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THE PLACE AWAY FROM HOME: SPACE AND GLOBALIZATION IN QUEER AFRICAN TEXTS

by
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis focuses on the spatiality of queer identities in diasporic African and local African texts, linking spaces to anti-universalism. The analysis joins academic conversations relating to the globalization of queer theory, focusing on African authors' use of spaces occupied by their protagonists. With a combination of close-textual-analysis and comparisons, this thesis, through the use of *topoanalysis*, analyzes the differences between diasporic and local texts, illustrating the correlation between spaces and the anti-globalization of queer identities.

In the first chapter, the different categories of spaces and space production will be defined, allowing for the introduction of Gaston Bachelard's *topoanalysis* as a method for a more specific analysis of spaces to be explored. In addition to examining African queer cultural histories, the concept of queer theory and queer identity will also be defined, providing more specificity to the analysis of the spaces. The primary texts, Iweala's diasporic novel *Speak No Evil* and Adichie's and Arac de Nyeko's local short stories "Apollo" and "Jambula Tree", respectively, will be surveyed in the light of the protagonists' identities.

The second and the third chapters focus on the analysis of the primary works. The second chapter works on Iweala's novel, extracting the spaces his protagonist occupies while identifying them through Bhabha's work on the *unhomely* and Lefebvre's work on natural spaces. The third chapter processes the same spaces, providing a clear difference between the queer identities of the three texts. In addition, the final chapter will establish the issues that arise with globalizing queer identities, especially when comparing the results of chapter three to Iweala's novel.

This thesis concludes the correlation between spatiality and anti-globalization of queer African identities through the *topoanalysis* of spaces in diasporic and local works. The findings of this thesis also point at the correlation between spaces and identities, providing a stable view on the role the imagination plays in one's experience of spaces.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

READING SPACES THROUGH CULTURE: *TOPOANALYSIS* AND THE IMAGINATION IN AFRICAN QUEER THEORY

It has been previously stated that research on sexualities and the global generalization of queer theory lacks focus on cultures, cultural spaces, historical factors, and cultural geographies, especially when discussing the modern urban spaces a queer identity occupies (Mitchell 2000, xiv). Natalie Oswin, in "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space" (2008), observes that when discussing spaces and queer theory, clear demarcated queer spaces for non-Caucasian identities do not exist especially in literary works which are [the spaces] "implicitly white" (93). To expand on the concept of queer cultural spaces and queer theory, she calls forth the questioning of "race, colonialism, geopolitics, migration, globalization and nationalism to the fore in an area of study previously trained too narrowly on sexuality and gender" (90). Oswin's conclusion concerning the lack of cultural specificity within queer theory can be traced back to the dominant ideas and definitions of queer theory and sexual spaces which will further be discussed in my analysis. As Eve Sedgwick states in *Tendencies* (1993), a plethora of different classifications concerning queer theory and its definition exist. At the start of the book, Sedgwick introduces the term "queer" as relating to same-sex relationships and practices, further claiming the heteronormative origins of such a definition. She proceeds to elaborate on this conclusion by mentioning one definition of "queer" as, "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of

anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (7), opening up the concept of "queer" and "sexuality" to a plethora of different definitions and meanings. According to Sedgwick, "a lot of the most exciting recent work around "queer" spins the term outward along dimensions" like race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality, violence and migration (8) allowing the concept of space to integrate itself within the queer definition. In accordance, the definition of queer cannot be fully stabilized to mean one thing, allowing the different spatial and historical aspects subjected onto the queer identity to create different, more "personal", meanings to being queer. The previously mentioned definition of an "open mesh of possibilities" will aid this analysis in moving forward given the different racial and historical aspects the sexualities of non-white individuals embody, furthering the complex analysis of the spaces that will be elaborated on in the upcoming sections.

To further the research and in accordance with Sedgwick's previous statements, her discussion concerning the heteronormativity and Anglo-American culture mostly apparent in major literary works (115) and Oswin's call for a more specific and personalized approach to the discussions on sexualities and spaces, a number of growing body of work concerning spatiality and sexuality will be elaborated on and introduced for the progression of my analysis. Pioneering works by Henri Lefebvre and Gaston Bachelard in both their books *The Production of Space* (1974) and *The Poetics of Space* (1964) respectively,[1] give us a clear understanding of the concept and production of different types of spaces and locations, in addition to the non-physical spaces that personalize an individual's view on

[1] Originally published in 1958 in French, 1964 designates the date of *La Poétique de l'Espace*'s first English translation by Maria Jolas.

different aspects of life. Merging these two previously mentioned works with Chantal Zabus' and Neville W. Hoad's *Out in Africa* (2013) and *African Intimacies* (2007), respectively, which focus on the issues that arise when queer African identities are subjected to globalization, causing the loss of cultural identity, provides the analysis a clear relationship between locations and identities, in addition to focusing the study on African literature. Also, Joseph A. Massad's *Desiring Arabs* (2007), which analyzes the Westernized values given to the queer Arab world as well as sheds a light on the issues which arise when such a perception is subjected onto a non-Western identity, my analysis will join such body of work through the critical study of spaces as projections of queer identities. These "projections" lead to the illustration of a non-conforming view on spatiality, as well as an inability to stabilize said views as a result of the liminal cultural existences African queer identities live in. The problems that arise when subjecting an African queer identity to the American queer culture are visible through the comparison of queer texts from the diaspora as opposed to queer texts from Africa. The three texts which will be spatially analyzed are the diasporic novel *Speak No Evil* (2018) by Uzodinma Iweala, the Nigerian short story *Apollo* (2015) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Ugandan short story *Jambula Tree* (2008) by Monica Arac de Nyeko. This analysis will focus on these specific three texts due to the authors' avid use of spaces and descriptions concerning the queer journeys of their protagonists. In addition to the fact that all three protagonists discuss the starts of their sexual journeys, which is mainly represented through a mesh of confused choices and experiences regardless of the identity, all three texts provide an equal and clear starting point, despite the different locations each character

resides in, allowing the analysis a more balanced look at the diasporic and the national works.

The conclusion that will arise from the previously stated analysis reiterates Massad's main point concerning the issues of globalizing queer theory, but instead of bringing forth the issues arising from said globalizations, the analysis will focus on the comparison of spaces in relation to the sexual identities of the protagonists. At one point in Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* (2001) the author states the existence of a theory arguing for the presence of an alternating identity adopted by African individuals when placed in cultures different from their own (29). These alternating identities prove to convey a more unstable outlook on one's general view and response on situations, relationship and locations. The comparison between the spaces of diasporic and local texts will prove the imbalance and inequality shown between the confused state of the diasporic queer African identity's situation as opposed to the more stable queer African identity living in Africa and adopting local queer practices. This leads to the concept of anti-universalism being the notion adopted by African authors, conceived through the spaces provided in their works.

To reach the afore mentioned point, the dissertation will firstly lay the foundation of the studies concerning spaces and its production, deciphering between two main categories of space; physical and mental. Next, location, gender, race and sexuality will be integrated into the study of spatiality, working on differentiating between the perceptions and productions of different spaces when discussing different identities occupying such spaces. In addition to that, Bachelard's *topoanalysis* will be introduced to elaborate on the method used when exploring the spaces in the texts. The concept of anti-universalism in non-

Western civilizations will also be fully presented and explained to form a more concrete goal for the analysis of the dissertation. Lastly, the final two chapters of the analysis will focus on the three afore mentioned texts, dividing themselves into two categories; diasporic and national. The focus will mainly be on the spaces occupied by the three protagonists and the way their identities and reactions conform or do not conform accordingly. Through the analysis of these different queer spaces, a clear divide between the identities will emerge allowing the anti-universalistic sense that African individuals develop to arise from the comparison.

A. Topoanalysis Imagines a More Personal Space

French materialist philosopher Henri Lefebvre introduces his research on the meaning of space in his novel *The Production of Space* (1974) with the statement, "the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area" (1). Throughout his work on spatiality, Lefebvre evolves that statement to envelop different aspects of physical and mental locations, as well as emphasizes the valuable role that nature and knowledge play in the production of spaces (3). Lefebvre also stresses the importance of social spaces in determining an individual's emerging identity at a particular point in time (73). Due to the myriad of different spaces presented in the three texts that will be analyzed in the upcoming chapter, it is specifically his [Lefebvre's] afore mentioned work on social, mental and natural spaces that this paper will be focusing on mostly, given its direct correlation with the classified spaces the three main protagonists occupy. My focus on Lefebvre's classification of spaces stems from his elaboration concerning the clear interchangeable connections between spaces and identities occupying

them, which allows for the analysis of the spaces of the African texts at hand to represent a more personal and specific reality, aiding in the inclusion of racial, historical and cultural aspects. Similarly, in Letitia Smuts' research on the relationship between queer African identities and social spaces in "Coming Out as a Lesbian in Johannesburg, South Africa: Considering Intersecting Identities and Social Spaces" (2011), she concludes that the findings indicated that "sexual identities were linked and influenced by the social spaces in which they found themselves" (32). This creates a direct connection between spaces and identities, which Lefebvre examines as being mutually exclusive and challenging each other in different manners, hence claiming that, in another sense, there exists no space without identities and vice versa.[2] As previously stated, Lefebvre distinguishes between numerous different kinds of spaces (3), but it is the afore mentioned natural, mental and social spaces which will be defined for the purpose of this analysis.

Starting off with mental spaces, or, as Lefebvre labels them, 'mental thing/place' (3), which represent all that is visualized in the mind and not a physical location. Lefebvre notes the complex nature of a 'mental thing' and the trouble that arises when attempting to stabilize a definition for it by stating that "we are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary spaces, ideological spaces, the space of the dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth" (3). In a sense, these mental spaces could never be clearly defined but could be simply explained as the gap or the bridge between a mental thought and a physical space (4). Secondly, Lefebvre mentions the value

[2] Going from Lefebvre's idea, Don Mitchell, in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (2000), gives the example of a "gay bar", where an individual might be regarded as being gay just for occupying this space. Also, the example of a random bar being mostly occupied by groups of queer individuals might take on the identity of being a "gay bar" (173).

of nature in the production of all human and societal spaces. In doing so, he approaches the concept of social spaces through the rationale behind the meaning of nature. According to Lefebvre, "nature creates and does not produce" (70) as opposed to a society's way of producing different spaces for different purposes. From nature comes the individual and from the individual comes the knowledge to build physical spaces and societies to further progress and evolve the human race (3). In short, natural spaces exist on their own and are used to enrich an identity's life, while societal spaces are produced by identities for that said identity group to occupy. Lefebvre walks us through the concept of production claiming that "humans as social beings are said to produce their own life, their own consciousness, their own world" (68). So to Lefebvre, social spaces represent a "set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object" (73), leading to the conclusion that these spaces differ from one person to another. In addition to that, and in a sense, social spaces, to Lefebvre, designate a paramount amount of relationships between man and man or man and object (83). Applying Lefebvre's definition of social spaces as a "set of operations" that cannot be defined as "a simple object", moves the analysis forward as it provides us with the basis of the malleability of physical and mental spaces in relation to the identity of the individual who occupies it. In a sense, spaces represent different things to different identities depending on the ways they occupy said spaces, leading to a more specific analysis of the spaces in the upcoming chapters. With Lefebvre's definition of social spaces and Letitia Smuts conclusion concerning the direct interchangeable relationship between identities and spaces, we move forward onto Gaston Bachelard's work on the imagination and its relationship with space in a more individualized manner, to aid

this dissertation in including race, history, and culture in the analysis of spaces, which renders the texts different, personal, and comparable.

As previously mentioned, Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1964) provides a more phenomenological philosophical approach to the reading of the spaces around an individual, especially around more personal locations like domestic spaces inside the home, which will greatly aid in this paper's spatial analysis for its specificity and relation to mental situations and locations within a physical space, in addition to personalizing said spaces due to an identity's consciousness being at play in its imagination of locations. But before going into Bachelard's work, and drawing on Lefebvre's work, and similar to Smuts conclusion, Doreen Massey, in *Politics and Space/Time* (1992), emphasizes the fluid definitions of spaces and the different ways authors perceive the spaces they write about in their works (66). She elaborates on that point by adding that "the issue of the conceptualization of space is of more than technical interest; it is one of the axes along which we experience and conceptualize the world" (67), pointing back to the concept of social spaces being perceived differently by the occupant of said space and/or its producer. Despite Bachelard's similar discussions on the topic, he switches the focus from the search for a stable definition of space to the acceptance of the current present experiences conveyed through the spaces around an identity,[3] and how these experiences, memories and ideas affect the spaces. What this analysis focuses on from Bachelard's work on spatiality and poetry is his views on memory and imagination; the relationship between the consciousness and the home. Although memories are mostly regarded as events that occur

[3] i.e. the imagination of the spaces through one's current perception of his or her life.

in the past and are merely repeated in the minds of individuals who recall them, Bachelard works on introducing the idea of memories being part of the present as much as the past (2) through the reliving of these memories.[4] The home is, within an individual's mind, often seen as the space of refuge with a complete sense of belonging. Such domestic spaces, to Bachelard, represent the direct products of the soul and what one imagines when at their most vulnerable (3). Numerous different philosophies and findings will oppose Lefebvre's materialist view on spatiality but Bachelard's work on the home and its body of images integrates itself well into the previously stated three definitions of spaces, fulfilling most culturally imposed works with the tools required for a clear critical analysis and creating a more personal approach to the analysis through the introduction of *topoanalysis*.

