

African Diasporic Literature and Film: The Reality of History

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Abstract

African Diasporic Literature and Film deal with the study of literary and cinematic works created and produced by individuals of African origin or descent, who at a time have been dispersed throughout the world as a result of slavery, migration, and even colonization. African Diasporic Literature and Film incorporates works that delve into the histories, experiences, and cultural expressions of Africans in diasporic communities. The paper delves into the multifaceted and diverse field of African Diasporic Literature and Film, probing its significance in representing cultural resistance, identity, and representation. Taking into cognizance the main texts and films from prominent authors and filmmakers in the diasporic communities, the paper explores the social impact, critical theories, and historical context that reinforce this rich and dynamic turf. By critically analyzing the narrative strategies, theme, and historical connections in African Diasporic Literature and Film, the paper aims to throw more light on the various contributions made by authors, filmmakers, and other related movements that address the centrality of fostering dialogue, cultural expression and stimulating prevailing stories. With the clear impacts of the influence of feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and cultural education, the lead paper therefore seeks to enhance the basic understanding of the nuanced complications and socio-political inferences summarized in the context of African Diasporic Literature and Film. In a nutshell, the paper finds out that African Diasporic Literature and Film provide the opportunity for researchers to explore the impacts of historical events such as slavery, colonialism, and racial segregation among individuals living in diasporic communities. The research also finds out among others that African Diasporic Literature and film provide an insight into the diverse experiences, cultural expressions, and histories of individuals living in diasporic communities thus providing a counter-narrative to mainstream representation that repeatedly spreads stereotypes. It is recommended among others that there should be an increase in perceptibility and accessibility of African Diasporic Literature and Film in our libraries, educational curriculum, and even

cultural institutions to encourage and promote African Diasporic Literature and Film.

Keywords: Africa, Diaspora, Culture, Identity, Immigration, Exile, Displacement, Belonging, Representation, Trauma, Multiculturalism.

Introduction

Africans who were forcibly or voluntarily relocated from their own country to other regions of the world are the subject of artistic works that are referred to as African Diasporic Literature and Film. African Diasporic literature and film address the themes of identity, displacement, new cultural recognition, and adaptation. They explore the realities of belonging to one's adopted nation or not. Above all, African Diasporic Literature and Film typically evaluate the complexities of navigating the dynamics of various cultural civilizations, histories, languages, and other characteristics unique to the African people. The essence is to provide Africans with a platform to share their narratives and difficulties to guarantee that their experiences in the diaspora are accurately viewed and understood.

However, it is important to recognize that the artistic creations of the populace speak to the difficulties, hopes, and adaptability of Africans living in diasporic communities. This needs to involve shedding more light on the roles that Interpower play, cultural preservation, and hybridity play in the new communities. The role of demystifying stereotypical issues and enhancing the link between different cultures must be considered important when dealing with African Diasporic Literature and Film. Stuart Hall (1990) in collaboration with the aforementioned submission averred that:

Diasporic communities are not fixed entities but are constantly evolving, hybrid, and multifaceted, and as such, it is important to note that literature and film play a crucial role in representing and articulating diasporic experiences and identities. In this regard, narratives could be deployed to challenge dormant stereotypes and constructs of identity as well as the potential for cultural production to foster new forms of belonging and understanding. (4)

Stuart's postulation brings to bear the dynamics of cultural orientation and reorientation, in diasporic communities. This implies that the experiences, hybridity, identity, and cosmology of African diasporic communities are key to their literature and films. Stuart further asserted that the people of the diasporic communities must establish a connection with their cultural roots and heritage. This will enable them to

communicate their experiences of relocation to express their struggles and identity in their newfound communities. We are also not oblivious to the fact that the core objective of African diasporic literature and film includes the preservation and sharing of histories, language, and traditions while taking a longer overview of hybridity, discrimination, identities, and the complex nature of a multi-ethnic society. It is also sufficient to provide the voices of those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented the chance to express the unique experiences they have had with relocation and adaptation. This will add to the celebration of multiplicity and display of resilience of Africans in diasporic communities and project their often-downplayed contributions to the larger communities' socio-political, cultural, and economic growth and development. In furtherance to this assertion, Paul Gilroy (1993) also re-affirmed that:

Cultural forms provide important insights into the experiences of diasporic communities and how they navigate issues of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage. It is how diasporic literature and film challenge traditional conceptions of national identity and foster a more inclusive understanding of cultural belonging. (9)

It is important to submit that the focus of African Diasporic Literature and Film has remained critical, considering the perspectives of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. Their submissions imply that, irrespective of the displacement, hybridity, experience, and adaptation, the literature and films of the people will continue to propel relevance in the creative industry. This is established within the ambit of multiculturalism, multinational, and globalization as buttressed by some critical theories and methodologies employed to drive this study.

Critical theories and methodologies employed for this study

In an attempt to carry out an all-inclusive survey on the critical study of African Diasporic Literature and Film, it thus becomes pertinent to also take into cognizance the various relevant theories and methodologies that could be adopted to drive this theme.

Afrofuturism: This theory appraises the intersectionality between African diasporic culture, technology, fiction, and science. It envisages alternative futures where black people prosper and own agency in a world that has marginalized them. Closely applied here are elements of folklore, mythology, and science to challenge power structures and social norms. This particular theory is considered very important in the discourse of African Diasporic Literature and Film thus its application in this study.

