse and nuanced perspective of Africa, perceiving it as a complex, dynamic, and profoundly personal realm rather than a singular entity. Taiwo and Sadie's 'return' visits to Ghana exemplify their readiness to connect with and complicate the story of Africa in multiple ways. First, in Ghana, they confront their family's history and their father's poor experiences, which are interconnected with wider socio-cultural and historical settings. Their understanding of Ghana evolves from a mere abstract notion to a concrete reality replete with challenges and victories. This embodies the Afropolitan who critically engages with

Africa's history and contemporary realities, rather than diminishing it to stereotypes or clichés. Second, their experience in Ghana involves not only reconnecting with their heritage, but also navigating their multiple identities. They learn to accept the dualities of their identities as African, whether Ghanaian or Nigerian, and American, as both grounded and cosmopolitan, rendering their identities Afropolitan. Their 'return' experiences to Ghana embody the Afropolitan attitude of embracing hybridity and complexity, dismissing the idea that Africa or African identity is singular or fixed. Thus, instead of perceiving Africa as a static setting, their experiences in Ghana evolve into a locus of human growth and agency. They reconcile with their family, comprehend their backgrounds, and further develop their identities. This contests the frequently simplistic perception of Africa as merely a site of suffering or nostalgia, emphasizing its function as a vibrant, empowering space.

Similar to Taiwo's semi-forced 'return' journey to Lagos, Lila in *Powder Necklace* experiences semi-forced 'return' to Ghana. Returning one day to find Lila at home with her male friend Ev, her mother decides to send her to Ghana. Lila's 'return' to Ghana fits Lee's definition of semi-forced 'return', as she has no agency over the decision to return. The decision Lila's mother takes to send daughter away shows, in line with Foner (2002), that immigrant parents often send their school-age children to protect them from the dangers of the host country. At the age of twelve, Lila resides in Ghana for a duration of six months. Initially, she spends a short period with her maternal aunt, Auntie Irene, before being sent to Dadaba, an exclusive, boarding school for girls. Thus, Lila's reason for return resembles that of Taiwo in *Ghana Must Go*. Both decisions are made by single mothers who believe, at a given moment, that they are acting in the best interest of their daughters. Lila's 'return' to Ghana is motivated by her mother's desire to impart discipline and reconnect her with her cultural background, whereas Taiwo's journey to Lagos is more situational, stemming from familial pressures and Fola's efforts to

safeguard her children following Kweku's abandonment.

In a similar manner to *Ghana Must Go*, the concept of Sankofa is clear in *Powder Necklace*. For instance, when Lila weeps about returning to London immediately upon her arrival in Ghana, her mother replies, "This will be good for you. You'll learn about Ghana" (Brew-Hammond, 2010, p. 20). Additionally, Auntie Irene emphasizes this concept, stating, "Take this opportunity to learn a new way of doing things" (Brew-Hammond, 2010, p. 23). However, as someone who is born and raised in the United Kingdom, Lila's perception of Ghana mirrors the West's perception of Africa, shaped by stereotypes and incomplete stories. This reflects Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's (2009) argument that limited and one-dimensional portrayals of Africa foster misconceptions. Lila initially views Ghana through a lens of deficit and discomfort, revealing how internalized, singular narratives can distort the second-generation returnees' national identity and belonging. She maintains:

All I knew of my parents' homeland, and Africa in general, was what Mum had told me (*Everyone is a crook, Lila, hustling for that almighty cedi*⁽¹³⁾), what I had seen in pictures (miles of dirt where sidewalks and streets were supposed to be), on the news (bloated-bellied kids too weak to swat away buzzing flies), at the Ghana market (stinky foodstuffs), and what I had heard from all the aunties and uncles in London. (Brew-Hammond, 2010, pp. 12-13)

Lila as a second-generation individual adopts an Afro-pessimistic⁽¹⁴⁾ perspective since she is influenced by the West's stereotype of Africa as a poor continent, which proves that the second generation's 'return' constitutes another migration. They establish residence in a place where they were neither born nor raised. In Lila's case, this is further emphasized by her adoption of an Afro-pessimistic perspective prior to her 'return' journey to Ghana. Thus, 'return' journeys are integral in contesting what Adichie (2009) calls the dangers of a single story of

Africa. Despite Lila's mother striving to immerse her daughter in Ghanaian culture by fostering connections with other Ghanaians in London, Lila's engagement with fellow expatriates does not consistently reinforce her Ghanaian identity or sense of home and belonging. Lila observes that the Ghanaian community connection is characterized by implicit hypocrisy, which prevents Lila from completely embracing her cultural roots. She intuitively discerns that "[t]hey all claimed to love Ghana but contradicted themselves by threatening to send their kids there when they misbehaved" (Brew-Hammond, 2010, p. 13). These conflicting impressions further complicate her perception of home, highlighting the fragmented and ambivalent relationship many second-generation Afropolitans have with their ancestral homelands.

