# SUICIDE, DEPRESSION AND NEUROSIS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA CHARACTER: A HORNEYAN READING OF TAIYE SELASI'S *GHANA MUST GO.*

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## Abstract

Contemporary African diaspora writing is characterized by issues of rejection, displacement, racism, and how these (re) constructs the character traits and personality of the African diaspora person as he oscillates between multiple countries and societies. This paper accounts for the construction of self and the behavioral traits and patterns of the characters represented in African diaspora writing. It argues that the psyche's reaction to predominant social, political, psycho-social and economic realities is a major determinant of the neurotic turmoil or conflicts and personality traits that afflict characters in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go.* This study adopts Karen Horney's psychoanalytic principles in examining the intricacies of the human psyche or thought system which is central to psychoanalytic theory. Individuals' social perceptions as regards to their place in society are pertinent in psychoanalysis. It is also key to defining self-determination and behavioral patterns. In contemporary analysis, psychoanalysis has been deployed to account for individual anxiety, depression, and other neurotic traits that determine personality development. Psychoanalysis does this, by beaming into the workings of the unconscious part of the human mind and how that is reflected in personal characteristics. This way, this study demonstrates among

other things that there is a nexus between the individual characters' behavioral traits in this novel and the prevailing cases of institutional racism and social turmoil in American society.
**Keywords:** African Diaspora, Suicide, Depression, Neurosis, De-individuation,

## Introduction

Decades ago, diaspora was a vague word constrained in meaning to the ancient scattering of certain communities around the Mediterranean basin. Since then, it has become an umbrella term mentioned in migrant narratives, polemics of identity, and cultural discourse, to signify a number of different kinds of movement and situations of mobility among human populations (Edward 2001: 1). In the same light, (Brubaker, 2005:8) also observes that the use of the term diaspora has been expanding and argues that a central element of its huge popularity and usage "involves the application of the term diaspora to an ever –broadening set of cases: essentially to any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space." Diaspora is used to mean a process of separation, scattering, banishment and departure. Over the years, diaspora has come to mean "the migration of people from their place or countries of origin to other parts of the world.'' (Okpeh, 1999:3).

The dynamism of the concept of diaspora necessitates that this work focuses specifically on the African Diaspora evolvement. The emergence of an African diaspora population can be traced to the activities of transatlantic slave traders. The African diaspora population constitutes a significant portion of the world's population. As the African Union record shows: The African diaspora consist of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship or nationality… (AU, 2005 cited in Bakewell 2008).

There are about three periods that have been highlighted in the discourse of the roots of Africans in the diaspora. The first migration of Africans to the diaspora has been categorized as forced migration. According to Okpe (1991:10), "the origin of the

African diaspora can be traced to the dehumanizing trade in slaves across the Atlantic Ocean. It started with Europeans invading the coast of Africa (sic) and capturing her inhabitants for sale in European Markets…" This assertion puts in perspective the emergence of human commerce between Africa and the west. Robert Cohen (2008:49) quotes Bosman the chief agent of the Dutch West India Company as saying: When these Slaves come to Fida, they are put in Prison altogether … they are thoroughly examined, even to the smallest member, both men and women, without the least distinction of modesty. Those which are approved as good are set on one side; and the lame and faulty are set by as invalids … the remainder are numbered, and it is entered who delivered them. In the mean while a burning iron, with the arms or name of the companies, lies in the fire; with which ours are marked on the breast … I doubt not but this trade seems very barbarous to you, but since it is followed by mere necessity it must go on; but we yet take all possible care that they are not burned too hard, especially the women, who are more tender than the men.

For the capitalist West, African slaves meant cheap labour in their huge plantations. Slaves were subjected to inhuman treatment by their enslavers. Some were branded multiple times to prove ownership, to show their loyalty to a King concerned, to prove that export duty had been paid, at times to validate the fact that they had been baptized. The transatlantic slave trade dropped Africans at different points on the World map in places such as Brazil, the Caribbean, Mexico and America to work as manual labourers on tropical plantations. The misery of these Africans has been embedded into the consciousness of Europeans and Americans because of their involvement in purchasing and abusing slave labour. The plight of these immigrant populations found expression through dance, music, photography, art, literature and religious rites. It is this slave trade that explains the presence of African diasporans in America and the Caribbean islands where the offspring of the African slaves now inhabit.