One other theory is the Black Feminist Theory which interrogates the intersection between class and gender race in diasporic communities. It investigates the experiences and struggles of the literature and film of black women who pursue to test and dismantle racist and patriarchal systems. This theory is considered apt in the critical analysis of African Diasporic Literature and Film and as such adopted for this critical study. Another theory which is employed to drive this study is the postcolonial theory which is also a major driving force in the analysis of African Diasporic Literature and Film. This important theory mainly observes the effects and consequences of colonialism as it affects individuals living in diasporic communities. The theory emphasizes the power-play between the colonized and the colonizers, representation of race and identities, culture and gender among others. In the same vein, some of the methodologies employed for this paper include the intertextuality methodology which encourages the analysis of literature and film as they affect texts and other cultural nuances. Also, a similarly important methodology for this study is the poststructuralism methodology which tends to critique the fixed meanings and binary oppositions contained in African Diasporic Literature and Film. The researcher uses this methodology to project the power of language unpredictability, identity construction, and even power relations to explain the multiple interpretations and perspectives of Africans in diasporic communities.

The Impact of Multiculturalism and Globalization on African Diasporic Literature and Film

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism explores the significance of the experiences, challenges, and identity questions faced by individuals or a group of people living outside the shores of their original birthplace. Multiculturalism refers to the overall acceptance of the coexistence of various cultures and their dynamics within a given society. More importantly, African diasporic literature and film emphasize and explain the diverse cultures and identities of African people. African Diasporic Literature and Film usually project an overview of the richness and difficulties of multicultural societies. One of the major advantages of multiculturalism is that it offers an articulated voice to confront the experiences of refugees, immigrants, and their descendants. It provides the theme of cultural hybridity, displacement, and belonging which most times, exposes the clash of cultures.

Furthermore, multiculturalism as viewed from the viewpoint of African Diasporic Literature and Film questions the various experiences as they relate to empathy and the understanding of different African cultures. It also strengthened the

interface between current issues by equipping the voiceless underrepresented communities. This implies that the existing social structures can be challenged for overall improvement, thus encouraging the celebration of cultural multiplicity through arts, music, food, and other cultural-related nuances. In aligning with the role of multiculturalism in African Diasporic Literature and Film, Jhumpa Lahore (2002) affirmed that:

The challenges and nuances of cultural assimilation, the sense of displacement, and the search for belonging faced by individuals living in the diaspora are rather challenging. This is because the tension between the cultural heritage of the people and their interaction with the dominant culture of the adopted country is usually accompanied by the navigation of the intersection of multiple cultural influences. (13)

The perspective of Jhumpa also adds another voice to the discourse of multiculturalism in African Diasporic Literature and Film because she explored the dynamics of the immigrant experience, the identity of culture, and the intricacies surrounding the beauty, complexity, and dynamics of multicultural societies. This perhaps is an added advantage to the African Diasporic experience in terms of richness.

Globalization

Globalization has a significant impact on African Diasporic Literature and Film in so many ways. One of the ways includes facilitating the dissemination of African Diasporic Literature and Film to global audiences. This creates the opportunity for more proactive visibility and recognition of the creative works of African diasporic writers and filmmakers. The role of globalization in African Diasporic Literature and Film has led to improved collaboration between artists and creators from other parts of the global community. It is also pertinent to note that globalization has provided the opportunity for cross-fertilization of ideas, cultural influences, and themes across different regions of the world. This has led to the emergence of new forms of storytelling and expression within the context of African Diasporic Literature and Film. It has also facilitated the incorporation of global impacts into the works of African Diasporic writers and filmmakers. Martin Mhando in his assessment of globalization (2023) observed that: *Globalization is the all-pervasive constituent of contemporary living. It is the narrative of socialization that helps us to locate the local within the global (1)*

Mhando's position on the concept of globalization is apt even in the context

of African Diasporic Literature and Film as it also explains the socialization of Africans in diasporic communities and how these communities experience the growth of transnational networks by exposing African Diasporic writers and filmmakers to connect with audiences for collaboration. This development has ushered in a more dynamic and interconnected effective creative scenery with increased chances for cross-cultural exchange and dialogue.

African Diasporic Literature and Film: Cultural Experiences & Background of People in the Diaspora

African Diasporic Literature and Film typically project cultural diversity, background, and experience of Africans who left their homeland and live in the diaspora. African Diasporic Literature and Film explain themes of displacement, identity, and the relationship between the multiple cultures of African descent. The works explain the challenges of navigation between different cultural nuances among Africans. The essence is to explain the difficulties of identifying and preserving one's original heritage while also trying to adapt to a completely new environment. This provides the opportunity to interrogate the nature and importance of hybrid identities that are considered crucial. More so, African Diasporic Literature and Film provide the opportunity for the underrepresented and marginalized voices to be heard. This can be achieved by initiating a broader range of understanding of the various multifaceted and dynamic nature of the communities in the diaspora. Some examples of African Diasporic Literature and Film include, *Americanah* by Chimamanda Adichie, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Shoot the Messenger* by Ngozi Onwurah *13th* by Ava DuVernay among others

We are not oblivious to the fact that African Diasporic Literature and Film serve as a veritable tool for the display of diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of people living in the diaspora. It is pertinent to note that, the people's works usually project an extensive range of characters which by implication, represent diverse ethnicities, languages, cultural transitions, and religions. This enables them to project the complexities and prosperity of these diasporic communities. African Diasporic Literature and Film provide authors with rich experiences which include the preservation of cultural heritage, the search for identity, and perhaps, the tasks of cultural adaptation. When critically viewed from their points of storytelling, one could ascertain the fact that they provide an understanding of different cultural practices which include traditions, rituals, and cultural performances among others. This gives a better understanding of diversity which invariably deals with the empathetic nature of Africans living in diasporic communities. Consequent to the aforementioned postulation, Onuh, Martha Ene

(2016) submits that:

Diasporic Literature and Film centre on the experiences of people all around the world who leave their homelands in search of greener pastures or are forced out of such homelands for various reasons... the diasporic experience is a complex reality that amounts to double consciousness and/or identity crisis. Diasporic Literature and Film grapple with issues such as race, identity nostalgia, and alienation in their new homes. (1)

