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Identity and Belonging for Second-Generation Migrants in Contemporary African Fiction

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, School of Literature, the Language and Media, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in African Literature

DECLARATION

I, Gilbert Sepobe Nchabeleng declare that: **Identity and Belonging for Second Generation Migrants in Contemporary African Fiction** my own work, and that it has not been submitted anywhere before for degree or examination. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in African Literature at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. All sources and works that aided to this work have been acknowledged through means of complete academic referencing.

Signature:  **Date: 22 March 2024**

DEDICATION

To my widowed mother, Mathabathe Elizabeth Nchabeleng. I am wholly indebted and grateful for prayers, support, sacrifices and tears you shed with and for me throughout this troubling yet necessary journey.

To the African migrants in the global North.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible and complete if it was not for invaluable support from a number of selfless individuals who walked this journey with me from the beginning, and institutions that aided in ensuring that I realise this milestone. First and foremost, I owe a debt of gratitude to my amazing supervisor, Prof. Grace A Musila, for her unwavering support, intellectual guidance, constructive criticism, thorough questioning, general guidance, and timely feedback. Most importantly, though, is her rare patience in dealing with a nagging and persistent student like me. Of special recognition and appreciation to Prof, is how she ensured and smoothened my academic and intellectual transition and adaption to an advanced space of research, from University of Limpopo into Wits University. Many thanks for all those intellectual debates you encouraged my critical participation in.

I also extend my special gratitude to University of Witwatersrand for affording me this opportunity to study with the institution. I am also extending my special thanks to the Department of African Literature for affording me an opportunity to present my ongoing paper at the 7th E'skia Mphahlele Colloquium.

Special thanks to my family, in particular, to my little sister, Grace Nchabeleng, and my adorable mother, Modipadi a' Ngwato, for always encouraging me even when the going was rough and tough, and I felt like giving up. The pressure and courage given to me to complete this is highly recognised, acknowledged and appreciated. Kea leboga, Mme Motswadi!

ABSTRACT

The study interrogates literary depictions of identity and belonging among second-generation African migrants. It explores Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010) and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013). The two texts depict different experiences of second-generation African migrants in the global North with an eye to class mobility, history, and familial memory as significant in their navigation of identity and belonging. Theoretically, the study draws on Afropolitanism and Transnationalism. The study establishes that although there have been significant shifts in experiences and politics of migration between the parent generations and the second generation born and raised in the global North, the latter generation still grapples with questions of identity and belonging which continue to be shaped by historical dynamics of Euro-American imperialist logics. Consequently, for future research, the study recommends research on identity and belonging for second and third generation migrants from other geographical parts of the global South living in the global North.

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CHAPTER ONE: Contextualisation

1.1. Background and Introduction

The history of African migration from Africa to America and Europe — the capitalist superpowers often referred to as the West and global North — demonstrates that self-identity and belonging are interwoven. The genealogy of diasporic African presence in the global North regions is historically linked to the Atlantic slave trade that annexed Africa with merchant slave ships circa the fifteenth century (1440s) (Inikori 78). The Atlantic slave trade inaugurated with the capitalist impetus for cheap labour created social and material conditions characterised by alienation, displacement, dislocation, and anti-black racism in the long run (Eyeh 490).

As the Atlantic slave trade wound down, Europe pivoted to colonising African territories (Harris et al, 78). This European colonisation of the continent is marked by the 1884 Berlin Conference of European coloniser countries whence Africa was officially and systematically divided into territorial colonies of the coloniser to enable the exploitation of Africa's human, mineral and natural resources (Thiong'o 5). Following multifaceted modes of anti-colonial resistance and liberation struggles, African countries gradually attained independence. However, numerous post-independent African states codified laws and policies that failed to ensure necessary social security and economic development for their people (Eyeh 488). Fast on the heels of independence, many countries witnessed failures of governance, coup d'états, famine, unemployment, wars, and other socio-economic and political ills that have come to catalyse decades of contemporary migration by Africans to the global North, in search of greener pastures in countries with economic and social stability and security (Eyeh 485). This economic failure can be ascribed to the institutionalised global economic hegemony of the global North through their neo-liberal bodies such as the Bretton Woods Institutions — International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group. Stone argues that Bretton Woods Institutions are complicit in the destitution of Africa. Their failed initiatives lead to reduced socioeconomic growth and shifted income redistribution from the African have-nots, thus creating destitute social conditions in Africa (577). Stone posits that, in actuality, most if not all postcolonial African governments take part in IMF plans to

change the income distribution to the advantage of capital owners, regardless of the detrimental effects on domestic economies (577).

There is a growing body of literary reflections on African migrants' experiences in the global North. This study focuses on portrayals — of second-generation migrants' experiences in Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010) and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), with a keen interest in belonging and identity. For this study, the term second-generation migrants is used about people of African descent born and raised outside Africa, to parents who migrated to the global North due to any of the above-outlined push factors. Although this generation sometimes enjoys official recognition as citizens of the Northern countries of their birth, this bureaucratic recognition stops short of resolving questions of identity and belonging for this generation whose life story has an elsewhere that is foundational to their sense of self and how their encounters with other communities in the global North unfold.

This study explores literary depictions of second-generation African migrants' identity and sense of belonging in two contemporary African novels — Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010) and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013). An important question that guides the discussion is how these narratives depict second-generation migrants of African descent navigating their identities and senses of belonging between familial spaces and personal relationships on one hand, and the broader sociocultural, economic, and political systems that govern interpersonal relations, perceptions, and possibilities on the other.

People's perceptions of individual identities are often rooted in their cultural values, which derive from the community and land in which they live in (Udah and Singh 845) as people born in the global North to migrant parent(s) of African descent, second-generation children of African migrants faces new factors that determine and shape belonging and self-identity. They negotiate their sense of identity and belonging in these new homelands (Chacko 230).

As far as African migration is concerned, African diasporic history shows that remnants of white colonial and imperial structures continue to influence how people of African descent relate to each other and other racial groups in the global North (Eyeh 490). The diasporic set-up often demands that African people reorient themselves in line with the new set standards and values in the host countries. Being alienated from their African

roots, the new social realities of being Other and adopting new patterns of life canons distorts, problematises, and undermines their sense of self-worth, belonging, as well as relationships and identities while simultaneously creating space for alternative frames of identification (Udah and Singh 844). They are subjects of these adversarial new social realities that dislocate and displace them from their cultural identities, self-perception, the spirit of place, sense of history and experiences (Waite and Cook, 2011).

Scholarly engagements on identity and belonging for second-generation children of African migrants in contemporary African literature remain pretty thin as compared to engagements on racism, trauma, and identity of the first generation in many instances. Much of the existing literary scholarship on experiences of migration focuses on those who migrate from Africa (the parent generation, for this study's purposes), with relatively limited focus on those who are born and raised in the global North. Contemporary migration patterns have been unfolding for decades, resulting in an extensive community of adults born and raised in the global North by migrant parents of African descent. African literary imaginaries increasingly reflect on these second-generation children of African migrants, who uniquely lives between their countries of birth and upbringing and their parents' countries of birth. They are also uniquely located as people of African descent but not quite in the same category as Afro-descended black diasporic communities whose links to Africa stretch back to the middle passage. Consequently, this study is keen to explore how the two novelists, Mengestu and Selasi, depict this category of people's navigation of identity and belonging, given that they were born and raised in the global North but have more recent connection to Africa through their parents (unlike the older patterns of African diasporas when migrants migrated from their African countries to the global North either for asylum purposes or for career purposes). Mengestu and Selasi's novels offer perspectives of second-generation migrants' experiences from two different regions of the African continent — Ethiopia and Ghana – as well as different class locations of the parent generation of migrants, with highly trained professionals in Selasi's novel and blue-collar migrants in Mengestu's novel.

I employ close textual reading of the two texts in my analysis. Khan describes close textual reading as a research technique that is used to uncover the deeper layers of written, spoken, or visual messages (Khan). It is the process of analysing a text and its underlying

themes, meanings, and symbols to gain a deeper understanding of the intentions, drives, and viewpoints of the authors (Khan).

Rather than merely summarising a document, close textual analysis looks for hidden patterns and complex connections within it. It requires thoroughly comprehending the subject matter, where the text is read, understood, and interpreted in light of the more significant historical, political, and sociological context.

1.2. Unpacking the Current Debates on Identity and Belonging for Second-Generation Migrants

The question of African migrant identity and belonging is not exclusive to African literary scholarship. There are substantial debates surrounding the question of identity and belonging for second-generation migrants of African origin, both within and beyond the discipline of African literary studies. Thus, this section unpacks those debates and their relevance to this study.

Lavasha Naidoo, in their Master' dissertation titled "Representations of Home, Dislocation, and Nostalgia in Contemporary South African Novels" (2021), examines the fictional depiction of home and belonging in South African literary imaginaries. The research is mainly concerned with preconceptions that a migrant's home visit or return signals a watershed moment, causing an identity crisis and upending preconceived beliefs of where they belong and who they are. Naidoo stresses the return-home visit as a significant life experience that allows migrants to adequately explore their perceptions and comprehensions of home and personal histories. She examines two contemporary novels — Michiel Heyns's *Lost Ground* (2011) and Zoë Wicomb's *October* (2014), each featuring a migrant protagonist who has lived abroad for sizable portions of their life. Their troublesome return to their original nation is portrayed through a nostalgically introspective and self-critical viewpoint. At the same time, the 'return-home' visit underscores the fleeting character of home and the unavoidable psychological distress and dislocation brought on by crossing borders (Naidoo 1).

Elsewhere, in their minor dissertation, "Re-Imagining The Past, Negotiating The Presence: The Lived Diasporic Experience in S.J. Naude and Jacob Van Schalkwyk's Fiction" (2018), Ale Elizabeth Smith looks at issues relevant to the discourse of diaspora which include borders, dwelling, movement, home and freedom, identity and meaning. Smith explores

these in South African literary texts underpinned by profound pain and grief, a great sense of loss and displacement. Smith's central consideration is how contemporary authors of selected South African fiction articulate and re-imagine the lived diasporic experiences of Afrikaner transnationals who assimilate multiple identities. Smith posits the diasporic experience has a feeling of unbelonging, precarity, and displacement, and thus characters' identities are negotiated and renegotiated in response to change. The study is generative for its insights into literary meditations on diasporic experiences of white Afrikaner transnationals. The study builds on these insights to consider how black racial identity potentially inflects migrants' identities in ways that may differ from white South African diasporic experiences.

Some analyses of identity and belonging questions in contemporary African literary portrayals of migrancy attend to authors' aesthetic choices in their framing of migrant experiences. Patrycja Kozieł's "Narrative Strategy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel *Americanah*: The Manifestation of Migrant Identity" (2015) is a case in point. Koziel examines how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a writer and activist from Nigeria, uses the Igbo language to highlight the peculiarities of her narrative technique in her novel, *Americanah*. Kozieł uses the idea of migrant identity to argue that Adichie's use of specific Igbo context as a foundation for recognition in her narrative strategy as a way for a Nigerian writer living in the US to express multiple self-identifications, global identities, and a dynamic sense of belonging. While Koziel delves into the migrant identity question to stage an argument that the Igbo context show the conditions shaping and resulting in multiple identities, her discussion sidesteps how socioeconomic and political dynamics often negate migrants' other cultural identities, with Euro-American identities emerging as dominant over others. The study builds on this from the aspect of migrant identity formation and negotiation of the second-generation in the global North, considering the racialised class contradictions characterising the lives of the migrants of African descent with both upward and downward mobility within this generation.

Elsewhere, Elizabeth Chacko's "Fitting In and Standing Out: Identity and Transnationalism among Second-generation African Immigrants in the United States" (2019) studies the ethnic and racial identities assigned to the category of people often referred to as 1.5G — these are middle and adolescent people who immigrate to the global

North. Chacko's study focuses on this group of African migrant students enrolled in universities in the Washington metropolitan area and their transnational relationships. She posits that this group broadly defines their identity by belonging throughout their lives. Chacko discovers that the prior emphasis on African ethno-national identity, which was dominant in the previous migrant generations, is gradually replaced with identities that better reflect the lived conditions of the second generation. This group recognises and studies Africa-based traditions and cultures and blends them with American sensibilities to portray their complex and multidimensional identities. These African-descended people consider themselves powerful agents of change in the future who, by working together across borders, might improve how the world regards Africa. They recognise the socioeconomic and political crises arresting the development of Africa and the preconceptions that must be challenged and changed; hence, their level of concern and responsibility is that they would have to work on developing the continent through international connections when they grow up. Chacko finds that the transnational attachments and ties are demonstrated through African traditional dances, dress codes, art, and music among these generations of students of African descent. They embody a great degree of allegiance even though they have relocated from the continent — Africa. Chacko's study centres on the factors that shape these generations' sense of identity and belonging, especially concerning cultural production and reproduction. The current study draws on Chacko's insights as mapping key debates on factors that shape this generation's identity and belonging navigation patterns.