From the early 1950 to the late 1990, there was a mass exodus of Africans from the African continent as a result of the

harsh socio-political, educational and economic situations of most African countries. The high hopes of Africans at their independence from colonial rule became unattainable as a result of several factors. Principal among which include institutionalized corruption, tribalism, military intervention in leadership and a host of others. An estimated, 27,000 highly skilled Africans left the continent for the west. (Selasi, 2005:1). Arthur (2010:1), further buttresses this when he asserts that: Africans are on the move across borders seeking economic and cultural opportunities far away from the continent. The postcolonial transnational migration involves Africa's skilled and unskilled, men and women, …seeking economic and cultural opportunities far away from the continent. Postcolonial transnational migration involves Africa's skilled and unskilled, men and women, including those who are displaced by the incessant wars, civil strife, and violence that have plagued almost every region of the continent. To date, more Africans have settled in the United States voluntarily than were forcefully brought to the then New World. The United States has become a site for the cultural formations, manifestations, and contestations of the newer identities that these immigrants seek to depict in cross-cultural and global settings.

The argument by Arthur reinforces the fact that, transnational migration of African diasporans was first a coerced movement, and then it became voluntary; to escape unfavourable conditions of living within the African continent.

In more recent times, the raging argument on homophobia and the legislation against gays and lesbians in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Gambia and several other African countries have exiled Africans from the continent. Most of them have been granted asylum and citizenship in countries like England, Sweden and America. Jude Dibia, a Nigerian writer and Bisi Alimi a Nigerian human right activist are examples of Africans who left Africa because of persecution arising from their sexual orientation.

In contemporary context, the domineering influence of globalization and the huge cross border exchanges of culture, raw materials, technology, music and fashion have brought about a

collision of various practices by individuals of different nationals. This trend has inspired renewed interest in African diaspora studies from disciplines like history, literature and cultural studies. As the relevance of African diaspora voices continue to shape the global outlook, it is important to consider the contributions of diaspora writers in their representation of individual experiences.

**Theorizing Horneyan Psychoanalysis**

In the *Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937), Horney defines neurosis as "a psychic disturbance brought by fears and defenses against these fears, and attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies". This designates a mind caught in a complex situation of handling and managing fixed psycho-social tensions which cumulatively grow into internal psychological conflicts (intra-personal conflict). Horney (1950) defines neurosis as "a disturbance in one's relation to self and others". In another sense, neurosis is an outgrowth of "basic anxiety" in interpersonal and intra-personal relationships. This is demonstrated through the manner people manage and wield control over, inter and intra-personal concerns that sprout daily.

Horney highlights ten natural needs in all humans. Her opinion is that these needs are vital components in human beings, who are engaged in daily existence. Normal persons experience all these needs but satisfy one need at a time before moving to others. Horney postulates that humans use it to minimize the feeling of anxiety and in relating with other people. These needs include the need for approval, the need for a partner, the need for power, the need for prestige, the need to exploit others, the need for personal admiration, the need for self-sufficiency, the need for personal achievements, the need to restrict one's life to narrow borders, and the need for perfection. As random and simplified as these needs are the amplification or over-dependence, on one or more of these needs turns the person into a neurotic. Horney, therefore, has encapsulated them as neurotic needs or neurotic trends. An appraisal of the over-magnification of the neurotic need will be done in the preceding paragraph.

The neurotic need for affection involves the extreme need to please others and be liked by them. The neurotic with the need for a partner aspires to persons who will control their lives and solve their problems. The neurotic need to curtail one's life to a simple life is to be contented with little and be less demanding. The neurotic need for power is attended by disdain for the weak and the frantic desire for power. In a normal person, the need to abuse others and gain the better of them might just be a strategy to acquire relevance. However, the neurotic has a fear of being used, hence s/he contemplates that people are there to be turned into tools and seek ways to influence them. The neurotic needs for social recognition or prestige are persons who are particularly apprehensive about appearances and fame. People who possess the neurotic need for personal admiration are petrified of being thought of as not significant; hence they frantically strive to prove to everyone how crucial they are. The neurotic need for self-sufficiency or independency; people who adopt this approach seek no help from anyone. The neurotic need for perfection is a fascination to be perfect; people with this neurotic need are scared of making errors. The ten needs can be divided into three broad categories, namely; dependent/moving towards, domineering/moving against, and detached/ moving away from people. Dependent/moving towards includes the need for approval and the need for a partner. While domineering/moving against the need for power, the need to exploit others, prestige, personal admiration, and the need for personal achievement. Lastly, the detached category/moving away includes the need for self-sufficiency/independence, the need for perfection, and the need to limit one's life to narrow boundaries.