Starting off with Bachelard's work on the domestic space, homes are spaces which evoke full comfort due to the balance it offers the identity that occupies it (25). The balance is created through the polarity of the rooms available in the average home; from the attic down to the basement, allowing some rooms to embody a more neutral stance than other rooms. These points of neutrality usually lie in the bedroom and the living room (28), especially during childhood before the sense of intimacy takes over these confined domestic spaces and transforms them into a different type of comfort. This relationship between individuals and the spaces inside their houses urged Bachelard to introduce the concept of 'daydreaming' inside the safety of one's home as the practice that aids in differentiating between the spaces an individual might or might not enjoy occupying (35).

[4] Bachelard mentions the bringing of the past into the present, allowing it to survive in the situation that the individual is experiencing.

When an individual 'daydreams' about his or her home and the peace they will be provided with within each different room, the home becomes a sort of psychological diagram which helps authors venture through the different levels of intimacy their characters go through in their stories (59). Exemplifying all these previous claims, Bachelard visualizes a reader reading about a bedroom who then "leaves off a reading and starts to think of some place in his own past" (35). The author writing about the room would like to share his or her experiences with this room but what he or she ends up doing is unlocking "a door to daydreaming" (36). In short, an individual perceives rooms through the memories that these spaces evoke in his or her mind, bringing the past into the present and transforming it into a physical "object". This ideology moves us to the next section of Bachelard's work consisting of the introduction of a technic of psychoanalytical analysis which will be applied throughout the spatial analysis of this paper; *topoanalysis* and which will aid in arguing for the anti-universalistic approach adopted by the three African authors. Valuable, reflexive, work on the study of spatiality has been done by Bachelard who observed that rooms were not merely physical locations but reverberation of past memories brought back to exist in the present (29). He defines *topoanalysis* as, "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (30) which, simply put, means that memories of the home, as previously stated, are not merely recollections of the past that only exist in the past, but also represent the body of images that construct the home, i.e. exiting the subconscious to move into the conscious memory and imagination.[5] My analysis uses *topoanalysis* to decipher the different types of intimacies authors provide in their depictions of their

[5] In simpler terms, *topoanalysis* is the study of an individual's identity through the locations he or she occupies.

characters' homes, including the discussion of domestic spaces outside of their own homes. Bachelard transcends the physicality of the rooms in the house and focuses on the memory provided of these spaces to reach the core and soul of an identity (32), which is what my analysis will be focusing on especially when dissecting domestic spaces in comparison to each other and the feelings evoked through memories and ideas. In addition to domestic spaces, Bachelard's take on urban spaces, more specifically, homes that lack polarity in terms of the attic and the basement, as a concept that I will be integrating in the analysis of the urban spaces around the three African protagonists of the stories at hand. When giving examples of the houses on the streets of Paris, Bachelard discusses the lack of verticality of homes which have no basement, no attic and, subsequently, no stairs due to the elevators that apartments fashion (46). In such cases, Bachelard calls for the imagination to help the mind 'create' what the home lacks. For example, when in his Paris apartment, city's noises are transformed into the natural sounds of the ocean which Bachelard claims is a way the mind converts hostile sounds and imageries to something more soothing, natural and familiar (50).[6] Similarly, numerous cases of such imagined alternatives to uncomfortable situations and spaces exist in this analysis, leading to the use of *topoanalysis* to examine and expose the different expressions of intimacies an author's characters have towards a specific room through the use of the imagination and memory as a method to decipher these locations. Through the use of *topoanalysis*, I will be able to fully analyze and comprehend

[6] Bachelard here mentions the way he used to imagine his bed in his Parisian apartment as floating in the middle of the ocean when the sounds of the city outside of his window become too loud (50), hence replacing the unnatural sounds of the urban city with the natural sounds of the ocean. This leads back to Lefebvre's view on nature being the most freely comfortable space an identity could occupy due to its lack of artificial production.

the reactions the African queer identities of the stories at hand project, relating them to their growth as a means of consequently comparing them to each other, hence proving the instability of the diasporic queer identity against the stability of the African queer identity. Moving on from the method used, the integration of culture is valuable for the arguing of the use of an anti-universalistic approach to African texts. The next section of this chapter will consist of the relationship between spaces and African queer identities, and the spaces they occupy. The focus will be on the history of queer theory in Africa and the way it integrates itself in the present, the issues that arise once globalized and the reason behind its importance when analyzing spaces.

B. African Histories Partake in the Occupation of Urban Spaces

The previous section elaborated on the study of spaces through an identity's imagination of said locations, also known as *topoanalysis*, Bachelard's coined terminology, while still designating specific rooms as being more intimate, comfortable, or uncomfortable than others. This section will provide a clearer observation of cultured social and domestic spaces, the relationships required to produce such places, and the presupposed gender and identity of the location, which will allow the analysis a more specific view on African identities in the different spaces and locations they occupy. In addition, this section will also include a concise historical review of queer African history and the way it is perceived around the world to help in specifying the different African ideologies ignored in different civilizations. Starting off with the power dynamics of social

relationships, Doreen Massey and Henri Lefebvre both argue for the unequal experiences that result from occupying social spaces. In the first place, Lefebvre states that, "the more a space partakes in nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production" (83), deeming urban spaces the most unstable places to the identities classified as minorities. In a sense, the minority group occupying an urban space will not feel as comfortable and at ease as the majority group of identities, unlike in nature where both are equal since natural spaces do not partake in social productions. Massey elaborates on this concept by introducing the notion of the politics of power to the production of space. She states, in *Politics and Space/Time* (1992), that spatiality is "integral to the production of history" (83), hence tying it to politics. Massey then further designates 'gender' as a characteristic of political power, describing the different roles each gender plays in a society, securing each identity a different experience in a specified gendered space (72). In conclusion, there exists no balanced and similar experience for two different identities. Given this ideology, analyzing spaces as free of culture, gender, history and race deems the outcome unclear and generalized. Similarly, Don Mitchell, in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (1994), states the instability of all social spaces due to the overlapping of the myriad of identities which occupy these public spaces (xvi). Here, Mitchell is shedding light on the fluidity of an identity, in relation to the fluidity of spaces. Spaces are ever-changing depending on the individual producing and occupying said places, due to the fact that power dynamics are also constantly changing. For example, a bar could be regarded as a 'gay' bar due to the amount of queer identities that occupy that club. In a similar sense, a park could be regarded as a runner's park in the morning due to the amount of runners who occupy it at that specific time, and a children's park in the afternoon for the same reasons.

Mitchell also mentions the capabilities of gendered and sexualized spaces to evoke an individual's identity (174). Given this unbalanced and interchangeable relationship between spaces and identities, the integration of culture, history, race and gender to the analysis of spaces is valuable for this dissertation, given the African protagonists at hand and the value it will bring to the final comparison.

When discussing the inclusion of culture in the study of spaces, Nathalie Oswin, in "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality" (2008), introduces the different aspects of queer identities (race, history, gender, culture, geographical location…) to the afore mentioned queer spaces. According to Oswin, queer spaces, in the view of critical geographers, merely designates the spaces homosexual identities occupy (89) reckoning queer spaces a transgressive form of heteronormative spaces. Oswin critiques this definition by stating the importance that race and class play on any space (90). In a sense, Oswin is calling for the redefining of queer spaces as not just a space of sexuality, but a space of race, culture, and class, integrating the concept of 'queer theory' to heteronormative spaces as well. Race and sexuality, as Oswin puts it are, "predominantly understood as analogous rather than mutually constituted" (94). In this logic, Caucasian queer individuals are sexualized accordingly, while non-white identities are only raced despite their homosexual identities. This denies the non-white queer identity from fully exploring their sexual identity, making it more difficult for them to stabilize themselves and their thoughts and feelings. Calling for the broadening of queer theory to integrate race in sexuality challenges the monolithic portrayals of heterosexuality and provides a more balanced view on the queer identities discussed (100). Regarding queer identities in

consideration to their race and cultural upbringing allows for the analysis this paper will provide to personalize the literary conclusions made on each identity, specify the differences and lead to a clearer and more stable comparison to reach the goal of arguing for the presence of an anti-universalistic approach adopted by African authors. Similar to Oswin, Mitchell works on integrating the term "culture" to the social spaces previously discussed. Mitchell describes "culture" as not one thing but rather, "a struggled-over set of social relations, relations shot through with structures of power, structures of dominance and subordination" (xv). Without the integration of culture, gender, race and class, social spaces do not fully make sense. It is the merging of all these different aspects of an identity that deems urban locations unstable. According to Mitchell, identities are formed through the occupation of specific spaces, claiming that racial inclinations of any sort are provided by the occupation of cultured spaces, the entourage, relationships, and the class that an identity belongs to (176). In addition to that, Mitchell gives the example of the myriad of McDonald's franchises around the world which serve different menu items depending on the culture of the space the franchise occupies to explain the inter-changeable relationship between identities and spaces (xvi).

In addition to the previously stated discussions on cultural spaces, and before moving to African queer spaces, Mitchell also mentions the importance postcolonial theory plays in the different power structures of spaces (xvii). Postcolonial theory offers a greater understanding of the relationship identities share with spaces due to the domination and subordination roles provided by the society. The issues that arise when a non-white individual exists in the spaces of different cultures are apparent due to the power dynamics

at hand. This is clearly shown in Iweala's diasporic novel *Speak No Evil* when discussing Niru and Meredith's relationship throughout the book. But before we move onto discussing the African queer identity in global spaces, it is valuable to elaborate on the queer historical background of specific sub-Saharan African countries to fully comprehend the analysis of the spaces the identity occupies. In Chantal Zabus' *Out in Africa* (2013), it is stated that, "African '*homosexualities'* can never be comfortably slotted within identity politics carved out of Western 'gay' and 'lesbian' liberation struggles, and display queer and even post-queer characteristics" (5) due to the main reason that the terms 'homosexuality', 'gay', 'lesbian' and any of the sort are regarded as being completely 'un-African' and that is, according to Zabus, due to their absence in African queer histories (10). Basing queer theory on the American/English discourse limits other global identities from feeling comfortable expressing themselves in a language outside of their own. According to Zabus, the main issue arising from such a Eurocentric theorization of queer theory is that the localization of desire skips out of identity politics (6) rendering the outcome bland, less personalized and mainly catered to the cultured identity. She then proceeds to stress on the importance of terminologies in the application of queer theory, providing a solid background for the analysis of African texts, disregarding the globalized ideologies usually used, or at least giving them less importance. For example, an African woman wanting to indulge in a sexual relationship with another woman refuses the term 'lesbian' and wants to only be labeled as '*amachicken*' which is defined as involving foreplay (17). Despite the fact that both words might designate the same concept, they do not mean the same things especially to the people using them and the people of that specific culture. In a sense, the term 'homosexual' is 'un-African' as a terminology but not as a practice. This allows for

the concept of globalization to show the negative effects that this analysis wants to argue African authors utilize. According to Zabus, the introduction of homophobia came through Europe to Africa (20), which, in turn, proves the acceptance of queer practices in African countries due to the adaptation of cultural terminologies for such practices and the rejection of universal ones. She emphasizes that, "phrases like 'pederasty', 'sodomy', or 'situational homosexuality' fail to account for the culture-specific complexity of African intimacies and in particular, same-sex relations in sub-Saharan Africa in and outside of ritual" (20). For example, in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, pederasty, the sexual acts between a man and a boy, was regarded as a *rite of passage* "that implied symbolic reversal" (25) allowing a boy to become 'a man'. Yet in Senegal, 'pederasty' was used to define any white or non-white adult males in a sexual relationship (29). These different outlooks on the same word do not intermix, with each culture conforming to its own historical and current practices. This concept is valuable for the analysis of the three African texts in comparing both two African countries and Africa and America. Zabus proceeds on to bring into view the different queer practices from the queer histories of specific African countries by introducing two relationships; boy-wives and female husbands. The first designating the relationship between a young boy and a man during war times (at times even involving cross-dressing) (35-38), and the latter a sexual and emotional relationship between two women whose husbands have left for war (43), both these practices are deemed acceptable and public in numerous sub-Saharan African countries. The use of locally approved terminologies as opposed to the adoption of universal words deems valuable for this analysis especially in the discussion of the non-diasporic stories, which prove to display a more stable identity than the diasporic novel.

In addition to Zabus, in Neville Hoad's *African Intimacies* (2007), it is constantly reiterated that, in a sense, the rejection of homosexuality in Africa came from a misplaced rejection of cultural globalization (xii). Given that the analysis in this dissertation, which argues for the existence of a sense of anti-universalism in queer African stories, Hoad's argument proves valuable for this dissertation. Hoad's book consists of an analysis to argue that 'homosexuality', "is one of the many imaginary contents, fantasies, or significations (sometimes in the negative, sometimes not) that circulate in the production of African sovereignties and identities in their representations by Africans and others" (xvi). Similar to my analysis, Hoad's work consists of focusing on the reasons behind the rejection of homosexuality in Africa through the use of global politics, as opposed to spatiality in this case, and he achieves that through the analysis of different fictional and nonfictional African texts. The rejection of colonization is prevalent in current Africa, with the rejection of numerous different practices and ideologies that do not necessarily relate back to European or American cultures. Similar to Zabus, Hoad mentions the concept of Africa deeming 'homosexuality' 'un-African' due to cultural and religious reasons, despite the historical and cultural facts of similar practices existing in the past (xii). Hoad stresses on the concept of globalization causing new forms of queer African identities to arise as well as causing this rejection of such identities in these societies. These cultural relationships and ideologies illustrate the different analysis that queer theory can provide if culture and race are fully integrated in the subject, which is valuable for this analysis. Yet, when discussing the effects colonization left on queer African identities, Achille Mbembe, in *On the Postcolony* (2001), claims the importance of the study of colonialism on the current modern identity of African individuals. Accordingly, and as an outcome of all the years of

colonialism, Mbembe claims the evolution of African identities to encompass a more fluid aspect of existing and conforming to society (29). African individuals have acquired the ability to inter-change their identities to fit the situation they are in to benefit them (29). Despite this, when discussing immigrant identities living outside of their mother countries, Raymond Williams, in *The Politics of Modernism* (1989), describes a kind of alienation that most of these 'immigrant' identities might feel when living in the urban spaces of European countries (45) due to the restriction concrete buildings oppress on the cultural imagination.[7] Mbembe's introduction of the fluid African identity and Williams discussion concerning the alienation felt by immigrant identities prove to be useful in my analysis since the concept of an unstable identity is what I argue is most apparent in diasporic African novels. The integration of Zabus' and Hoad's work on the effects globalization has on African identities also aids this analysis in the comparison of the spaces in and outside of Africa. Integrating culture into Bachelard's *topoanalysis* when specifically discussing African works is integral in arguing for the different aspects found between protagonists outside of Africa as opposed to the ones living in Africa, which subsequently represents the sense of anti-universalism African authors illustrate in their literary works.