In a similar manner to Taiwo and Sadie, Lila's 'return' journey to Ghana contributes to shaping her national identity. Lila understands how stereotypes are inaccurate, as they sustain misconceptions and marginalize various experiences. While spending time with Auntie Irene, Lila learns about Ghanaians' stereotype of second-generation Africans who are born and raised in the West as spoiled. In her conversation with Madam Seamstress, the headmistress of Dadaba Girls' Secondary School, to which she will be sent to complete her studies, she maintains that second-generation children are often sent to Ghana as punishment because they are spoiled and cannot keep up with school work. She tells Auntie Irene: "Are you sure her mother didn't send her here because she's a bad girl? I won't have these bad Abrokye children come and spoil my girls" (Brew-Hammond, 2010, p. 32). This illustrates a prevalent Ghanaian misconception about second-generation Africans, commonly termed 'Abrokye children', as morally depraved or inadequately disciplined owing to their Western education. This stereotype depicts second-generation Africans as being swayed by Western norms deemed morally permissive or defiant, in opposition to the more traditional and community-focused values typically linked to African cultures. The apprehension that

these youngsters would corrupt local youths underscores a defensive position against the perceived cultural degradation attributed to Western influence. Another stereotype that Ghanaians have of Western nations is that they are all the same. When Sister Penny first introduces Lila to Brempongmaa because she is American, she tells her that she is from London and Brempongmaa corrects her that she is from Brooklyn. Sister Penny answers back: "London. America. They're all Abrokye" (Brew-Hammond, 2010, p. 51). This echoes the Ghanaian perception of Western countries as affluent, privileged, and socially superior. The term 'Abrokye' which is a colloquial expression denoting Westerners or Westernized individuals, implies a generalized perception that all inhabitants of London, America, are analogous. This stereotype is reductionist since it does not recognize the intricacies and diverse nuances of the numerous Western nations as well as the varying circumstances of their citizens.

Brew-Hammond discloses Lila's developing critical awareness of her national identity in numerous scenes. Lila's perception of London changes when her mother sends her a care package. Lila comments:

I broke a square of the Fruit & Nut and bit into a little bit of London. The chocolate tasted different on my tongue now ... The Lilt had a nagging chemical aftertaste. I realized then that if I were to get on the plane to Heathrow right now, the London I had left wouldn't be there—because I wasn't the Lila who had left. (Brew-Hammond, 2010, pp. 108-109)

This illustrates Lila's changing connection with London, which highlights the impact of personal growth on one's sense of belonging. The shifting flavor of Fruit & Nut and Lilt signify the transformation of her idea of home as she matures and encounters life beyond London. Lila recognizes that the London she previously knew is no longer accessible to her, leading to the realization that her identity has transformed, rendering a return to her former self or a similar

experience of the city unattainable, so underscoring the fluidity of national identity and its profound connection to her Afropolitan identity and ‘return’ experience. This internal shift prepares her to engage more meaningfully with Ghana, suggesting that even a semi-forced ‘return’ can evolve into a roots visit, as it allows her to establish personal connections with her Ghanaian ancestral origins. This is notably apparent in the subsequent exchange, where one of the Ghana-born girls confronts Lila regarding her elitist stance:

You think you’re better than us, don’t you? Because you were born in Britain, Hari continued. I didn’t have to say yes because we all knew the answer... for the first time since I stood in the “Other Nationals” line at the airport, I wondered why I did think I was better than the Ghana-borns—and why most of them thought so as well. (Brew-Hammond, 2010, pp. 80-81).

This exchange effectively encapsulates a moment of Afropolitan self-realization. Lila’s introspection demonstrates her increasing recognition of the hierarchies inherent in her national identity. Her inherent sense of superiority, influenced by her English origin, reflects the postcolonial power dynamics that Afropolitanism aims to examine; the prioritization of Western experiences over African ones. By recognizing this bias, Lila demonstrates a defining characteristic of Afropolitan identity which is the capacity to critically examine preconceived notions of identity. Her reflection signifies a transition from passive identification with the West to an active and self-reflexive negotiation of belonging, which is fundamental to the Afropolitan consciousness.

