Battle Hymn of the Afropolitan: Sino-African Futures in Ghana Must Go and Americanah

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ABSTRACT. This article argues that a China-directed Orientalism infuses the political unconscious of recent fiction by "Afropolitan" writers. Focusing on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*, this article demonstrates that crises of national economic development compel Afropolitan characters to self-Orientalize. Unable to rely on the stability of their home countries' economies, and unwilling to endure the racism of the United States, these characters cathect alternative futurities offered by China's non-ideological economic involvement in Africa and the flexible citizenship of Asian/American identity. Afropolitan novelists thus bring into relief the cultural and affective contours of an emergent Sino-African geopolitical formation that, to paraphrase Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, has turned its back on the West.

Asian American characters and China references consistently and frequently appear in recent novels by so-called "Afropolitan" writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, NoViolet Bulawayo, Teju Cole, and Taiye Selasi.[1] These appearances are unexpected because the concerns of these novels seem to have nothing to do with Asian America or China, but instead with the historical circumstances of Afropolitan identity: that is, the identity of a group constituted by the 1.5- and second-generation children of Africans who emigrated to the West—mostly the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States—after 1960, a group whose members, moreover, tend to be highly educated and professionally successful, live outside of Africa, and claim an African identity.[2]

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For instance, a central scene in Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) features a vociferous critique of Chinese oil exploration in Nigeria that maps the allegorical correspondence between one character's emasculation and the uncertain future of Nigerian economic sovereignty.[3] The protagonist of Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2013) returns to Lagos from the United States, and a friend of hers observes, "You know the Chinese. Before you know it, they take over your economy. Very soon they'll be telling America to shut up."[4] In Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), an entire chapter is spent in a Chinese-run construction site that the protagonist and her friends call "Shanghai."[5] The Nigerian American narrator in Teju Cole's novel *Open City* (2011) is very close with his undergraduate mentor, Professor Saito, a Japanese American historian who was interned as a child, and with whom the narrator feels "more in common … than with the people who happened to be related to me."[6] In Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), Asian American characters appear in college and white-collar settings. While they aren't explicitly connected to the traces of Chinese capital and ghosts of Maoist solidarity found in the novel's Ghana scenes, Selasi nonetheless appears intent on establishing a resonance between Asia, America, and Africa.[7]

With few exceptions, Asian characters in Afropolitan novels tend *not* to appear outside of American settings. When they do they are almost always Chinese, and they almost never speak. In these novels, despite the prevalence of Asian American and China references, the predominant geopolitical vectors extend from the United States and Africa, and their characters struggle primarily with conflicts that involve negotiating the dissonances between their American and African identities. The resulting conjuncture is signaled by the title of a highly successful blog written by *Americanah*'s main character, Ifemelu: "Raceteenth or Various Observations about American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black." While race is a major theme in these novels, it is, as this title suggests, heavily mediated.

This article thinks through how and why the U.S.-Africa conjuncture is mediated by Asian American and China references in these novels, and how Asian American topoi and criticism might help us to answer Afropolitan questions. The consistent characterization of Asian Americans as model minorities in these novels functions as a site of formation for the economic subjectivity that Afropolitan characters either instantiate or approach: a global subject oriented to a personal arbitrage of national citizenship that aligns with Aihwa Ong's concept of "flexible citizenship."[8] As Susan Koshy argues, "Asian American skilled immigration and filial relations offer an indispensable lens for understanding the economic reorganization of intimacy under neoliberalism because these bonds are overdetermined by

a plethora of social forces that characterize the present: new transnational kinship forms, human capital, and flexible citizenship."[9] Asian Americans, in other words, are paradigmatic of the mutual determination of race and flexible citizenship. I am therefore less interested in what Ifemelu's blog can tell us about "American" versus "Non-American" blacks, for example, than the fact that the monetization of her "observations" facilitates her passage from model minority in a U.S. context to flexible citizen in a global context as she moves between the United States and Nigeria.[10] In the two novels that I will be focusing on—*Americanah* and *Ghana Must Go*—this process is romanticized as a return to Africa/home, the reconstitution of heteronormative relations, and a struggle to reimagine personal futurity.

The compatibility between the model minority and flexible citizen is by no means a given. Writing in 1999, David Palumbo-Liu observed that the increased immigration and heightened visibility of Asians (primarily East Asians) in the United States, spurred by the success and collapse of "tiger" economies, "promises to intensify the tension between the bourgeoisified, 'assimilated' class of Asian Americans and recent immigrants and to demand a rethinking of the inscription of the ethos of the model minority."[11] Three years later, Viet Thanh Nguyen noted, "The sudden appearance [in the United States] of wealthy Asians displaces this assumption that traditional whiteness is associated with wealth and that both whiteness and wealth are to be earned over the passage of time. By putting traditional whiteness into crisis, the new Asian capital also puts Asian America as a whole—not just the model minority—into crisis in its efforts to claim a domestic authenticity that does not threaten whites."[12] Nearly two decades after these observations, the threat to white supremacy still exists and has intensified, but accounts of the tension between model minorities and flexible citizens require revision: above all because of China's geopolitical rise and the adjustments it forces upon Orientalism and other Western strategies of containment.

Afropolitan fiction offers a preeminent site from which to pursue this revision because it attests to the impossibility of reimagining personal futurity outside of a geopolitical imagination. As Katherine Hallemeier has argued in regard to *Americanah*, it also attests to the difficulty of avoiding national allegory.[13] Afropolitan characters reimagine futurity via rhetorical and aesthetic forms that draw from, and participate in, a discourse of transpacific futurity whose poles are the United States and China. Even though these novels never explicitly mention the Pacific Ocean, their depictions of the rapid expansion of China's interests in Africa furnishes Western observers with evidence of the full geopolitical reach and economic potential of Chinese capitalism, not to mention the waning of the American Century and

the eclipse of the Washington Consensus by an authoritarian "capitalism with Chinese characteristics."[14] The Orientalism operating in these novels thus demonstrates how transpacific futurity is generated and reiterated in sites far afield from the Pacific Rim.[15]

Complications

The prevalence of Orientalism across so many Afropolitan novels attests to a conflation in the Anglophone geopolitical imagination of Asian subjects with capital as such. It also suggests that the negotiation of American and African identities undertaken by the characters in these novels is simultaneously a negotiation with their relation to an Orientalized conception of global capital.