C. Globalization Halts Steady Identity Growth

Joseph Massad, in *Desiring Arabs* (2008), criticizes the globalization of queer theory and argues for the negative effects it causes on non-white individuals by elaborating

[7] In this section, Raymond Williams specifically discusses these identities' relationship with London.

on the different Arabic texts he works on throughout his book. Similarly, I apply Massaad's and other authors' work on queer globalization in this paper to negate the idealistic representation of sexualities in non-American/European countries caused by globalization through the process of analyzing the spaces that different African queer identities occupy. When addressing the 'introduction' of Western homosexual terminologies and ideologies, Massad mentions the U.S.'s plan on universalizing "gay rights" as a way to connect all the queer individuals of the world together so that they feel more accepted wherever they are located, in addition to stabilizing the gay desires of unstable queer identities (160). Yet, this universalization 'project' proves futile and, on the contrary, heteronormative, leading Massad to state that, "by inciting discourse about homosexuals where none existed before, the Gay International is in fact heterosexualizing a world that is being forced to be fixed by a Western binary" (188). This occurs due to the concept of introducing labels to a country that already practices its own, rendering heterosexuality the 'norm' as opposed to the opposing 'sexual orientation'. Massad gives the example of men who are considered the 'passive' or 'receptive' parties in male-to-male sexual and romantic relationships being forced to choose one or the other, restricting them the liberty of fluidity. "Because most non-Western societies have not subscribed historically to these [Western] categories, their imposition is eliciting less than liberatory outcomes" (188). In addition to this, Massad mentions countries which do not have laws against queer practices creating new ones due to the Gay International's globalization of gay rights (189). He states that the persecuted will be the "poor and nonurban men who practice same-sex contact and who do not *necessarily* identify as homosexual or gay" (189). Massad makes it clear that the Gay International's goal to universalize homosexuality as a way to simplify queer identities'

lives has proved the opposite, rendering non-white identities more unstable, confused and sometimes in danger (190). Similar to his work, my analysis will join this body of work in proving a sense of anti-globalization in African texts through the comparison of diasporic and local literary works.

Now that I have laid down the definition of spaces, the different categories, and discussed the issues that arise when subjecting a non-white queer identity to globalized Eurocentric and Americanized homosexual terminologies, my analysis then works on extracting spatial references in three African texts to finally compare them, noticing an unstable identity in the globalized queer individual as opposed to the more stable African cultured queer identities. The differences that will arise are classified not only considering the emotions explored and exerted by the protagonists, but also the "unhomely" feeling that these locations might or might not provide for these identities. The technic I will be adopting in my analysis exists in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), where he introduces the term "unhomely" in the discussion of spaces. Heavily influenced by Freud's work on the *uncanny*, Bhabha describes the unhomely as something that stealthily creeps up on you but is not related to being homeless (10). In a sense, the unhomely, simply put, is when the public is brought into the private (11), destroying any sense of privacy, intimacy and comfort an individual might have had in a specific domestic room. The globalization of private and intimate desires and practices lead to the exploitation of domestic spaces, which subsequently lead to the sense of alienation Bhabha is trying to convey. Freud's work on the *uncanny* can fully be integrated in my analysis given the ideologies presented by Bhabha which fully correlate the uncanny to the spaces surrounding an identity. *The*

Uncanny (1919) discusses the concept of the familiar becoming unfamiliar (148). Freud defines the uncanny as, "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124), which Bhabha adopts and integrates to develop in a more cultural sense. Similar to this dissertation's argument, to non-white individuals living outside of their mother countries, familiar social spaces become uncomfortable while occupying them especially when the spaces are exposed to drastic mental (a tragic event) or physical changes. Bhabha states that, "the study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of 'otherness'" (12) and it is that 'otherness' which provides the eerie sense of unfamiliarity in homely spaces, and this otherness which my analysis will be looking out for in the comparison of spaces.

Conclusion

In addition to Bhabha's sense of unhomeliness, integrating Massad's view on globalization, Bachelard's *topoanalysis*, Lefebvre's views on natural spaces and Zabus' and Hoad's work on local African queer theory, I work on analyzing the African diasporic and the African local authors' representation of spaces in their stories to prove the correlation between spaces and anti-universalism of queer identities in the comparison of unhomely locations. My analysis will depict the unhomeliness and instability of the spaces the diasporic queer African identity illustrates, in comparison to the stable and natural spaces the local queer African identities portray. This paper will analyze three different texts; one

diasporic novel and two local short stories. The second chapter of the dissertation will start with the analysis of the diasporic novel, where I will be extracting the spaces in Uzodinma Iweala's *Speak No Evil* (2018) and displaying the unhomeliness and instability presented in the book caused by the globalized terminologies and realities young protagonist Niru has to abide and live by, which clash with the Nigerian culture his parents at home want him to follow. The third and final chapter of this paper will be focusing on two texts; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Apollo" (2015) and Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2008) which, in turn, will portray the naturalized aspect of the spaces that their queer protagonists, Okenwa and Anyango, respectively, perceive and occupy, proving a sense of acceptance with no agitated concerns with the labels that their identities need to conform to.

CHAPTER II

TRACING ANTI-UNIVERSALISM IN DIASPORIC SPACES: A SPATIAL READING OF *SPEAK NO EVIL*

Born and raised in America, Nigerian-American author Uzodinma Iweala contributes to the diasporic African literary movement with both his novels *Beasts of No Nation* (2005) and *Speak No Evil* (2018). With the first discussing child soldiers in an unnamed African country, the latter will be adopted in the analysis of spaces for its clear displays of the connection between spatiality and instability in diasporic identities this analysis is trying to prove. *Speak No Evil* is a contemporary novel that uses a first-person narrative, allowing a close understanding of the experiences of Niru Ikemadu, an intelligent 18-year-old Nigerian American senior in high school who, similar to Iweala, resides in Washington, DC with his wealthy family. Most of the spaces that Iweala depicts share similar characteristics representing confusion, instability, and discomfort. Whether public or private, Niru experiences Homi Bhabha's sense of "unhomeliness" (1994), a term appropriated from Freud's work on the "*heimlich/unheimlich*" (*The Uncanny*, 1919), which, as previously discussed, takes on a more global scale when discussing contemporary world literature and different cultures. The "home" is generally perceived as a space of security, belonging, clarity, and stability. The "unhomeliness" begins when the "home" is shifted away from the familiar, emanating a sense of terror, hence *uncanniness* (124). In *Speak No Evil*, the landscapes of Washington, DC and Nigeria overlap, creating a powerful clash of cultures within Niru. Niru does not fit in Nigeria yet does not belong in America and his inability to fully integrate himself in either cultures is very apparent in Iweala's use

of spatiality. With the application of Gaston Bachelard's *topoanalysis* (*The Poetics of Space*, 1957) to the spaces of the novel, in addition to his claim that memories are part of the present as much as the past (xi), we come to comprehend that there exists a sense of discomfort and alienation in Niru's perception of the spaces around him. This cold alienation goes back to the negative outcomes Raymond Williams discusses, which are subjected onto immigrant identities occupying spaces in different cultures, hence, and with the inclusion of Massad's concept of the instability subjected on queer identities caused by the globalization of Western queer theory, creating a sense of anti-universalism. Iweala's protagonist's Nigerian roots play a crucial role in intensifying this anti-universalistic sense ignited by the clash that results from Niru's residence in America and his family's Nigerian background. Iweala provides his readers with a clear understanding of the chaos and imbalance that occurs once an African identity like Niru's is socialized into the more liberal values of the American culture, while balancing the more conservative and religious values his parents want him to live by. Niru also has a first-hand experience with the unfamiliar and alien customs brought by the American state he lives in due to his integration in an American high school. Growing up in America and having his entire future planned out through his scholarly accomplishments and track-running, his life consists of numerous cataclysmic obstacles brought upon him by his unequivocal desires towards men clashing with his longing to fit in with his family and be more like his "perfect" Nigerian older brother.

When discussing individuals with liminal existences in Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), it is stated that "the borders between home and world become confused" (9). Bhabha expresses the discomfort diasporic identities, or any identity forced to live in

two different cultures, when trying to identify themselves and grow. Being displaced from a colonial home onto a new land denies the protagonist from existing in a safe environment which allows him or her a stable place to grow. Iweala explores this uncanny nature of the spaces around Niru, taking into consideration the confusion Niru experiences between balancing the two different "worlds" he is a part of. The act of bringing into view the complex destabilization most diasporic identities experience displays a sense of anti-globalization since, and especially when compared to non-diasporic works, African identities residing in America tend to find more difficulty in stabilizing themselves as opposed to African identities residing in Africa (Williams, 43).[8] This is especially due to the cultural practices objected on the individual as well as the language and labels. Iweala proves this anti-universalistic sense through the spaces Niru occupies. Those spaces become a key tool in articulating this sense of anti-universalism found in diasporic identities and Iweala does so by blurring the line between familiar and unfamiliar, making every day-life and personal rooms, homes, activities and interactions slightly more threatening to the self, hence including Bhabha's sense of the unhomely feeling in said spaces. Given the previously discussed points concerning Bhabha's unhomeliness, these feelings that Niru goes through in a variety of different spaces is what this section of the analysis will be focusing on. Iweala's physical and mental spaces can be understood as an outcome of Niru's deracination through the use of Bhabha's *unhomeliness*, which further proves the sense of anti-globalization Iweala is attempting to visualize and prove when subjecting African identities to the American culture.

[8] On the analysis of poems about the city of London written by authors from the city as opposed to authors who were born somewhere else.

Mainly focusing on Niru's domestic rooms as well as the mental spaces represented in *Speak No Evil*, this chapter sets out to explore the manifestation of the anti-universalist sense presented through the *topoanalysis* of Iweala's spaces. My approach mainly builds on Gaston Bachelard's development of the crucial analysis of spaces termed as "*topoanalysis*", which, as previously mentioned, seeks to "work with psychoanalysis to analyze exiting the subconscious and entering the conscious of our imagination" (9), in addition to comprehending the significance of the imagination when analyzing urban settings which do not include polar rooms (i.e. the attic and the basement) meaning no vertical quality of intimacy is available for the occupants of the home (10). In a sense, the analysis will work on breaking down the spaces in *Speak No Evil*, using Bachelard's *topoanalysis* through deciphering the home to provide a clear understanding of the instability experienced by Niru. The uncanny and the unhomely will also rise into view in the analysis and will be adopted in the upcoming chapter for further comparisons when discussing the domestic bedrooms and the unhomely and unsafe feelings they provide as opposed to the warmth and security a bedroom is normally supposed to provide. As such, this chapter aims to represent a clear analysis of the spaces Niru occupies and compare them, in the third chapter of this dissertation, to the way other characters' perceive these spaces, in addition to further compare them to works of authors relating to African identities living in Africa and not subjected to Western ideologies. This comparison will allow the analysis to prove the use of the anti-universalistic sense present in diasporic texts.

A. Liminal Existences and the Issues with the Home

Given the previously stated value a home offers throughout the growth of one's identity, I will be starting off the analysis with the main house in the story, Niru's home. This key space for the uncanny embodies the blurring of the line between the familiar and unfamiliar which is clearly shown through both Niru's feelings towards his bedroom and his room preferences. The home in *Speak No Evil* mainly acts as an *in-between* space for Niru since it is not quite as intimate as the average domestic home, but never as chaotic, impersonal and exposed as the average urban landscape (79).[9] But what defines a home and what makes a space a home? In *Psychological, Political, and Cultural Meanings of Home* (2005), Mechthild Hart and Miriam Ben-Yoseph describe the home as a space, "fully inserted in the social division between private and public spheres or life-worlds. This division profoundly affects the spatial and social organization of the home or the public [work]place" (3). In the same book, when discussing the clash between the public and the private when the domestic home is mixed with the public especially when living in a country far from the mother country, Shu-Ju Ada Cheng states that, "home was both intimate and alien" (10). With this in mind, and similarly, Niru's home starts resembling a public space more than a private and personal space and this will be shown through his [Niru's] feelings towards his home and bedroom. In Emma Zimmerman's analysis of Jean Rhys's protagonist in her article "*The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight*" (2015), she defines the lobby as a space that blurs the "boundaries the hotel

[9] From Emma Zimmerman's "Always the same stairs, always the same room": The Uncanny Architecture of Jean Rhys's Good Morning, Midnight.

engenders" (79). Similar to Niru's perception of his home, the bedroom and the kitchen blur the boundaries that the home is supposed to engender.