Onuh Martha's submission on the focus of the complexities of Diasporic Literature and Film is apt. This is because when people of similar cultural orientation and perhaps creed find themselves in an entirely new environment or homeland, the perception of hybridity, identity crisis, race, alienation, and even nostalgia come into question. This is also peculiar to Africans who have left their birthplace for socio-economic or political reasons. At this juncture, the need for the search for seamless adaptation takes centre stage in the themes of the literature of Africans in diasporic communities. It is important to note that African diasporic films, on the other hand, focus on the visualization of the narratives of individuals who have found themselves living in the diaspora to ensure the provision of a visual representation of their cultural backgrounds and even experiences. It is also important to note that, these films often comprise elements such as language, costume, and music among others to protect the exclusive cultural identities of the characters. Nevertheless, such film directors are usually able to explore and communicate the nuances of diasporic experiences which allow the audience to immerse themselves in the vibrant tapestry of culture.

Suffice it that, in both literature and film, the stories and characters presented suggest the multifaceted nature of diaspora. Literature and film demonstrate that individuals in the diaspora often grapple with conflicting cultural identities which perhaps seem to negotiate between different value systems and confront unique challenges that conform with their status as displaced or migrant individuals. In a nutshell, African Diasporic Literature and Film add value to a broader understanding to appreciate the complexities of African cultures as they relate to the functionalities of diasporic communities. According to Smets, Kevin (2015):

Diaspora films are films that are inspired by the contents which include immigrants and descendants of immigrants who have settled abroad for economic, political, or cultural opportunities as well as refugees of war and occupation...

Diasporic films encompass more than mere migrant status or physical displacement, they reflect aesthetics, narratives, or thematic focus on migration, displacement, and diasporic dwelling. (2)

Taking a closer appraisal of Smets' submission, it is thus apparent that the nuances of colonialism, war, globalization, and other factors are usually key to the themes of African diasporic films which project these films' synopsis as they affect African individuals in diasporic communities. It is also important to note that such films could also explore a plethora of genres, and sub-genres.

Analysis of select texts and films of some Authors and Filmmakers of African Diasporic Literature and Film.

This section deals with some select writers and filmmakers as they project the themes of African Diasporic Literature and Film. This is to enable us to take a critical study and analyze their perspectives on their various creative works and how these works have been able to impact, shape, and add value to existing knowledge, especially among Africans living in diasporic communities. One such amiable writer is the Nigerian-born Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Adichie is globally recognized for her powerful and stimulating essays, novels, and short stories. She is also a fearless public commentator. Adichie was born on 15th September 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. Her literary career began to gain momentous recognition after the publication of her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* in 2003. The publication of this novel was followed by *Half of a Yellow Sun* in 2006 which won her the Orange Prize for fiction. Adichie is well known for her strong voice on the feminist movement, cultural identity, and race among other salient issues. In 2013, She published *Americanah* which earned her accolades and awards. *Americanah* focuses on the themes of identity, race, and immigration experiences, especially among Nigerians living in the United States of America (USA)

Synopsis of *Americanah*

The novel opens with Ifemelu's experiences in Nigeria before her relocation to the United States of America. Upon her arrival in the United States of America, Ifemelu is confronted with a plethora of challenges as she navigates American culture/tradition, racism, and above all the complexities of interracial affairs. However, Ifemelu's former boyfriend known as Obinze, similarly leaves Nigeria to live in the United Kingdom. The novel interlaces their separate experiences in different countries and further explores their multifaceted relationship against the backdrop of their trips of self-discoveries. Ifemelu experiences independence and success in the United States of America. She wrestles with her own identity and tries to embrace the reality of the impact of race on her overall relationship and sense of belonging. Eventually, she returns to her fatherland, Nigeria where she is confronted

with new challenges of readjustment.

Analysis of “Americanah”

The novel “Americanah” is a challenging and rich novel that provides an insightful explanation of the question of race, cultural identity, and immigration. Adichie’s creative prowess explores the complexities and distinctions of being an African immigrant in Western societies, offering an important investigation of the immigrant cultural assimilation, experience, and the role of race on social undercurrents. The novel further studies the concept of “Americanah” which is a term adopted to describe someone who has been shaped by his/her experiences in America and how this identity changes and influences individuals’ relationship and their perspectives. “Americanah” addresses critical discourses about privilege, and race and how these germane issues have been able to shape and redefine the experiences of Africans living in diasporic communities. “Americanah” gives a deep exploration of race, belonging, and identity. It provides an insightful opportunity on immigrant experiences while also encouraging critical reflections on the question of culture and race in modern society.

Furthermore, another African Diasporic writer who has made a significant impact on Africans living in diasporic communities is Toni Morrison. Toni Morrison was born on February 18th, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio in the United States of America. Morrison is a renowned author who is also known for her thought-provoking novels and essays that essentially interrogate the themes of identity, race, and gender-based related issues among others. One such creative work is titled “The Bluest Eye”

Synopsis of “The Bluest Eye”