A balanced person tackles one need at a time reliant on principal external and internal elements; the neurotic character prioritizes one need even when it is not satisfied. S/he devotes his/her strength to attaining that need and discards other needs. Neurotics that heighten the motion towards people tactics are also responsive to people who protect themselves against thoughts of vulnerability and helplessness by pushing close to other people.

While the neurotics who move against people are aggressive and anti-social people who shield themselves against the perceived hostility of others by taking advantage of them. Again, the group that bends away from people isolates individuals who defend themselves against feelings of alienation, arrogance, and reservation. These demonstrated needs are termed defenses. According to the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*; "…she believed a deep inner conflict emerges in the individual leading to the need for elaborating layers of rigidified protective defenses".

The personality conflict experienced by the psyche of the individual brings about the growth of protective shields that can also be termed defenses. This process is what she has called the neurotic process. In other words, interference in human relationships gives rise to basic anxiety, which subsequently results in the advancement of defense techniques. These defense techniques can be divided into two categories namely interpersonal and inter-psychic defenses. Interpersonal defenses are adopted in the interaction with other people. While the inter-psychic is employed within an individual's mind.

**Anti-Normative Behaviour and De-Individuation of the African Diasporic Character**

Human behavior is dictated by psychological as well as social factors. The dynamic variables in society such as racism, economic misfortunes could explain how the human psyche could adjust to accommodate new realities. Trauma and racial discrimination mold the behavioral patterns of African diaspora characters.

Taiye Selasi in *Ghana Must Go* signifies the role that society plays in subjecting African diasporic characters through traumatic experiences which motivates self-destructive instincts, or what Diener (2011: 210) refers to as de-individuation; which is a process of reduced self-awareness that blocks individuals from monitoring their behavior and are therefore able to behave in uninhibited, impulsive and anti-normative ways. It is in tandem with this that Horney (1937: 227) opines that: "The neurotic, whether or not he feels it consciously, is not only a very unhappy person indeed, but

he does not see any chance of escaping his misery". Hence; adopting self-destructive instincts become a route of escape.

Also, Durkheim (1987: 14) asserts "Social variables" could account for anti-normative behaviors in individuals. Morrison ((1988: 21) further buttress this when she observes that; "The trauma of racism is, for the racist and the victim, the severe fragmentation of the self and has always seemed to me a cause (not symptom) of psychosis…." The characters in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* are afflicted with cultural detachment, racism that dislocates family ties, and results in family estrangement, which dovetails into insanity, suicide, depression, aggression, inferiority complex or low self- esteem and alienation amongst African diaspora characters. In this regard, Kylie (2013:919) defined family estrangement as:…the physical and or emotional distancing between at least two family members in an arrangement which is usually considered unsatisfactory by at least one involved party. Family estrangement can be attributed to any of several factors within the family such as attachment disorder, differing values, and beliefs, disappointment, major life events or change, or poor communication.

Family estrangement is akin to Bowen's "emotional cut-off", which is a coping mechanism adopted by individuals in response to anxiety and psychological stress. It entails "people managing their unresolved emotional issues with parents, siblings, and other family members by reducing or cutting off emotional contact with them." Detaching oneself from family has psychical implications that affect one's personality and could deteriorate into depression, anxiety, and issues of inferiority complex in individuals. The African diaspora characters, because of their exposure to racism and severed family ties exhibit depression, anxiety, and inferiority complex. Drain (2016:1) avers that: Depression and anxiety are common disorders often confused with each other, but the two couldn't be more different. People with the personality disorder of depression often feel emotions of hopelessness, despair, and anger. However, when someone is impacted by an anxiety disorder, they experience overwhelming fear and panic.

The feeling of anxiety and depression are traumatizing experiences that affect a person's wellbeing and personality. It sparks aggression, suicide, and dementia as components of a person's personality in response to societal pressure among African diaspora characters as emblematized in the characters found in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go.* Dauod (2016: 221) posits that: "Suicide is a means of taking flights," from the prevailing pressures of a multicultural diaspora.