This is first shown when Iweala states that Niru's first impression of his home that we notice is the violence and stress that awaits him if he does not make it before night falls due to the snowstorm (5). Niru also vocalizes his fear of going home after the plausible threat of receiving a speeding ticket by the two cops who pull him over in fear that his father would throw a tantrum and start comparing him to his perfect brother, OJ (28). Yet, Mr. Ikemadu's aggressive reaction stems from a different issue which was the shocking unanticipated revelations he finds on Niru's phone, leading him to beating up his own son. This altercation between Niru and his father directs us to the continually recounted domestic room in *Speak No Evil*; the kitchen.

Going through the most prominent spaces in Niru's home to decipher Iweala's use of anti-universalization in *Speak No Evil*, part I delineates the kitchen under various lights. According to Gayatri Gopinath in *Impossible Desires* (2005), "home in the queer fantasy of the past is the space of violent (familial and national) disowning" (173). Working from that, it is made known during Niru and his father's altercation that the kitchen has been representing the space where Niru felt his father's disapproval the most for as long as he remembers. In chapter eight, Iweala mentions that Niru and his mother, Ify, used to spend a lot of time cooking together in the kitchen before Niru's father denied Ify this shared activity in fear that his son would turn out 'effeminate' (127). To Niru's father, Niru's identity is reduced to a number of dehumanizing aspects that represent a more rigid and conventional Nigerian identity, while the kitchen, to Niru, represented all that he was not able to become; a perfect Nigerian man like his brother OJ. On almost all occasions, Niru's

parents are either indignantly or restlessly waiting for Niru's return in the kitchen, on the kitchen counter. Mr. Ikemadu waits for his son's return while, "there is a place mat but no food in front of him" (29). This scene unravels prior to Mr. Ikemadu's violation of Niru's privacy and physical space, and inaugurates the *uncanniness* of the kitchen. Niru comprehends the irrefutable hostility of the situation when he detects the absence of food in front of his father. Niru is consequently slammed on the kitchen table and slapped multiple times before his mother terminates the abuse (32). Subsequently, Niru's perception of the kitchen is always linked to that moment in time. The memory of his father's arms violently placed on his body is invariably recalled through the space of the kitchen as its predominant medium (71).[10] Iweala uses the space of the kitchen as the main representative for all that is Nigerian to Niru. The kitchen, constantly filled with the smell of "jollof rice and egusi soup with *okporopo*" (56), figuratively evokes Niru's cultural identity, the self he is trying to evade as a way to find himself, while simultaneously trying to perfectly achieve so as to please his parents.

Moving on from the space of the kitchen, Niru strongly desires and actively seeks the anonymity his bedroom offers. Prior to the embroilment with his father, Niru is desperate to suppress his unsought desires to the point where he avoided any triggering locations. Recalling his bedroom when he was in Meredith's at the start of the novel, Niru appeared to fondly reminisce over its warmth and security (10). Niru feels "unsteady in this room of shifting shadows" (13) when Meredith takes off her shirt and he is coerced to recognize his unwillingness to perform any sexual activities with her. As is expected from

[10] After Niru's father places his hands on his shoulders, Niru states that, "It is the first time he has touched me since **the kitchen**" (71).

any identity in such a situation, Niru here muddles the inaccurate heteronormative desires with the comfort of his bedroom. Better stated, he concludes an unfitting connection between the identity required of him to convey and his bedroom. Although he desires the safety and reassurance of his private room, it is nevertheless more apparent as an unstable sanctuary. Having his raw desires now unveiled, Niru longs for his previously established rendition of his bedroom. The space of his bedroom represents, to him, his childhood, and simpler times, and what he once believed he could be. After his "*realignment*" trip to Nigeria, Niru yearns for his bedroom space to seek respite from the tensions of approbating and adapting to an Americanized method of self-identification. He feels "weak and exposed" after just a few "short steps" outside of his bedroom (38). The clash between both cultures forces Niru to adapt into the American system of identification due to the social environment built around him which defines him in a manner,[11] but also restricts him from the culturally imposed spaces of his home, family, and memories. This is caused by his divided environment, one imposing him to the labels of the country he lives in, while the other trying to bring him back to the practices of the country he is originally from. Due to that, Niru recollects his bedroom space as a space representing simpler times when his identity was concealed and protected. Iweala uses the space of the bedrooms to signify the in-between between being American and being Nigerian. To Niru, the bedroom is where everything is concealed and nothing should or could be revealed or exposed to the outside.

Further along the story, after Niru's secret has been exposed to his parents, the bedroom transforms into something more unfamiliar to Niru than before. In *The Uncanny*,

[11] i.e.: school.

Freud states that "the uncanny" is "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124). According to Nicholas Royle, in his Freudian commentary *The Uncanny* (2003), the uncanny has to do with "an experience of liminality. It may be that the uncanny is a feeling that happens only to oneself, within oneself, but it is never one's 'own': its meaning or significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others, with the world 'itself'" (2). Instead of conforming to Bachelard's definition of its original role as the point-of-balance between the two polar opposite rooms of a house and the space which provides stability,[12] privacy and non-exposure (59), Niru's bedroom space transforms into a memory of what it once was, governed by Ify's shadow (35) and the shadow of the picture-perfect Nigerian boy he used to be, recalling Bachelard's work on memory and the use of the imagination when domestic rooms become imbalanced (35). In addition, Royle's statement is certainly convincing in its alignment with Niru's description of entering the bedroom on a bad day with a harsh feeling of dizziness that lasts him until he gets to his room

> where I can fling myself on my bed and wait until everything that is my life—the posters I have tacked to the wall, the paintings of African market scenes my parents have meticulously hung, the over-sweet smell of frying plantain and the one-sided frustration of my mother arguing into the phone in Igbo—stop spinning. (84)

Just as Royle argued, Niru's uncanny feeling stems from his bedroom metamorphosing into a space he [Niru] recalls as his own, but is truly the world's. The bedroom loses the qualities it offered before the incident that occurred between Niru and his father but that didn't stop Niru from constantly yearning for the memory of how his bedroom used to be, fixating on the idea of the bedroom as a mental space to make up for the loss of this stable

[12] i.e.: the attic and the basement.

room. Just as the afore mentioned quote states, Niru wishes for his bedroom during horrible times despite the horrific obstacles that await him to reach it. Yet, even after reaching his bedroom, and as previously mentioned, it is now governed by his mother's presence, rendering it less private than it used to be. Iweala transforms the bedroom into a memory of comfort that Niru seeks, rendering the room more unstable and uneasy than at the start of the novel.

To briefly summarize, this illusion of the bedroom's inviolability recalls the domestic space of the kitchen which Niru unsympathetically deems as the space where his parents wait for him to do what they believe would transform him into a "perfect" accomplished Nigerian man they could be proud of (39). At this point, Niru is persuaded that his domestic space has lost its privacy after his father's attack in the kitchen (72). Iweala uses these two spaces to firstly portray the instability these domestic rooms represent to Niru despite their universally accepted approach (as Bachelard claims) and to show the confusion in Niru's mind when desperately trying to stabilize them to fit in. The unclear, indecisive phrases that describe Niru's unstable thoughts and feelings towards one room to another in his own home depicts the instability created by the universal gay terminology he is required to abided to. Due to this requirement, mostly around his American entourage; Meredith, his classmates, the church and later Damien his lover, he becomes deprived of his Nigerian home, leading him to confusing his identity and becoming incapable of balancing both cultures. When discussing Arab and Iranian men who indulge themselves in sexual practices with other men, Joseph Massad, in chapter three, "Re-Orienting Desire", of his book *Desiring Arabs* (2007), explains Rex Wockner's perturbation when these Middle Eastern men reject the *Westernized* gay terminologies,

rendering them, according to Wockner, unstable, as the preeminent issue in gay studies. "It is precisely this perceived instability in the desires of Arab and Muslim men that the Gay International seeks to stabilize, as their polymorphousness confounds gay (and straight) sexual epistemology*"* (164). This extracted quote explains the manner in which American gay activists believe the instability stems from. But on the contrary, cultured identities living in America tend to be more unstable than the individuals living in their mother countries due to the fact that the latter are not subjected to universal ideologies. Iweala negates this quote through the instability he illustrates in Niru's perception of the spaces around him.

Exemplifying the previous claim, Iweala allows the kitchen to lack a sense of personal belonging due to its predominant cultural implications, while the bedroom is momentarily regarded as a desiderated space due to its implications of privacy and non-exposure which are later lost when exposed to western ideologies. The imbalance is apparent in chapter eight, when Niru leaves his bedroom to go meet Damien, he is welcomed by "this beautiful prison that my parents have built" (116). Niru does not recognize himself in his family pictures and stares blankly at "the family that owns me" (116) when he starts accepting himself more in the American views of homosexual practices. Niru wishes he was '*white*' and that he could abide to the laws of the country he calls home. The statement is followed by him [Niru] looking down at Reverend Olumide's Bible Verses Cards and hopes "there is still a chance to change my ways" (116) proving the persistent instability of thought. Iweala provides his readers with the imbalance caused by the merging of two different cultures through the instability presented in the spaces Niru occupies physically and mentally. Through these implications, it is possible to state that

Iweala completes the first step of portraying an anti-universalistic sense through Niru's domestic rooms and home without further analysis. In addition to the imbalance of the domestic rooms, Iweala reiterates his views on the negative effects of queer globalization through the use of mental spaces in the form of Niru's relationships and memories.

B. Meredith and OJ Represent a Cultural Clash

As *Speak No Evil* progresses, Niru's quest for an unalterable identity becomes the driving force of the narrative, as memories of his brother and experiences with his best friend collide, puncturing Niru's relationship with Damien and his present thoughts. While Niru consciously recalls some of these memories, others erupt subconsciously when in his most dire moments, manifesting themselves as narrative flashbacks. According to Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1974), '*mental spaces*', also labeled as '*social spaces*', are a product of the myriad of relationships formed and interconnected, the *social* is the third '*field*' of the production theory, defined by "the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination" (11). In simpler terms, '*mental spaces'* represent a set of recollected moments or relationships that one goes back to in one's mind when in uncomfortable situations. Through these recollections and relationships, an individual is capable of replacing his or her reality to fit a more convenient spatial memory in the experiences and moments they are currently going through. Despite the fact that these '*mental spaces*' are not occurring in the moment, the individual occupying said spaces in his or her mind makes them a part of the present as much as the past.

It is viable to think of this *social field* of space production as a subtitle for *the mental spaces* visited by Niru through his rendition of the relationships and connections that he creates and recalls. Iweala, here, uses OJ and Meredith to illustrate the clash of cultures occurring in Niru's mind. Lefebvre equates *social spaces* to the product of past actions, "social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others" (73). As a result, and going back to Bachelard's work, these flashbacks and memories are not just renditions of the past, but reverberations of the past brought into the present to determine the outcome of the future (xii). Iweala utilizes these *mental spaces* in the form of Meredith, Niru's best friend, and OJ, Niru's brother, to further elaborate on the internal dangers that occur due to the globalization of homosexuality.

Most examples of the collision between the experiences Niru has with Meredith and the flashbacks of OJ consist of a series of situations where Niru is attempting to pull away from the culture Meredith relates to, while enigmatically forcing the culture OJ relates to on himself and on his choice and vice versa. Although similar experiences are produced from both *mental spaces*, this is a useful observation of the conscious and subconscious dilemma Niru is going through caused by his liminal existence. It also provides a strong link to Freud's discussion of the uncanny when psychoanalytical theory is brought in when discussing maintaining the concept that every emotional impulse is transformed into anxious emotional feelings when repressed*, "*then among instances of frightening things there must be a class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs. This class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny"

(75).[13] Similar to what will further be discussed in this section, the repression in thought and the clash of memories propose a bigger case of the frightening and the uncanny. The experiences with Meredith and the recollection of OJ is not uncanny, but, as previously stated, the process of constantly remembering those moments in dire situations only as an attempt to get some sort of relief from an anxiety-inducing experience of instability is. With his use of the uncanny in mental spaces, Iweala leads his readers to fully comprehend the anti-globalizing sense that his protagonist represents. This assertion proves to be essential since it helps us comprehend the clash of the *mental spaces* in Niru's mind when analyzing the novel.

Starting off with some examples of this from *Speak No Evil*, after Meredith's advances are rejected and she leaves Niru alone to wander her home, Niru stumbles on his words and finds it hard to think of something suitable to say to Meredith. He is then overwhelmed by memories of OJ and his confidence, wishing he could be more like him in this specific moment so that he wouldn't find himself in such a mess to begin with (15). Here Iweala makes it clear that OJ was summoned in Niru's mind as a way to escape the reality of him having to tell Meredith that he was not attracted to her for reasons other than her not being pretty enough. The clash between "coming out" in an American world and OJ's capability of escaping any uncomfortable situation proves the discomfort felt by Niru. Similarly, Iweala depicts Niru driving home while remembering the moment Meredith revealed to him that she had downloaded a dating application on his phone, while simultaneously recalling a memory of OJ driving their mother's Volvo and teaching him

[13] Sigmund Freud's The Uncanny from Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's The Monster Theory Reader (2020).

how to be careful and avoid getting in trouble with the cops (22). Despite Niru's persistent attempts to defy everything Meredith says by remembering OJ, he can never entirely resist her. Ergo, Meredith represents one side of Niru's life while OJ illustrates the other. Indeed, much of Niru's time spent with Meredith is subconsciously followed by a recollection of a series of choices that OJ would have taken as opposed to Niru's, leading to the depiction of a more positive outcome than the one Niru would currently be experiencing. In a sense, Niru believes that his Nigerian culture would lead him to a more balanced and happy life like OJ's, while his American culture would cause him more trouble and discomfort. For example, when Niru was in Nigeria to go through his conversion therapy sessions, his father forces him to stay behind to clean up his grandfather's decrepit home where he eventually finds whiskey bottles hidden inside a cabinet. He picks one up and remembers Meredith, imagining her stealing these bottles. Instead of giving in to his mental space recollection of Meredith and having a drink, he "[I] put(s) it back and close(s) the cabinet" (65), shutting Meredith out and focusing on becoming more like OJ.