“The Bluest Eye” was published in 1970. The novel portrays the themes of identity, race, and beauty. It adopts the tragic story of a young African American girl known as Pecola Breedlove. Pecola is an introvert and a shy young girl of twelve years. She grows up in a very hostile and segregated society. Her desire for blue eyes is borne out of her conviction that possessing blue eyes will make her beautiful, adoring, and loved especially since the fantasy of white beauty is regarded as widespread in her immediate community. Pecola is confronted with constant neglect, ridicule, and even sexual harassment because she lives with her parents who are abusive and dysfunctional. All of these inform her ultimate desire to clamour for physical transformation. Pecola’s story also provides the opportunity for the introduction of other characters who share the same story with her, although providing different viewpoints on the cruel nature and dynamics of racism. In light of the foregoing, a young black girl known as Claudio in a similar situation juxtaposes parts of the novel

with Pecola's predicament. In the view of Claudio, the idealization of white beauty which perhaps challenges the notions of beauty and self-esteem should be considered unnecessary. Furthermore, Morrison also harps on the effects of racism pointing out how it rusts self-worth and promotes self-hatred. Pecola's wish for the bluest eye is a clear reflection of her belief and submission that she is worthless of respect and love because of her race as a black person. This leads to the deterioration of her emotional and mental state thus the eventual tragic end. Nevertheless, "The Bluest Eye" relishes the harsh realities of racism and its injurious effect on young black girls such as Pecola. Morrison again, exposes the scarring nature of racism and how it impacts societal values of beauty. The novelist also raises a fundamental question about the unhelpful power of racism, and identity and why cultural reformation and empathy must be embraced to devalue and alienate the non-conformists to dominant norms.

Analysis of The "Bluest Eye"

"The Bluest Eyes" fundamentally explores the themes of identity, and racism, among others as essentially posited in the synopsis. These are explicitly conveyed through the activities of Pecola Breedlove. One of the main themes in the novel is the high-level nature of racism. It is a known fact that Pecola, alongside her family and even her community faces persistent marginalization and discrimination because of their race. Pecola's craving for blue eyes clearly explains how society's beauty standard could deeply be deep-seated with racism and the concept of cultural superiority. More so, she is optimistic that her desire for the bluest eyes and even blonde hair will bring her joy and acceptability in society.

Morrison's explanation of racism in "The Bluest Eye" further communicates the profound meaning of how racism is connected to abuse and violence as projected in the characters of Cholly Breedlove, Pecola's father. The high degree of violence meted out by Pecola explains the disturbing consequences of racism in society.

More importantly, symbolism is also key in the analysis of the novel as Morrison can bring to bear the symbol of not just the blue eyes which connote white beauty but also the desire for acceptance and self-respect.

Morrison also employs poetic prose and lyrics to explain the emotions and thoughts of the characters she presents in the novel. Her use of repetition and fragmented narratives also add value to the entire complex nature of the novel.

Nonetheless, in the area of African Diasporic Film, a lot of progress has also been made considering the impacts these have on Africans living in diasporic communities. One such filmmaker is Ngozi Onwurah who is a British-Nigerian filmmaker and visual artist. Ngozi Onwurah was born in 1966 in Nigeria. She is popularly known for her stimulating works that deal with themes of identity, race,

and other critical social issues. Onwurah's creative works usually challenge the complexities of personal cultural identity and conventional narratives. She has directed documentaries which include "And Still I Rise", among others. Onwurah has been a very strong voice in advocating for diversity and representation in depicting the experiences of marginalized communities. She has continued to explore boundaries by offering a vital perspective on issues of social justice, race, and cultural identity as could be seen in her film titled "Shoot the Messenger".

Synopsis of "Shoot the Messenger".

"Shoot the Messenger" is a film directed by Ngozi Onwurah. The film was released in 2006 with the story revolving around a British black journalist whose name is Joseph Bede. Bede is seen to be confronted with racism, corruption, and violence while investigating a story that is inclined to racial murder. Bede is regarded as a respected Journalist in his community because of his disposition to always uncover the truth no matter the circumstances. His investigation into the murder case of the young black boy makes him deeply involved in the lives of those affected by the crime. His investigation into the murder case unravels a web of racism and corruption within the ambit of the Police Force and the government. Bede is confronted with enormous pressures from both his immediate community and the White community because of his uncompromised position to expose the truth. This makes him become the target of violence and constant threats putting his life in danger. The film also reveals how Bede is confronted with his fears and biases as injustice and corruption are continuously perpetuated with impunity. Bede eventually decides to take the risk by telling the public the truth about his investigation. "Shoot the Messenger" depicts the theme of power struggle, race, and the moral responsibility expected of Journalists in an unjust society. It also questions the unhealthy status quo and the injustice that pervades the society.

Analysis of "Shoot the Messenger".

The themes of the film include identity, sexuality, and racism. The film through storytelling and effective characterisation, projects a conscious and deep analysis of these critical themes which allows viewers to understand and confront their individual biases and understand marginalized identities and complexities. One of the major themes of the film is the theme of racism. Onwurah delves into the deep-seated systemic racism that is predominant in society. It is imperative to note at this juncture that the trial of Demba, a black man that is accused of murdering a white girl provides the rationale behind Bede's investigation to bring to bear the prejudices and racial tautness that have been existing. The film further highlights the dual standards

that Bede faces as a mixed-race journalist which makes him face rejection and discrimination from both black and white communities. This again reiterates the intricacy of racism. The identity question is another fundamental theme of “Shoot the Messenger” which is highlighted. Here also, the challenges of navigating the perceptions of others as demonstrated by Bede are further complicated by his eventual realization of his sexual attraction to men. This to him is a self-discovery that is made during the investigation.