While Huesmann et al (2003:5) describe aggression as a "behavior directed towards another individual carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm either physically or emotionally" and Dementia as defined by the National Institute of Mental health of America "is a manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels." Selasi depicts African diaspora characters that have to cope with the daunting task of confronting racial discrimination and legacies of African heritage in negotiating their sense of selfhood and personality in a dynamic society.

Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* aptly conveys how hostile social-stressors and traumatic experiences or encounters can lead to intra-personal and interpersonal conflicts that spur suicidal acts and tendencies. This is exemplified in the Character of Kweku, whose unfair dismissal from work as one of the best surgeons in American leads him to commit suicide as an escape from disillusionment, depression, and racial discrimination. There exist interplays between social pressures and family responsibility that grows into psychological problems that evoke the feeling of worthlessness in African diaspora characters. Kweku's descent into depression and trauma started when he falls under stress from his work as a surgeon. On occasion, Taiwo his daughter finds him: Collapsed on a couch with his mouth hanging open, his coat on the floor, his head slumped on his chest. She'd never seen her father so-loose. Without tension. He was always so rigid, so upright, strung taut. Now he looked like a marionette abandoned by its manipulator, puddled in a jumble of wood, limbs and string (p. 44).

Kweku's life is shattered. This is symbolized when Taiwo sees "the bruises on the bottom of his feet" (44). This reflects the effect of social stressors on the psychological wellbeing of Kweku; his responsibilities as a father and husband and the need to satisfy his hospital responsibilities also subject him to further anxiety. His physical absence from his children and emotional distance from his children is depicted as his children's desire to be with their Father. This is succinctly portrayed when "they'd loiter in the hall outside the half-open door, giggling softly, whispering loudly to attract his attention, then peer in to see if he'd look up from reading his peer-reviewed journal" (p.47). Kweku's defense or coping strategy to the pressure is to console himself with the fact that "His devotion to his profession kept a roof over their heads" (p.47). His mind in recognizing these anomalies is depressed. This becomes the yardstick for Kweku's mood swings and lack of stability in his dealings with his wife and children.

Kweku's ultimate sack from work; and the manner Marty delivers this sad news to him shows a lack of empathy and the level of cynicism on the part of the hospital's management towards him. As "Marty didn't bother with pitying looks,'' (p.68) when he announced to Kweku that his appeal against his wrongful dismal had been thrown out of the courts. In fact, Marty's colleague tries to dissuade him from pursuing the case further because Kweku was up against "the machine turned against him, charged, swallowed him whole, mashed up, and spat him out of some spout in the back" (p.69). The machine represents the forces of racism – the system, that is entrenched even within the judiciary – arguably institutionalized. Kweku's fate could be said to have been sealed thus: I am afraid we have to let you go…Having reviewed all the details of Mrs. Cabots appendectomy and of the complaint that the Cabots lodged against you therewith, this body believes that, though a phenomenal surgeon, you failed… (p.72).

This verdict plunged him into episodes of hallucination and dementia as he grapples with the problem of how to sustain himself and his family in a capitalist diaspora, which is highly individualistic. The disillusionment that this sacking or firing

brings to Fola his wife, who at the age of twenty-three, "with her law school acceptance letter framed on the wall" (p.72) abandoned her dreams to ride with him to Georgetown. Holding on to the hope that one could dream 'enough for the both of us" (p.73) and their love represented by the Olu's Utero. Kweku knew that Fola's sacrifices for him were endless. So for her, he knew "he had to be successful" and the words "you failed" (p.74) was a grievous blow to his ego as well as the wellbeing of his household.

Kweku who embodies the neurotic trait for recognition adopts at the initial stage denial of his sack as a coping mechanism to his pain and disgrace. But eventually, the interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts within him heighten as a result of embarrassing encounters he has with Kip, the Cabot family physician who questions his credentials and training saying; "And where did you do your 'training?' (p.74). Kweku responded with "in the jungle, on beasts," and "Chimpanzees taught. Great instructors. Who knew?" (p.74). This exchange forces Kweku to defend his ego and channel his aggression on a representative of a racist system. As Horney (1937: 111) posits, Kweku is engulfed by "a psychic disturbance brought about by fears and defenses against these fears, and attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies" in this condition.