Moving on to the opposing balance of the previous examples, Niru's biggest struggles for clarity and stability begin in Nigeria when he fondly recalls America as opposed to his constant recollection of OJ and the culture he represents when he was there [in America]. When describing the crowds of people found on the streets and his irrational fear of disappearing, "into the mess of all these people and never be seen or heard from again" (55), Niru recalls what OJ would say to him if they were together, which were mostly words of hatred towards Nigeria, only pretending to enjoy it for the sake of their father. Yet, even though OJ loved visiting people in Nigeria with his father, Niru could not comprehend the delight in the experience. This flashback is rapidly followed by a memory

of Meredith begging Niru not to go to Nigeria (55). Iweala here portrays the clash between Meredith and OJ in favor of Meredith, with Niru's mind recalling Meredith as a safe escape from the rituals and activities he is forced to go through in Nigeria. But although Niru did not want to go to Nigeria, Meredith's offer to have him stay at her house did not appeal to him either since, "the thought of perpetual self-consciousness, of walking from an unfamiliar bedroom to an unfamiliar bathroom in the mornings, of eating salmon and steak tartare instead of *jollof* rice and *egusi* soup with *okporopo* didn't feel like home either" (56). This imbalance in thoughts is evident in the contrast between Niru's different *mental spaces* that he is in a constant state of confusion and is incapable of settling on one cultural identity. The tangibility of his choices anchor him to a reality which ultimately renders him muddled and in a constant state of soul searching. Iweala denies Niru the ability to pick between these two completely different spaces in an attempt to portray the problems that arise with universalizing homosexuality.

As previously stated, this constantly repeating feud between Meredith and OJ in Niru's mind associates Meredith with the more liberal manner the society Niru lives in experiences life and OJ with the more conservative culture their parents live by which Niru desperately strives to be a part of. Niru's acrimony with everything that negates his parents' approval of him translates into a type of aggression towards Meredith, whom he blames for dragging him away from the peaceful life he longs for. When Niru feels more inclined to follow Meredith than OJ, he speculates that his parents did not even want him and that OJ "would have been just fine for them on his own" (28). According to Niru, anything related to Meredith and American practices represent everything that push him away from being the perfect Nigerian son that OJ easily represents. Referring to the exorcism Niru had to

undergo, Iweala utilizes this moment to represent Niru's untenable aggression towards his American life by allowing him [Niru] to blame Meredith for his being in Nigeria (76). This is shown halfway through the exorcism where Niru blames Meredith for his being gay in addition to causing him all these problems by downloading the dating application to begin with, and, with jealousy, recalls his brother's perfection and how their father says OJ's name with pride (79). In addition to this previously stated moment, Niru also openly blames Meredith for his sexual desires when he was drunk at a party (96). The reason it is crucial to mention this final time is because it links us to the next relationship that curtails this hatred towards Meredith and alleviates Niru's resentment of everything American; Damien.

After this short but painful altercation, Meredith takes off and leaves Niru and his drunken accusations behind. He then ends up throwing up on the sidewalk all by himself, only to be safely rescued by Damien who takes him into the store he works at and gets him cleaned up and driven back home. The term 'desire' is frequently deployed in the sections concerning Niru's discernable attraction to Damien. In *Impossible Desires* (2005), Gayatri Gopinath complicates the idea of one definition for desire, especially when discussing diasporic bodies. She argues that*, "*the queer diasporic body is the medium through which home is remapped and its various narratives are displaced, uprooted, and infused with alternative forms of desire" (165). Rather than sharing similar desires as queer identities residing in their mother countries, the diasporic queer body, through the exploration of their desires, comes to envisage a new and "true" homosexual identity that roots them "outside the purview of home and family" (164). In simpler terms, Niru's desires for Damien are what grant him a "true homosexual identity" if only for a few instances, outside of

Meredith and OJ and even outside of his parents and his classmates. For instance, while scouring Sportzone, the store Damien works at, from the outside, Niru recalls Reverend Olumide's disapproval of his desires, OJ's words to not fight battles he cannot win, and his banter with Meredith when mocking their parents' impeccable childhood stories.

Regardless of all these simultaneous flashbacks, Niru's desires for Damien overcome him, making him believe that he was "out of options" (108) and was now required to enter the store and speak with Damien. Iweala here uses Damien as the more natural aspect of Niru's identity and desires. Niru forgets all his responsibilities when it comes to Damien and even, at times, believes in a more comfortable future away from his family when he goes to college. It is during this more natural phase of Niru's growth that he sutures himself to the Tryst scene,[14] radically displacing it from the cultural, social, and political roots of heterosexuality, thus creating a new comfortable space for him to occupy away from the mental spaces of Meredith and OJ and the physical space of his home. On multiple occasions, when leaving Tryst for school, Niru states that "the world has not changed" (117), proving Niru's more natural expression of his homosexual identity forming outside of home, through the free development of his unequivocal desires for Damien. Iweala allows Niru to understand himself a bit more when he is isolated and free from the constant recollection of mental spaces. Composing a poignant final chapter for part I of the novel, Iweala renders Niru incapable of following Meredith nor OJ's lifestyles, leading to his comical rebellion against his father in the middle of the highway, sending him "flying" back to the one place away from home where he can truly be himself, Tryst

[14] A café/bar that Damien takes Niru to on their first day. This will be further discussed in the third subtitle of this chapter.

i.e. Damien. Through these clashes between mental spaces, Niru's discomfort in his own home, and his attachment to a new space and to Damien, Iweala portrays the imbalance and instability caused by the globalization of homosexuality. Niru is incapable of conforming to any one of the cultures he has grown up in so ends up conforming to a new one he has created. This finally moves us to the spaces which are deemed neutral and devoid of human production by Lefebvre; the natural landscapes and the spaces produced for specific groups of people; the strictly heteronormative and religious spaces. Niru occupies both these types of spaces in various instances in the novel, and Iweala makes sure to illustrate a sense of anti-universalism in the emotions expressed by his protagonist.

C. The Moods of Nature

As Henri Lefebvre (1974) famously stated, spaces can be divided into two general categories; spaces that exist and spaces that are made (7). Spaces that exist solely consist of the purest form of nature and the natural landscape. The latter are comprised of any spaces created by social, geographical, economic, sociological, continental, global social relations (8). Approaching Iweala's spaces in this way is highly illuminating given the number of natural and urban landscapes Niru describes in *Speak No Evil*. When discussing the alienation felt by individuals living in their own communities, Raymond Williams, in *The Politics of Modernism* (1989), states that some authors might respond to the urban landscape as a representation of freedom of expression and infinite possibilities, while alienated identities respond to urbanization by representing it as unnatural, precarious, and lacking purity, disallowing any significant amount of space for comfortable personal growth (43). According to Williams, an author might utilize natural metaphors to illustrate

urban landscapes and the emotions these spaces evoke. For example, using terms such as "dark" to describe an impenetrable city (when feeling alienated) and "like flowers" to describe a bright and happy town depending on one's mood (42), as an attempt to bring neutrality to an urban space. Williams drives back to Freud's *The Uncanny* when he describes the uncanny "alienation" that urban landscapes oppress "immigrants" of a city with, discovered through their repeated recollection of past experiences (45). Similar to Williams' argument, Iweala creates an apparent clash between the natural and urban landscapes as a tool for exhibiting the issue that emerges as a central problem of globalizing queer identities. Niru observes his environment and describes it to an extent that the characteristically modern urban landscape is remarkably divided from the natural. Niru relates nature to his desires in their purest form, while the city defines the heterosexual Nigerian-American identity he has to play the rules by. One of the most evident examples of this is discernable on the very first page of *Speak No Evil*, when Niru describes the snow outside of the classroom as "light" and "refusing to stick to anything" but instead "hovers about the bare tree branches" (4). Iweala portrays Niru's dilemma in being unable to harmonize and conform with both of his cultures in this simple natural landscape that "refuses to stick" to anything and just hovers around. Even while Iweala describes both landscapes simultaneously, the ontological divide between nature and society is unmistakably palpable. For example, Iweala describes Niru's surroundings as, "the clouds nuzzle up against one another in a bright blue sky while the sun struggles to warm everything below" (42). The gap between both landscapes is clearly provided in this statement, with "nuzzle" and "bright" as words describing the sky and "struggles to warm" as describing the city. There is a clear division between both landscapes, one being warm

and bright while the other struggles to be the same as the other. Niru divides these landscapes, feeling purity with the natural and artificiality with the urban.

Taking into consideration Lefebvre's concept that nature is pure and the urban is not, the city is callous and unforgiving and its chaos and darkness is predominantly described during Niru's trip to Nigeria. Not only does Niru render the space lewd and sullied for the unfair treatment it reserves for his identity, but explicitly clear-cuts the division between the society and the natural during this traumatic trip. Niru recounts the unfinished church and how it stands out against "the darkness" that covers the city (74). The terms "unfinished" and "darkness" provide the analysis with a clear view of the intentions Niru feels towards the urban landscapes around him. Niru also mentions the "broken and muddy roads", the "crumbling houses", the "overburdened men and women walking slowly in these streets singing praise songs to keep themselves going" (68). Along with Niru's "irrational" fear of disappearing in the monstrous crowd of people busying the streets (53), the contrast in Iweala's explication of the two landscapes in Niru's life is powerful and apparent. Niru secretly loves the thunderstorms and the smell of the red mud in Nigeria (54). He describes the landscapes as "green" and "sweet" (55). Niru secretly loves nature more than the urban landscape because it is more freeing than the latter and does not "stick to anything". In addition to that, the dualism of nature and society is also ostensible in another aspect in *Speak No Evil* which consists of nature uniformly aligning with Niru's temperament, while the urban landscapes and "the world outside has not changed" (111) despite any triggers.[15] On Niru's bad days, "there is no color". Niru "can

[15] "*No, the world has not changed, but my arms quiver*" (111).

see the colors, but the world looks gray" (84). Yet after his panicked run out of Damien's dorm room, Niru hyperventilates his way under a tree, only to realize that the "outside world is still normal" (124). Nature follows Niru's emotions while the urban landscapes stay the same and keep moving on despite the issues he is having. Iweala builds a clear connection between Niru and natural spaces while splitting him away from cities and cultural spaces. When Niru leaves Damien's room perturbed and uncomfortable, he tells Damien that the world never changes, the cultures he has to abide to, and the society he lives in is not enough space to confine his unstable identity.

Before closing off the spatial analysis of *Speak No Evil*, it is significant to mention the heteronormative and gendered spaces of the novel. Don Mitchell, in *Cultural Geography* (2000) in the chapter titled "Sex and Sexuality: The Cultural Politics and Political Geography of Liberation", observes that the creation of gendered spaces varies according to the concentration of the sexual identities occupying said spaces (173). Mitchell notes the contestation which affects sexualities due to the fact that all sexualities are made public in a society.

> One of the signal contributors of academic cultural studies – and now their adoption into geography – has been to point to the obvious, to show just how "public" sex and sexuality always are, and thus how they are always and everywhere contested in and through the public sphere and public space. (171)

Mitchell's argument brings up the discussion of the politics of power in public spaces. In her dissertation titled "Geographies of (In)Equalities: Space and Sexual Identities" (2010), Eduarda Ferreira asserts the notion of an unfair distribution of power (37). In short, the distribution of power depends on the majority of sexual identities concentrated in a space, heavily considering their race, culture, gender and age. In "Critical Geographies and the

Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space", Natalie Oswin mentions "queer cultural politics" bringing questions of "race, colonialism, geopolitics, migration, globalization and nationalism to the fore in an area of study previously trained too narrowly on sexuality and gender" (90). Despite the sexuality of a space, the lack of culture in some locations also affect the queer diasporic identity when discovering the self. Moving on from this, heteronormativity in schools and classrooms has been a topic of discussion in multiple fields of queer theory (Allen, 2016). One of the most prominent spaces in Iweala's *Speak No Evil* which radiate heteronormativity is the locker room that Niru constantly dreads walking into.[16] Niru fears the locker room after vocalizing his desires to Meredith in fear that things would be different for him when he walks through the crowded room of half-naked boys who might touch him now that he has revealed his true self to Meredith (21). Revealing his preferences to his best friend allowed Niru to allocate his sexual identity away from the overbearing heteronormativity of the locker room. Although constantly present throughout the school year, Niru avoided the locker room until he doubtfully decided to take on the challenge and show Reverend Olumide and himself that he was not as "*sinful*" as everyone thought he was while venturing in this public space. Niru describes the space as "tight" with many "bodies" and "I can feel the temperature rise as soon as I

[16] It is important to mention here the heteronormativity of schools in general. Louisa Allen in "Schools as Heteronormative Spaces" (2016) writes about the casting out of LGBTQ individuals from most school activities. It is stated that, "within the existing critical sexualities literature in education, schools are seen as heteronormative because of the way they operate to establish heterosexuality as the default of human sexuality while casting out all other sexual identities (bisexual, gay, lesbian, homosexual) as "abnormal other" (2). Throughout the novel, the disconnection between Niru and his high school is made very apparent.

step inside, or maybe it's the steam from the showers, or maybe it's just me" (88). Niru even admits his fear of the locker room when he describes the infinite number of individuals his age who practice horrific rebellious activities while he is merely "scared to death by locker room banter" (93). Iweala asserts Niru's vivisection from the heteronormative space of the school locker room by illustrating his discomfort when going through such a sexualized space. Iweala uses the locker room to paint the heterosexual American spaces that Niru fears due to this incapability of accepting who he truly is.