A different take on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) is that of Benbedra Zohra, who explores how Afropolitans (described in the work as members of the new African generation) confront racist attributes and dogmas in contemporary America. They rationalise their study focus on Adichie by arguing that Adichie falls under both the feminist and Afropolitan community as a globetrotting African-descended multilingual, confronting the global question of hybrid identity. Using an Afropolitan lens, their study is interested in how Adichie exposes the perception of identity and belonging for characters who possess hybrid identities and how Adichie undertakes that in line with other Afropolitan writers and thinkers who expound the foundational underpinnings of Afropolitanism — Selasi (2005), Mbembe (2007) and Gikandi (2010). In a similar vein, Gillian Creese's "' Where are you from?' Racialization, Belonging, and Identity among

Second-generation African-Canadians" (2018) examines the role that a problematic question like "Where are you from?" (1476) plays in racialisation dynamics in Canada, as well as how interactions with strangers affect the sense of identity and belonging among second-generation African-Canadians. More so, Creese grounds the study methodologically on in-depth interviews with young people who are racialised as black, raised in metro Vancouver, and whose parents immigrated from sub-Saharan African nations. The study makes two observations: first, despite the second generation exhibiting the typical local dialects and geographic knowledge, other locals usually interrogate their origins; and second, these exchanges demonstrate how a black person's presence impacts the negotiation of identities as Canadian, African, and black, as their racial identity provokes perceptions that they are out of place rather than at home. This ties in with Nadia's central view that the Afropolitan individual tackles racism and biases by lambasting and lampooning the host country for marginalising minority groups. Migrants' other defense against racism, according to Nadia, is allegiance to their African culture, which they regard as a source of self-worth and dignity. Both Nadia and Creese offer essential insights into the experiences of second-generation migrants of African descent in the different cities in the global North and problematisation of identity and belonging that these migrants face, which this study hopes to build on and extend.

1.3. Mapping Theories: Afropolitanism and Transnationalism

In this section, the researcher map the theories guiding the study's identity and belonging investigation. The study draws on Afropolitanism and transnationalism as the primary conceptual tools that guide its exploration of second-generation African migrants, as depicted in Mengestu and Selasi's novels. It is crucial to anchor the study on a theoretical bedrock that speaks to the dynamics that frame the contemporary lived realities of African-descended migrants in the global North.

Selasi and Mbembe (2005) are credited with developing Afropolitanism as a theoretical position. Afropolitanism was propounded by Taiye Selasi (under her other name, Taiye Taukli Wosornu) in a short essay titled "Bye-Bye Babar," published in 2005. She describes the term as an amalgamation of Africa and cosmopolitanism (Selasi). Selasi deems Afropolitanism to be an urban and upper-middle-class mode of life and living for contemporary young African migrants who are a cultural amalgam, socially integrated,

and professionally employed category, particularly those dwelling in the cities of global North (Kasanda 381). Selasi further expounds:

> the newest generation of African emigrants (…) You will know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, (…), others merely cultural mutts: Most of us are multilingual (…) There is at least one place on the African Continent to which we tie our sense of self (…) Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the various institutions that know us for famed focus. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world (Selasi)

The quote above demonstrates that Selasi associates being an Afropolitan with a panoply of traits. She labels the Afropolitan's occupations, style, ethnicity, multilingualism, and self-expression, as well as their ties to both an African nation and one of the industrialized countries in the global North or G8, all of which are economically regarded as progressive nations (Ede 90). As a result, Afropolitans lack a firmly entrenched sense of self and maintain a flexible sense of who they are, identifying with appropriate cultural identity (Ucham 63-64). Selasi considers Afropolitanism a theoretical paradigm that illustrates how the new generation of Afro-descended migrants embody a sense of being hybridised and globalised African-descended citizens of the contemporary global North, who maintain the ontological connections to their African origin (Ede 90). It is a bedrock of literary criticism produced by contemporary globetrotting literati embedded within multi-cultural backgrounds (Ede 89). Consequently, Taiye Selasi is regarded as the pioneer of Afropolitanism.

The second proponent who popularised the concept is Mbembe. Afropolitanism, according to Mbembe, is an identity construct that investigates how Africans interact with the rest of the globe (28). Mbembe's view, is concerned with the African way of being in and relating to the world. He believes this manner of existing in the world is best described by the freedom, movement, and blending of cultures (Kasanda 381-382). Thus, Mbembe avows that:

> Afropolitanism is not the same as Pan-Africanism or negritude. Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the

> world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity--which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world. It is also a political and cultural stance in relation to the nation, to race and to the issue of difference in general (Mbembe 28-29).

Mbembe emphasises that Afropolitanism "is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world" – indeed, it names a way of being in the world "that refuses the victim position" (Mbembe 28). Mbembe views Afropolitanism as a historical form of cosmopolitanism that originated in Africa before colonial epochs (Knudsen and Rahbek 116). It is a phenomenon of being an African in a world in constant motion, a mode of being an African who is historically hybrid and mobile. According to Mbembe, Africa is present in the world, and the world is in Africa due to people migrating away from and toward Africa (28). Mbembe argues that this is because many individuals use Africa as both a starting point and a destination. Afropolitanism is distinguished by the general exchange of thoughts, ideas, behaviours, and civilizations. It accepts what is unique and strange (Kasanda 382).

Afropolitanism has widely been credited to Selasi and Mbembe, but other scholars have since expanded its conceptual reach. For instance, Gikandi observes that:

> [t]o be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions; ... to live a life divided across cultures, languages, and states. It is to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity —to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time (Gikandi 9).

It is a "phenomenology of Africanness—a way of being an African in the world" (Gikandi 9). Gikandi posits that Afropolitanism is the finest way to be African in globally (9). Being Afropolitan implies having ancestors from a particular African origin and being well-versed in their culture as a result of one's birth (Kasanda 382). It also implies having a broad upbringing and speaking several languages. Therefore, cultural blending is typical due to contemporary cross-national migration (Ucham 64).

In their proposition of an alternative type of Afropolitanism, Gikandi postulates that people of African ancestry living abroad define themselves by their nationality rather than their African background and that many have left their home countries for economic, political, or educational reasons (11). Feeling uprooted and yearning for roots and

reconnection may result from feeling linked to their home country while living abroad, especially among second-generation migrants. Gikandi welcomes Afropolitanism for people who remain in Africa, meaning that there are two kinds 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, qtd. in Stenport 17). Categorically, he notes that those in the first group possess internet technology that allows them to stay linked to the outside world. Thus, they are concerned about their seemingly global life, while those in the second group live in a mediated, unreal, and possibly deceptive reality. The first group's members' access to the internet is the reason for this. He distinguishes between cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism, contending that the latter is more common among second-generation migrants. At the same time, the former seeks a universal concept that transcends the distinctions that set them apart from the other (Gikandi 51).

However, the concept of Afropolitanism has been fairly criticised by other scholars, such as Ede, Eze, and Musila, for its apparent socioeconomic and political confines concerning its evident propensity to support a privileged social class, its lack of enthusiasm for social and political issues, and its close ties to dominant neoliberal thinking. Its limited account of historical developments and oppositional character to Euro-American assumptions and distortions of the continent is a fundamental factor in its criticism by these scholars.

According to Eze's interpretation in their article "We, Afropolitans" (2016), "what underscores Selasi's conception of the Afropolitan is the absence of fixity to a location on the one hand, and a marked mobility between Africa and the West, on the other" (Eze 115). Furthermore, he indicates that "an Afropolitan is an African in the continent or an African descent who has realised that his identity can no longer be explained in purist, essentialist, or opposition terms or only about Africa. Their realities are interwoven with the realities of their erstwhile oppressors" (Eze 117). Thus, the ultra-elitist and ossification logic that comes with upward class and social mobility underpinning Afropolitanism, which Ede and Musila contest. Ede lambasts it as a typical Western interpellation that essentialises reductionism and professionalises confines while refusing African labels (97). Musila contests the ultra-elite tendency that fails to recognise that the global North

is "unwelcoming", as Musila notes, of African expatriates in particular and Africa in general and thus strives to maintain African exclusions from the world (111).

The global North in this era of neo-liberal capitalism is still trapped in the old racist ideological metaphysics (European superiority, which socially positions Europeans as first-class citizens) that reduces Africans and people of colour to the status of second-class citizens in the world. This racialised historical class positionality in this epoch is still underpinned by the historical imbalances and assumptions that inform the central question of identity and belonging of second-generation migrants of African descent in the contemporary global North. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt literary transnationalism as another theoretical framework to buttress and supplement the gaps of Afropolitanism in studying the representation of identity and belonging in the two novels.

Literary transnationalism draws critical attention to identity and belonging. Not only does transnationalism concern itself with these issues but it also explores identity on a broader scope by scrutinising transformations occurring in the structure of the state (Shake 9). This attentiveness to the reconfigurations of the nation's structure makes transnationalism appropriate for this study's interest in exploring how such shifts and the resultant dispersals of African communities' impact second-generation African migrants' identity and belonging as depicted in contemporary African fiction (Shake 10).

As relatively recent concept, literary transnationalism articulates the ties between national literatures and the broader processes of globalising culture (Portes 464). Transnationalism in the literary or critical sense refers to literary circulation and movement that defies reduction to the level of the nation-state. Historically, the concept surfaced in American Studies, marking a significant shift in the understanding of the patterns of interactions between American literary discourse and the environment it exists in (Morgan 3).

The concept of transnationalism has developed in literary studies to reflect current and evolving international and global political linkages by concentrating on the relationships between nations, governments, and regions in literary representation (Morgan 4). Vertovec avers that literary transnationalism is the recognition and depiction in literature of the movement of individuals, ideas, and objects beyond cultural and national

boundaries (Vertovec 449). This interpretation is consistent with how it is employed in the social sciences (Portes 466). In literary analysis, it reflects current and widespread nation-state concerns despite its intention to promote connections between literary cultures (Vertovec 450).

Portes defines transnational activities as those that frequently occur across international borders for protracted periods, both at the level of relatively powerful actors, like representatives of national governments and multinational corporations, and at the level of individual immigrants (465). Furthermore, Morgan avers that, along with commercial endeavours, transnational operations also encompass political, cultural and religious undertakings (7). Accordingly, Vertovec builds on transnationalism to incorporate the idea that boundaries between nation-states are becoming less distinct, which places more stress on human agency than hereditary identifications such as, for instance, individual and group action versus national identity (Vertovec 450). The rapid growth of transnational groups, and globalization undercuts the methods of policing differences based on territoriality (Vertovec 448). Morgan observes that the formation of new frameworks for grasping the boundaries of nation and identity in literature reveals much about the outdated frameworks they seek to replace (12). In departing from the past, they may continue to be constrained by the epistemological presumptions they want to disprove (Morgan 12-13).

Vertovec, Portes, and Morgan explain that literary transnationalism refers to the point at which two or more geo-cultural imaginaries in a literary work connect, link, interact, disrupt, or collide (Morgan 12). Literary transnationalism encompasses a system of production and reception that deals with issues like translation, understanding across cultures and languages, invention, publication, and dissemination (Morgan 15). For the study's purposes, literary transnationalism lends itself to the researcher's reading of how second-generation African migrants navigate the politics of identity and belonging, as portrayed in Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* and Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*.

Consequently, Vertovec, in contrast to Selasi, highlights that transnationalism is a migration viewpoint that highlights the ties migrants have made to their previous and new nation-state and their families, communities, traditions, and causes outside of its borders (450). Moreover, among migrants, this could signify a kind of resistance or,

conversely, as a pattern of absorption into global capitalist trends (Vertovec 578). Vertovec position dovetails well with Ede's view that the excessive focus on aesthetics in Afropolitanism runs a significant risk of falling into consumerist politics of the global North, a remnant of an imperialist past with lingering existential and neo-colonial implications that contemporary writers tend to overlook. They give the impression of celebrating an African utopia that either does not exist yet or will not (Ede 98).

The two theories are concerned with the state of African migrants across national borders. They both acknowledge and speak to the pertinent question of identity and belonging in the global North and the mobility that shapes the lives thence. Meanwhile, Afropolitanism seems to emphasise on upward mobility and elites' experiences (that often come with Euro-American assimilation) and less on those with lower or downward mobility but situated in the global North. Conversely, Transnationalism speaks to the question of mobility, but it is not prone to racialised class bias and consumerist politics as Ede notes, in contrast to Afropolitanism. Hence, the use of both theories in this study ensures a balanced critique.