In so much of the literature on Afro-Asian history and culture, Afro-Asian political solidarity has provided the grounds for Afro-Asian character and expression (e.g., Bandung-era Third World subjects, Elijah Muhammad's claim to Asian roots, Fred Ho's jazz).[16] Indeed, the romanticization of Afro-Asian political encounters on the part of Asian Americanist scholars might be said to evidence a reluctance to relinquish resistant politics.[17] In the context of Afropolitan novels, however, political solidarity is an inadequate explanation for the affinity between Afropolitan characters and Asian American model minorities. Understanding Afropolitan novels requires us to theorize Afro-Asian encounter not via political solidarity, but via economic subjectivity. Crucial to this theorization is the framework Koshy establishes when she argues that the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act's professionalization of Asian America has facilitated the convergence of model minoritization and flexible citizenship, and that this convergence can be perceived through narrations of the immigrant family romance.[18] While Koshy focuses her elaboration of this far-reaching conjuncture on the specific instance of post-liberalization India's relationship with its American diaspora, a comparative Afro-Asia analysis will demonstrate how a Sinological Orientalist discourse morphs race into an emergent global ethnicity constituted by a convergence of model minorities and flexible citizens.[19] I thus explore a set of Afro-Asian encounters whose politics and futures are more aligned with than opposed to the aspirations of neoliberal capitalism. Along these lines, I have chosen to focus on *Ghana Must Go* and *Americanah* not only because of the Orientalism operating in them, but especially because of the very public roles that both Selasi and Adichie have played in promoting Afropolitan fiction. According to Selasi and Adichie, Afropolitan fiction complicates stereotypes of Africa as a space of abjection, and of African fiction as shackled to the ethnographic imperative.

Americanah traces Ifemelu's peripatetic itinerary from her childhood in Lagos to her emigration to the United States, and eventual return to Lagos. Fifteen years after arriving in the States as a destitute student on partial scholarship, she has a writing fellowship at Princeton, a stable, loving relationship, and a widely read, profitable blog. A chance encounter with an old friend rekindles unresolved feelings for her childhood boyfriend, Obinze, and initiates a thought process that culminates with her closing her blog, selling her condo, dumping her current boyfriend, and moving back to Lagos. The novel's secondary focus is on Obinze, who, after a series of hardships, becomes a real estate developer in Lagos. By the time his and Ifemelu's narrative strands are brought together in the novel's final act, he is wealthy, married to a beautiful, devoted wife, and father to a two-year-old daughter. Nonetheless, Obinze and Ifemelu begin an affair and dream of a future in which they can be together.

Selasi's novel similarly projects a heteronormative future that never materializes. It opens with Kweku Sai, a Ghanaian-born, U.S.-trained surgeon, dying of a heart attack in the courtyard of his house in Accra, where he has decamped from Baltimore after abandoning his Nigerian wife Folasadé and their four adolescent children. Kweku's death initiates the novel's back-and-forth movement between the narrative present of his family's regrouping in Ghana to bury him, and retrospective narration of events in their lives prior to his death. In this backstory we learn that, like their parents, each of the four Sai children—Olu, Kehinde and Taiwo (twins), and Sadie—is beautiful and brilliant, each academically and professionally successful: model minorities in the most stereotypical sense.[20] The whole family is well on its way to achieving status as a "Successful Family" when Kweku is summarily fired after a wealthy donor dies on his operating table, though by no fault of his own.[21] He hides his unemployment from his family for almost a year before finally leaving—a decision he makes after Kehinde witnesses an ugly verbal confrontation between himself and the hospital administrator who fired him (Dr. Yuki, whom Selasi describes as "a Hong Kong mobstress").[22]

Needless to say, Adichie's and Selasi's characters each have very *complicated* attachments to Africa. I land on the term "complicated" very intentionally, because it has become somewhat of a slogan for Selasi, Adichie, and other Afropolitan writers who, according to Paul Zeleza, harbor "disdain for colonialism and distrust of nationalism that had animated earlier generations of writers who bemoaned the cultural agonies of colonialism and the aborted dreams of uhuru."[23] Zeleza goes on to specify that Afropolitan writers are a distinct subset of so-called "third generation African writers … born after 1960, whose creative flowering came in the 1980s

and 1990s, the era of pervasive crisis for the postcolony and the triumph of postcolonial theory, both of which marked and mediated their work. … The new generation had decidedly more cosmopolitan visions of the African condition, cultural production, and the subjectivities of gender, class, and sexuality."[24] To add to this description, in my reading of *Americanah* and *Ghana Must Go*, neither novel is primarily concerned with race, ethnicity, or nationalism: the usual suspects of historicist and sociological reading that have for so long framed the study of "African literature."[25] In her widely circulated essay "Bye-Bye Babar," Selasi argues, "What distinguishes this [cohort of Afropolitans] and its like (in the West and at home) is a willingness to complicate Africa—namely, to engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them. The Afropolitan consciousness is defined by the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is wonderful, unique."[26] The "willingness to complicate" that Selasi conveys here has been vocally supported by other Afropolitan writers.[27] Adichie takes this up in her viral TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," warning us against accepting "a single story" about Africa.[28]

As Hallemeier argues, this willingness to complicate entails a rejection of national allegory, which is among the most pervasive "single stories" shaping the production and analysis of African fiction. For Afropolitan novelists, above and beyond undermining Western epistemologies of Africa, a willingness to complicate pushes fiction toward what Selasi calls a "utopia" of "*human* literature," and that Adichie calls a "paradise."[29] Though these terms are tinged with cliché and ahistoricality, they in fact name a historically specific formal structure that holds on one side a rejection of national allegory, and, on the other, an as yet to be defined space of post-national futurity that, in spite of itself, is forced to draw from residuums of national allegory. The romanticization of terms like "utopia," "human," and "paradise" reveals itself as what Zeleza might call a post-national allegory in which characters struggle to reimagine their personal futurity as it is constrained by nationally coded, contemporary crises of racism (the United States), corruption (Nigeria and Ghana), and exploitation (China). It's in this uncertain imaginative space, defined by the hazy relations and futurities suggested by these national vectors, that Afropolitan writers pursue "complication."

One use of Orientalism in these novels is to produce complications and thus generate an affective and material vocabulary for post-national allegory. Any universalist effect produced in the bargain necessarily recapitulates the dynamics of U.S.-China discourse, whose contemporary form, as Daniel Vukovich argues, is defined by universalism of another sort: Marx's

value-form. Describing what he calls the "Sinological-orientalism" that shapes contemporary U.S.-China discourse, Vukovich writes, "When one recalls the Marxist cultural analysis of capital as such, namely as an historical force of abstraction that makes unlike things alike on the basis of some third thing called the value-form … the relationship between this orientalism and global capitalism appears in sharper relief. Sinological-orientalism is in an important sense a capital-logic, just as historical capitalism betrays an orientalist one."[30] Despite their differences, U.S. capitalism and Chinese capitalism are both governed by the capital logic of the value-form and can thus be said to converge upon it. It's along these lines that, as Vukovich argues, "'China' is understood as becoming *generally equivalent* to the West."[31] Importantly, he goes on to note that, in contrast to Said's account of Orientalism, "The older, more racist logic of essential difference is here in abeyance." Barriers to general equivalence are knocked down, instituting not so much a readerly "paradise" or shared "human" experience as a sameness that is symptomatic of reification's totalizing itinerary.[32] If Asian American characters and China references do indeed mediate Afropolitan negotiations of U.S.-Africa identity, then this mediation takes place within a formal economy of resemblances that is generated by Sinological Orientalism's catalyzation of general equivalence.[33]