The final space that will be discussed in this section would be the Cathedral grounds. In Alexis Leanna Henshaw's "Geographies of Tolerance: Human Development, Heteronormativity, and Religion" (2014), she discusses the adversary relationship between modernization and religion. "While modernization may make religion less important, it does not make it unimportant" (963). According to Henshaw, numerous men and women experience dissonances in reuniting their religion with their sexual identities, "such results imply that religion may be a continued source of resistance even where homosexuality is purportedly accepted" (964). The Cathedral grounds in *Speak No Evil* radiate heteronormativity portrayed through the discomfort that Niru feels when walking with his classmates. Before the trip to Nigeria, every time Niru thinks of the Cathedral grounds he remembers Adam telling him to kiss Meredith (6) and him rejecting her kiss at homecoming (10). Yet it wasn't until after the "*realignment*" trip that the Cathedral grounds become a painful camouflage for Niru's desires especially when he states that, "when we walk across the Cathedral to class my classmates talk about fucking her [Ms. McConnell] and laugh. I talk about fucking her too because that is what Reverend Olumide says I should do – except the actual fucking" (81). Niru even admits to ignoring Meredith

after class only so he could walk across the Cathedral with the rest of the boys to discuss "*manly stuff*" (83). There are instances where Niru expresses his disdain for what the Cathedral space represents especially when he mentions checking out girls' legs during the warm weather. Niru describes this experience as, "mostly they are just legs and they are just asses, and the words cum slut just don't turn me on. Nothing turns me on and that is just fine for now" (82). Iweala provides the novel with a plethora of heterosexual spaces in America to further elaborate Niru's discomfort in his liminal existence, further proving an anti-universalistic sense in diasporic queer literary works.

Conclusion

The trouble with forming a stable sexual identity renders Niru incapable of steadying his feelings towards a specified culture. Through the use of various types of spaces, Iweala illustrates a sense of anti-universalism in queer identities and renders most spaces uncomfortable to his Nigerian protagonist residing in America. The analysis of this chapter depicted the different uses of spaces Iweala ventured through, focusing on Niru's home, heterosexual spaces, mental spaces and natural spaces, progressively displaying Niru's distancing from his journey of growth. Despite Bachelard and Lefebvre's work on the relationship between an individual and domestic and natural spaces, Iweala proves Niru's discomfort with his environment through his inability to stabilize himself in most familiarly approved spaces. Niru's discomfort grows more and more drastic throughout the novel, leading to his death in the first chapter of the second section. Massad and many other authors who work on shedding a light on the issues caused by the globalization of queer identities stand apparent in numerous literary works, yet the argument of Iweala's adoption

of this sense of anti-universalism mainly applies when put up against authors of non-diasporic works. This moves us to the next chapter which will observe two short stories, from Nigeria and from Uganda, analyzing their spaces to further compare the outcome with that of Iweala's *Speak No Evil*. Through that analysis, Iweala's sense of anti-universalization will fully be displayed, leading to the confirmation of the correlation between spaces and the anti-globalization of queer identities.

CHAPTER III

A REPRESENTATION OF STABILITY IN AFRICAN SPACES: "APOLLO" AND "JAMBULA TREE"

Addressing the underlying theme of spatiality as a method for arguing for an anti-universalistic approach provides the means for exploring the potential an individual from Africa living in their mother-country has at scrutinizing and examining their identity. Although similar in up-bringing and cultural histories, African individuals living in Africa and diasporic African individuals illustrate their lives in a slightly different manner. Although universal, and as previously mentioned in chapter II, the meaning of "home" is far from stable, as well as its portrayal, especially when discussing individuals with liminal existences (Homi Bhabha, 1994) (9). One of the major differences between diasporic and local texts revolves around the complex portrayals of personal spaces such as homes. Going back to the afore mentioned ideologies from Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1957), homes are products of the imagination, rendering them completely personal and unmatched (5). But in what way does the portrayal of the home in these two different contexts lead to a drastically different outcome? In the introduction of her book *Out in Africa* (2013), Chantal Zabus negates the erroneous belief that homosexuality should be perceived as "un-African", tagging the term "un-African" as being "a means of controlling variant gender performance or sexualities" (1). As defined by its "demonic" "Western" origins, homosexuality is seldom perceived as a way of being, but more so a colonially-acquired practice (5). The term "homosexuality" is monopolized by Caucasian writers, notes Zabus, to the point where it has been partially if not completely alienated from any literary works

produced by the "Global South" (6). Paradoxically, however, homosexual relationships are not strange to such communities. One difference between diasporic and continental literary works is the overall shift of focus from the Anglophone terminologies, such as "homosexuality", to focusing on contributing the queer tendencies portrayed to a more *naturalistic* appreciation of the romantic relationships between individuals of the same gender (20). To further elaborate, resisting the use of universal terminologies grants African authors living in Africa the space to adopt a more culturally appropriate queer approach when it comes to their fictional characters. Hence we move onto the spatial connection with the anti-universalistic sense through the more locally used queer terminologies.

In comparison to diasporic authors who tend to illustrate the dangers of liminal cultural identities and the complexity behind stabilizing one's desires though homosexual characters and universalized ideologies,[17] queer African continental literary works tend to advance the subject using a more naturalistic approach. As previously stated, and in his discussion on the *topoanalysis* of urban spaces in *The Poetics of Space* (1957), Gaston Bachelard argues for the concept that spaces are not merely material rooms, but what we imagine them to be, "the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man, apprehended in his actuality" (3). Despite the concept Bachelard introduces, which he defines as at times being limited for mainly fixating on urban settings and homes, Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1974), focuses on the concept of spatiality as a mental place and as any place of

[17] As seen in Iweala's *Speak No Evil* through Niru's constantly altered perceptions of the private and public spaces around him.

social practice which includes "products of the imagination" (12).[18] When going back to the afore mentioned naturalistic approach adopted by local authors, when discussing Hegel's infatuation with nature being the creator of all and above all (68), Lefebvre presents his perspicacity on the matter, affirming that nature is a space that is "not staged" and that "to say 'natural' is to say spontaneous" (70). It is precisely this naturalistic adumbration of spaces that proves most "natural" in the representation of queer relationships inside of Africa. Indeed, to say that homosexuality is "un-African" has come to be anomalous and restrictive in any discussions concerning continental African literature. Instead of focusing on the universally approved terminologies to decipher one's desires and tendencies, African authors tend to depict African queer protagonists located in Africa as more 'naturalistic' and fully comprehensive of their desires. It is through the naturalization of spaces these protagonists occupy that this study moves on to discuss this intended comparison between *Speak No Evil* and the two non-diasporic African short stories.

The following chapter intends to analyze the spaces illustrated in two African texts to further explore the instances of anti-universalism in the comparison between diasporic and continental literary works. It will argue that the locations elaborated in the Nigerian and the Ugandan texts crystallize the queer identities of the protagonists by avoiding universalized terms of homosexuality and naturalizing the spaces the two characters recall in their imaginations. The analysis will start off with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer mostly known for her works of fiction in the form of novels and short

[18] Which is very similar to Bachelard's *topoanalysis*.

stories. Labeling herself as a storyteller, Adichie works on projecting her queer and feminist point of view in her writings. In 2015, a short story titled "Apollo" was published in The New Yorker which revolves around a flashback Okenwa, the protagonist, has concerning Raphael, a young boy he used to have a crush on when he was young. The different spaces presented throughout the short story, given that the work is set essentially in one location, mainly revolve around Okenwa's home in numerous different wings of the house. The second section of the chapter will revolve around Monica Arac de Nyeko, a Ugandan writer of poetry and short story/essays who, through her work "Jambula Tree" (2008), won the Caine Prize for African Writing. This essay is, in fact, the one that will be discussed in the second section of the analysis and it revolves around two young girls who fall in love in Uganda despite the restrictions and obstacles presented to them. The natural spaces are most prominent in this work, allowing for a closer look at the simplicity of passionate expression. The two texts provide the analysis with a look at both concrete and natural spaces, broadening the research and allowing for a clearer comparison and conclusion. My approach mainly builds on a consolidated rationale of Bachelard's *topoanalysis* fused with Lefebvre's spontaneity of nature applied to the different spaces of the texts to later compare them with Iweala's diasporic work. Freud's uncanny will also be applied throughout my analysis of the domestic spaces mostly present in Adichie's *Apollo*. As such, this chapter aims to progressively detail the relationship between spatiality and anti-universalism by connecting naturalism and identity in continental texts, further comparing the outcome to the previously analyzed novel, proving the direct correlation between spaces and anti-universalism.

A. "Apollo" Illustrates Okenwa's Uncharacterized Growth

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Apollo's* (2015) main scene consists of young Okenwa's lush and lavish home in Enugu, Nigeria. It is from this '*overfurnished flat'* that Okenwa meets Raphael, a young teen 'from a nearby village' who temporarily occupied one of the bedrooms in the boys' quarters in the back of their home during the time he worked for his [Okenwa's] mother (2). In this short story, Okenwa reminisces on the adventures he and Raphael went on under the mango tree of his backyard and the consequences that followed his feelings of betrayal when his desires went unreciprocated in his bedroom (3). Whereas Okenwa's financial and familial background provided him with the space to explore his identity, Raphael had to work at a young age, following the rules of his employers' household, as well as following the social laws required from him. As the young boys build and destroy their relationship in Okenwa's recollection of the previous moments spent with Raphael, Adichie illustrates the traversed and occupied spaces of the home and its surroundings to accentuate the natural growth and exploration present in queer African identities untampered with by universalistic approaches.

1. Domestic Spaces Connect with Emotions

To reiterate a previous concept from Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1957), a house is an illusion created by the inhabitant's consciousness which "guide(s) writers and poets in their analysis of intimacy" (59). A home and its rooms are comprised of scattered feelings of intimacies which are ignited and thoroughly explored throughout one's childhood (36). The reason behind this involves the notion of a dreamers' requirement for

loneliness. According to Bachelard, dreamers', in a sense, envelop themselves in the warmth of their homes, visualizing them as "*artificial Paradises*" due to the "coldness" which exists in the outside (60). This "warm and cold" aspect, albeit metaphorical, separates the inside of the home from the outside in the individual's mind, giving off a sense of intimacy in "warm" spaces as opposed to "discomfort" in cold ones. In my analysis of continental authors' use of spaces, the previous supposition will be negated throughout the short stories, proving a kind of thrill to the protagonists' when leaving their homes, unlike Niru's attachment to his bedroom. This is caused due to Bachelard's view on the "warmer" nature of outside spaces experienced by African individuals in Africa as opposed to the "coldness" of the spaces African individuals in other countries occupy. This vivid differentiation between the spaces in African texts as opposed to diasporic African texts leads to the exposure of an anti-universalistic approach adopted by these African authors.

As Okenwa transports himself from the comfort of his present comprehension, strengthening and acceptance of his sexual identity and back to the time when he was not completely aware of and capable of articulating his desires, Adichie draws out the domestic rooms in the short story as booming with promise and intimacy when in the presence of Raphael. When describing his bedroom, Okenwa claims that at times he felt like "an interloper in our house" (2). The books in his room made his "stay feel transient, as though I were not quite where I was supposed to be" (3). Okenwa feels discomfort in his own home and bedroom, expressing a sense of uncanniness in the room of self-discovery. After Raphael contracts Apollo and is confined to his bedroom, Okenwa walks around the house

and notices the sudden loss of energy in the familiar rooms around him. “In the quiet kitchen, our house seemed emptied of life” (5). For Okenwa, it was immensely, “strange not to have Raphael open the front door, not to find him closing the living-room curtains and turning on the lights” (6). Whereas to most people, the home represents a space of comfort and stability, Laurence J. Silberstein, in *Mapping Jewish Identities* (2000), emphasizes the important roles of memories and imaginations in the experiences which result from a specified space (12). Okenwa was denied the comfort of his home before the introduction of Raphael who, in a sense, symbolizes Okenwa’s desires. Despite the sudden change of outlook, Okenwa is comprehensive towards his feelings and protects them throughout the story.

Okenwa pays Raphael multiple visits day after day to help him apply the eye drops medication he [Raphael] was unable to use on himself (6). The evolution of Okenwa’s perception of Raphael’s room develops from “never [having] been to his room before” and observing it to be “bare” and somber (5) to feeling “familiar to me” (6) due to the intimacy shared between them. The rooms around Okenwa grew more and more familiar the more he ventures into the exploration of his desires. In addition to that, the feelings expressed in Raphael’s bedroom evoked a sense of illicitness and rebellion, despite the fact that everything that was occurring in said room represented an innocuous conversation. “We had discussed the film [*Enter the Dragon*] many times, and we said things that we say before, but in the quiet of his room they felt like secrets” (6). This sense of secrecy and intimacy domes Raphael’s bedroom, turning it into the domestic room that Okenwa felt the most at ease in. In a sense, Adichie emphasizes Okenwa’s natural instincts in evoking his

emotions through his exploration of the spaces he once deemed uncomfortable. Additionally, Okenwa connects the bedroom space to the arbitrary touches Raphael plants on his [Okenwa's] arm and fantasizes about spending more time with him (6). Yet, the domestic space, although intimate and sensual, denies the liberty of expression, but does not shame Okenwa.