On another note, Kweku's mental state becomes unstable and he begins to exhibit the traits of dementia and hallucination as a result of his isolation from the diaspora society and his family. For eleven months he pretends that he had not been sacked from work by "Getting out of the bed every morning, leaving the house scrubs, coat, briefcase," (p.75). It is at the height of this regretful situation that Kweku's severe depression kicks in. He is seen at Havard Library from morning "until two o'clock researching cases: wrongful dismissal, discrimination, malpractice" (p.76) all to salvage any court judgment that might prove useful in restoring his job and dignity. His attempts became futile when he discovered Martyr was also "letting him go" (p.76). The de-individuation process in Kweku makes him adopt anti-normative behavior thus: He started to laugh. He had nowhere to go. He had nowhere to

pretend to be going. He was clean out of money. He was defeated. He was delirious. He was driving for some minutes before he realized he was driving. Driving, he discovered, as if these hands were not his, as if his foot were not his, to the hospital (p. 76).

Kweku has not only lost his sense of decorum and transforms into a demented person, but also loses his humanity. His trip to the hospital elicits violent scenes as he tries to embed a sense of guilt on his colleagues and old friend Dr. Yuki Michiko Michelle and the Hospital president who had recommended Kweku for the surgery in the first place because they knew "he's a fine surgeon. The finest we have." (p.74). Now that the surgery has resulted in the death of Jane "Ginny" Cabot, patron of research sciences, whose condition before the surgery was sure going to lead to her death whether she was "in a bed at Beth Israel or in a bed on Beacon Hill" (p.74). And the only reason Kweku attempted "the appendectomy was because the Cabots had called the president of the hospital, a family friend, to suggest very politely that in light of their donation surely a last-ditch operation wasn't too much to ask? It wasn't. And they wanted the very best surgeon." (p.74) The Patient's death prompted Dr. Yuki to sacrifice Kweku even though she knew "that procedure had been flawlessly executed". Kweku drove in fury to the hospital to ask her "simply: how was she sleeping?" after such a heinous crime (p.77) as he barges into her office in anger. It is this aggression that grows into madness that the security had to drag him on the floor through the lobby, "eyes bloodshot from shouting, a madman in scrubs" (p.72).

In this state, Kweku experiences memory loss as he forgets details like going to pick up his son Kehinde at the Museum of Fine Art – more like the early stages of Alzheimer's. Kweku's humiliation and shame with family could be traced down to the instance Kehinde decides to walk to his Father's hospital just to discover "appearing calmly in the lobby at precisely the same moment two men dragged a madman across it" (p.79), and this madman happens to be his father. When Kehinde drives home and gives his Dad a piece of painting that he claims to be the picture of Kweku and his wife Fola. Fola in this painting is depicted as "big"

while Kweku is small. Kehinde explains to Kweku that "Because Mom says she always has to be the bigger person," (p.82) that shows why Kweku's image is small in his painting.

It is important to assert that during this drive home, Kweku's mind is caught in a complex situation of handling and managing fixed psycho-social tensions which cumulatively grow into internal psychological problems (intra-personal conflicts). Kweku as a neurotic whose neurotic needs of personal achievement and personal admiration falls under the domineering/ moving against and detach neurotic traits adopts a coping mechanism of silence, departure, or estrangement from family, down to a solitary life on the streets of Baltimore. His phone conversation with Fola from his self-imposed exile and his answer to her inquiry about his condition says; he was sorry and he was leaving. What if she sold the house at value, she'd have enough to start over again. That it was quite possible that he had never really deserved her, not really. That he wiped them out trying to beat the odds… (He was nowhere) He said it was for the best and that again he was sorry. That she'd be better off without him. "I am letting you go (p. 86).

The implication of his physical estrangement from his family, his alienation from his society, and his sack at his place of work on his psyche are enormous. His depression deepens as he spends "Days: in stupor, barely sleeping, barely thinking, too afraid to call home, eating rice, drinking shame, back to the Goodwill on Broadway to buy suit for a meeting at Hopkins (no position), Johnnie Walker, kind of blue" (p.87).