Resemblances: Afropolitan Racial Triangulation

One of Afropolitan fiction's strategies for pursuing complication is to show how Afropolitan characters tend to identify more strongly with Asian Americans than black Americans. We have already seen, for instance, how Cole's narrator identifies with his Japanese American mentor. In *Americanah* a member of the African Students Association tells Ifemelu, "You will … find that you might make friends more easily with other internationals, Koreans, Indians, Brazilians, whatever, than with Americans both black and white."[34] This structure of emotional identification recapitulates the economy of identification and disidentification at the heart of what Claire Jean Kim calls "racial triangulation": a cultural logic in which "Asian American" is defined as a structural relation in a "field of racial positions" organized by the polarities of "relative valorization" and "civic ostracism" vis-à-vis black-white racial hierarchy (see Figure 1).[35]

While it is tempting to read the racial dynamics in Afropolitan novels through the framework of racial triangulation, the resemblances that these novels so often establish between Asian Americans and Africans aren't adequately explained by Kim's U.S.-based, black-white-Asian triangulation. While these resemblances also engage in a kind of triangulation—which I

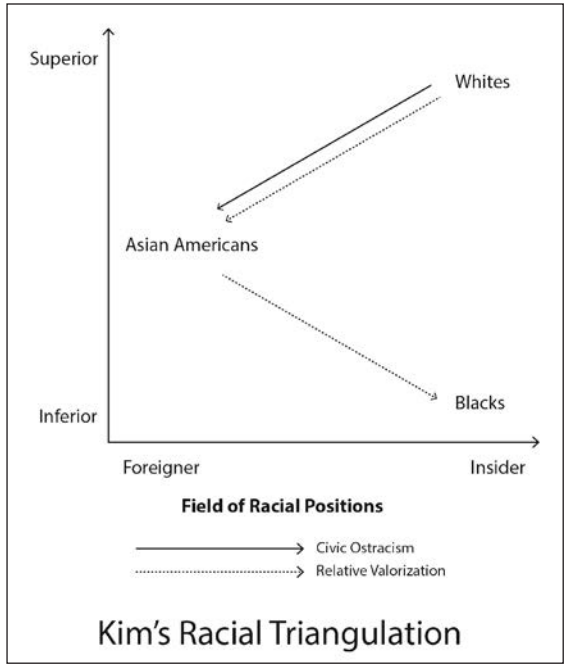
will be calling Afropolitan racial triangulation—they involve not black and white but rather African and Asian American characters converging upon two Orientalized subjectivities: the model minority and flexible citizen. In other words, Afropolitan fiction witnesses the globalization of the Asian American model minority as it converges with the flexible citizen. *Ghana Must Go*'s economy of Afro-Asian resemblances is most clearly seen in Selasi's characterizations of Olu, Ling, and Olu's and Ling's respective fathers, Kweku and Dr. Wei. Attention to these resemblances and the reproductive futurity they are premised upon reveals how Afropolitan novels imagine African and Asian subjects on parallel paths converging on the figure of capital—a process that *Americanah* further clarifies in relation to post-national allegory.

Olu and Ling first meet as undergrads at Yale, when Olu finds himself at the Asian American Cultural Center's Open House. The greeter stutters an explanation: "I'm sorry. … We thought *Sai* was Asian. You're welcome to stay." He does, and later at the punch bowl accidentally touches hands with Ling. Startled, she fumbles out:

> "You're not Asian. Wait. Why are you here? Do you play a stringed instrument? Excel in mathematics? Attend a cult-like Korean-American Christian church?"
>
> Laughing, still touching, "Piano. And science. A Catholic church, no, but the priest is from Laos."
>
> "Then what am I saying? Stupid me. You *are* Asian."[36]

Later, we are provided with evidence that this scene is at least as much about Olu and Ling's mutual resemblance to a narrative of model minority upbringing as their private identification with each other's biographies. Wherever they go, they are known as the "golden couple," not only because of their accumulation of prestigious degrees, but because they have been lucky enough to proceed, as a couple, upon "matching" professional trajectories: after Yale, medical school at Harvard, and then "both matching [for residency] in Boston."[37] Their futures are mutually determined: Afropolitan identity offers a template for Asian American futurity, and vice-versa.

Afro-Asian resemblance extends to Selasi's depictions of Olu's and Ling's fathers. Both are the beneficiaries of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act's system of professional preferences, having emigrated to the United States in hot pursuit of techno-scientific expertise: Kweku becoming a highly respected surgeon and Dr. Wei becoming an engineering professor at MIT. As Dr. Wei explains to Olu in a screed of racist love, the end result of the Act's regime of citizenship is that Africans and Asian Americans are ultimately fungible: "Americans call Asians the 'model minority.' At one point



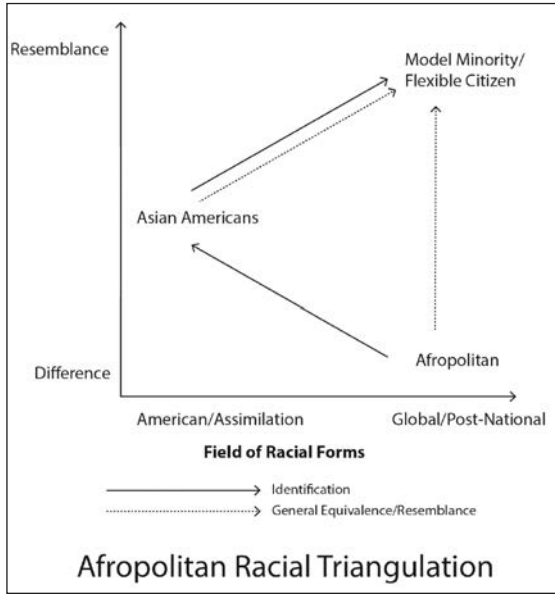


Figure 1. Kim's Racial Triangulation vs. Afropolitan Racial Triangulation

this may have been true. Recent past. But now it's the Africans. I see it in the classroom."[38] Which is to say, Africans and Asian Americans are generally equivalent by virtue of their educational attainment.[39]

Along these lines, the hints that Olu and Ling provide about their similar upbringings suggest that we can read them as "golden" in an additional sense: they are both the products of what erin Khûe Ninh calls familial "production units" geared toward producing "a particular brand of good, capitalist subject[s]," and what Koshy calls "(re)productive citizenship."[40] Olu's and Ling's upbringings index the "Chinese" parenting style that Amy Chua reflects upon in her memoir, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*.[41] This parenting style, Koshy argues, perfectly instantiates the ethos of Ninh's familial "production units," which are hell bent on capital accumulation of all sorts (academic, economic, professional, etc.): "the Tiger Mother," writes Koshy, "is a neoliberal racial form that embodies the extreme filial discipline demanded by contemporary conditions for the accumulation and reproduction of human capital."[42]