1.4. Outline of the Study

The study is divided into four chapters. The current chapter serves as an introduction. It provides a thorough contextualisation of the study including the identified gap in existing scholarship, the focus of the study and the analytic approaches. It has unpacked existing debates surrounding the fictional scholarship on identity and belonging for the sampled generation under study, and finally closes with a mapping of theories that are germane to the study.

In chapter two, the researcher explores how Taiye Selasi in *Ghana Must Go* (2013) depicts identity and belonging. I focus the chapter on how the second-generation professional class of migrants navigates intertwined identity and belonging within familial and relationship spaces. The chapter considers the implications and influence of geopolitical developments and dynamics on the sense of identity and belonging for this generation of migrants in the global North.

The third chapter focuses on how Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010) portrays identity and belonging for blue-collar migrants of African origins belonging to the second-

generation. It explores the socio-cultural, historical, economic, and political systems that govern their personal experiences, perceptions, and possibilities. It looks at how Mengestu interlaces the recreation of history, memories of the past, and trauma embedded in these memories and their implications for identity formation and feelings of belonging. It also explores the process of identity formation within the workplaces of second-generation African migrants.

Chapter four is the conclusion of the study. It summarises the findings of the present study and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: Second-Generation Migrants' Identity and Belonging in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013)

2.1. Introduction

The phrase 'Ghana Must Go,' which, according to Gehrmann, denotes a "cheap plastic bag popular with hurried travellers", is employed in Taiye Selasi's novel to reference the pernicious expatriation of Ghanaian immigrants from Nigeria in 1983 (67). Thus, the phrase serves as a fundamental metaphor for movement. The 'Ghana Must Go' bag signifies people's incredible ability and capacity to leave behind a place they once called home to travel abroad, sojourn, and to start over, while also implying the displacement of expatriates inside Africa, often under destitute socio-economic and political conditions (Gehrmann 68).

The novel comprises three sections, titled around the different variations of the verb 'go' — Gone, Going, and Go. An African middle-class family of six living in the United States of America, Kweku and Fola, and their four children—Olu, Taiwo, and Kehinde, twins, and Sadie, the youngest—are the main protagonists. On the surface, this well-educated and high-achieving (academically and professionally in their careers) family with upward class and social mobility, possesses all the necessary components to be a cohesive and emotionally secure unit. However, because of their withdrawal into silence following Kweku's haphazard withdrawal from the family upon being unfairly dismissed from his job as a senior medical surgeon, the novel presents them as wounded and broken. The novel's chronology is somewhat jumbled, seemingly to mirror the disruptions wrought by migration. It opens with the patriarch, Kweku Sai's death in Ghana, under the section titled "Gone," along with his family members' first responses upon learning of his tragic passing. Hence, Stenport observes that for each family member, the objects next to Kweku following his fatal heart attack, including "the slippers, the statue, the mango tree, and the plastic" 'Ghana Must Go Bag' acquire distinct meanings and symbolic significance (8-9).

Throughout "Going," the second segment of the novel, Fola and the children's memories revolve around Kweku's desertion, instead of what can be interpreted as a withdrawal from family. It gives an account of Fola's early years in Nigeria, the twins' (Kehinde and Taiwo) horrific experiences in Lagos when their mother sent them to live with their uncle, Femi, due to heightened financial difficulties of single parenting after Kweku's desertion. Olu's decision to step in his father's shoes as the first-born and Sadie's college years are also narrated in this section using a similar associative but less poetic style. Collectively, Kweku Sai's family reformulates, reinterprets, and divides their memories into before and after Kweku's desertion. They become silent and estranged from one another following his exit, and the children move away to pursue their careers and education elsewhere. The children are "going".

The third and final segment, "Go", breaks the off-limits. Anxiety, betrayal, fear, grief, jealousy, and homelessness are revealed, and context is provided for the children's physical ailments. Taiwo experiences sleeplessness, Sadie bulimia, Olu an obsession with neatness, and Kehinde despair and suicidal thoughts. The novel's open ending— which alludes to the book's title—seems to salute the ability to go, move on, and heal, implying that the family may be able to reunite. The children, thus, are invited by the familial, historical, and socioeconomic conditions (conditions such as silence on ancestral lineage, the death of their father), traumatic experiences endured by the twins as well as career aspirations, the unfair and discriminatory workplace that Kweku worked in at a hospital in America whence he was dismissed unfairly, and Fola's loneliness) to "go." Consequently, Selasi juxtaposes the experiences of first-and second-generation migrants in the global.

In this chapter, the study investigates how Sai's family is employed as a focal unit to depict the formation and navigation of identity and belonging in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*. Using the outlined theoretical lenses of Afropolitanism and Transnationalism, the chapter examines how Kweku and Fola's four children, second-generation African migrants born and raised in the United States, navigate issues of identity and belonging within familial and relationship spaces. In the following section, the study explores the depiction of first-generation migrants as a launchpad to Selasi's representation of identity and belonging for second-generation African migrants.

2.2. Depiction of First-Generation African Migrants

Vertovec denotes a transnational citizen as someone who regularly travels between two or more countries, is characterised both geographically and personally by multiple identities and national allegiances and has built significant links that serve a range of functions in each of those nations (576). Moreover, these citizens highlight their relationships and memories with their families, nations/communities, customs, and causes beyond the borders of the country they relocated to (Vertovec 578). In *Ghana Must Go*, Folasade Somayina, Kweku's wife, has created new homes, crossed borders many times, and then left those homes willingly and unwillingly (caused by familial antagonisms/conflicts as witnessed with Kweku's desertion and social developments as it was the case with her forced migration from Nigeria to Ghana in 1983 before relocating from Africa to the United States, and eventually back to Ghana. Her latter return to Ghana was not to Kweku (who returned to Ghana years earlier, disserting his family) but to the house she inherited from her foster father, Reverend Wosornu when she sought asylum in Ghana as a teenager displaced by Nigeria's civil war. More so, Fola embodies the essence of the first-generation migrants, defined as "the young gifted and broke [who] left Africa in pursuit of higher education and happiness abroad" (Selasi).

Owing to Fola's migratory history of sacrifices and destitution, she seems to defy belonging that is characterised by selfishness and "elitism" (Ede 80). Initially, she left the continent with the career ambition of pursuing a law career ambition alongside her husband who aspired to be a cardiothoracic surgeon. However, she had to relinquish her ambition because she was a newly wedded wife, a parturient mother, and in a destitute financial condition. Thus, these circumstances compelled her to opt for these choices.

Fola's eventual return to her Ghanaian home demonstrates her disregard for upward mobility. During her initial weeks in this home, she experiences panic attacks at night as she recalls the tragic historical moments of 1966 that led to the vicious death of an innocent man — her father (Selasi 98, 102, 106). She recalls this moment as "a thing she recognized

(tragic) instead of what she became: a part of history (generic)" (Selasi 106). Therefore, she acknowledges that she turned into 'a native of War-Torn Nation', who is not just deprived of her home but likewise of her own identity:

> 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 naiveté 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 identity-less, estranged from all contexts, then one could live estranged from all context as well (Selasi 107).

In this case, Fola recognises that upward class and social mobility, the material possessions lost, and a life of privilege in a particular place are insignificant. She feels as though her identity has been stolen, turning her into a nameless victim of Nigeria's civil conflict, a displaced person, the outsider African. For her, now is the critical moment. In this moment of introspection, she recognises that she has reconciled her painful links to places, belonging, and possessions. Her name represents aspects of her identity as the Nigerian daughter with Scottish ancestry in her lineage. Thus, Fola's self-identity undergoes a protracted, nonlinear metamorphosis across several levels before she gains learns how to live "estranged from all contexts" (Selasi 97-107).

Subsequently, Fola was raised as a solitary orphan in Ghana by the foster family of Reverend Wosornu after experiencing trauma from the Nigerian civil war that resulted in the death of her biological father. While pregnant with Olu, she left Africa alongside her husband while pregnant with Olu and was accepted into law school at Georgetown University in the United States. Upon their arrival, she was compelled to abandon her career ambition of enrolling for a law qualification owing to her being an expectant mother and a newlywed wife, let alone destitute financial circumstances. They were in as unemployed newlyweds. Therefore, she eventually devoted herself to supporting her husband's career aspirations as a stay-at-home parent (Selasi 72-73). Fola often questions

her identity and her place in the world. She sees herself as a robust and self-reliant wife and mother and a scared and helpless provider, especially after her husband disserted her and their children without explanation or stable financial means. Following a string of horrific incidents, Fola's awareness of the probability of living "identity-less" is a good indicator of her identity (Selasi 107).

In contrast, Kweku's re-grounding in Ghana, is reliant on his sentimental, nostalgic memories of the past in Ghana and the United States. He had always wanted to build a house since he was a young migrant to the United States and drew a blueprint for it on a serviette during a coffee break at his workplace — the hospital, during "his third year of residency" (Selasi 4). Kweku's vision of his homeland includes pictures of snow, the sun glinting, the ocean from his childhood, and heat. His vision of a home with snow pictures signifies his transnational and multiple allegiances to two nations. Snow is rare, and the country's climate features rainy and dry seasons. The falling of snow seems to signal to die, as Selasi asserts:

> Later in the morning when the snow has started falling, and the man has finished dying, and a dog has smelled the death, Olu will walk in no particular hurry out of the hospital, hung up his BlackBerry, put down his coffee, and start to cry. He'll have no way of knowing how the day broke in Ghana; he'll be miles and oceans and zones away (and other kinds of distances that are harder to cover, like heartbreak and anger and calcified grief and those questions left too long unasked or unanswered and generations of father-son silence and shame), stirring soymilk into coffee at the hospital cafeteria, blurry-eyed, sleep-deprived, here and there. He'll picture it — his father, there, dead in a garden, healthy male, fifty-seven, in remarkable shape, small-round belly pushing… (Selasi 6).

Kweku considers the house he designed and built in Accra to be his home. By returning home, he exemplifies the first-generation migrant who "can claim one country as home" and is confined to a specific place (Selasi). Through Kweku, we see African migrants in the global North as prone to the global North's "qualified welcome of Africans"; a qualified welcome that has its origins in historical assumptions about the continent (Musila 110-112). This incomplete welcome is demonstrated through the racist dismissal

of Kweku, a reputable cardiothoracic surgeon, for supposed negligence after a failed surgery on a wealthy white patient, despite Kweku's prior warnings of the dangers that come with performing an operation at that critical phase of illness.

First-generation migrants embody significant ties to their homelands and host countries, as demonstrated in this section through Kweku and Fola (Chacko 228). The patterns of identity and belonging navigation employed by this generation impact how their children develop sense of self and place. Hence, a home for this first generation signifies a double bind: a place to escape from yet a place to escape to. Kweku and Fola migrate from their homes to United States, with the former from Ghana and the latter from Nigeria and Ghana, just to return to Ghana when their home in America becomes unhomely.

2.3. Identity Formation for the Second Generation

As denoted by Chacko, the question of identity plays a crucial role in how people perceive the world, interact with others, and form a sense of self (230). Multiple fluid identities that change over time and are based on material conditions and relations might exist in one person and characterise the pattern of identity formation for second-generation migrants of African descent (Chacko 228). The process of creating and changing an identity is a continuous and complex, influenced by internal and external variables that interact in both temporal and space dimensions. Socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors influence people's identity formation (Chacko 230). In the novel, as represented by the Sai family in the United States, each Sai child goes through a phase of self-doubt before coming to terms with their identities. Identity—or lack thereof—matters because it impacts a person's sense of belonging, and belonging is critical in framing identities for second-generation migrants (Ucham 70).

Following his migration to America, Kweku became a doctor and excelled as a cardiothoracic surgeon at a prestigious hospital before egregious racial injustice wrecked his career. This African family exhibits extraordinary aptitude in every one of its members (Wallinger 208). Furthermore, Selasi posits that there are a variety of ways in which this generation differs from those that came before it. For example, while Eze argues that the first generation's identity was defined in terms of resistance to the hegemony of global

North, the second generation's definition of identity is oppositional to the assumptions of the global North about the continent (Eze 112).

The eldest son, Olu, followed in his father's footsteps and became an accomplished surgeon. Therefore, he demonstrates his admiration and affection for his father, Kweku. Growing up with parents from Ghana and Nigeria, he was exposed to American culture and Ghanaian-Nigerian customs and traditions (Tariq, Saleem and Asif 1076). In one scene where the two start arguing, Olu remains calm and composed despite his wrath toward his father; "Look at me when you're speaking to me." Olu, this time, responded, 'I don't want to.' Olu looked down, gripped the straps of his bag" (Selasi 288). Olu regards these interactions with his father as teachings underpinned by and meant to shape him and his identity as an African man. In African traditional norms, it is widely believed that a father assumes the role of a teacher to his sons by teaching them through the process of becoming a man, and thus, as Achebe observes, a man in African tradition is a man because of his solid identity; knowing who he is and where he is coming from and how to conduct himself (Achebe qtd. in Rhoads 71-72). Hence, Olu looked up to his father and tried to follow in his footsteps.