Kweku deteriorates in character: he becomes an alcoholic and a beggar on the streets. From being one of the elite bright stars in society to becoming a never-do-well overnight was a hard blow on his personality and sense of responsibility. During one of his outings, he comes in contact with his son Olu, a medical student on his way to school and Olu accuses him of the misfortune of the family and vehemently expresses his disappointment at his father. But Kweku still maintains his silence about what transpired in the hospital. Olu informs him that Fola his wife still "cries every morning," (p.88) when he inquires about where she stays. The

killing blow or the psychological strain comes when Olu assures him; "She doesn't want to see you" (p.87). Even when Kweku attempts to show affection to his son, he simply walked away.

The frantic attempt made by Kweku to reconnect with his wife and family and its failure fracture his familial spirit and sense of belonging. This is further jeopardized by his hanging phone calls and how nobody ever calls him back or even cares to search for him. His absence facilitates his family's disintegration or estrangement with the family who are: "Folade everywhere, Kehinde in New York, Taiwo in East London, Olu in Boston, and Kofi in Jamestown". These traumatic events elicit feelings of guilt, regret, and hopelessness in him. Kweku retrogresses into feats of hallucinations, madness and contemplates suicide. For example, He is seen as:

Gripping the grass in pain, he rolls to his side. Lifts his head. Looks around. Is there something he can use to hoist himself up? The boungainvillaea, the butterfly, the mango. And there she is. Finally, in the fountain. A ridiculous place. Though not so surprising for a dreamer. Or for two. Standing (floating) in the fountain with white blossoms in their cotton hair, their bodies swathed in sparkling lace…His mother says, "Rest," Fola says, "Yes." So he lies in the grass (p. 90).

Kweku on the grass in Baltimore hallucinates that he is having a conversation with his Mother and subsequently Fola a few minutes after the thought of suicide crosses his mind. The breakdown in familial communication culminates in intrapersonal conflicts and estrangement. Kweku develops self-hate and indulges in self-destructive habits. He eventually dies "on his face," "in the grass," as if he walked outside, fell down, and couldn't get up at 6.am (p.112).

Selasi through the character of Kweku exemplifies that the African diaspora character leaps towards suicide when s/he uncovers an aberration or disconnect between the ideal image of the diaspora and the reality of discrimination, societal rejection, disillusionment, and lack of fulfillment in the diaspora society. In other words, suicide takes place psychologically a long way before

the physical act kicks in or begins to manifest itself. It also starts when the individual loses grip of the main reason for existence or when s/he feels an unforgivable mistake has been committed and adopts the existential dictum and feels life has become meaningless. Kweku's resignation to suicide backs this point.

Furthermore, the departure or detachment of a Father figure in the Sai's family becomes a major source of dysfunction in their family and has a chronic long-term impact on the psychological development of all family members especially Sadie, who grew up without the image of her Father existing in her imagination. Kruk (2012: 1) supports this claim about children who grow up in homes that have absentee fathers. He claims they always suffer from: Diminished self-concept, and compromised physical and emotional security. Children diminished self-concept, and compromised physical and emotional security, children consistently report feeling abandoned when their Fathers are not involved in their lives, struggling with their emotions and episodic bouts of self-loathing. They develop behavioral problems; many building an intimidating persona in an attempt to disguise their underlying fears, resentment, anxieties, and unhappiness

The absence of Kweku (a father) in Sadie's life haunts her existence. She is alienated from her immediate familial connections. The lackluster companionship between Sadie and her other siblings gives rise to basic anxiety in her which results in intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts. In other words, intricate interfaces of environmental, social, psychological, and family problems evoke feelings of worthlessness in her. Her alienation from society and family explains her feeling of low self-esteem. This dejection later transforms into an inferiority complex in her dealings with people.

Sadie is depressed and seeks to escape in alcoholism. Here, alcohol becomes a symbolic mechanism for coping with her psychological predicaments, in essence, it becomes an extended family she goes to seek consolation from in the absence of true or real family members. As Kruk (2012: 3) again observes; children with absentee Fathers are more likely going to have: "drug and

alcohol abuse (fatherless children are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol and abuse drugs in childhood and adulthood." When Philae comes over to Sadie's apartment to pass a message across to her from her sister Taiwo, she meets Sadie "kneeling at the toilet bowl, fingers down her throat. Outcomes the alcohol…she peers in the toilet as she does at such moments, the patient turned doctor, inspecting the food. It is fascinating, however disgusting, the vomit." (p.142).