In conclusion, the ‘return’ journeys of second-generation Afropolitans, Taiwo, Sadie, and Lila, are examined by analyzing the different types of ‘return’ they undertake, their motivations for ‘return’, and the ways these journeys contribute to the reformation of their national identities. Both semi-forced and voluntary ‘returns’, in the case of second-generation returnees, can serve as catalysts for

Afropolitan identity reformation. Taiwo's journey, for instance, begins as a semi-forced-turned-voluntary ritual visit and gradually evolves into a roots visit, illustrating that a successful reconfiguration of identity is not exclusive to voluntary 'returns'. Sadie's 'return', initially driven by a sense of moral obligation to attend her father's funeral, similarly transforms into a roots visit, enabling her to connect meaningfully with her Ghanaian heritage for the first time and discover her talent. Lila's experience marks her first sustained contact with the African continent that develops into a roots visit. The return journeys of these three women are rarely fixed in form; they are fluid processes that may shift from forced to voluntary movements or ritual to roots visits as the individual gains insight and cultural awareness. Ultimately, these narratives demonstrate that the reformation of second-generation Afropolitan identity relies heavily on physical 'return' as a means of bridging diasporic disconnection with ancestral rootedness. Rather than straightforward acts of going back, these 'returns' function as circular, transformative journeys of becoming, an evolving practice at the heart of the Afropolitan consciousness.

Notes

- 1) ¹ In her TED Talk "Don't Ask Where I'm From, Ask Where I'm a Local," Selasi (2014) employs the word "multilocal" to contest the notion that identity is exclusively linked to a singular nation-state. Rather than enquiring about an individual's place of origin, which typically presumes a static, singular nation-state, she suggests asking, "Where are you a local?" to denote the locations where one established emotional, cultural, and lived connections.
- 2) ¹ Rumbaut (2002) uses the term 'post-immigrant generation' to refer to the second generation in the United States.
- 3) ¹ Wessendorf (2007) uses the term 'post-migrant generation' to refer to second-generation Italians in Switzerland.
- 4) ¹ King and Christou (2010) underscore the importance of second-generation return by identifying three geographic contexts in which it has been examined: the case of Japanese Brazilians (Nikkeijin) returning to Japan, British-born individuals returning to the Caribbean, and Greek-Americans resettling in Greece.
- 5) ¹ Foner's study (2002) is about contemporary West Indians, Dominicans and other Latinos living in the United States.
- 6) ¹ Duval (2014b) theorizes a connection between return visits and

return migration, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with members of the Eastern Caribbean Commonwealth community in Toronto, Canada.

- 7) ¹ King and Lulle (2015) examine the role of visiting friends and relatives (VFR) within the broader context of migrant experiences, illustrating their argument through an in-depth case study of Latvian labor migration to Guernsey.
- 8) ¹ Miah's (2022) eight types of return visits include: 'Routine Visits', 'Ritual Visits', 'Care Visits', 'Roots Visits', 'Rights Visits', 'Pre-return Visits', 'Economic Visits', and 'Leisure Visits'.
- 9) ¹ It is important to note that the theoretical background on second-generation returnees only partially reflects the return experiences of second-generation migrants with African roots, especially Afropolitans. In light of the differences in societal, cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds, the findings of these studies should not represent all second-generation returnees, but they still remain useful in mapping out methodological approach to understanding them.
- 10) ¹ In *The New African Diaspora* (2009), the Nigerian critic Isidore Okepe who describes the 'new' African Diaspora as "postcolonial" (p. 5). Bénédicte Ledent & Daria Tunca (2014) differentiate between 'old' and 'new' African Diasporas stating that "the former refers to the descendants of people who were displaced as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade; the latter designates those who were born (or whose parents were born) on the continent in the contemporary period but left it either as children or as adults" (p. 2). With this classification in mind, the 'new' African Diaspora refers to Africa after independence in the 1990s.
- 11) ¹ Fola is forced to leave Nigeria in 1966 at the age of thirteen following the assassination of her father by Hausas during anti-Igbo-pogroms. She then heads to Accra, Ghana where she stays till the 1967 Nigerian civil war erupts.
- 12) ¹ Femi is a cocaine dealer and a pedophile.
- 13) ¹ Cedi is the basic monetary unit of Ghana (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)
- 14) ¹ Simon Gikandi (2011) defines Afro-pessimism as "the belief that the continent and its populace is hopelessly imprisoned in its past, trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, and held hostage to corrupt institutions. Afro-pessimism, which emerged as the figure of representing Africa during the political and economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s, has become the dominant idiom through which African experiences are recuperated and filtered" (p. 9).

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