After their father disserted them, Olu, the oldest son, struggles to come to terms with his African masculinity — his identity as a man. Thus, to try to fathom this struggle, Olu decides to travel to Ghana on the date of his graduation ceremony to visit his father for the first time since he left them, about a decade ago after being ousted from his job, instead of attending his graduation ceremony (Ucham 71). For this decision, his father rebukes, "you can't do that…" His father uttered, stuttering and feeble in his speech. "Give up when you're hurt. Please. You get that from me. That's what I do, what I've done. But you're different. You're different from me, son" (Selasi 253). Thenceforth, Olu was puzzled by this utterance and their insinuations since it deviated from his internalised image of his father, despite his belief that he wholly resembles the man who would desert his family. This leaves Olu confused on how to regard his African father.

Dr. Wei (Ling, Olu's partner's father) voices his preconceived perceptions about Africans to Olu. He denounces African men under the guise of concern about his daughter's future with Olu and accuses African men of paternal carelessness and the continent of

backwardness. He exposes his problematic assumptions about the structural crisis of the neo-liberal capital press-ganging Africa and Africans:

> You know, I never understand the dysfunctions of Africa. The greed of the leaders, disease, civil war. Still dying of malaria in the twenty-first century, still hacking and raping, cutting genitals off? Young children and nuns slitting throats with machetes, those girls in the Congo, this thing in Sudan? Intellectual incapacity, inferiority perhaps. Needless to say I was wrong, as I have noted. When I came here I saw I was wrong. Fair enough. But the backwardness persists even now, and why is that? When African men are so bright? as we have said. And the women, too, don't get me wrong, I'm not a sexist. But why is that place still so backward? I ask. And you know what I think? No respect for the family. The fathers don't honour their children or wives. The Olu I knew, Oluwalekun Abayomi? Had two bastard children plus three by the wife. A brain without equal but no moral backbone. That's why you have the child soldier, the rape. How can you value another man's daughter, or son, when you don't even value your own? (Selasi 119-120).

Dr. Wei claims that the postcolonial dysfunctionality and social ills of Africa hitherto are ridiculous and must be blamed on Africans as if the destitute and conditional social conditions Africans are enmeshed in bear no connection and roots to colonialism and imperialism in its neoliberal era. Dr. Wei learned this is the logic of Euro-American imperialism when he arrived in the United States. Curiously, he even blames diseases and viruses in Africa on the greed of African leadership (even though all these diseases are not exclusive to Africa). Paradoxically, he discards the more open-minded perception of Africa he once held as a young adult in China and develops this new damning perception after he migrates to United States. Myopically, he likens Olu to other African men he encounters. He likens Olu to his father, who deserted his family. Olu is haunted by the fear of confirming the stereotype of African men Dr Wei holds. Moreover, since his parents never mentioned their grandparents or showed them photographs, he wishes his family had some form of memories or at least he had knowledge of his ancestral lineage.

Consequently, while Olu may be regarded as Afropolitan in Selasi's sense that the "modern adolescent African is tasked to forge a sense of self from wildly disparate sources" (Selasi), he also seems to buttress Ede's criticism of Selasi's Afropolitanism in that she overlooks the materialist account of postcoloniality; that is the history that shapes the politics of identity

(Ede 98). Likewise, he also seems to be absorbed into what Vertovec regards as the patterns of, and shifts in, neo-liberal "global capitalism" (578), which deny Africans their authenticity into world unless their entrance in the "world" is through the set "qualified" (Musila 112) criteria by the global North. In the text, Selasi does not expound on how the global hegemony of Euro-American capitalism shapes the world through the political and economic power that came with its imperialist-colonialist annexation of the global South.

Kehinde and Taiwo are gifted biological twins with astounding and psychic abilities. The twins "were extra ordinarily good-looking", undoubtedly because of their Scottish ancestry from Fola's family lineage (Selasi 219). Taiwo grows up to be a responsible and intelligent woman who consistently achieves the highest grades in her class. She becomes editor of the *Law Review* despite her mother's objection to her becoming a lawyer. This achievement would allow Fola to vicariously attain the dream of her youth, to become a lawyer. The Sai family and subsequently, the children, are enjoying upward mobility. Thus, their career aspirations and prospects align with conventional middle-class careers.

Nonetheless, language and social identity formation are interwoven. Wa Thiong'o contends that "our social identities—the numerous ways in which we define ourselves in connection to others—can be reflected in and formed by the language or languages we speak and how we use them" (Thiong'o 10). The Sai children can be seen as transnational bilinguals; they speak more than one language. They grasp and can communicate in English, and either Italian, French, or Spanish — a Romance language, an urban vernacular and an indigenous language. Taiwo demonstrates this when she attempts to impress the Dean during a conversation by showcasing her knowledge of Latin and Greek.

The model-like physique that Taiwo's mother has, which her younger sister, Sadie, covets, is Taiwo's inheritance. Despite being attractive and intelligent, Taiwo struggles with belonging within a familial space because she constantly feels and thinks she was the unwanted daughter. Not only was Sadie the lastborn, but there was also the feeling that her mother loved Sadie more because of the difficulties she underwent at Sadie's birth. Their differences grow and are further exacerbated when Fola sends the twins (Kehinde and Taiwo) to their uncle Femi in Nigeria.

During their stay, their uncle's wife, alleged that she found the twins attempting to be cosy with each other. The uncle then coerced Kehinde into having sexual intercourse with his twin sister, Taiwo, based on this unverified assumption. This incident would haunt the twins for a great part of their lives. This horrific sexual abuse intensifies Taiwo's perceptions of being an unwanted daughter. Taiwo blames her mother for sending them to her predator, brother whom she initially regarded as a stranger. Taiwo's struggles with un/belonging are variously demonstrated in the novel. Beginning at her "predominantly white college," she grew dreadlocks in an attempt to "fit in" with the white girls and be able to run in the rain like them (Selasi 138). Since Taiwo attended a primarily white school despite having black parents, her uncertainty about race can be explained by the fact that she feels more like a white person than a black person. Taiwo is therefore worried about being black, which makes her feel like she needs to conform to the appearance of the white girls, in addition to feeling ignored by her mother (Ucham and Kangira 44-45). Taiwo seems to be fitting aptly into Selasi's category of Afropolitans.

Kehinde, the other twin, struggles with identity issues, failure, and inferiority complexes (Tariq et al. 1077). Chacko notes that the social construction of a migrant identity is influenced by panoply of factors comprising of:

> the dialectical process of migration and transnational experiences, formal education, age, socioeconomic class, political status (such as dual or single citizenship), knowledge of other cultures, the ability to use and manipulate cultural artifacts, and network membership (Chacko 229).

Therefore, after being awarded a Fulbright grant to study in Mali, Kehinde relocates to Paris and takes a job as a waiter to support himself while he pursues his studies and profession. Kehinde became a talented painter whose works are sold in exhibitions and auctions worldwide. He is the only person who is aware of the cause of his father's abrupt and premature abandonment of the family — that he had been unfairly dismissed and was too ashamed to tell his family he was now jobless. Since he never shared this truth with the rest of the family, he feels guilty as they live with anger in the belief that their father simply chose to desert them. At some point, Kehinde can be seen using his painting to escape from this reality which he only knows (Selasi 176).

Kehinde seems prone to feeling inadequacy since he believes he let his father down in a different sense prior to Kweku's departure. He could not shake the question in the back of his mind that if Olu had seen their father before he left them, he would have stayed with them instead, since Olu actualised his father's aspiration of having his sons follow his career path. Put differently, Kehinde wonders whether seeing Olu, at the time well on the path to becoming a doctor, would have consoled his father sufficiently for Kweku to choose to stay with the family following his dismissal from the hospital. Unlike Olu, Kehinde did not pursue a career in medicine. As a result, he felt he had let his father down by not being able to establish the medical business Sai and Sons as their father had aspired for the family (Ucham 72). Kehinde blamed himself since he did not enjoy science and mathematics in school and thought that if he had, his father and brother would have welcomed him (Selasi 176-177). Still, Kehinde, the internationally recognised artist, embodies Selasi's sense of being an Afropolitan who possesses "symbolic capital" that enables their transnational class and social mobility (Ede 80).

During their ill-fated stay in Nigeria, their uncle, Femi, informed Kehinde and Taiwo about their grandparents, showing them a photograph of their Scottish grandmother. Their mother, Fola, had never initiated a confabulation about her parents, leaving Kehinde perplexed why he and Taiwo were golden-eyed while their siblings were not. His knowledge of his heritage reawakened upon seeing his grandmother. Thereafter, he understands where some of his Scottish features come from. His grandmother was the force underpinning his identity crisis (Tariq et al. 1080). Being neither black nor white, he thought he did not belong to any one group of people since he had no relatable past or history. Kehinde encounters what Selasi denotes as a second-generation being, "[b]rown-skinned without a bedrock sense of 'blackness,' on the one hand; and often teased by African family members for 'acting white' on the other – the baby-Afropolitan… 'lost in trans-nation'" (Selasi qtd. in Ucham 72). However, the children's multicultural appearance is more of a curse than a privilege. Olu, the oldest, desires to be as attractive as his younger brother, Kehinde. That Kehinde believes he can only be one of two hues, black or white, is an instantiation of the crisis of navigating identity on this level.

Identity among second-generation African migrants is recreated through social customs such as dressing style (Chacko 230). Kehinde wears "spattered sweatpants, an NYUT-shirt, Moroccan babouches" (Selasi 61). Kehinde identifies with both locations —

embodying cultural hybridity (which, unfortunately, Selasi does not expound on in the novel).

The final child in the family, Sadie, struggles with her looks and body weight. Sadie was born prematurely and had a low birth weight. Fola surfeited her out of concern, and she learned to despise her appearance. If she could just look like her sister Taiwo, or her white friend, Philae, that would be wonderful, so she thinks. This is demonstrated by her account that they "are ethnically heterogeneous and culturally homogenous. She doesn't want to be Caucasian. She wants to be Philae" (Selasi 146).

Moreover, identity formation amongst this generation of migrants is shaped by their experiences of hybridity, in-betweenness, and plurality, as well as a desire to understand and reclaim their heritage (Chacko 232). Sadie desires a model's physique. She overeats due to the bulimia she suffers from and then forces herself to throw up to prevent weight gain. It is debatable if Sadie's eating disorder is merely a result of her weight because she also feels unplanned and different from her siblings, who are all exceptionally attractive and gifted in some way, resulting in various flourishing middle-class careers, while Sadie is still undecided on her career path. Sadie seems to be using eating disorders as a form of protest against self-appearance which she resents as a result of her surroundings. Similarly, Tsitsi Dangarembga accounts for bulimia as a form of resistance in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) through Nyasha, who develops an eating disorder as a form of rebellion against the patriarchal perception that reduces women to sexual objects. Dangarembga's Nyasha starves herself in an effort to disown her adult female body which she holds responsible for the dominant sexualised patriarchal perception of men on women. Nonetheless, Sadie's aspiration remains to be white, as she misconstrues being white as naturally beautiful. With the depiction of Sadie here, Selasi comments on Euro-American colonial assumptions of racialised beauty and embedded negative self-identification.

John M. Kang observes in "Deconstructing the Ideology of White Aesthetics" (1997), that the question of racial beauty is a power dynamic question which necessarily involves negative self-identification, therefore, "for something to be beautiful, something must be ugly" (Kang 288). More-so, he posits that given the reality that under the globalised and racialised Euro-American capitalism, the whites are at the apex of this global power, they predominate and set standards of beauty. Owing to this power dynamic, persons of colour are compelled to

either conform to or resist an imposed White norm, whereas White people are free to choose how they want to look and express themselves. Sadie seems to content with assimilating habits and traits of whiteness as demonstrated in a scene of her assimilationist admiration of her friend Philae. Likewise, her brother Olu seems to be prone to such assimilation as he quickly and desperately assimilated the dominant Euro-American attributed perceptions of Dr. Wei about Africa and Africans. She fails to contest the myth of blackness being attached to ugliness and whiteness to beauty, thus overlooking racialised power dynamics. This also buttresses what Musila describes as Afropolitanism's failure to challenge the Euro-American "historical assumptions" of backwardness and barbarism imposed on blackness and the continent (109). These anti-black racist assumptions and prejudices seem to be assimilated by both Sadie and Olu. Through misconceptions of feminine beauty and falling into myths of associating beauty with European genealogies, Sadie wishes to be like Philae. On his part, Olu is easily manipulated by Dr. Wei's prejudiced views. These dynamics profoundly impact how both Sadie and Olu belong into their Ghanaian-Nigerian family.