The theme of intersectionality of identity is very pronounced in this film. It emphasizes that the different marginalized identities can intersect and compound discrimination. Bede’s experiences as a gay and mixed race expose the challenges and complexities faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities. This has challenged the norms and expectations of individuals. Onwurah’s gritty style of cinematography reflects the unease nature of Bede’s journey which vividly captures his emotional disorder and further highlights the weight of issues he contends with. In furtherance to this discourse, another African-American filmmaker and screenwriter, Du Vernay in her work titled The “13th” shares almost related experience on the discriminations meted out to African-Americans. Ava DuVernay was born on August 24th, 1972 in Long Beach, California, United States of America. She is widely known for her strong disposition to critical social issues typically affecting the Black communities. She is also known for addressing gender inequality and racial questions as contained in her creative work of the “13th”

Synopsis of “13th”

“13th” is a documentary film directed by Ava DuVernay in 2016. This film explores a cogent historical overview of racial inequality in the United States of America (USA). The title “13th” undoubtedly refers to the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which abolished slavery and servitude except if it must be applied as a punishment for a crime. The film critically examines how this gap is adopted to promote discrimination and oppression against African Americans. “13th” essentially portrays the systemic form of racism that paves the way for the lop-sided imprisonment of black people and even the flagrant exploitation of the prison labour organization. “13th” central focus is primarily on criminal injustice and racial discrimination.

Analysis of “13th”

“13th” explains the racial bias as it is found in the United States of America’s criminal justice system. Particularly, it appraises the bequest of slavery, the war on drugs, and the Jim Crow era. It is important to note that all these have been unduly wedged on

black communities which unvaryingly leads to a high degree of confinement. The film also unequivocally exposes the profits made from imprisoning people.

The documentary is a powerful medium that exposes the deep-rooted systemic subjects that contribute to prison recidivism and racial inequality that continues to pervade the American community. “13th” sparks critical conversations that dwell on reform, justice, and race. The creative work remains a focal point for the ongoing debate about racial discrimination and the call for reform in the justice system.

The Challenges of Traditional Notions of Identity and Promotion of Cultural Exchange

It is important to note that, the traditional notions of identity are entrenched in the complexities of a fast-growing globalized world. This is because traditional notions of identity usually project stable, fixed, and homogenous identities often tied to specific ethnic cultural, and national connexions. However, in the present society of multiculturalism, these traditional notions are being interrogated and challenged. It is important to note that one of the challenges is the geometric increase in the fluidity of identities. Suffice is the mixed heritage, global migration, and of course, global communications platforms that are blurring traditional boundaries to create more diverse and hybrid identities. Note that, this development can lead to the appraisal of fixed notions of identity and the request for more all-encompassing and stretchy contexts. Cultural exchange also addresses the nuances of conserving genuineness and avoiding cultural appropriation. It is therefore important to opine that, as cultures interact and impact each other, they must risk commodification, misrepresentation, and weakening of cultural practices. Cultural exchange should be viewed from the perspective of understanding, mutual respect, and a sense of commitment to preserve the truthfulness of the expression of cultural values.

The dynamics of power play are also integral to cultural exchange. This is because dominant cultures are usually seen to dictate the shape of the narrative and reaction of other cultures. This can create representational disparities in line with their perspectives. Authentic cultural exchange demands that the marginalized voices be accorded the platform to encourage and promote equal participation. However, the preferment of empathy, open dialogue, and the overall respect for diversity can be employed to surmount these challenges. The recognition of the changeability of identities and empathy for the complexities of cultural exchanges can encourage more inclusive and equitable spaces for people and their communities to coexist for national development. In the light of the foregoing, Ankita Dutta (2020) corroborated that:

Identity refers to the idea of how one perceives self. It is a prescription of who one is, what role one is supposed to enact as a member of society and citizen of the state, and how one is unique from others in society. The concept of the “self” and the “other” are generally involved whenever we talk about identity and identity-related issues. Societies across the globe today are dominated by discourses of identity... (393)

In furtherance to the collaboration by Ankita Dutta’s assertion, Sinn Han (2024) also submitted that:

Traditional identity explains the identity of a group of culture which includes a tradition of an individual as far as one is influenced by one’s belonging or a group of culture. Traditional identity is a part of a person’s identity or their self-conception and self-perception. This is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality, or any view of a social group that has its own distinct culture. (3)

From the submissions of both Dutta and Han, it is obvious that the notions of traditional identity are critical to individuals’ diverse cultures as these cultures shape and reshape the overall perspectives and ideologies of the works of Africans living in diasporic communities. The postulation implies that, despite displacement and the newfound environment, the traditional identity of the people will always intervene with their creative works.

The role of African Diasporic Literature and Film in challenging stereotypes and fostering cultural understanding in a globalized society

African Diasporic Literature and Film play a crucial role in challenging stereotypes and promoting understanding in the contemporary global community. They point to critical works that are created by individuals who have migrated or better still, those whose ancestors have migrated from one country to another such that the different cultural practices, identities, and ideas can be harnessed (Hybridity)

It is important to note that African Diasporic Literature and Film challenge the role of stereotypes by offering nuanced portrayals of African cultures and even Communities. We are not oblivious to the fact that they provide an opportunity for marginalized voices to be heard to challenge the dominant chronicles that prolong the stereotype question. Taking into cognizance the multifaceted nature of diasporic experiences, these creative works challenge preconceived notions and provide an understanding of different cultures. African Diasporic Literature and Film encourage cultural understanding by providing a bridge between diverse cultures. They allow audiences to connect with characters and stories to reflect various backgrounds to

facilitate empathy and understanding. It is pertinent to note that African Diasporic Literature and Film encourage shared experiences, struggles, and triumphs so that in the end, the complexities and richness of African cultures are very much appreciated. Given the above submission, Avinash Kumar (2022) opined that:

Diasporic literature and film in the globalized world simply relay the expressions of people living together in the country who acknowledge that the country always has some claim on their loyalty and motions. It is not only the coexistence of multiple cultures and ethnicities but a condition to maintain individuality and self-recognition. (12)