In Afropolitan fiction, the flexible citizen and model minority are joined together as two sides of the same coin. Aihwa Ong defines "flexible citizenship" as "the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes."[43] These figures abound in Afropolitan fiction, not least because flexible citizenship is premised in Afropolitan identity as such.[44] By establishing Olu's and Ling's resemblance to each other as Asian American model minorities, Selasi imbues depictions of their flexible citizenship with a narrative inevitability. After getting together they begin traveling the world to provide indigent communities with the prerequisites of futurity: "Ling-and-Olu in Guam building homes for the homeless, Ling-and-Olu in Kenya digging wells for the waterless, Ling-and-Olu in Rio giving vaccinations to vagrants."[45] Ling-and-Olu's "golden" sheen is burnished by their globetrotting good deeds, offering a metaphor for the realized conversion of racial subjects into human capital.

We find a clear expression of how this conversion is also a process of Asian Americanization in the example of Ifemelu's blog, "Raceteenth: or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black." As the title implies, her "observations" are primarily about the contradictions and absurdities of white and black racial codes. They feature provocations like "Badly-Dressed White Middle

Managers from Ohio Are Not Always What You Think" and "there IS an oppression Olympics going on. American racial minorities—blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Jews—all get shit from white folks, different kinds of shit, but shit still. Each secretly believes that it gets the worst shit."[46] Ifemelu's adoption of a position outside the field of racial positions delineated by white and black American racial formation allows her to defamiliarize and complicate African subjectivity for American audiences by redeeming individual white characters' attitudes about race.[47] Following Kim's model of racial triangulation, Ifemelu's outsider perspective (in the context of the United States) and its potential for honorary whiteness (a potential secured precisely by her critique of whiteness) renders her perspective structurally equivalent to that of Asian Americans. Ifemelu's blog can thus be understood as a mechanism that converts the textual record of her discovery of her Asian American resemblance into human capital—not to mention substantial income from advertising.

In Afropolitan novels, the most prevalent mechanism for establishing the general equivalence between Afropolitans, Asian Americans, and capital is the American university (we recall Dr. Wei: "I see it in the classroom").[48] Like the Sai children, whenever Ifemelu is in a college context, she finds herself in the midst of Asian Americans. In Philadelphia hanging out with her childhood friend Ginika, Ifemelu is impressed "by how like her American friends Ginika had become" during her time as an undergrad at Wellson College. She scans the small group gathered at the party:

> Jessica, the Japanese American, beautiful and animated, playing with the emblemed key of her Mercedes. Pale-skinned Teresa, who had a loud laugh and wore diamond studs and shabby, worn-out shoes. Stephanie, the Chinese American, her hair a perfect swingy bob that curved inwards at her chin, who from time to time reached into her monogrammed bag to get her cigarettes and step out for a smoke. Hari, coffee-skinned and black-haired and wearing a tight T-shirt, who said, "I am Indian, not Indian American," when Ginika introduced Ifemelu.[49]

Notably, Ginika's Asian American friends are each assigned tokens of material wealth (Mercedes, diamond studs, monogrammed bag). The only friend without such a token, Hari, sports a T-shirt whose polemical insistence that she is "Indian, not Indian American" asserts a diasporic rather than assimilationist identity, thus delivering a counterpoint to Lisa Sun-Hee Park's reading of Chinese and Korean American conspicuous consumption as a performance of American citizenship, which might otherwise hold sway here.[50] In accordance with Hari's flexible citizenship, her T-shirt

polemically asserts national identity as fundamentally a matter of personal choice. Moreover, the parallel structure of the sentences introducing each of the friends establishes an equivalence between Hari's diasporic politics and her friends' conspicuous consumption, rendering all of these things as shibboleths of capital.

Having laid out the shape and vectors of Afropolitan racial triangulation, I need to acknowledge here that my argument thus far appears to risk instrumentalizing Asian American identity as a contentless analogy, that is, as a mere waypoint for Afropolitan subjects in the process of becoming fully fledged flexible citizens.[51] Asian American resemblance could potentially be read as merely a momentary, though certainly privileged, site in which the contradictions of American racial and class discourses are powerfully scrutinized, only to be transcended by an Afropolitan identity being written into emergence.

I resist this reading for two reasons. First, because "Asian American" is not just one of many options in a "field of racial positions" generated by imperfect analogies with blacks and whites, but a historically specific racial form that is produced by material forces that do not necessarily have anything to do with race or "skin."[52] For our purposes, these are forces extending from China's involvement in Africa and the waning of Western-style liberal capitalism. Afropolitan deployments of Asian and Asian American character do more than merely traffic in boring stereotypes. They provide angles to observe Asian racialization that might not be available in novels written by Asians or Asian Americans.

Second, the portrayal of racial identity as something purely performative, or as purely contingent upon place (Ifemelu: "I discovered race in America and it fascinated me"), participates in a more extensive thematic economy concerning agency that ultimately refers back to Sino-African geopolitics.[53] Among other things, the Sai children and Ifemelu share in common a vertigo of too many choices: in part the consequence of overbrimming beauty and talent (that is, model minority attainment), but also because of the privileges of flexible citizenship. For example, as Ifemelu puzzles over her reasons for wanting to leave her American life and return to Lagos, she wrestles with the myriad feelings brought on by this vertigo, which is intensified by the Internet:

> It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness. She scoured Nigerian websites, Nigerian profiles on Facebook, Nigerian blogs, and each click brought yet another story of a young person who had recently

> moved back home, clothed in American or British degrees, to start an investment company, a music production business, a fashion label, a magazine, a fast-food franchise. She looked at photographs of these men and women and felt the dull ache of loss.[54]

For Ifemelu, an abundance of agency resolves as "fatigue," "bleakness," "borderlessness," "amorphous longings": a malaise reminiscent of the "waning of affect" that Fredric Jameson has associated with postmodernity. It's worth reminding ourselves here of Jameson's thinking because he traces the waning of affect back to a crisis of narration characterized by overwhelming multiplicity: "If, indeed, the subject has lost its capacity … to organize its past and future into coherent experience, it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but 'heaps of fragments' and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory."[55] This is what Ifemelu faces in the passage above, and what Afropolitan characters in general are set up to confront. Indeed, the haze of the aleatory engulfs all of Ifemelu's Internet-generated imaginings. Her best chance at realizing her desires is her romance with Obinze, which, to use Koshy's words, "harnesses heterosexuality to the productivity of knowledge work to enhance national competitiveness in a globalizing economy."[56] In addition to the promise of heteronormative middle-class stability and a connection to home, a future with Obinze offers grounding in a space outside of racist American capitalism and its reified forms—what Hallemeier calls America's "entwinement with white supremacy," which disqualifies it as a genuine option—and thus a stable position from which alternative futures might be pursued.[57] All the futures Ifemelu imagines here are post-national allegories for Nigerian capitalist futurity, and, as I will demonstrate in the next section, China appears *precisely* in her idealization of her relationship with Obinze. No matter how expansive the array of choices she and other Afropolitan characters encounter, these choices are ultimately rooted in two fundamental options: the United States and China.