In her depressed state, Sadie develops a fondness for the bathroom. It becomes a site of affection and safety for her away from the madness of the diaspora. This ritual she learned "at Milton, to hide in a bathroom, a perfect place really, a cocoon, a world away. The peculiar insularity of bathrooms becomes a comfort, a sort of mother, and a world of concealments (p.143). From this, the metaphoric relationship between alcoholism is extended into the maternal need for comfort in the bathroom. Sadie only finds abode in the closed-up solitary space of a bathroom, which arguably could stand as an extended metaphor for a closed society; a disassociation from the real world. All these results from the absence, or alienation she suffers from actual societal involvement in her life - particularly her estrangement from family members.

Though Sadie's friend's parents found her a good influence on their daughters because of her good grades and good manners; on her vacations with them she is reminded of what she lacks in her family, which are affection, attention, and love. She is constantly in a state of alienation and depression. The bathroom becomes her space of solace – a seeking of the lost self: family. She indulges in different anti-normative acts while in the bathroom like:…always use the towel on the back of the door if there was one, which smelled of defenselessness, skin, of a person in a vulnerable, sweet-smelling state… Sometimes she'd press up her face to these towels, overwhelmed by the smell, suddenly wanting to cry. Always, she'd peer in the tote bins, the cabinets, the makeup bags, kaboodles, and take something with: a kind of clumsy Kleptomania, not as professional as professional as the

bulimia, not as clinically executed, nothing of note. A scrunchie or eyedrops or squashed tubes of lip gloss or sample –sized hand creams brought back from the spa…Until someone called "Sadie" or knocked on the door. (p.143)

Sadie's severe neurotic conflict makes her highly unstable. She however makes effort to hide her pain from the world. This concealment finds ways of affecting her personality as she is forced to lie consistently about her problems to hide her feelings of shame. A good example is when she is confronted with the question of why she stayed so long in the bathroom, on several occasions, she responds with; "I locked myself in" (p.144), which is not enough detail to satisfy the curiosity of her interrogators.

Through introspection, Sadie sees herself with self-loathing or self-deprecation. This is depicted through her actions like when she, "sits on the toilet seat, feet up beneath her and hugging both shins with her chin on her kneecaps" (p.144). She harbors anger and discontentment against her siblings for different reasons that range from the feeling of abandonment on their part and the lack of affection from them, probably it is one of the many reasons she felt unwanted and insecure while growing up. She enacts scenes or situations to test her importance to her siblings. At times she plays a game "with herself, or against. Goal: guess how many seconds it will take for them to notice that someone's gone missing, that Sadie is not there? ...which of them would notice that Sadie was gone?" (p.144). Or "she always prays that Taiwo her sister would notice her absence and would look for her, but "Taiwo never did" (p.144). Acts like these show the unresolved conflicts in her unconscious and the fear and anxiety that have been with her since concerning her worth to her family.

Sadie possesses the neurotic trait of social recognition and becomes agitated if she feels her value or image is being relegated to the background. Hence, her behaviors of throwing tantrums and acting in anti-normative ways become an escape mechanism for her, used to gain wide attention, sympathy, and possibly recognition. In this case, it is from Philae her roommate; an American who has become "like a sister" to her that she seeks

validation. Philae is said to be "The light of her life and the thorn in her side…." (p.145)

On the whole; Selasi's Ghana Must Go, through the bond that exists between Sadie and Philae depict the fact that African diaspora characters crave for friendship, approval and companionship with the citizens of their host societies. These give a sense of positive self-worth at the same time cushions their alienation and anxiety.

Consequently, because of Sadie's alienation from family, there is a conflict between the idealized image of herself as Philae or wanting to belong to Philae's family. A family that has, "their pictures on the wall along their stairs on the cape, mother Sibby, sister Calli, Philae, Father Andreas, of photos on the internet, fashion weeks, galas. They are larger than life-at least larger than hers, Philae's family is heavy…the wealth keeps them together…a gravitational pull," (p.146) and her real image of belonging to the Sai's family. A poorer family, "…scattered five some, a family without gravity, completely unbound. With nothing as heavy as money beneath them, all pulling them down to the same piece of earth, a vertical axis, nor roots spreading out underneath them, with no living grandparents, no history, a horizontal…barely noticing when someone has slipped off the grid" (p.147).