African Diasporic Literature and Film create the platform to engage in dialogue and discussion about cultural identity and some critical issues faced by Africans in diasporic communities. African Diasporic Literature and Film provide awareness about political, cultural, and social challenges faced by marginalized African people or groups. This often stimulates conversations on issues such as identity, racism, and even assimilation. Most often, this dialogue assists in breaking down prejudice and encourages the promotion of intercultural empathy. In further buttressing the role of African Diasporic Literature and Film in challenging stereotypes, Jacob Shai (2023) submitted that:

Diasporic literature and film involve an idea of a homeland, a place where displacement occurs, and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic, social, cultural, and political compulsions. The stereotypical nuances addressed to this development are usually challenged through these creative works as reflected in their feeling of alienation, living for their homeland, dispersed and dejection, rhythmic memory, and the protest against discrimination in the adopted country. (6)

In line with Shai's submission, it is therefore important to note that, diasporic literature and film even in the context of African cosmology can provide the paradigm of cultural pride and the provision of a sense of belonging among African Diasporic Communities. This can be achieved by projecting their stories and experiences in literature or on screen. Embarking on this creative responsibility suggests that, their works would authenticate and empower individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This could also lead to the promotion of a sense of inclusivity and the encouragement of individuals to rejoice in their heritage while also embracing their current realities. African Diasporic Literature and Film also play an important role in challenging the question of stereotypes and developing cultural understanding in a global community. This if properly achieved, can encourage and sustain inclusivity and an empathetic society through awareness, appreciation, and

dialogue for cultural transformation.

National and Transnational Identities

How African Diasporic Literature and Film Blur the Boundaries Between National and Transnational Identities

African Diasporic Literature and Film play a significant part in blurring the boundaries between national and transnational identities. They project the experiences of individuals and communities who were displaced or migrated from their original countries of origin. African Diasporic Literature and Film blur the boundaries between national and transnational identities through the following:

- African issues and themes: It is important to note that, African Diasporic Literature and film usually address African themes such as assimilation, displacement, cultural adaptation, and memory. These themes would usually resonate with audiences globally, surpassing national boundaries. By interrogating these African concerns, African Diasporic Literature and Film would encourage robust conversations that deal with experiences and foster transnational connections. To this end, Marina Gold (2009) averred that:
...while the question of national identity clearly defines belonging, migration studies explore the limits and determine the parameters of membership. However, in the last fifteen years, these parameters have significantly changed, therefore, it is important to note that the world's 'citizenship' is not exercised in the same way throughout different moments of history as it relates to diasporic communities. (1)

Gold's submission is apt because the role hybridity has played in juxtaposing transnational identity is crucial to African Diasporic Literature and Film.

- Hybrid Identities: We are aware of the fact that African Diasporic Literature and Film generally portray characters who inhabit multiple linguistic, cultural, and national identities. Hybrid identities explain the complexities of identity construction in the context of transnationals. This provides individuals with the opportunity to simultaneously identify with their original homes and the country they currently live in. This addresses the question of flexibility and fluidity of identity.
- Representation and Visibility: African Diasporic Literature and Film provide a viable platform for communities who are not represented the chance to tell their sides of stories. Representation and visibility showcase the multiplicity within African diasporic communities. This will ensure the breaking away from essentialists through the understanding of national identity. With the

effective projection by these voices, issues such as barriers between national and transnational identities would have been eroded.

- Transcultural Encounters: African Diasporic Literature and Film often investigate the encounters and interactions between individuals from different African cultural backgrounds. These could lead to the blending and restructuring of cultural practices, languages, and beliefs thereby creating hybrid cultural expressions and languages. This poses some challenges of fixed identities and emphasizes the shared human experiences across borders. African Diasporic Literature and Film create room to challenge conventional notions of national identity by basically interrogating the complexities and the interconnectedness of transnational experiences. This encourages the bridging of diverse cultures to promote a more inclusive and better way of understanding the significance of identity.

Artistic Forms and Depiction of the Complexities of Identity Formation and Negotiation within African Diasporic Communities

Artistic forms play a very important role in protecting the complexities of identity formation and negotiation within African diasporic communities. In this regard, artists would usually adopt various mediums such as literature, painting, sculpture, performance, and film to explore and communicate the multi-layered experiences of individuals or people in African diasporic communities. It is thus, important to note that visual arts which include sculpture and painting can be used to vividly capture and explain the complexities of identity by representing the synthesis of dynamics and multiple influences of cultures. According to P.V Bohlman (2016):

The multiple dimensions and contradictions that accompany the intersections of identity and the arts in diasporic communities are usually very striking. This is because an increasing number of immigrants, workers, families, and other collectives self-identify themselves as communities by participating in demonstrations and strikes with new symbols of identity emerging from the diverse aesthetic repertoires and connecting them to places of origin globally. (1)

Given the above, it is also important to add that artists are at liberty to incorporate motifs, symbols, and even imagery that reflect the heritage while also fusing other elements from the culture these individuals adopted, For example, the African culture. Consequent upon these projections, artists could also relay the complicated interplay of the aesthetic values of memories, traditions, and also, contemporary practices that model the shape of identities of Africans living in diasporic communities.

Furthermore, literature and film equally provide an effective platform for the investigation of identity formation in African diasporic communities. In this regard, filmmakers usually narrate stories that project the struggles, and transformative journeys of Africans going in between different cultural contexts and struggles. These artistic forms give reason for a deeper understanding of the nuanced discussions and also the challenges confronted by Africans in diasporic communities as they ensure the reconciliation of sense in the African diasporic communities. At this juncture, it is important to note that performance arts such as dance theatre also provide artists the opportunity to explore the complexities of African diasporic-related identities through physicality and rhythmic movement. It is concerning the above assertion that Rachel Ekua Asamoah (2015) opined that:

Theatre has witnessed a certain vibrancy and diversity that has produced a proliferation of theatrical practices, and unprecedented forms of representation in the various artistic works. This is why the eclectic works of theatre have been in response to major shifts nationally and internationally. (1)

Asamoah's postulation provides the opportunity to further assimilate how artistic forms serve as reflective mirrors, sparking conversations and encouraging effective dialogue in the African diasporic communities. At this juncture, it is important to note that, artists' expressive ability allows individuals to explore and make sense of their disjointed identities. This, if effectively achieved, bridges the gaps between their heritage and the present realities they have found themselves. The artistic works of artists can provide a deeper insight into the details of identity formation and proper negotiation in African diasporic communities if diasporic Africans and the wider society are adequately engaged.