Afropolitan Futures and Chinese Capital

In a 2005 speech commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Zimbabwean independence, President Robert Mugabe declared, with Chinese jet fighters screaming overhead, "We have turned east, where the sun rises, and given our back to the west, where the sun sets."[58] The Afro-Asian dimensions in Afropolitan novels function at a historical level to depict a fading American Century and rising Africa whose rise has been, and will continue

to be, significantly influenced by Chinese capital.[59] The protagonists in these novels are constantly being disabused of their beliefs, however skeptical, in the adequacy of American futurity. America is instead the place where things fall apart, and Africa becomes the place where things have the potential to be reassembled, and where the future is more open to possibility than in an America where capitalist realism and racism circumscribe futurity.[60] For Ifemelu and Obinze, Nigeria offers the possibility of a different kind of future. For the Sais, Ghana offers the possibility of moving on after Kweku's death. But given the social and political instability in Nigeria and Ghana ("complexities" from which neither novel shies away) the question of who or what will underwrite that future is far from fanciful. Absent a sense that the Nigerian or Ghanaian economy will be the ones to do it, the Sino-African relationship takes on a special significance.

Since the 1950s, China has pursued, in fits and starts, a closer relationship with African countries. Throughout the Maoist period, these relations were pursued primarily along ideological lines, in a bid for anti-imperialist, Third World solidarity. Token investments were made, and infrastructural projects—such as the Tanzam railway that connects Zambia to Tanzania's port in Dar es Salaam—were pursued mainly for symbolism. After Mao's death in 1976, however, those relations stagnated.[61] Beginning in the 1990s, with China's turn to a more full-blooded capitalism, individual entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises, and a few state-run enterprises began to establish themselves in African markets. In 1999, then-Premier Jiang Zemin beseeched Chinese to "go out" and pursue business opportunities abroad.[62] Since then, China's economic interest in Africa and incorporation of Africa into its broader policy forecasts have only expanded—mainly through the "One Belt, One Road" trade framework that Xi Jinping launched in 2013. While journalists and commentators have fallen into the habit of describing this most recent round of Chinese interest in Africa as neocolonialist, observers like Alvin Cheng-hin Lim, Howard French, and Deborah Brautigam have argued instead that China's interests can hardly be described as anything so coherent or systematic. For instance, despite Beijing's announcement at the end of 2015 of sixty billion dollars in investments in Africa from 2016 to 2019, upon closer inspection that figure corresponds neither to a strategy of foreign direct investment nor to an aid strategy, but instead represents the sum total of many small investments and loans proposed by a mishmash of private and state-run enterprises.[63] China's economic involvement, in other words, is primarily non-ideological, not a coherent, coordinated project: certainly nothing approaching neocolonialism. French prefers the term "haphazard empire" to describe China's African itinerary.[64] Brautigam has shown how

China's recent presence has been marked more by the appearance and proliferation of individual Chinese entrepreneurs, rather than agents of state-led policies.[65]

In Afropolitan novels, the haphazard nature of China's historical involvement in Africa is registered as anxiety over infrastructure and the material conditions of futurity.[66] In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo offers this description of the cacophony of a Chinese construction site: "it's Chinese, it's our languages, it's English mixed with things, it's the machine noise."[67] In *Ghana Must Go*, Kehinde thinks of mid-1990s Lagos as "a dirty Hong Kong." When Olu visits Accra for the first time, Kweku picks him up from the airport and drives him past the National Theater, which is "Modern, white," and thus futuristic, but also "A gift from the Chinese" signaling partnership and solidarity as well as exploitation and condescension.[68] These moments of cognitive dissonance stem from the ideological disjunction between China's contemporary focus on economic relations and the faded memory of Bandung-era Third World solidarity: a Sino-African geopolitical formation that, to use Vijay Prashad's word, has long been "over."[69]

The choice between East and West that Mugabe evokes is, in more concrete terms, a choice between Western aid with heavy conditions, and haphazard Chinese investment with no conditions. The futures of many African economies—Ghana and Nigeria among them—have been dependent upon both of these relationships for the better part of the past three decades.[70] The vertigo of too many choices in Afropolitan novels and in Afropolitan discourse relates back to this choice of speculative futures and capitalisms, as well as the combination of optimism and anxiety conveyed by Mugabe. We thus see the structure of feeling produced by these two options not only in the waning of affect experienced by Afropolitan characters, but also in the narration of their romantic relationships. If by the end of *Americanah*, Ifemelu and Obinze's romance is still unresolved, it is in part because the China-oriented future of their chosen lives in Nigeria is still unimaginable.[71] The dream of a Nigerian capitalism that supposedly offers an alternative future to American capitalism is itself deeply shaped by Chinese capital, not merely via the material and political realities created by the latter, but also by the emasculation the latter threatens against Nigerian and Afropolitan subjects.

China's involvement in Nigeria is explicitly mentioned only in one scene in *Americanah*, but its appearance reveals the Sinological Orientalism that structures its characters' most intimate feelings and attachments. Ifemelu and Obinze's affair has been going on for some time. Obinze has just declared that he wants to marry Ifemelu and that he should never have married his wife Kosi in the first place, but he is paralyzed with indecision.

In this case, even two options is far too many. Meanwhile, Ifemelu grows impatient, calling him a "fucking coward." A few days later, Obinze is at a party celebrating the birth of his friend's child with Kosi and their daughter Buchi, where he runs into his closest friend from university, Okwudiba. Just returned from a business trip to China, Okwudiba offers some thoughts on his experience, expressing sentiments very similar to characters in Atta's and Bulawayo's novels:

> These Chinese people, ehn. Very wily people. You know the previous idiots in my project had signed a lot of nonsense deals with the Chinese. We wanted to review some of the agreements but these Chinese, fifty of them will come to a meeting and bring papers and just tell you "Sign here, sign here!" They will wear you down with negotiation until they have your money and also your wallet.[72]

Okwudiba ridicules his "idiot" colleagues for their passivity in the face of new Chinese capital—mechanical negotiations prosecuted by a horde of "fifty"—while he congratulates himself for being agential (even if it does sound like he and his firm lost out in the end). His anecdote thus establishes the thematic parameters for the scene that follows: agency versus passivity, masculinity versus emasculation.