It is important to mention the emotional distress Okenwa feels when the spaces he started feeling comfort in transform back to a prison when Raphael is not around. A sense of betrayal overcomes Okenwa once he contracts Apollo himself and is tethered to his bed and deprived of any visits apart from his parents'. Okenwa recognizes his room as a confined space where all his desires are repressed.

> After he [Dr. Igbokwe] left, my parents created a patient's altar by my bed […] My parents closed the curtains and kept my room dark. I was sick of lying down. I wanted to see Raphael, but my mother had banned him from my room, as though he could somehow make my condition worse (7)

It wasn't before Okenwa fantasized and imagined that night and how Raphael's eyes looked like in his bedroom that he felt happiness (7). Okenwa has connected Raphael to the bedroom and was appalled when he [Raphael] did not visit him when his [Okenwa's] parents had both left the house for a short while. Adichie, here, uses the concept of mental spaces to alleviate the stress off of Okenwa from being in an uncomfortable room by allowing him to use his imagination and create a different reality for his bedroom. When Okenwa was starting to get hurt and tired in his own room, he shifts his spatial preferences towards Raphael's room, and more specifically, that first evening spent with him [Raphael]. The spaces devoid of Raphael turned into a penitentiary and denied Okenwa the comfort

and stability to express his identity. It was through the mental spaces of imagination and fantasies that Okenwa felt most at ease.

In addition to mental spaces, Adichie works on a different aspect of the domestic rooms inside Okenwa's home by illustrating the power dynamic between Okenwa and Raphael's lifestyles and identities. She plays with the upper and lower levels of the home to illustrate the separation between both characters. The spaces are not only used to define Okenwa's identity but also his relationship with the people around him. Throughout the story, Raphael is drawn out as patiently and constantly waiting at the bottom of the staircase while members of Okenwa's families look down upon him from the top of the stairs. After Adichie describes the altercation between Raphael and Okenwa's mother, she ends the paragraph with, "she was standing at the top of the stairs, and Raphael was below her" (6). Raphael was always "downstairs" and Okenwa longed to be there with him, in that space, desperately attempting to "sneak downstairs to the kitchen" to see him [Raphael] (7). This section is valuable for the comparison this analysis is working up to since the distribution of power, to Niru, was not related to financial status like Okenwa's.

2. The Outdoors Role in Allowing Natural Expression

In this section, the analysis moves towards Adichie's use of natural and outdoor spaces as the spaces of full expression and acceptance. The use of the outside allows Adichie the space to create a more natural touch to Okenwa's feelings and desires, which will be placed against Niru's confinement in a world he does not fit into. Less discreet and secretive is Okenwa's expression of happiness in "Apollo" when spending time with

Raphael in the context of the outside. The title of this section refers to the setting that is nature, or, as Bachelard mentions, an artificially created space which replicate more natural environments like the backyard, and the feelings that flow through Okenwa as freely outside as opposed to the confinement of a home and the rules it embodies. Similar to his previous statements concerning the imagination as a tool to fill out the missing spaces in one's life, Bachelard mentions the importance of man-made natural spaces to reciprocate similar feelings one might feel in a natural environment (52). Adichie allows both characters to simultaneously occupy the backyard of Okenwa's home in Enugu on multiple occasions as a replacement of nature most city houses adopt, allowing the characters' a sense of "openneness" to balance the constrictions of a house. Formerly presented, Raymond Williams, in his book *The Politics of Modernism* (1989), describes the alienation present in urban spaces as opposed to nature (46). It is through the culture of such urban buildings and cities that an individual evokes a sense of loneliness and misunderstanding. Adichie abates the secrecy ignited by the home when Okenwa is in the backyard or even when he merely recalls it (going back to the concept of mental spaces). Partly in agreement with Don Mitchell's statement on culture in urban spaces in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (2000), depicting the dependence of spaces on the culture it represents, "culture is always something to be explained as it is socially produced through myriad struggles over and in spaces, scales, and landscapes" Okenwa's home represents his parents' culture and preferred way of living (xvi). However, and given the innate stature of nature, Lefebvre claims that, "the more a space partakes in nature, the less it enters into the social relations of production" (83). Adichie slips her protagonist from the inside the house to the outside, whether physically or mentally, providing him with a more natural space to

grow in.[19] In accordance with that, Okenwa is allowed the space to grow and understand himself fully at his own pace. Unlike Niru, Okenwa's "outside" is clear, comprehensive, and happy.

In the story, Okenwa is restricted from freely "slicing the air with my arm" when practicing kung fu in his bedroom where his moves had felt "stillborn" (3). It was only when he went outside that, "I could feel practice become real, with soft grass below and high sky above, and the endless space mine to conquer" (3). When Okenwa discovered the openness of the outside, his days were brimmed with kung fu practice sessions in the backyard with Raphael. Okenwa began to realize the limitations of the house and the restrictions he had to follow and started spending more time in the "openness" of the outside with his friend [Raphael] who was, "of course, part of the landscape of outside" (4). Natural mental spaces were created in Okenwa's mind when he daydreamed about the nunchaku that Raphael had carved out for him. Even during school, "I sat through my classes thinking of the wood's smoothness in the palm of my hand. It was after school, with Raphael, that my real life began" (4). Adichie swiftly proves the nature-like status of Okenwa's identity through her deliberate use of space switching. It is important to reiterate here that Okenwa's feelings for Raphael were fully and freely expressed when outside without an ounce of confusion, distress, or objections. Okenwa's backyard was the chosen natural space for growth and comfort which Niru was denied from in a land he fits into but does not belong to, despite the existence of numerous man-made and natural outdoor

[19] Or, in this case, artificial nature.

spaces in the novel.

The fighting practices were abruptly adjourned after Raphael contracts Apollo and is restricted to his room, but that doesn't stop Okenwa from dreaming of being "with Raphael and Bruce Lee in an open field, practicing for a fight" (6). Okenwa longs for the "open" landscape that accommodates his desires and explorations due to its limitless and cultureless appearance, as opposed to his closed-off home. Adichie portrays these mental spaces in Okenwa in the form of dreams to reiterate the value of the "openness" of the outside in Okenwa's identity growth. After contracting Apollo himself, and after having been denied Raphael visitation hours, Okenwa attempts to sneak downstairs on multiple occasions but to no avail. The secrecy and intimacy of the bedroom is also illustrated by Adichie when Okenwa confronts Raphael in the "openness" of the backyard after finding him shyly flirting with Josephine, the neighbor's worker, and thinks "he spoke to me as though I were a child, as though we had not sat together in his dim room" (8). The contradiction between the bright and "open" aspect of the yard and the dimness and constrictions of the room conflict Okenwa who, despite his longing for Raphael, does not fully comprehend the imbalance caused by the different spaces. To Okenwa, both spaces needed to exert the same emotions and feelings given that his desires were regarded as natural to him. At times, however, the space of nature and the urban spaces are integrated in the form of an open veranda right outside the kitchen. The veranda seems to play the role of the in-between between the concrete and the natural, forming a different spatial status to Okenwa. The fact that Raphael forbid Okenwa from jumping off the veranda to land on the grass while attempting a flying kick proves an objection towards a completely free space

(8). To Okenwa, freedom lies outside, while to Raphael, the freedom Okenwa seeks is not safe. This clash between personalities proves a clear distinction between Raphael and Okenwa, the first having to follow cultural rules to be able to survive and having no space to fully grow, while the latter feelings free enough to explore all possibilities. Adichie uses the veranda as a tool of transition between culture and primitive freedom. Crucially, and also adding to the previously stated concept of the power dynamics in the house, Okenwa watches Raphael and Josephine in the backyard from the high open veranda (7). Raphael's freedom affects Okenwa who, despite his present acceptance of himself in addition to the fact that Okenwa is always "higher" than Raphael, stands incarcerated in the reality that he has to face; Raphael does not want him the same way he does.

Before ending this section, another point worthy of discussion which I will be exploring for "Apollo" drives us back to Bachelard's work on the dreamlike and safe space of the home in *The Poetics of Space* (1957). "Behind dark curtains, snow seems to be whiter" (61). When Raphael develops Apollo, Okenwa feels the emptiness and uncanniness of the house without his [Raphael's] presence. "It felt strange" that Raphael was not there to close "the living-room curtains" which drove the home to seem like it was "emptied of life" (5). Okenwa was denied the "dreamlike" condition of the home and elects to go to the bedroom where intimacies between him and Raphael could secretly be shared. Before comparing these spaces to *Speak No Evil* to prove the connection between spaces and anti-globalization, we move onto Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" where the natural theme is also very much apparent.

B. A Tree Breaks Through Cultural Cuffs

When addressing the fundamental theme of anti-universalism through the use of spaces, it is valuable to explore the potential of the cultural locations at hand; Uganda and Nigeria. Although in the same continent and sharing similar cultural backgrounds and histories, both countries slightly differ in terms of queer literary styles of writing. During the supposed time "Jambula Tree" occurs, the notorious President Yoweri Museveni was in leadership of Uganda. According to Chantal Zabus in *Out in Africa* (2013), in 2009, President Museveni attempted to "institute the death penalty for homosexuality" (151). During that time, any sexual relationship between any two individuals of the same gender was completely prohibited, looked down upon, and even ended in incarcerations and violent beatings in some cases (152). In comparison to Uganda, Nigerian queer history holds more of an innate and culturally approved nature. According to Zabus, personal Nigerian vocabularies were utilized to differentiate and label different homosexual terms and practices, which were not understood the same way as in Anglo-Saxon countries or could even be fully translated (16). The term "lesbian" was not common to the Nigerian individual, and Zabus gives the example of the term *manvrou,* roughly translated to 'man-woman', being used in a similar context as lesbian. Although, the individual who identifies as a *manvrou* does not identity as a lesbian (17). When discussing the same-sex relationships occurring in prisons, Zabus states that, "there is never an absolute semantic overlap between the indigenous words, whether in Afrikaans or in Zulu or any other African language, and the imported word '*lesbian"*' (17). The queer terminologies appropriated by Nigerians do not necessarily reflect back to any linguistic concept in the

English language. With all this in mind, it is important to differentiate between the two texts especially since the analysis of the spaces will definitely hold some cultural differences.

On a more literary level, and conforming with Zabus' statement, Sofia Ahlberg in her article "Men and War in Contemporary Love Stories from Uganda and Nigeria" (2009) compares the different writing styles of Ugandan and Nigerian writers considering the afore mentioned historical origins of homosexuality, concluding the more idealistic style of writing that results from indigenous Nigerian identities living in their country as opposed to the more "sober" and realistic style from Uganda (407). When elaborating on the Ugandan style of writing, Ahlberg states that there is, "an internalized narrative, one that acknowledges that social and political change begins from within the self and the ability to raise one's voice above that of the mainstream" (408). In a sense, rebelliousness presents itself in the form of queer discovery in Ugandan texts, while Nigerian texts, more dreamlike than their counterpart, discover their queer identities using a more compliant and flexible method. This is very apparent in the previous analysis of "Apollo" given Okenwa's flexible and natural view on his emotions, desires, and actions.

Monica Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" (2008) presents an interesting pair of characters in the form of a letter from Anyango to Sanyu. Despite their strong love for each other, Sanyu was sent off to London, far away from Anyango, due to one night they shared under the Jambula tree. In Anyango's case, the naked passion they shared under the tree clearly radiates love but it was Mama Atim, their neighbor, who destroyed the whole experience, deeming it "shameful". There are two discernible types of spaces in *Jambula*

Tree; natural landscapes and mental spaces in the form of relationships and flashbacks. Taking on a more rebellious aspect, the spaces in *Jambula Tree* prove most natural especially when discussing the tree itself.

1. Nature Provides No Restrictions

Going back to Henri Lefebvre's previous concept of nature never being staged (70), Arac de Nyeko characterizes her own writing by amplifying the naturalistic features of Sanyu and Anyango's love through the Jambula tree to reflect an imbalanced and unfair concept of queer relationships in Uganda. Throughout the entire short story, Anyango recalls natural spaces when speaking of comfortable and fully expressive moments she experiences. The first of many examples starts when Anyango recalls Sanyu telling her that they could be anything they wanted to be while they sat under the mango tree (10). Anyango recalls that she and Sanyu, "were not allowed to climb trees, but we did, and there, inside the green branches, you said – we can be anything" (10). This first appearance of natural already portrays the sense of rebellion Ugandan literature is said to produce. The girls shared moments in spaces they were forbidden from being in, igniting a forbidden love. In addition, and throughout the essay, Arac de Nyeko focuses on the color 'green' to emphasize different aspects of shame and self-discovery. Sanyu and Anyango were not allowed to climb trees but did it anyway and enjoyed themselves in the process. Also, when discussing the soldiers she and Sanyu used to pass by on their way back from school, she notices the color 'green'. "Green tents", "green soldier colour", "stone pelting colour", "AK-47 colour" (11) followed by the phrase, "freedom in forbidden colours. Deep green – the colour of the morning when the dew dries on the leaves to announce the arrival of

shame and dirt" (11). In a sense, therefore, Anyango related the color green with shame and nature (dirt). What is natural in space, to Anyango, is forbidden and shameful to her culture.