Another fundamental leitmotif which characterises Selasi's conception of Afropolitanism is that of careers. She avows that, in contrast to earlier generations whose parents aspired to be engineers, doctors, attorneys, or bankers, today's Afropolitans are pursuing careers in the media, politics, music, and design without holding back when showcasing their African origins (Selasi). Unlike her siblings, who are active in middle-class professions that come with an upward mobility package, Sadie struggles to find a profession. Besides feeling less attractive than her beautiful siblings with light complexions (the twins, Kehinde and Taiwo) and beautiful bodies (her mother and sister's body which have Scottish attributes), she lacks a prestigious profession like her siblings. Hence, her lack of middle-class profession contradicts Selasi's category of being an Afropolitan. Only when she meets her relatives in Ghana at her father's burial and plays the Ghanaian rhythm and drumbeats with her relatives that she feels immeasurable joy. This experience liberates her from identifying as less successful in the family (Selasi 269-270).

Ultimately, she seems to come to terms with her identity near the end of the narrative when she encounters her father's sister (her aunt based in Ghana, Africa). She is astounded by their likeness; she feels she is gazing in a mirror and refers to it as a genetic joke (Selasi 264). Although Sadie belongs to second-generation migrants, she stops short

of pursuing the typical middle-class career trajectories that Selasi associates with this generation in her essay. She seems to identify more with Africa after encountering her aunt. This encounter resolves her identity crisis and resentment towards her sister.

Therefore, through exploration of a shifting sense of place — a home that can be both homely and unhomely — the following section examines how the Sai children navigate their relationship to the places they dwell in, which ultimately informs their sense of belonging. For each sibling, a home signifies a "double-bind; place to escape from yet a place to escape" (Rushton 50).

2.4. Belonging for Second-generation Migrants

> The transnational journey of subjects and others invite us to consider what it means to be at home, inhabit a particular place and might invite us to question the relationship between identity, belonging and home (Ahmed 78).

In Ahmed's interpretation, a home signifies where one's family resides: a house, a country, or one's country of origin, all of which have confines that keep outsiders at a safe distance (89). Home can also imply both a safe and an unsafe space — an unhomely space. Space is uncertain in the setting, although it is linked to physical experiences. From a geographical, cultural, or social standpoint, Ahmed defines a stranger as someone who does not fit in or is out of place, denoting that anyone who goes beyond their own boundaries or assumed region of belonging may likewise be labelled a stranger (89). Along similar lines, for second-generation African migrants, transnational activities of belonging denote the recreation of the home community through social norms, religious practices, foodways, and linguistic traditions (Chacko 231). On the one hand, Vertovec posits that transnational migrants claim multiple ties to home and maintain numerous forms of contacts and connections with people and institutions in the place of origin (577). On the other hand, Gikandi holds that home for second-generation migrants, which is demonstrated through a connection to their ancestral homeland (9). According to Gikandi, Africans living abroad would prefer to maintain ties to their ancestral homelands (Africa) than to the global North countries in which they live (9).

The notion of the ancestral home, whether it be in Ghana, Nigeria, or America, is prevalent in the mental landscapes of the characters in Selasi's novel. In its depiction in the text, a

home can be seen as a place where each character can both escape from and go to (Rushton 50).

2.4.1 A Shifting Sense of Place — Home and Estranged Feeling of Belonging

Both Olu and Ling are medical professionals who travel the world to help those in need. Known for his paintings, Kehinde has studios in both London and the United States. Having studied at Oxford, Yale, Columbia, and London universities, Taiwo is just as successful as Olu and Kehinde. Sadie is waiting to choose a middle-class profession as she completes school. They dedicate less time to familial bonds and gatherings as they study, work, and travel for a while before being compelled to go to their ancestral home in Ghana following their father's death.

Selasi, through the Sai children, describes perceptions of the second-generation about home (familial and relationship spaces) as a sentimentalised space of belonging concerning their unique experiences of being raised in an African family in America. Olu remarks, "all this white is oppressive, apathetic; a bedroom shouldn't be an OR" as he gets home that night after learning of his father's passing while at work in the hospital (Selasi 113). He recognises the cruelty of whiteness that still exists in America, associating the white colour palette of his home with the oppression of whiteness. The timing of this observation— soon after the death of his father, a talented cardiothoracic surgeon pushed out of the profession by racism— invites us to read this banal comment as more profound than a throw-away comment on interior design. The feeling of unease, separation, and dislocation implies that his domestic and national home is sterile and a place where nothing flourishes. He longs for a heritage, roots, and a feeling of ancestral belonging and origins (Selasi 251).

Olu feels most at home when he is close to his wife, Ling Wei, and cannot bear being apart from her, particularly during family gatherings. When arrangements to Ghana for his father's funeral are made, he initially declines Ling's offer to travel with him due to Ling's agitation at the sense of exclusion from this family event. Olu responds to 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 182-183). Here, Olu is referring to the broken relationships between family members because of his father's desertion. He implicitly

believes that members of a "real family" are closely related on an emotional level (Rushton 52). Therefore, he has found a home in Ling as she aptly suits Olu's "real family" conception.

The Sai children's upward mobility does not seem to provide them with a stable foundation for forming bonds with one another as a family, particularly Kehinde, Taiwo, and Sadie, instead, it pulls them apart from each other. This, in turn, appears to create what Gehrmann regards as the feelings of anxiety and restlessness that problematise their sense of belonging as subjects who do not belong to a family (Gehrmann 67).

Kehinde is represented as a second-generation migrant who feels most at home in his workshop, whether he is in London or not. He actively brings the theme of ancestry and origins to life through the artistic depiction of his twin sister Taiwo as the muse in nine different paintings (Selasi 180). These paintings symbolise both a wish to bring a family member into the present and a metaphorical reunion with a sister whom he has longed to reunite with (Selasi 174-180). He feels like he has lost his sister owing to the order they endured during their visit to the uncle, Uncle Femi, thus he sees a need to use his paintings to articulate longing for family and remorse. Stenport contends that Kehinde is in the process of healing from his childhood trauma emanating from the horrific sexual ordeal in Nigeria. Therefore, he rewrites the "presumptively" Greek tradition by fusing the African traits of his sister's face with the Greek muses (Stenport 18). More so, beaded and mud-cloth portraits are associated with an African custom, and the blending of creative traditions is similar to the ethnic blending of his family, resulting in a hybridization that creates a "cultural-in-between" space (Stenport 18-19).

In contrast to Olu, who sought pictures of his ancestors to understand his identity, Kehinde searches for physical characteristics and similarities inherited from his parents. He talks about his brothers and sisters; his younger sister has "tilting-up eyes set in valleys of bone," "a lighter-skinned Kweku," "classically Ga," whereas Olu, "a darker-skinned Fola" is "classically Yoruba," with "Ethiopian eyes, Native American cheekbones, […] black hair/blue eyes of the Welsh, Nordic skin" (Selasi 166). His parents and siblings "bear the stamp of belonging" (Selasi 166). That Kehinde feels local and at home in many ways seems irrefutable. He utilises his creative work to demonstrate the special

significance of his ancestors' culture and resolve childhood traumas and the grief of fragmented family ties.

Conversely, Taiwo is searching for a place where she can live in comfort and security. Ahmed notes that longing for home communicates a way of being that restricts social interaction and limits the home's boundaries (Ahmed 87). She posits that homes are intricate and ephemeral places where people live and interact with each other and others who come and depart (Ahmed 87). For Taiwo, home is not Africa but where she has lived and created relationships. For example, when their cab driver in Ghana queries Taiwo's origins as she linguistically claims an English identity and England as her home, she replies that she had "studied in England" and thought of it as another home (Selasi 210). Her feeling of home is problematised as she feels unwanted and unloved by her mother. That she was sent to her ancestral home — Nigeria, where she suffered sexual torment at the instigation of her uncle, Babafemi (Uncle Femi), constitutes the estrangement of homelessness at home — that is, feeling like a stranger to her mother and subsequent feelings of unbelonging at home. She blames her mother for sending them to Nigeria to live with her uncle, whom she considers a stranger. She is thus enmeshed in the rage of being overlooked and not belonging to her family, feeling unprotected (Selasi 276). The traumatic experience of Nigeria in her childhood makes Taiwo reject Africa as home and claim England instead. Notwithstanding that Selasi in the text does not speak of Taiwo's feelings and relationship with Ghana thoroughly, Taiwo can be regarded as an Afropolitan in all its various components, from her middle-class profession, knowledge of Romantic language(s) as evidenced by her intimate interaction with the Dean to knowing of G8 cities — London, New York, Paris, and being an African of the world.

Taiwo's little sister, whom she has long perceived as a favourite girl child of their mother, Sadie, abruptly distances herself from her over-protective mother, expressing her right to be an adult and capable of living her own life without supervision; "I'm not a baby! I'm not a child. I'm not your replacement husband" (Selasi 156). Still the "baby" at nineteen years old, Sadie does not know her father, whom she refers to as "the man in the photo" (Selasi 149). Sadie is distraught by her reactions to Taiwo's attractiveness, her father's absence, the image of Olu and Ling as the ideal pair, and Fola's move to Ghana because they indicate "the heartbreaking difference between what they've become and what a Family should be" (Selasi 158). The family members' silence contributes to the disparity

between Sadie's idealistic concept of a family and reality. Sadie expresses her wishful thoughts on belonging to a collective:

> all 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. Rather, part of Philae's family, of the Frick Negropontes, of their pictures on the wall along their stairs on the Cape […] they are larger than life — at least larger than hers, Sadie's family, spread out as it is, light, diffuse. Philae's family is heavy, a solid thing, weighted, perhaps by money (Selasi 146).

Sadie links personal ancestral portraits to the idea of a home. She envies families such as the powerful Negropontes, who project the image of a unified familial unit of ancestral pride and a sense of history connected to Greece and Italy. Contrary to the Sais, the Negropontes have a visible family tree, wall portraits, and a "gravitational pull'; while the Sais is a "scattered fivesome, a family without gravity, completely abound" (Selasi 146). Sadie yearns to be a family and desires meaningful familial relationships premised on love for one another (Selasi, 2013). This emphasis on ancestry supports Gikandi's framing of second-generation migrants' yearning for their ancestral homeland as they prefer to maintain ties to their ancestral homelands than to the United States (9).

The siblings, whose parents are reluctant to talk about their past and African origin, express their desire for ancestral connection by wishing for pictures of relatives, a written pedigree, or biologically defined family traits (Stenport 21). Therefore, Gikandi's emphasis on the uncertainty regarding one's origins is a sign of unease typical among second-generation migrants in the diaspora (11). The children suffer physical pain and a weakened sense of self-worth because of their dread and the family's silence, which makes them wonder about who they are and whether the family is hiding secrets or not. While Kehinde is suicidal, Taiwo is an insomniac, Olu is very organised, and Sadie struggles with bulimia. Each of their self-discoveries seems to have been greatly influenced by Kweku's abandonment and silence on the ancestral heritage as well as physical visits initiated by parents to Ghana prior to the death of their father.

Consequently, the children embody varied conceptions about what home is. While Kehinde represents his roots in his artwork by feeling at home locally and globally, Olu

and Sadie search for roots and ancestral lineage. On the other hand, Taiwo is looking for a place where she may live a pleasant, anxiety-free existence. As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, it is worth noting that although home is sentimentalised as home, feelings of home do not entirely postulate feelings of belonging. Olu, Taiwo, and Sadie identify home as the places they have lived in, in Boston and Baltimore, yet this does not imply a sense of togetherness or familial attachment. On the other hand, Kehinde feels at home locally and globally through his artwork.

In this chapter, the study explored how first-generation migrants from Africa to the United States laid the foundation for the second generation to negotiate identity and belonging. In the case of Selasi, that foundation was one of upward mobility. It also discussed how Selasi's second-generation migrants struggle with identity and belonging regardless of upward mobility, which most of them, except Sadie, enjoy. The chapter demonstrated that despite upward mobility, migrants' identity formation in the global North, in particular the United States, is still conditioned to be negotiated through the premises of historical assumptions and prejudices about Africans and the continent. It also demonstrated how Afropolitanism falls short of debunking these historical assumptions and prejudices and how, despite a lack of confrontation and opposition to these assumptions, second-generation African migrants are still victims of these assumptions. In the following chapter, the researcher examines Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010), another contemporary African novel about identity and belonging for second-generation migrants in the global North.