Okwudiba escorts Obinze upstairs as he recounts his trip to China. Leading him into a smoking-room to join the rest of the men, all newly wealthy beneficiaries of Nigeria's oil wealth, Okwudiba pivots the scene from heteronormative reproductive futurity (they are at a birth celebration, after all) to the homosocial futurity of capitalism.[73] Obinze doesn't fit into this dynamic at all, but only because he embodies the anxieties of the men in the room. The topic of conversation is how Nigerians are holding themselves back in regard to economic development because of corruption, incompetency, and poverty. At one point a guest unwittingly makes explicit the sexual dynamics at play in the room when he blurts out a joke about a man in his employ whom he calls an "economic homosexual," because of that man's fawning attentiveness to men who give him money: that is, men like Obinze, who won his first contract by joining "a trail of prostrating visitors" to the house of a government crony who is referred to only as "Chief."[74]

The description of the smoking-room itself echoes this sexual economy: burgundy drapes drawn, a chandelier "like a wedding cake made of crystals" hanging phallically "in the middle of the ceiling."[75] Readers will immediately recognize "ceiling" as Ifemelu's nickname for Obinze, inspired by her predominant view while they're having sex.[76] Everything that transpires in the scene thus has an air of sexual innuendo. When the conversation

turns to self-congratulation over the oil wealth of the gathered company, Obinze flatly accuses the men in the room of profiting off the exploitation of Nigeria's natural resources:

> The Nigerian government basically finances the oil industry with cash calls, and the big oils are planning to withdraw from onshore operations anyway. They want to leave that to the Chinese and focus on offshore operations only. It's like a parallel economy; they keep offshore, only invest in high-tech equipment, pump up oil from thousands of kilometers deep. No local crew. Oil workers flown in from Houston and Scotland. So, no, they are not doing us a favor.[77]

Although Obinze doesn't mention the word "rape" here, it is close at hand.[78] The implication of his critique is understood: that the men in the room have been emasculated by this arrangement with the Chinese, and they hide their castration with their wealth. He makes the men in the room uncomfortable because he refuses to honor this open secret, choosing instead to hide outright. As one of the men says, "he [Obinze] doesn't want anybody to know how much money he has!"; he doesn't even fly British Airways, which is "what the big boys flew."[79] Even though Obinze, like the others, has been castrated as well, his need to hide this fact is more urgently felt, perhaps because the wound was inflicted by a fellow countryman—his original sin of accepting the Chief's contract—rather than by Chinese capital.

In his assessment of Adichie's fiction, Ian Baucom writes, "If there has been a signature feature of Adichie's work to date it has been her remarkable ability to balance the competing demands of genre and history, to hold in realist equipoise the domestic and the national, scenes of infidelity and scenes of war."[80] When *Americanah* needs to focalize a point of convergence between these two scales, it often turns to Sinological Orientalism. In the smoking-room scene, Sinological Orientalism allegorizes a struggle between passivity and agency being played out in two simultaneous strata of meaning: on a private, libidinal scale regarding Ifemelu's and Obinze's individual and romantic future; and on a public, national scale regarding Nigeria's non-Western future.

Obinze's project of concealing his castration produces the kind of behavior that appeals to Ifemelu: a refusal to meet social expectations of wealthy men participating in extravagances like recreational sex and conspicuous consumption. And to Obinze, what Ifemelu now possesses, after her American sojourn, is an American futurity that he has cherished since childhood: "Oh, you've changed," he tells her. "But your blog … also made me proud. I thought: She's gone, she's learned, and she's *conquered*"—America, that is.[81] Even though the future they struggle to imagine together

is never explicitly depicted, the contours of that future can be *felt* through the specific features of Ifemelu's and Obinze's characters and their desire for each other: his refusals of the extravagances of wealth (an allegory for a Nigerian capitalism free of cronyism), her rejection of America's racist capitalist futurity, and their infidelity's enactment of individual desire over traditional values.[82]

Insofar as Afropolitan fiction clears an aesthetic space for a new kind of African character, it participates in what Daniel Kim identifies as a "strand of minority discourse that figures the literary realm as a utopian site in which the un-manning damage done by racism can be reversed."[83] Kim's analysis of Afro-Asian "masculinist agonism" offers an important point of departure in any study of Afro-Asian gender and sexuality. However, the case of Chinese capital, which is driven by the pragmatic logic of the neoliberal exception rather than white supremacy, poses a different set of problematics involving, at the very least, the futurity and waning of affect that I have explored in this article. Contrary to the Fanonian equation, in which white supremacy's castration of the Negro produces in the Negro a homoerotic desire for whiteness, castration by Chinese capital does not produce a desire for Chineseness or Orientalism.[84] Instead Afropolitan novels tend to treat Sinological Orientalism as a vocabulary of symbols for capital *as such*, and general equivalence establishes the continuity between the Asian American model minority, flexible citizens, and Chinese capital. If Asian racialization coincides with commodity fetishism, then it proceeds not via personification as it does for Jews, following Moishe Postone's famous argument, but via the resemblances between Asian Americans and Africans that is ultimately a resemblance with capital.[85] Insofar as Asians are racialized in this dynamic, that racialization proceeds not via triangulation with whites and blacks, but via Afropolitan triangulation with the figures of the model minority and flexible citizen converging via the logic of general equivalence. Afropolitan character thus reveals how Sinological Orientalism operates as the political unconscious of Afropolitan fiction.

Notes

1. I thank special issue editors Aimee Bahng and Christine Mok, as well as my two anonymous reviewers, for their comments and suggestions. Anita Mannur and Nona Landis deserve special thanks for their editorial attention and patience. Thanks also to Sunny Xiang for her feedback. This article emerged from conversations with Aaron Bady, and it is to him that I dedicate it.

2. On African "brain drain" during this period, see Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Toyin Falola and Niyi Afolabi, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Migration: The Paradoxes of Exile* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Isidore Okpewho and Nkiru Nzegwu, *The New African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).
3. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Anchor Books, 2013).
4. Sefi Atta, *A Bit of Difference* (Northampton, Mass.: Interlink Books, 2013), 57.
5. NoViolet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2013), 44–59.
6. Teju Cole, *Open City* (New York: Random House, 2011), 10.
7. Taiye Selasi, *Ghana Must Go* (New York: Penguin, 2013).
8. Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).
9. Susan Koshy, "Neoliberal Family Matters," *American Literary History* 25, no. 2 (2013): 349. On Asian Americans as preeminent neoliberal subjects, see Walter Benn Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), and Walter Benn Michaels, "Model Minorities and the Minority Model—The Neoliberal Novel," in *Cambridge History of the American Novel*, ed. Leonard Cassuto, Claire Eby, and Benjamin Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); David Palumbo-Liu, "Model Minority Discourse and the Course of Healing," in *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 395–416. See also Colleen Lye's critique of Michaels, "Unmarked Character and the 'Rise of Asia': Ed Park's *Personal Days*," *Verge* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2015).
10. The economic subjectivity I am describing thus differs from the model of "economic citizenship" that Christine So describes in her eponymous study, which focuses on Asian American negotiations with American identity. So argues, "It is through the language of economic exchange … that we can locate underlying anxieties about the relationship between Asian Americans and the larger American nation, and recurring doubts over the ability to convert difference into sameness, disenfranchisement into universality, the racial minority into the abstract citizen." *Economic Citizens: A Narrative of Asian American Visibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 3. On Asians as economic subjects, also see Laura Kang, "The Uses of Asianization: Figuring Crises, 1997–8 and 2007–?," in "Race, Empire and the Crisis of the Subprime," special issue of *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (September 2012).
11. Palumbo-Liu, "Model Minority Discourse," 411.
12. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22.
13. Katherine Hallemeier, "'To Be from the Country of People Who Gave': National Allegory and the United States of Adichie's *Americanah*," *Studies in*