When discussing the natural and shameful, in the second section of the letter, Anyango reminds Sanyu of the "dirt roads" which are filled with "thick brown mud" and how the streets constantly smell of "rain and hard soil" which she will be returning to, making sure that Sanyu is understands what she is doing (12). Arac de Nyeko uses the space and the products of nature to define the shameful and deservingly passionate thoughts and actions Anyango relives in her mind. To simply reiterate this thought, Arac de Nyeko uses these natural aspects and spaces to provide us with a sense of shame in the natural desires both girls feel. It is not until Anyango starts to rebel against these rules that the natural spaces start taking on a more comfortable stance. When both Anyango and Sanyu were seated under the Jambula tree, Anyango notices the differences that had occurred to this tree, "it had grown so tall. The tree had been there for ages with its unreachable fruit" (18), as well as comparing Sanyu's breasts to "two large Jambulas on your chest" (18). The carefully written recollection of this moment that these two girls shared creates an interesting comparison of the unreachable and the shameful; the natural and the unnatural. The unreachable fruits symbolize Anyango's inability to be with her love the way she so dearly desires. Arac de Nyeko uses the space of the Jambula tree as well as its components to not only prove the natural aspect of Sanyu and Anyango's relationship, but to also project the thoughts Anyango created concerning the love she felt for Sanyu, which is completely natural to her. Anyango loves the Jambula tree and loves to remember it and

sees no shame under the fruits of the tree, even after finally being able to reach them for one night, also despite the restrictions set upon them.

2. Educational Systems Represent Innocence

To fully comprehend Arac de Nyeko's use of spaces in *Jambula Tree*, the place where both girls met and spent most of their lives together proves valuable. There exists a myriad of articles and studies concerning the reality of schools and educational systems and what they represent to the students, especially younger children, throughout their journeys and growths in such environments. The space of the school Arac de Nyeko chose for *Jambula Tree* embodies a transitional phase of innocence in Anyango's life, progressively getting contaminated by the reality of the society both girls live in. Similar to the veranda in "Apollo", and unlike Niru's heteronormative high school, the school illustrates the in-between existence of the girls' relationship in Uganda. In another sense, the school slightly portrayed a dream-like space where the girls could evade reality without suffering any consequences. Anyango recalls when both she and Sanyu "used to talk about her [Mama Atim] on our way to school, hand in hand, jumping, skipping, or playing run-and-catch-me" (9). The space of the school represented the innocence and vulnerability Anyango embodied, as well as the innocuous feelings she had towards Sanyu. These feelings would later be soiled and made more harmfully malignant by Mama Atim's mouth which worked like "ants on a cob of maize" (9). In short, Anyango recalls the school whenever she reminds Sanyu of the innocuous and natural feelings they evoked to one another during such times, as a tactic to move away from reality and reach a middle ground. The school was realistic but also held unspoken desires and ignited the love between the two girls.

The school lost its status as an in-between space when Sanyu defended Anyango from a bully on the playground and "dared them to lay a finger on me [Anyango]" (13). Sanyu was indefinitely expelled, causing both girls' mothers to forbid them from being friends. When recalling this event, and retracing back to the section on nature, Anyango specifies her wearing her "deep dark green uniform" (13) signifying the shame she felt in the space that was supposed to be safe. Arac de Nyeko strips the school from its naturally safe status, exposing the girls to a more dangerous side of their love. Anyango's mother tells her to not "do anymore Sanyu" (17) after this incident and so do Sanyu's parents. Regardless, the girls still ended up seeing each other in secret, proving the rebelliousness of these queer characters. Seeking out new spaces of comfort, Sanyu and Anyango go back to the natural spots they once knew as kids. But before moving onto Mama Atim's tree, it is important to mention that the last encounter with the school that Anyango recalls would be the last time before the moment her and Sanyu shared under that tree, when Sanyu was accepted to her first choice of high school and Anyango was not. This event separated the girls even more and led them to only being able to see each other during the holidays. Anyango could not wait for the holidays to come around so that she could "dare place my itchy hand onto your two jambulas" (18). As a result of losing the space of school, the girls grew more and more impatient for each other's presence, forcing them to naturally be led back to the tree.

3. Mama Atim Limits Natural Freedom

In this final section of my analysis, Lefebvre's concept of mental spaces, as well as his work on the natural spaces, will be most prominently illustrated to prove the naturalistic

and stable aspect of queer characters' identities in continental African texts as opposed to diasporic texts. Mama Atim, Anyango's neighbor, is an old woman who knows everything about everyone. Mama Atim was also the person who lets Anyango know that Sanyu would be coming back to Uganda (9). There are a plethora of mental spaces marking the girls' relationship in the short story but Mama Atim stands the greatest of all indicators. When introducing her in the first paragraph, Anyango states that "we made that promise never to mind her or be moved by her" (9). Mama Atim, albeit a person, signifies a space in time in Anyango's mind when everything she ever yearned for came to an abrupt stop. The shame that Mama Atim brings onto Anyango, representing all that is forced and unnatural, falsely stringed their names to forever be "associated with the forbidden" (9). In addition to that, the recollection of Mama Atim brings shame back into Anyango's mind. It is only when Mama Atim's tree is remembered that Anyango is capable of rebelling against the norms and finding comfort in that space and in her desires.

The balance between Mama Atim and her Jambula tree in terms of mental and natural spaces allows us to understand Arac de Nyeko's use of spaces, in this case natural, overweighing other spaces that bring restrictions, allowing her protagonists to completely express their culturally-illegal desires. Mama Atim is recollected at almost every point when Anyango remembers the moment she and Sanyu shared under the tree. The act of love that occurred under the tree was seen as shameful at first when Anyango states, "the things we should not have done when the brightness of Mama Atim's torch shone upon us – naked" (10), but is later followed by Anyango's realization that she hates Mama Atim and even wants to hurt her and pelt her with stones in front of soldiers since her [Mama

Atim's] fear of soldiers became "a secret weapon we [Anyango and Sanyu] used as we imagined ourselves being like goddesses dictating her fate" (11). Anyango, here, uses the space of the tree (as well as the moment shared under said tree) to rebel against her fear from Mama Atim.

Arac de Nyeko ends the short story with the following passage, "I do mostly night shifts. I like them, I often see clearer at night. In the night you lift yourself up in my eyes each time, again and again. Sanyu, you rise like the sun and stand tall like the Jambula tree in front of Mama Atim's house" (19). This passage provides the analysis with a clear link between the space of nature and Mama Atim. Arac de Nyeko builds the clash in Anyango's mind through the spaces of Mama Atim and her Jambula tree. Anyango rebels against the oppressive views of her village and her culture, fighting against what is unnatural until she feels comfortable in the natural spaces. Arac de Nyeko uses these spaces to prove the stability in Anyango's belief that the identity she perceives herself to be has no connection with Anglo-Saxon terminologies and is not immoral or shameful. This balance and stability in identity proves a sense of anti-universalism since Niru, on the other hand, was incapable of stabilizing his desires and comprehending them due to him being forced to abide to two cultures he does not fully fit into. Anyango dreams of these natural spaces and yearns for them as if they were a part of her she knew to be true and right.

Conclusion

Despite the different obstacles that arise, both protagonists define stability in

identity growth throughout the stories. Whether illustrated through their connection with nature or their ability to shut down negative thoughts with the memory of simpler times, Okenwa and Anyango both find different kinds of comfort in the spaces they occupy. Adichie and Arac de Nyeko both provide their characters with a sense of belonging despite the different issues they experience. This chapter depicted a *topoanalytical* reading of the different spaces both authors illustrated, focusing on mental, natural and domestic and social spaces. Adichie and Arac de Nyeko's spaces connected with Lefebvre and Bachelard's work on nature and domestic rooms, rendering the growth of their characters more peaceful than that of Iweala's Niru. In addition to that, the use of culturally appropriate terminologies and the lack of English terminologies allowed both Okenwa and Anyango to focus on themselves more than on their integration in different cultures. The clarity of the differences allows us to observe the issues that arise with globalization, and for that, we move onto the final section of this analysis to finally distinguish the dissimilarities between diasporic and local works.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed at arguing for the correlation of spatiality and the anti-globalization of queer identities through the comparison of diasporic and local African literary works. By mainly focusing on Bhabha's unhomely feeling in domestic spaces, Williams work on urban spaces and Lefebvre's work on mental and natural things, and by combining all the afore mentioned categories with Bachelard's method of spatial analysis, *topoanalysis*, the close reading of Iweala's *Speak No Evil*, Adichie's "Apollo" and Arac de Nyeko's "Jambula Tree" has shown the difference between the unstable identity illustrated through the African American novel's protagonist as opposed to the more stable allure of the African texts' main characters.

In this research, Niru's perception of the world around and within him proved mainly uncomfortable and, at times, traumatic for him. From the shadows projected by his parents around his bedroom to the smell of Nigerian foods in the kitchen, Niru's home represents the Nigerian culture he could never seem to fully integrate himself in. Through the concept of Lefebvre's mental spaces, OJ seems to play an integral role in proving Niru's longing to be accepted in this community. Yet, opposing OJ's presence, Meredith's spatial recognition in Niru's mind provides a sense of disconnection from the Nigerian culture for Niru, tethering him to the community he has been brought up in as well as his parents'. The concept of spatiality was also extended to natural spaces, which, according to Lefebvre, must create a sense of comfort, acceptance and belonging due to the spaces'

neutrality and lack of artificial production. Yet, Niru's identity was incapable of belonging to both the Nigerian and the American natural spaces due to his disconnection to both spaces. Rather than existing in a space, Niru attempted to become a part of said spaces, finding difficulty in adapting to one rather than another. Finally, Niru's discomfort while occupying heteronormative spaces such as his school and the church is apparent of his disconnection to both the American and the Nigerian cultures due to their rejection of what he truly perceives himself to be.

To attempt to explore this relationship between spaces and globalization, this thesis moved on to analyze Adichie and Arac de Nyeko's African protagonists inhabiting their own mother countries. While Niru works on stabilizing his identity in two different cultures, Okenwa and Anyango work on expressing their raw emotions regardless of the obstacles they encounter. As Okenwa moves throughout the spaces in his room, he finds comfort wherever he is reminded of something experienced with Raphael. He relives spatiality through his imagination and his memories, allowing himself a full expression of love and desire without any exterior labels. On the other hand, Niru occupies his '*mental spaces*' when in need of an escape from the current situation he is in. Okenwa recounts his comfort through spatiality, focusing on what brings him pleasure as opposed to struggling with the concept of settling for a specific identity. When in need for comfort, Okenwa is reminded of the times he spent in Raphael's bedroom or in the backyard. The direct correlation between Okenwa's ease with the domestic and natural spaces around him due to his recollection of said spaces to aid him in times of discomfort clearly represents the difference between him and Niru. In times of discomfort, Niru is taken back to different mental spaces represented by OJ and Meredith to balance out the extreme situation he finds

himself in. The instability of identity that Niru is handling is clearly portrayed in this comparison with Okenwa. In addition to the '*mental spaces'*, Okenwa and Niru's different relationships with natural spaces is very apparent. But the most apparent difference in the feelings evoked when occupying natural spaces between diasporic and local protagonists is clearest between Anyango and Niru.

Anyango's identity is shunned throughout the story by her community and the people around her. Yet it is made clear that the young protagonist does not worry about what she is perceived as for the feelings she evoked towards her lover are unlabeled, passionate and natural. Anyango's connection with the Jambula tree itself is proof of the raw passion and comfort felt in that natural space. Unlike Niru, Anyango yearns for the outside, due to the lack of rules that have to be followed. Niru's relationship with nature, as previously analyzed in the second chapter, consists of him perceiving it as the light and positivity that shines down on the dark and cold city. The problem that arises between Niru and natural spaces is his inability to find himself completely peaceful due to the constant presence of the urban landscape in the background. Niru compares himself to nature but is incapable of being as free as the snowflakes he watches from the classroom window. On the other hand, despite all the issues brought upon her by her society, Anyango does not disconnect herself from the natural spaces around her. From comparing her lover's breasts to Jambula fruits to them rebelling against what was asked of them by climbing mango trees, Anyango's identity stabilizes itself when in natural spaces.

In addition to that, in "Jambula Tree", even the heteronormative spaces, like the school, represent a sense of innocence and love in Anyango's imagination which is also something that is missing for Niru when he is occupying these public spaces. To Anyango,

the school represented the space where her and Sanyu had met and spent most of their childhoods in. Despite the heteronormativity of the school, Anyango relates it to these innocent times spent with her lover on the playground. To Niru, the school, especially the locker room, represented the space where he was forced to act out an identity that he did not fit into. No matter what situation he was in, the school illustrated the space where he could never be himself. Both Okenwa and Anyango prove completely detached from Niru's reality. The differences between the African protagonists living in Africa as opposed to the diasporic protagonist is perfectly depicted through the comparison of all three texts.

This research on spatiality and globalization limits its analysis to African texts, more specifically three African texts from two different countries. Yet, the three texts at hand are rich in queer narratives and spaces, allowing for a comprehensive and specific outcome to the comparisons at hand. Joining the body of works such as Massad's *Desiring Arabs*, this thesis attempts to start this analysis as a means of opening up to different literary worlds around the globe. Numerous different countries around the world suffer from the globalization of queer identities, opening up discussions on the subject in different areas of study.

Finally, through the analysis of the afore mentioned texts, this thesis provides a clear correlation between spatiality and globalization. Indeed, Mbembe's work on the "alternating identities" of African individuals proves the issues that arise from subjecting an African identity to another culture. Niru's inability to conform to both societies he is a part of renders him incapable of not only understanding himself, but understanding how to survive in a life that he does not belong to.

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