CHAPTER THREE: Representation of Identity and Belonging for Second-Generation Migrants in Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010)

> We are historical creatures — we have memories, we have narrative — all these things that give weight and meaning to our present lives, and so for me, and definitely for the characters in my novels, an understanding and reckoning with history is vital not only to moving forward with our lives, but also with coming to terms with it. — Dinaw Mengestu (qtd. in Hazelwood).

3.1. Introduction

Mengestu's concern and interest in history appear to have their roots in his background, as evident in his works, including the one under examination herein. He also notes his parents' disinclination to disclose the tragic experiences they endured while in Ethiopia, similar to the parents in the current novel. During a public lecture held at the Lewiston Public Library, Mengestu informed his audience that his migrant parents concealed their besetting experiences while living in Ethiopia "because of violence that surrounded it" (Mengestu qtd. in Garcia-Palauro 5).

The author's family fled war-torn Ethiopia in 1978 to the United States. The political conflict was on the back of the Ethiopian revolution, which vanquished the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. When his family migrated, he was a two-year-old boy, but his parents brought with them "memories of a brother and uncle who had died", as well as the agony endured because of the callous new regime's conflict (Garcia-Palauro 5). Mengestu "has almost no memory of his life in Ethiopia" because in his familial space in Peoria, Illinois, "the family's conversation avoided all but the vaguest mention of their heritage" (Garcia-Palauro 9). He had no knowledge or memory of his family's historical pedigree. This silenced history eventually spurred Mengestu's preoccupation with history, conflict, and migrant experiences in his writing.

Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air*, published in 2010, chronicles the struggles a small Ethiopian migrant family in America encounters in their interpersonal relationships — struggles made intricate by the constant sense of dislocation that permeates their daily lives. The novel interweaves three main storylines narrated by and from the viewpoint of

Jonas Woldemariam, an American-born son of Ethiopian immigrant parents, and it is fragmented into three main storylines entwined all through the narrative.

The first storyline follows Jonas' parents (Yosef and Mariam) on their honeymoon-like journey from Peoria, Illinois, to Nashville, Tennessee. This is their first journey together after Mariam arrived from Ethiopia six months earlier. It was intended to revive their marriage, since they spent three years apart. The separation was caused by Yosef's flight from imminent imprisonment following the violent 1974 communist revolution against the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia. This road trip comes to an end when, in a last-ditch effort to flee her violent husband, Mariam, who is newly pregnant with Jonas, clutches the moving vehicle's steering wheel and abruptly turns it, causing the vehicle to crash — abuse and memories of a traumatic past plague this road trip. Thus, the excursion has an exceptional value for Jonas, possibly because it represents the imminent demise of his parents' marriage. Following this road trip, Jonas' parents' relationship has a persistent impact on him, leaving him heartbroken and perplexed for the rest of his life.

The subsequent storyline traces Jonas' journey from the start of his dating and, eventually, his marriage to Angela until the ultimate collapse of their marriage. This section of the text tracks Jonas as he works at several jobs that both help and harm his marriage to his wife, Angela (Hazelwood). In the beginning, he worked as a legal assistant in a refugee resettlement facility in New York, which supports refugees in quest for asylum through formal and procedural routes of making an application into the country with formal application. Afterward, Angela helps him secure employment as an English teacher at a private institution. Angela assists him to this teaching post and later on learns that he lied about exiting the resettlement facility's job willingly, when he was actually retrenched due to funding cuts, thus leading to the weakening of their bond and marriage. Nonetheless, he begins scrutinising the background of his father's immigration to the United States throughout his incumbency as an English teacher, repeatedly making up details about his father's past. Throughout this interaction, Jonas experiences a watershed moment in his quest for self-realisation and healing from his traumatic familial histories.

Present tense narration is used for the novel's third storyline, which is told from Jonas' perspective. In this storyline, after walking out on his teaching job at the academy and the subsequent collapse of his marriage, Jonas rents a car to retrace his parents' journey in America, in particular, the road trip that resulted in the tragic ending of his parents'

marriage. At the start of his journey, he now imagines paying a visit to his mother, to hear her accounts of their road trip thirty years prior. After that, he re-traces that trip, traveling to locations like Fort Laconte prior to reaching the site of his parents' afore-cited accident. Jonas' reenactment of his parents' journey through physical means aids him in exploring family history and his own perceptions of the past and, consequently, of himself and home.

The novel's first two storylines highlight the impact of dislocation on the individual characters' lives. The third storyline focuses on Jonas' endeavour to integrate his fragmented historical familial vestiges. All through his journey and narration, Jonas discovers a voice and, more importantly, the will to endure amid the traumatic implications of his familial past and the dislocation it causes. In the end, by mixing these three storylines, Jonas can recreate and reenact history to reconcile the disparities between what he has witnessed and what his family has decided to conceal.

For this chapter, the researcher explores how Dinaw Mengestu depicts the question of identity and belonging for second-generation migrants of African origins in his second novel — *How to Read the Air* (2010). The researcher map how Mengestu interweaves re-creation of history, memory, and trauma of the first-generation inflicted by structural order, to demonstrate how second-generation migrants in the United States navigate their sense of self-identity and belonging. The chapter also looks at the socioeconomic and cultural patterns that govern the dominant perceptions towards migrants in the workplace of second-generation migrants.

3.2. Navigating Identity and Belonging through Re-creation of History, Memory, and Trauma

Mengestu's novel reenacts history by exploring the implications of forced migration from Ethiopia on Jonas' parents and his (Jonas') own life. Jonas rents a car and recreates his parents' honeymoon-like road trip, going through the exact sites (Hazelwood). Jonas' account of his road trip brings to mind Varvogli's views on the importance of physical environments in displacement tales. His journeys through physical environments in New York, other American places, and imaginatively, through the horn of Africa are linked to his knowledge of history and identity (127).

In *Location of Culture* (2012), Homi Bhabha asserts that "…we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (2). Mengestu's text serves as a space for renegotiation and defiance interwoven. However, it also demonstrates that the narrative it contains — or, more specifically, the novel itself — exists in and beyond time due to its emphasis on history and historical reproduction. Thus, Bhabha posits that the new materialises in those transitional areas where time and space converge. One of the felicitous illustrations of this idea in the text is found in Fort Laconte, whose stones bear witness to the fort's long history (Hazelwood). In a similar vein, Sylvia G. Palauro, in their master's dissertation (2015) about the persistence of memory and its impact on identity in *How to Read the Air,* observes that space and time collide here at the fort to establish a narrative that seems only fathomable to the reader (8). Mengestu offers a place that is more reflective of the actual events and how conceptions of space and time can alter one's interpretation of these experiences, enabling time and space to interact in this manner (Garcia-Palauro 7-8). Consequently, his experience is tactile and meditative, and he searches for new methods to convey it.

More-so, it is possible that Mengestu employs fragmentation as the principal means of expression in the text. Jonas regularly pauses his narration to offer a fresh idea or ponder on an earlier episode. Consider, for instance, the novel's opening scenes, which show Jonas imagining Yosef and Mariam preparing for their road trip. Mariam reminisces about the expression "Men can be strange. Wives are different" uttered by one of the ladies at her Baptist church while she is about to board the car for the road trip (Mengestu 4). These constant disruptions and temporal leaps mirror the dislocation in characters' lives and the actual and figurative shifting of locations throughout the text. Much of the novel is told through flashbacks, which disrupt linearity. Similar to how Jonas' parents have had to traverse state and national borders, Jonas too has to negotiate boundaries between his life and his parents' lives and reality and his imagination. Bhabha posits that since a boundary is a place where ideas collide, stories that translate differences into understanding and identity tend to be disjointed and dislocated (27). Therefore, fragmentation develops into a means of producing meaning.

In Mengestu's narrative, time itself breaks up into fragmentations of the past and present, constantly interacting with one another. The sensation of temporal dislocation—of "existing in and between different time constructions"— characterises Jonas, and his familial memory indicates of this fragmentation (Garcia-Palauro 9). The narrator, Jonas, for instance, literally and metaphorically journeys through time to achieve closure for his awful separation from Angela and the episodes of his father's cruelty that he experienced and witnessed as a child. As a child in America, he never felt recognised by his father, and he even feared sitting with him after he came back from work. Therefore, this validates silence about their familial history that defined their relationship and why Jonas would reinvent history.

The novel demonstrates how much of the past remains in and shapes the present lives of second-generation families, as evident with the past of Yosef and Marriam and their son's (Jonas') present and the silenced history of Angela's father whom she claims left on a brief errand and never returned. Angela brings up her father's desertion jokingly, but it seems to be a traumatic experience she never delves into beyond the jokes. Similarly, Kweku Sai's absence in Selasi's novel is a significant narrative element. He is hardly mentioned in the household and children's conversations after he forsook the family without any explanation. His name, likewise, seems to invoke traumatic memories and paradoxical thoughts as evident with Kehinde who assumes that Kweku might have left because Kehinde did not follow in his career footsteps.

Memories frequently cause the story and timing to falter. Jonas' narrative is based on his own and his family's memories. Based on his mother's recollections, Jonas opens the story by recreating his parents' Nashville vacation (Hazelwood). Throughout the novel, Jonas weaves in bits of speculated narratives about his parents' lesser-known lives before they immigrated to the United States. After that, he presents and elaborates on the more recent story about the progression and ultimate dissolution of his marriage to Angela.

The novel seems coherent, regardless of Jonas' scattered memories, adding to the overall fragmentation of the text since he tries to fill in the gaps with his insights and knowledge. This is exemplified by Jonas when he asserts:

> What happened to my parents late on a September afternoon thirty years earlier is, I have to admit, largely a matter of wild and errant speculation. The events of 1687 are shrouded in less mystery than that day. In effect, 1687 has more going for it 1977, and I don't think it would be wrong to say that I can see clearly the causes and effects of a battle more than three hundred years old along with the lives that fought and died in it, than I can understand my parents, who for their part always remained strangers to me (Mengestu 143).

Given his inability to access his parent's full story, Jonas' desire to narrate and rebuild their pasts is a necessary part of his attempt to understand his identity. Garcia-Palauro compares and contrasts the fictional life of Jonas and Mengestu to posit that Jonas, like Mengestu, fills in the gaps in his familial histories by adjoining details, imagining things, and fabricating pieces where he lacks knowledge (11). Nonetheless, a more thorough account might illuminate the reasons for his parents' actions and their impact on his life (a sense of home and self in America) and marriage to Angela.

3.3. Implicating Memory and Trauma: Problematics of Identity and Belonging for Second Generation Migrants

Mostafa, in "Memory, Trauma and Identity" (2009), considers trauma to be an individual's reaction to one or more series of violent, startling, or overpowering events that are not fathomed at the moment but subsequently manifest and recur as dreams, flashbacks, or other recurring symptoms (210). Thus, anything that endangers a person's bodily or mental health aptly qualifies as traumatic. Caruth additionally connects history and traumatic experience (6). Caruth's book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (2016) explores the significance of contextualising traumatic experiences within a particular cultural and historical milieu (6). The pre-, during, and post-time frames of Yosef and Mariam's immigration to America, and the intended honeymoon road trip — a journey characterised and defined by traumatic experiences— collectively shape Jonas' identity as a second-generation child of migrants in America. More so, trauma has frequently been related to—though not limited to—the experiences of engaging in political revolutions and wars, being uprooted from one's own country (dislocation/displacement), and losing loved ones, or developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of war (Mostafa 210).

In a similar vein, Musila, in her critique of racialised neo-liberal capitalism and the sheer failure of the American dream in Mengestu's *How to Read the Air*, connects Jonas' unstable life trajectory to systemic structures whose roots reach back to Atlantic slavery's dehumanisation of black people (112). A traumatic past and the failure of promised dreams in America haunt Jonas' father. He was active in the failed socialist reformist revolution that overthrew the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie and, subsequently, got jailed. He escaped to Sudan, where he worked in a port before immigrating to America for a life of greener postures but worked as a box shipper. Commenting on the rhetoric of border-crossings fruits supposedly embedded in the immigration to Europe and, subsequently, America, Musila notes that "Yosef's dreams fixate on box shipping, which signals the failures of global capital and its unfreedom for African people who are excluded from the European register of the human" (Musila 116). Jonas's traumatic memory of Yosef, embedded in his immigration journey and stay in America, also problematises Jonas' sense of history that must guide in defining who he is and where he should belong. Hence his need to recreate history seems justified.

That Mengestu's text is characterised and influenced by his traumatic experiences seems irrefutable. Yosef flees torture in jail and boards a ship, where he spends the next few days or weeks confined to a small cell. Following his parents' reconnection when Mariam joins Josef in America months later after he managed to immigrate from Sudan to Europe and ultimately America, Jonas observes his father physically assault Mariam, as he has done for years. Throughout the text, Angela, Jonas's wife, hints at an equally traumatic upbringing, but she never expresses it directly and fully. The trauma of the novel is best exemplified by Yosef, a man whose acts are motivated by the phantom of boxes. As Jonas puts it, "my father had been dreaming of boxes since coming to America … which despite his best efforts had continued to haunt him" (Mengestu 42).