the Novel 47, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 237. Hallemeier argues that *Americanah* "presents an alternative, utopic vision of global power in which the United States stands as a foil to the promising future of late Nigerian capitalism" (232). As I will explain, China is the submerged third term in Hallemeier's formulation, and that Afropolitan characters see Africa's/Nigeria's future as perhaps "promising," but far from "utopic." Susan Andrade demonstrates how fiction by African women is variously complicit with, and resistant to, national allegory. *The Nation Writ Small: African Fictions and Feminism, 1958–2011* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011).

14. See, for example, recent alarmist reports over the establishment of Chinese military bases in Djibouti, and China-Russia partnership in the UN Security Council on matters such as sanctions against South Sudan. Evidence of the displaced verification of China's threat, and transpacific futurity, is provided, for instance, in headlines like "China Is Building Its First Military Base in Africa. America Should Be Very Nervous," *The Week*, January 12, 2016, http://theweek.com/articles/598367/china-building-first-military-base-africa-america-should-nervous. This alarmism appears in Afropolitan novels when characters like Subu in Atta's novel blame the Chinese "for the lack of progress in Africa. They make us dependent on the money they keep handing us. They do, and their ultimate aim is to hold us back" (151).
15. As Arif Dirlik has pointed out, the referent of the "Pacific Rim" has never been stable. The term and its many cognates "sometimes include societies technically outside the physical boundaries of the Pacific Ocean even as some of the societies situated on the Rim or within in it are left out." "Introducing the Pacific," in *What's in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Rim Idea* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), 135.
16. See, for instance, Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Bill Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon, 2001).
17. I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for making this point clear to me. Helen Jun offers a forceful anti-romantic account of Afro-Asian cultural production in her book *Race for Citizenship: Black Orientalism and Asian Uplift from Pre-Emancipation to Neoliberal America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).
18. Koshy, "Neoliberal Family Matters." On the aesthetic consequences of periodizing post-1965 Asian American literature, see Min Hyoung Song, *The Children of 1965: On Writing, and Not Writing, as an Asian American* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013).
19. I am gesturing here at Koshy's argument that "Asian Americans … have been a crucial conduit for and a site of the reconfiguration of racial identities" precisely because of their capacities for complicity and resistance. "Morphing Race into Ethnicity: Asian Americans and Critical Transformations of Whiteness," *boundary 2* 28, no. 1 (2001): 155.

20. Kweku: "a Well-Respected Doctor, one of the best in his field, *goddammit!*" (15). Folasadé: foregoes a "full ride to Georgetown" in order to follow Kweku to Johns Hopkins and care for baby Olu (72). Olu: "calm brilliance … mastery of science" (214). Taiwo: top of her class at Columbia Law (205), "this girl, this *success*—summa cum laude, NYU! PPE, Magdalen College! summer associate, Wachtell!" (207). Sadie: who, despite her self-deprecating self-description as a "grab bag of competencies," nonetheless gets into Yale, like her siblings, and sports a "photographic memory" (215).
21. Selasi, *Ghana Must Go*, 124.
22. Ibid., 79.
23. Quoted in Helon Habila, "Introduction," in *The Granta Book of the African Short Story*, ed. Helon Habila (London: Granta Books, 2011), 5.
24. Ibid., 5.
25. Selasi has in fact explicitly distanced herself from the latter category in a talk aptly titled "African Literature Doesn't Exist" (lecture, Internationales Literaturfestival Berlin, 2013).
26. Taiye Selasi, "Bye-Bye Babar," *LIP Magazine*, March 3, 2005, http://thelip.robertsharp.co.uk/?p=76.
27. Emma Dabiri, "Why I am not an Afropolitan," *Africa Is a Country*, January 21, 2014, http://africasacountry.com/2014/01/why-im-not-an-afropolitan/. Simon Gikandi has described Afropolitanism as a new generation's response to the dominance of Afropessimism, arguing that it "constitutes a significant attempt to rethink African knowledge outside the trope of crisis.""Foreword: On Afropolitanism," in *Negotiating Afropolitanism: Essays on Borders and Spaces in Contemporary African Literature and Folklore*, ed. Jennifer Wawrzinek and J. K. S. Makokha (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2011), 9.
28. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," *TEDGlobal 2009* (July 2009), https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story. See also Binyavanga Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa," in "The View from Africa: Essays and Memoir," special issue of *Granta* 92 (2006); Aaron Bady, "Afropolitan," in *2014–2015 ACLS Report on the State of the Discipline of Comparative Literature* (April 8, 2014), http://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/afropolitan; Aaron Bady, "'African Writers in a New World': An Introduction," in *Post45: Contemporaries* (October 17, 2014), http://post45.research.yale.edu/2014/10/african-writers-in-a-new-world-an-introduction/.
29. Selasi, "African Literature Doesn't Exist"; Adichie, "Danger of a Single Story."
30. Daniel F. Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1–2. See also chapters 1–3 in Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin, 1993).
31. Vukovich, *China and Orientalism*, 1, emphasis original.
32. This process of knocking down barriers to capital flow is what David Harvey refers to as the "capital surplus absorption problem," which he explains like this: "Capitalists are always producing surpluses in the form of profit.

They are then forced by competition to recapitalise and reinvest a part of that surplus in expansion. This requires that new profitable outlets be found." *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26.