Exploring Identity, Hybridity, and Fluidity through African Diasporic Literature and Film.

African Diasporic Literature and Film play critical roles in exploring the concepts of hybridity and the fluidity of identities in African diasporic Communities. African Diasporic Literature and Film research into the complex experiences of Africans navigating between multiple cultural, geographical, and social contexts. They typically project distinct characters who embody hybrid identities, blending elements that have to do with their ancestral culture with the core influence of their adopted home. In this context, it is believed that authors would usually engage with the complexities or better still, the ambiguities of these hybrid identities to portray how Africans simultaneously belong to multiple cultural communities. The literature

often includes themes of cultural clashes, the negotiation of conflicting traditions, and the search for belonging.

Film as a powerful medium can question and capture the fluid nature of identities in African diasporic communities. It is also pertinent to note that, filmmakers make use of cinematic techniques such as cross-cutting between cultures, visual metaphors, and even fragmented narratives to project the relationship of different cultural influences on the identities of characters. These techniques aid filmmakers in relaying the overall flexibility and constantly evolving nature and context of African diasporic identities. It is in the light of this development that Edward Ugbada Adi (2018) asserted that:

The concept of hybridity highlights cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity. Hybridity implies the meeting or mixing of completely separate and homogenous cultural spheres. For example, to think of British-Asian or Mexican-American hybrid forms as a mixing of two separate traditions is problematic because neither British, Asian, Mexican nor American cultures are bound and homogenous. (84)

Hybridity as it reflects the role of literature and film, also sheds light on the experiences and struggles confronted by Africans in diasporic communities. The safeguarding of cultural heritage and integrating into an entirely new environment as well as the challenges of belonging to multiple communities are very crucial to this discourse. Nevertheless, the hybridity and fluidity of identities usually challenge the concept of stereotypes and create a stage or an opportunity for the vulnerable and marginalized voices in an African diasporic community so that they can share their stories and collective viewpoints.

African Diasporic Literature and Film in the context of representing hybridity and fluid identities offer an understanding of the different ways and perspectives in which Africans could navigate their sense of self in African diasporic communities. This also encourages the platform to contribute to discussions that deal with identity negotiation, cultural diversity, and the difficulties of belonging. This, if achieved, can guarantee the encouragement of empathy in the promotion of intercultural dialogue which can further stimulate growth and development.

Empathy, Understanding and Dialogue

These are crucial parts of creating a distinct, harmonious, and inclusive society. It is believed that when people engage in empathetic dialogue, they tend to have a better and more understanding and appreciation of different standpoints, cultures, and experiences. Empathy allows people to connect to others on a deeper level, thereby

encouraging a sense of shared humanity and the promotion of mutual admiration.

It is also important to note that, through an open dialogue, individuals can exchange great ideas to broaden their prospects. This will also create the impetus to challenge assumptions. Empathy and the understanding of dialogue assist in breaking down barriers with the promotion of broad-mindedness. In the same development, Macagno et al (2022) averred that:

Empathy focuses on the experiences of others' emotions and perceptions. It is an action that underpins an individual's participation in dialogue across diversity. Empathy is the basis for intercultural dialogue. Dialogue, however, consists of inclusions such as linguistic diversity, socio-political issues, and storytelling, among other complexities of different cultures and experiences of individuals in the diaspora. (117)

The role of empathy and dialogue cannot be overemphasized as they help in addressing societal issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and ignorance. They also allow the people to confront the challenges of favouritisms, and work towards an inclusive society to displace stereotypes. Empathy and dialogue play important roles in addressing conflicts because they provide an opportunity for listening to all parties for common understanding and benefits.

More so, empathy, dialogue, and understanding are critical elements that could be adopted to shape relationships and promote acquaintances in communities. These enable individuals to build trust, encourage a sense of belonging, and strengthen bonds. These qualities promote social cohesion and harmony in multicultural societies. It is also important to note that empathy, dialogue, and understanding greatly empower people to be agents of change in promoting fairness, inclusivity, and compassion. These values promote tolerance and encourage vicarious global development where people are saddled with the opportunity to better society in their ways.

The Role of Storytelling in Fostering Mutual Understanding and Breaking Barriers between Different Communities.

Storytelling is very critical in promoting understanding and addressing the barriers between different communities. With this, people can bridge the gaps of language, culture, and experience and the promotion of connection, mutual respect, and empathy through sharing stories. Given the aforementioned postulation, DOUNGMANI CHONGRUKSA ET AL (2010) declared that:

Storytelling is a powerful resource that could be used to develop an understanding of people who are different from them. Storytelling allows people to discover a diversity of characters with various cultural

backgrounds to have a better understanding of racial and ethnic diversity.
(283)

This submission infers that storytelling is indeed a medium that could be adopted to promote understanding with the view to breaking barriers between communities. The deconstruction of such barriers will also bring to bear a clearer understanding of multiculturalism among different communities. Other benefits of storytelling include:

- **Shifting Perspectives:** This allows people to step into the shoes of others so that they can view the world from a completely different perspective. By so doing, people can challenge their prejudices, develop an understanding of different communities, and dismantle stereotypes.
- **Humanizing the “other”:** Storytelling has the capacity and the power to humanize people of different races from different communities. This includes projecting their desires, struggles, and shared emotions. It is important to note that when we hear and read stories from people with different backgrounds and orientations, we assume their experiences to promote compassion and empathy.
- **Building Empathy:** Usually, stories create emotions and provide the connection between the storyteller/author and the audience/reader. With the support of thought-provoking and compelling characters, obstacles, joys sorrows, societal differences, and cultural issues can be empathized.
- **Cultural Exchange and Appreciation:** When stories from different communities are told, they tend to suggest an opportunity to learn about the diverse customs, traditions, and histories of such people. This can lead to the cultivation of a sense of appreciation for the people’s diversity, cultural richness, and mutual admiration for one another.
- **Encouraging Intersectionality:** Stories with the themes of intersectional identities generate the platform for people to recognize and embrace their multifaceted backgrounds and experiences. Storytelling provides recognition of diverse communities and inclusivity where gender, race, identities, and ethnicity are sufficiently acknowledged.
- **Breaking down Stereotypes:** It is important to note that, usually, stories challenge biases and stereotypes when they are presented from the point of view of complex narratives and multidimensional characters. They ensure that humanized, marginalized groups' misconceptions are dispelled to create space and encourage effective understanding and representation. Storytelling offers the opportunity to understand the lives of others. It

promotes dialogue, empathy, and cultural exchange to break down barriers to encourage a more inclusive, united, and interconnected community.

Discourse and Conversation about Common Experiences and Cross-Cultural links in African Diasporic Literature and Film

African Diasporic Literature and Film have the potential to spark conversations and dialogue about cross-cultural connections and experiences in so many ways. Some of these are as follows:

- Identification and Validation of shared experiences: African Diasporic Literature and Film usually interrogate emotions and African themes with a reasonable number of audiences. Identification and validation of shared experiences present stories and characters that point to human experiences of loss, love, belonging, and identity. These elements help Africans of different cultures and backgrounds locate common ground which could lead to pleasant conversations about the differences and similarities in the overall human experiences. According to Fergus Neville et al (2020), this often results to:

People who view each other as members of a common social group, seeing themselves and seeing others as united through belonging to a common category and assuming others do likewise because they see others as fellow group members. (3)

This perspective allows people in the African diasporic communities to adhere to a more harmonious relationship taking into cognisance the functionalities of cross-cultural connections as they affect literature and film among Africans in such diasporic communities. Some other ways African Diasporic Literature and film can spur dialogue and conversation about shared experiences and cross-cultural connections include:

- Representation of diverse voices and narratives: African Diasporic literature and Film offer a platform for the underrepresented voices to be heard. Representation of diverse voices and narratives projects the experiences of Africans who migrated and were displaced from their original homes. This enables them to convey their challenges, struggles, and victories among various communities to create empathy and appreciate the different cultures.
- Bridging cultural gaps: African Diasporic Literature and Film connect cultural gaps by subjecting unfamiliar customs, cultures, and traditions. This allows readers and viewers to be greeted with the perception of learning the different traditions, histories, and cultures and the understanding of the

individuals. This development if articulated properly can lead to a conversation that focuses on shared experiences and cross-cultural networks.

- Challenging Stereotypes and Promoting Diversity: African Diasporic Literature and Film subvert stereotypes and advance realistic depictions of African Diasporic Communities.

Moreover, challenging stereotypes and promoting multiplicity should be focused on multi-dimensional characters. This can be achieved with the appraisal of the challenge of monolithic depictions of certain cultures that abound in communities. It will also stimulate a wide range of conversations that deal with diversity, representation, and the overall importance of recognizing diversity in African diasporic communities. African Diasporic Literature and Film have the connection to propel dialogue and conversations about cross-cultural fusion and shared experiences in challenging stereotypes. This allows individuals to engage in meaningful and healthy conversation to tolerate and appreciate the diverse cultures, traditions, and experiences of the African people.

Conclusion

It is indeed apparent that African Diasporic Literature and Film explore the reality of history and experiences of the African people who have been displaced from their original birthplaces and have forged an entirely new identity in different countries with different cultures. They focus on the lived reality of Africans in diasporic communities. Consequent to this, the paper has articulated issues of cultural identity, hybridity migration, the complexity of navigating multiple cultures, social spaces, and belonging among others. The research has provided a platform to understand the various challenges and experiences usually faced by Africans in diasporic communities. These include focusing on human history, rich tapestry, and the display of resilience by the Africans in the diasporic communities in line with adapting to such new environments or communities.

Findings reveal that African Diasporic Literature and Film contribute to discussions on globalization, multiculturalism, and transnational identities in the context of multiplicity and complexity. One other key finding is the fact that African Diasporic Literature and Film challenge traditional ideas of the same culture by way of displaying the richness and diversity of cultural identities. It is also found out that, culture is dynamic and can evolve and adapt with interactions with different societies. Another major finding is the fact that African Diasporic Literature and Film clearly emphasize the impact of globalization on Africans in diasporic communities as they are made to realize transnational links between different cultures. It is further

discovered that African Diasporic Literature and Film contribute immensely to the discussions on ethnicity, discrimination, and the question of race and even xenophobia. African Diasporic Literature and Film are critical for building a more inclusive and harmonious society as they encourage interconnectedness and defeat barriers between Africans from unique and different backgrounds. In line with the findings, it is thus recommended among others that discussions on globalization, multiculturalism, and transnational identities in the context of multiplicity and complexity should be encouraged to foster global unity. African Diasporic Literature and Film emphasize the impact of globalization on Africans in diasporic communities as they are made to realize transnational links between different cultures and as such, it is recommended that this should be encouraged.

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