Mengestu mimics the temporal disjunction of memory in the novel's nonlinear flow by first building the novel's narrative using Jonas' blend of memory and imagination (Hazelwood). Mengestu uses memory and creativity as structural components to aid Jonas in understanding his parents' hints and create a past that aligns with his understanding of them (Garcia-Palauro 69). Moreover, he infuses Jonas' current world with material memories. Jonas' visit to Fort Laconte serves as an example of how he grasps how things cling to the past. At the fort, Jonas notes that "Looking at the remains of the fort — its size and scope, its proximity to the forest and to the spring that runs alongside it — I don't think

anyone who came here did so expecting or wanting to fight" (Mengestu 143). Jonas retraces his African migrant parents in America parents' journey, wanting to learn more about the history of his parents in America — a historical quest for knowledge, a story as well as meaning that should inform who he is and his relationship to the country thereof (Hazelwood). His journey leads him towards the unknown, where his tale and the fort's story about his parents eventually merge. Thus, since transnationalism offers possibilities of unfixing identities, as Vertovec posits, Jonas fits well with the frame of a transnational migrant who merges history and the present into one to unfix the best fixed conditions of identity formation and patterns of navigating and negotiating belonging in the host nation — United States, in the context of this work.

Although the fort has gradually vanished, the vestiges still reflect its initial objectives. The focal leitmotif of the text is the existence of historical relics in tangible objects. Owing to his parents' traumatic experiences, Jonas seems to be forever shaped by these experiences (Hazelwood). It seems fair to posit that Mengestu's novel is organised in a way that postulates time as cumulative, with the present functioning as a result of past events. Since he allows pain to infiltrate his life, Jonas forces himself to confront and attempt to make meaning of his past tragedies r to re/define himself and his relationship in terms of belonging to the space (Garcia-Palauro 29).

3.4. Stereotypical Socio-Cultural and Historical Perceptions of Identification in the Workplace

The concocted story that Jonas tells his pupils gives a glimpse into Yosef's journey from Addis Ababa to Illinois —which he never shared with his son. As highlighted in the preceding section, Jonas re-creates the historical accounts and events to fill the vacuum left by his father's passing and silence on significant events of his journey to Europe initially and America ultimately (Mengestu 180). Jonas' reinventions speak to historical and racialised class imbalances that give Africans what Musila terms a "qualified welcome" in the global North, in particularly America (Musila 112). This history necessitates an oppositional challenge of these stereotypical perceptions about Africans and the continent. Jonas' attempts to counter these stereotypes bring to mind Wilde's assertion that "history sometimes deserves a little revision, if not for the sake of the dead, then at least for ourselves" (Wilde 74). Unlike Selasi, who places history secondary to the depiction of Africans in the contemporary United States, a fundamental literary risk, Mengestu accords

history its primary position in representing the social, economic, and political modes and patterns that shape the existential scope in which second-generation migrants must negotiate to form and navigate their identity and belonging.

Jonas' work at a refugee centre relies on his tendency to distort the truth. He is tasked with repurposing the stories of US immigrants applying for asylum and citizenship. In line with Jonas' testimonies in the asylum seekers' applications to the authorities, economic migrants have endured horrendous violence. Those who have been coarsened feel their accounts have to be embellished to an extreme degree to raise their chances of being offered asylum by adhering to what Jonas describes as "common assumptions that most of us shared when it came to the poor in distant, foreign countries" (Mengestu 27). In the context of the asylum centre, Jonas' fabrications and his distortion of the asylum seekers' stories serve a specific purpose. However, this tendency to distort the truth is misdirected when Jonas fabricates a job promotion to grant Angela's wish for Jonas' upward mobility and win over her white American boss. It becomes evident that Jonas develops, invents, and normalises this inclination towards distortion of details that he associates with American traits to fill certain historical vacuums. He asserts, "I thought of this as a distinctly American trait – this ability to unwind whatever ties supposedly bind you to the past and invent new ones as you went along" (Mengestu 104).

Waite and Cook argue that downward social mobility may occur for second-generation children of migrants as a result of continued racial and ethnic discrimination coupled with narrowing of labour-market opportunities (239). They argue that generation associates "ideas of belonging with ideas of pluri-local homes and simultaneously of attachments to different places" (Waite and Cook 239). This is exemplified by a light-hearted conversation between Jonas and Angela about the layers of identification accompanying continent mapping. Angela asserts that "being of African American descent and all…" (Mengestu 20), her most profound empathy is for migrants from West Africa, while Jonas, who is of Ethiopian descent, has empathy for immigrants from East Africa. Here, we recall Vertovec's argument that transnational migrants claim multiple homes, allegiance, and attachments and endure problematised (re/negotiated) identities (578).

The problematisation of heritage, identity, and belonging for second-generation migrants is demonstrated by the accusation Angela levels against Jonas, that he is oblivious of his true identity given that he lacks a thorough understanding of his familial history. Jonas ponders Angela's criticism:

> I may not have had a solid definition of who I was, but that was only because for so long I had concentrated my efforts on trying to appear to be almost nothing at all; neither nameless nor invisible, just obscure enough to always blend into the background and be quickly forgotten. It had begun with my father, who I had always hoped would never notice me. It was first in his company that I learned to occupy a room without disturbing it…. Whoever can't see you can't hurt you (Mengestu 107).

The quote above illustrates Jonas' desire to blend in. A violent familial space compelled him to learn to exist in a space without disturbing it. As a child, Jonas simultaneously desires recognition from his father:

> Whenever my father came home from work, I'd sit in different parts of the living room — in the center of the couch, on the floor or next to the coffee table in order to see how he acknowledged me. On several occasions I came too close and was told to get out of his way, on others I was either grunted at or quizzed about my progress in school that day. Eventually one evening he came home from work and didn't notice me at all… I realised then that all I had to do to avoid him was to blend into the background (Mengestu 107-108).

This is the foundational base that trains Jonas to embrace his strategy of blending-in to the point of disappearance, as s coping strategy in unwelcoming spaces. The neo-liberal space of American imperialism had narrowed and subjected the life of Yosef to box-shipping that constantly stresses him and impacts his parental consciousness, hence constant abuse, and unrecognition of his son Jonas within familial space. The impact of American imperialism on Yosef is a stark reflection of the injustice in unwelcoming spaces.

Therefore, Jonas applies this strategy beyond familial space in his avoidance of the "qualified welcome" (112) and recognition that the global North affords to Africans (Musila 112). This is further demonstrated by a conversation sparked by Angela with a cabdriver from Gambia, which happens after Angela accused Jonas of being an alien in America and that he has no clue whatsoever of what he is and his ancestral lineage.

Angela asks Jonas, "'are you an illegal alien, Jonas? If so you know you can tell. I love refugees, remember'" (Mengestu 108). She asks the cab driver which side of Africa he is coming from and tells the driver that her husband is from "someplace on the east coast" (Mengestu 109).

Jonas' sense of belonging is limited to the registers of who is American and belongs in America. When Angela persisted, "so what is it, Jonas.? Illegal immigrant or not?" Jonas became defensive in his response; "sorry. Born and raised here" (Mengestu 109). Angela's response demonstrates preconceived perceptions about migrants' belonging, as she utters, "then why don't you act like it…by talking…You come back from work and then sit there quietly that sometimes I begin to think you don't know English at all" (Mengestu 109). Even though Jonas has answered that "he has a degree in English" (Mengestu 110), Angela still accuses him of not behaving like an American who knows English. Thus, he asserts the process of assimilating and owning American English as his own, "after one year at the academy I began to think of English in the same way. First it was my class, and then it was my subject, and then my discipline, until inevitably I had finally claimed the entire language as my own" (Mengestu 101-102).

Although Jonas was born and raised in Illinois, married, and established a home with his wife, Angela, in New York, his belonging there is still denied and conditioned to his African origins (Hazelwood). Whenever people question where he comes from, the response that he is from Peoria since he was born there is rejected. Therefore, Jonas' identity and belonging must be negotiated within the ideological frameworks and registers of Euro-American conceptions of Africans and Africa.

Against this backdrop, Mengestu employs Jonas' tendency to reinvent history to bring forth the socio-cultural, economic, and political contradictions characterising the lives of second-generation migrants of African descent in the global North. As Garcia-Palauro aptly observes, Mengestu, in this text, delves deeply into the topics of historical disappearance as well as personal disappearance due to cultural preconceptions (59). Although the novel's connection to stereotypes might seem hazy initially, it postulates that history provides a safety net for people who have lost out in the struggle for acceptance (Garcia-Palauro 59). Thus, it is fair to posit that the text defies some of the most propagated myths about immigrants. Put differently, Mengestu creates a novel that avoids or at least tries to avoid the clichés and preconceptions about immigrant families

in the United States. As a result, Mengestu's novel allows one to witness how the public's misconceptions of immigrants impact them through standards of identification and belonging that are often stereotypes and prejudices. This is most demonstrated when the refugee resettlement centre employs Jonas. What made Jonas susceptible to this kind of stereotyping, as he states, is that he "could be Jonas, or Jon, or J, and of course when Bill needed, Mr. Woldemariam, who despite distance and birth, remained at heart an African" (Mengestu 21).

Notwithstanding that Bill admits over the phone that Jonas is "completely American," Jonas' boss is wholly reliant on the fact that others can detect Jonas' foreignness in his appearance (Mengestu 21). Those who do not speak to Jonas but observe him give to him a past that is appropriately foreign, appropriately other, and appropriately conformist to notions of what foreign means. In other words, they describe him as an African immigrant without divulging his family's genuine origins or the circumstances of their immigration to the United States. Thus, Jonas' past is refuted. Therefore, the fundamental issue with this structuralised historical stereotyping is that it jeopardises the truth about a person's origins. More so, an analogous phenomenon among American Indians is noted by Büken who notes "stereotypes of the Indian' that are disseminated through popular culture, to erase the individual and cultural identities of the Indian" (Buken 47 qtd. in Garcia-Palauro 61). The stereotype of a feathered chief holding a hatchet contributes to American Indians' ignorance of the diversity of Native American civilizations. Furthermore, while this has not always been the case historically, this image normalises the idea of the hostile Indian. As a result, people whose histories have been converted into myths or images face historical and cultural oblivion.

In Mengestu's novel, characters such as Jonas and Angela perpetuate stereotypes about the lives of foreigners who come to Jonas's workplace — the refugee centre — for legal guidance. Jonas asserts, "I quickly discovered that what could not be researched could just as easily be invented based on common assumptions that most of us shared when it came to the poor in distant, foreign countries" (Mengestu 27). Thus, when migrants enter the office, Jonas contributes to the stereotypes. He even attempts to put a face on the story by assuming certain things about the characters based on appearances. Interestingly, no migrants in and out of the office have distinctive traits. Angela gives the following description of the refugees at the boat party the resettlement centre is hosting, which the centre's clients attend:

> The Pakistanis are sitting at a table by themselves barely talking to one another because none of them really like each other. They all just happen to speak the same language and don't trust the Liberians, especially the boys, who have probably snuck a bottle of alcohol out from behind the bar even though they're too young to drink (Mengestu 31).

She (Angela) classifies the refugees based on their country rather than naming them specifically in her description. They do not even have a past or a distinct personality that would enable one to distinguish them from refugees, even in this place (US). Later in the novel, when Jonas returns to help Bill over the summer, Bill ultimately confesses, "I didn't even need you to make up their stories. They were good enough on their own. They were perfect. Absolutely perfect" (Mengestu 136-137). At this time, Bill has realised the flaw in his approach and how he contributed to creating a stylised refugee comparable to the mythical Indian. Bill acknowledges the history of these refugees for the first time in the novel. Without a history, or at least one specific to their situation, the migrants can only exist as the anonymous group Angela recognises throughout their quick tour of Manhattan.

Bhabha notes the menace and problematic nature of the stereotype that:

> The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in psychic and social relations (Bhabha 107).

Bhabha posits—though he does not explicitly state this—that in situations in which distinctions are denied (due to stereotypes), the differentiated subject is likewise denied. He contends that stereotype symbolises the longing for a pristine origin, which is constantly jeopardised and "threatened by division" (107).