33. I do not mean to reference Christopher Lee's use of Theodor Adorno's concept of "aesthetic semblance" here, as my argument is still very much in the vein of Georg Lukács's "critical realism." See Lee, *The Semblance of Identity: Aesthetic Mediation in Asian American Literature* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012); Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962).
34. Adichie, *Americanah*, 173.
35. Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 106, 107.
36. Selasi, *Ghana Must Go*, 114.
37. Ibid., 114.
38. Ibid., 118.
39. African immigrants are currently the most educated immigrant group in the United States. See Christine P. Gambino, Edward N. Trevelyan, and John Thomas Fitzwater, *The Foreign-Born Population from Africa: 2008–2012* (U.S. Census Bureau, October 2014).
40. erin Khûe Ninh, *Ingratitude: The Debt-Bound Daughter in Asian American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 2; Koshy, "Neoliberal Family Matters," 351.
41. Amy Chua, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (New York: Penguin, 2011).
42. Koshy, "Neoliberal Family Matters," 347.
43. Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 6.
44. The proliferation of place names in Selasi's essay "Bye-Bye Babar" is one indication of the Afropolitan celebration of flexible citizenship: "London meets Lagos meets Durban meets Dakar."
45. Selasi, *Ghana Must Go*, 115.
46. Adichie, *Americanah*, 5, 253.
47. Caroline Levine makes this argument, though without reference to Kim's racial triangulation. "'The Strange Familiar': Structure, Infrastructure, and Adichie's *Americanah*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 61, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 594.
48. Mark Chiang argues that the university—and the academic field of Asian American studies specifically—also performs this function for Asian Americans. See *The Cultural Capital of Asian American Studies: Autonomy and Representation in the University* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
49. Adichie, *Americanah*, 152.
50. Lisa Sun-Hee Park, *Consuming Citizenship: Children of Asian Immigrant Entrepreneurs* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005).
51. On the theoretical and political problem of analogizing Asian American racial identity, see Colleen Lye, "The Afro-Asian Analogy," *PMLA* 123, no. 5 (October 2008).

52. On racial form, see Colleen Lye, "Racial Form," *Representations* 104 (Fall 2008); Joseph Jonghyun Jeon, *Racial Things, Racial Forms: Objecthood in Avant-Garde Asian American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012); Lee, *Semblance of Identity*; Rachel Lee, *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America: Biopolitics, Biosociality, and Posthuman Ecologies* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).
53. Adichie, *Americanah*, 499.
54. Ibid., 7.
55. Fredric Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 25.
56. Koshy, "Neoliberal Family Matters," 351.
57. Hallemeier, "'To Be from the Country of People Who Gave,'" 237.
58. Andrew Meldrum, "Mugabe Turns Back on West and Looks East," *The Guardian*, April 18, 2005, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/apr/19/zimbabwe.andrewmeldrum.
59. See, for example, Sungula Nkabinde, "Where Africa's Infrastructure Spend Is Coming From," *MoneyWeb*, January 27, 2016, http://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/south-africa/where-africas-infrastructure-spend-is-coming-from/.
60. See Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009).
61. On the history of Maoist China's involvement in Africa, see Donovan Chau, *Exploiting Africa: The Influence of Maoist China in Algeria, Ghana, and Tanzania* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2014). For recent accounts of China in Africa, see David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Dambisa Moyo, *Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What It Means for the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2012); Alvin Cheng-hin Lim, "Is China A Neocolonial Power In Africa?—Analysis," *Eurasia Review*, April 26, 2016, http://www.eurasiareview.com/26042016-is-china-a-neocolonial-power-in-africa-analysis/; Howard French, *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Deborah Brautigam, *Will China Feed Africa?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).
62. China's businesses, Jiang said, "must go out and temper themselves in the winds and storms of economic globalization, and build up their own competitiveness." Address to 1999 Fortune Global Forum, Shanghai International Convention Center, Shanghai, China, September 28, 1999.
63. Winslow Robertson and Lina Benabdallah offer a standard analysis of this investment package: "This isn't aid in the traditional sense. Most of the announced $60 billion will come in loans and export credits. Only $5

billion is to arrive as grants and interest-free loans. … Chinese aid differs from OECD-defined official development assistance and is often tangled with other financial commitments.""China Pledged to Invest $60 Billion in Africa. Here's What That Means," *Washington Post*, January 7, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/01/07/china-pledged-to-invest-60-billion-in-africa-heres-what-that-means/.

64. Howard French, "Cooperation or Exploitation: Howard French on China in Africa," *Sinica Podcast*, December 2014, http://popupchinese.com/lessons/sinica/cooperation-or-exploitation-howard-french-on-china-in-africa.
65. See Brautigam, *Dragon's Gift*.
66. Levine argues in her reading of *Americanah* that instability of all kinds, including emotional, are routed through tropes of infrastructure ("'The Strange Familiar,'" 601). Shannon Jackson offers a fuller account of "infrastructural aesthetics" in her book *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 212; as does Michael Rubenstein in *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2010).
67. Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*, 46.
68. Selasi, *Ghana Must Go*, 249.
69. Vijay Prashad, "Bandung Is Over: Passages in AfroAsian Epistemology," foreword to *AfroAsian Encounters*, xi–xxiii. On the twenty-first-century legacies of Bandung, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture," in *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher Lee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 45–68; "Bandung/Third World 60 Years," special issue of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 17, no. 1 (2016); "Afro-Asia Worlds," special issue of *Transition* 119 (2016). On the 1955 conference itself, see George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1956); and Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (Cleveland: World Pub., 1956).
70. See Brautigam, *Dragon's Gift*.
71. Adichie, *Americanah*, 588.
72. Ibid., 575.
73. On queer futurity, see Lee Edelman's foundational critique of capitalist reproductive futurity, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), and José Muñoz's critique of Edelman's anti-relationality, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
74. Adichie, *Americanah*, 578, 33.
75. Ibid., 576.
76. Ibid., 24.
77. Ibid., 580.

78. This is consistent with the highly sexualized language often used to describe China's involvement in Africa. China and the Chinese are figures for economic exploitation and resource extraction—a process that critics frequently metaphorize as rape. See, for example, Jackson West, "The Rape of Africa: Designed in California, Made in China," *The Awl*, July 30, 2009, http://www.theawl.com/2009/07/the-rape-of-africa-designed-in-california-made-in-china; George B. N. Ayittey, "The Rape of Africa by China," *African Post*, 2011, https://www.africanpost.com/opinion/55-individual/1148-the-rape-of-africa-by-china.html.
79. Adichie, *Americana*, 579, 581.
80. Ian Baucom, "A Study in African Realism," *Public Books*, November 1, 2013, http://www.publicbooks.org/fiction/a-study-in-african-realism.
81. Adichie, *Americanah*, 534, emphasis added. Obinze tells his mother, "I read American books because America is the future" (84).
82. "Obinze is not like some of these useless small boys with money," one business associate thinks to himself; not one of these "men who were brash and striving, who juggled huge businesses and supported vast extended families" (562).
83. Daniel Kim, *Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow: Ralph Ellison, Frank Chin, and the Literary Politics of Identity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2. See also David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).
84. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008).
85. Moishe Postone, "Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to *Holocaust*," *New German Critique* 19, no. 1 (1980). For other applications of Postone's argument to problems of race and nation, see Neil Larsen, "Race, Periphery, Reification: Speculations on 'Hybridity' in Light of Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande & Senzala*," *Cultural Critique* 79 (Fall 2011); and Colleen Lye, "Meat versus Rice: Frank Norris, Jack London, and the Critique of Monopoly Capitalism," in *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).