Jonas, as both an American and a foreigner, defies cultural prejudices. His initial encounter with the head of the academy, where his partner Angela got him a job through her white contacts at a law firm, utterly reflects this perception. This conversation takes place during the interview process for a teaching position at a prestigious private school:

> 'Where's that accent of yours from?' the dean of the academy had asked me during our first interview, after I had said all of eight words to him: Hello. It's a pleasure to meet you.
>
> 'Peoria,' I told him.
> He hesitated a second before moving on, and I could see him wondering if it was possible that there was more than one Peoria in this world, another situated perhaps thousands of miles away from the one he had heard of in the Midwest and therefore completely off his radar. (Mengestu 58).

A comparable incident occurs when a student questions Jonas's origins on the first day, he teaches his English lesson (Mengestu 81). A further student tries to elucidate the topic after Jonas responds that he is from Illinois by saying, "No. I think she means where are you really from?" (Mengestu 82). Jonas asserts, "I had considered responding that I was *really* from Illinois, but then I realized that most if not all of my students knew the answer, they were looking for already, whether it was specifically Ethiopia or just Africa in general that they wanted to acknowledge" (Mengestu 82). These two incidents demonstrate the uncertainty when Jonas instantly rejects a foreign identity. Those who (the Dean and students at the academy) question Jonas about his background refute the significant probability that he will not meet their expectations (the expectations of fitting the global North's modes and standards of human existence). Mengestu here exposes the preconditioned historical assumptions and false consciousness raging in students' mindsets; Jonas asserts, "my students were naturally infected by that mass false consciousness and those whom I had taught before organised a campaign under the theme 'Save Africa Now'" (Mengestu 105).

While Jonas is not the only character in *How to Read the Air* who faces this misconception, his experience adds to what Garcia-Palauro underscores as an "apparent fear of disappearance" (61). Thus, others' endeavour to generalise Jonas' identity put him at risk of losing himself in the mask of preconceived notions that are inflicted upon him by dominant structural frameworks of perception.

On the other hand, it is hardly surprising that Jonas' existence lies on the fringes of popular culture. He notes that whenever he is in a group setting, "I often disappeared into a corner of my own making" (Mengestu 31-32) and often tells made-up stories about his life when he does engage in social interactions. Essentially, Jonas asserts:

> "without ever thinking about it, I had become one of those men who increasingly spent more and more of their nights alone, neither distraught nor depressed, just simply estranged from the great social machinations with which others were occupied" (Mengestu 18).

Even though Jonas may not have created his misfit status as scholars such as Garcia-Palauro claim, his statements make it clear that he is still a misfit to the framework of Euro-American perception of an African migrant who is supposed to be subject to the assimilation of the dominant Euro-American cultural production (67). Jonas occupies the space between two civilisations, or what Bhabha would call the "beyond" (2). Consequently, his identity is fluid. As mentioned in the preceding sections above, history, memory, and trauma contribute to creating an identity and belonging (Mostafa 217). Given that the issue at hand is not merely a person's memory of the past or present but also his identity and authentic self, it is possible that *How to Read the Air* also examines the relationships between memory and history. The title *How to Read the Air* emanates from a story Jonas remembers in which his father Yosef learns "how to read the air" for signs of danger during his complex immigration journey from Ethiopia to the United States. Hence, it signals a complex historical search for knowledge to arm himself against forms of detrimental assimilation in identity formation. Hence, Jonas reinvents history. Recalling events, ignoring the past, and assigning identities put Jonas at risk of losing his relationships with those around him and, as a result, his sense of self and belonging in both America and Africa (Africa — given the complex dynamics that led to the departure of his parents from the continent) for belonging revolves around emotional investment and attachments (Waite and Cook 239).

The novel focuses mainly on Jonas and his family. However, it also addresses a concern that minority groups in the United States face: cultural identities are jeopardised when the story of a few becomes the story of many. Hazelwood makes the following observation after finding the thematic component in the composition:

> Towards the end of the novel, we find out that Mariam and Yosef never talked to each other about their past lives in Ethiopia. This unwillingness or inability to share past experience … brings into question the importance of remembering our heritage, to feel rooted in our own personal and social histories, in order to move forward with our lives. This issue of remembering is one that is vital to Mengestu's storytelling (Hazelwood).

Marian and Yosef enabled themselves to nullify the past effectively. As a result, Jonas feels detached from his family ancestry and heritage. Jonas exemplifies individuals torn between two cultures, each with its distinct self-perception. Nonetheless, Jonas does not exhibit the characteristics commonly associated with being ethnic. Bill, Jonas' supervisor, claims that he is American. Even if minority groups in the United States confront similar obstacles to Jonas', the novel aims to define and accommodate a subjective, personal, experienced history that positions them to navigate their identity and belonging (Wallinger 108).

Jonas, the son of an Ethiopian immigrant, had to strike a balance between America and Africa. Unquestionably, migrancy defines the novel. Immigrant narratives like *How to Read the Air* offer a unique perspective on navigating two cultures, making them better suited for negotiating transnational boundaries than traditional immigration narratives (Wallinger 114). The protagonist of Mengestu's novel, Jonas, navigates these conflicting identities. At one point, Angela goes so far as to inform Jonas that he "lacked a clear sense of identity" (Mengestu 106). It is complex for people to identify Jonas because he must traverse multiple cultures. Indeed, it could be argued that Jonas does not fully grasp his identity until he decides to follow his parents' earlier road trip (Hazelwood). Consequently, this reveals that Jonas has no clear idea who he is, possibly because being someone without reservations would have entailed exposing himself to the perils of the outside world.

The chapter focused on how second-generation migrants navigate their identity and belonging. It looked at how Mengestu interlaces recreation of history, memories of the past, and trauma embedded in these memories, to enable Jonas to grasp the journey of his parents and the historical, socioeconomic, historical, and political factors that led to their immigration. It looked at historical recreation, the filling of historical details, and the implications of traumatic memories on identity and belonging. Jonas re-creates history to defy silence and arrest any room for disparate sources to tell him who he is. The following chapter provides the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion

4.1. Introduction

This research report explored fictional depictions of identity and belonging for second-generation migrants of African descent in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013) and Dinaw Mengestu's *How to Read the Air* (2010). Engaging with these two contemporary African novels, the study aimed of the study was to investigate the patterns that underpin the second-generation's navigation of identity and belonging.

The analysis of Selasi and Mengestu's texts foregrounded migrant characters. With the development of big international capitalism of Euro-American imperialism in its different phases and now in its neo-liberal phase wherein Africans seem to be still subjects and victims of negotiated welcome and stay in the global North and afforded some inches of upward mobility privileges, the researcher holds a strong belief and argument that there has been a significant shift in the contemporary African and global North migration politics. From involuntary to voluntary migration of the late 1960s and early 1970s onwards, seeking greener pastures in the global North, economic and educational purposes, and those compelled to immigrate from their own countries due to political violence sought asylum in the global North.

The second-generation migrants who are the children of those who migrated to the global North for greener pastures (the sought-for American dream), as evidenced in the two texts, are born enjoying upward mobility in Selasi's novel while those in Mengestu's novel struggle to find social and professional stability, despite belonging to the same generation and living in the global North. More so, the upward mobility that came with assimilation is pernicious since it denies the existence of authentic and unnegotiated African identity and their place in the global North. The continuity of dominant modes and frameworks of perception that are ingrained in the globalised Euro-American racialised class relations still has remnants of historical assumptions and perceptions about Africa and Africans problematise the identity and belonging of this generation.

In navigating this generation's ancestral lineage, knowledge of history e is always central. However, their first-generation parents silence their complex histories. The characters studied are born and raised in America. The study explored how silence in the family

about family lineage made children prone to assimilation of foreign cultural traits and abandoning their origins while simultaneously struggling with shaky senses of identity. It also looked at how the authors interweave the socioeconomic factors concerning workplace, class, and social mobility (its impacts), memory, trauma and the search for and re-creation of history. The researcher also investigated the stereotypical perception of framework that still reigns supreme in the professional spaces of this generation.

This study was segmented into four chapters. In chapter one, I offered a thorough background on the roots of migration questions across the African migrant generations from the 1400s during the historic Atlantic slave trade to the era of neoliberal global capitalism.

In the second and third chapters, the researcher undertook a close-textual analysis of — *Ghana Must Go* (2013) and *How to Read the Air* (2010). In the second chapter, the researcher examined the middle-class children — second-generation professional migrants from Ghanaian-Nigerian family living in America. Using the theoretical lenses of Afropolitanism and transnationalism, the chapter interrogated Selasi's premise of upward class and social mobility as a prerequisite for familial belonging. Also, it demonstrated how the parent migrants of the first generation imposed limitations on children in their quest for their ancestral history by maintaining silence about their history, thus making them vulnerable to assimilation generation of their history from various sources. Fair enough, the chapter discussed horrific factors that contributed to the silence maintained by the migrant parents to the second-generation African migrants. In the same chapter, the researcher borrowed Sara Ahmed's ideas of migrant homes to explore Selasi's depiction of belonging for this migrant generation.

Instead of their upward mobility bringing them together as children, it drives them apart and makes them develop estranged or unhomely feelings of home. Kehinde's identity as a man is impacted because he assumes his father resents him for not choosing one of the prestigious middle-class careers, becoming a medical doctor. The researcher's fundamental argument in this chapter was that second-generation migrants' navigation of identity and belonging in the global North is not primarily dependent on upward mobility; in fact, upward mobility for African migrants in the global North comes with repercussions of the assimilations of dominant Euro-American ideologies. After all, the global North still applies its historical assumptions and prejudices that continue to afford a qualified welcome for Africans and the African continent in a world that is dominated

by Euro-American ideologies. Therefore, institutional racism that saw Kweku being unfairly ousted from his medical job as a cardiothoracic surgeon further undermined family relations in Kweku's family and more so, belonging for the children.

In the third chapter, the researcher explored Mengestu's depiction of identity and belonging for second-generation migrants of African descent. In this chapter, however, the researcher was more interested in how historical, political, and socioeconomic dynamics and patterns shape the lives of lower social class migrants— blue-collar migrants. *In Ghana Must Go*, the first-generation migrant parents to the second-generation voluntarily immigrate to the global North for economic purposes (Kweku and Fola seeking upper-middle-class professions in medicine and law). In contrast, in Mengestu's novel, the parents underwent involuntary migration emanating from what manifested itself as a communist political revolution that led to the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie's regime in Ethiopia 1974. The underpinnings of the first-generation parents significantly impacted how the second generation developed their perceptions of their homelands, Africa, as their home of origin and their host country, America.

Unlike Selasi, Mengestu interweaves the history and memories of the past, including the embedded trauma in some of these memories, to best position the second-generation in forming their identity and navigating belonging in the global North. Mengestu defies silence on ancestral lineage and the journey of first-generation parents through his recreation of history to avoid subjecting the second generation to the assimilation of historical assumptions about the African continent in particular and the global South in general. Angela is associated with this assimilation. This recreation also challenges stereotypical perceptions and historical-cultural prejudices of Euro-American imperialism that hitherto subject Africans to the registers of who counts as human and whose culture counts as part of human culture and qualified welcome in the world. It was also demonstrated that Mengestu exposes the lingering remnants of erstwhile colonialism and its preconceived views about the people of colour, and institutions that maintain these social, cultural, and historical assumptions and prejudices. This is typified in the workplaces of Jonas, as discussed in chapter three.

Overall, the study's central argument is the significance of class mobility and history as prerequisite factors for the second-generation to negotiate their identity and belonging within familial and workplace spaces in the United States. Contrary to other critical studies that tend to focus on migrants' ties from one specific country or region of the

continent and of the same strata of class mobility, the researcher has focussed the study on second-generation migrants from two regions of Africa — East and West Africa (Ethiopia and Ghana), and two varied strata of class mobility, with Selasi's possessing upward mobility —professional migrants, and Mengestu's ones possessing downward mobility — blue-collar migrants. The researcher has argued that historical silence within familial contexts inflicts estranged feelings of un/belonging and makes second-generation migrants' children prone to the assimilation of foreign identity and that the socioeconomic, cultural, and historical patterns of Euro-American imperialism in the global North countries, as in the United States herein the study, shape the process and scope of identity and belonging for this generation.

4.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Various areas can be pursued for future research. Given that the present study focused on the fictional representation of identity and belonging for second-generation migrants of African descent, further research could be conducted to explore and see how other genres of literature, such as drama, music, and poetry, depict issues of identity and belonging for second-generation migrants. Considering that there has been growing literature on second and third generations from the regions of the global South, it would be interesting and necessary to compare African literature to migrant literature from other global South nations and that of authors from the global North. It will be interesting to see how children's literature portrays identity and belonging for children in the global North, as it is necessary for children to be taught and appreciate the importance of identity and belonging from an early age. Finally, since literature should serve as a mirror of society in that it should reflect developments and dynamics of society, it will be fascinating to conduct research on history, memory, and racialised class contradictions.

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