Sadie mentally detaches herself from her family and by extension deconstructs the notion of the Sai's as a family. The power tussles between these two opposing sides result in inner conflicts within her. Sadie is consistently caught at a crossroads between the Sai's (her real family) dreary warmth and outsiders' genuine love and concern. For example, on her birthday, she spends that special moment with Philae while Folasade her mother, and Taiwo her sister forgot her special day. Sadie self-distances herself from sharing her emotions with her siblings. So, when Taiwo calls Sadie on her birthday to inform her of their father's death and inquiries about the loud music in her room; she lies to her sister and informs her, "It's a party. For the end of exams. She doesn't remind her sister of her birthday."

The seething anger Sadie has towards her family as a result of her inner conflicts inspires other lies. When Taiwo eventually informs her of their father's death, Sadie hardly remembers who her father was and even concludes that he was "A memory. Someone else's… The man from the story" (p.149). She further speculates that her sister Taiwo, "…doesn't like her, never has," (p.149). This further symbolizes her detachment and rejection of family ties with the Sai's. Sadie's aggression towards the Sai's transforms her into an eccentric and narcissistic individual concerning her biological family. This is represented in her nonchalance towards the death of her father and even when Taiwo instructs her to join the family for their trip to Ghana for their father's funeral, she gives excuses like, "I can't. I have to submit an essay." And when Taiwo pesters her more she claims, "I have to submit it in person…It has to be signed for. To show, like, the date…It's half our grade (which touches the nerve.)" (p.151)

Sadie attempts every trick that will help her to stay away from that journey to Ghana with her real family. This is because she does not have a sense of belonging among them. Even when she agrees to attend the funeral, her attempt to connect to the idea of her father is still oblivious to her. He eludes her imagination and memory and is rather replaced by the fond times they have shared with Fola. Ironically, it is the thought of Fola that moves her to tears.

Also, Selasi in *Ghana Must Go* considers racial hostilities and its ability to construct aggressive character traits in African diaspora characters. This is because as Schlenker et al observes, "it appears that what is important in self-conceptualization is that other people in your host society perceive you in a particular way" (Schlenker, Dlugolecki and Doherty, 1994:99). A degrading perception that insults a character's sense of worth can generate anger in defense of an individual's ego and confidence. Horney reinforces this view when she argues that, aggression serves as a basic need for safety, security, and love. This aggressive trait is portrayed in the character of Olu – a surgeon like his father and Sadie's elder brother.

The effect of racial biases and psychological torture on the African diaspora character psyche is also depicted during Olu's visit to his girlfriend's parent to ask for her hand in marriage. Selasi uses the conflict and tension that emerges in inter-racial relationships and how this intra-personal and interpersonal conflict serves a route that inspires aggressive traits in African diaspora characters. When Olu requests for Ling's hand in marriage from her Father Dr. Wei, he first downplays the seriousness of the plea and makes a mockery of Olu by laughing hypocritically. He then insults Olu's African ancestry. Dr. Wei denies Olu his blessing for Ling's hand in marriage when he said, "It is true that you do not have my blessing. And won't have. But not for the reasons that you may suspect. Certainly not for the reasons that she does. That Ling does" (p.118). He then offends Olu's sensibilities and self-esteem when he runs a stereotypical narrative of Africa by lunching a racist thus: You know, I never understood the dysfunctions of Africa. The greed of the leaders, diseases, civil war. Still dying of malaria in the twenty first century, still hacking and raping, cutting genitals off? Young children and nuns slitting throats with matches, those girls in the Congo, this thing in Sudan? As a young man in China, I assumed it was ignorance. Intellectual incapacity, inferiority perhaps. Needless to say I was wrong, as I have noted. When I came here I was wrong. Fair enough. But the backwardness persists even now, and why is that? When African men are so bright…But why is the place still so backward? I ask. And you know what I think? No respect for the family. The fathers don't honour their children or wives. The Olu I knew, Oluwalekun Abayomi? Had two bastards children plus three by the wife. A brain without equal but no moral backbone. That's why you have child soldier, the rape. How can you value another man's daughter, or son, when you don't even value our own? (p.120)

This remark plunges Olu into a psychological quagmire. His anxiety deteriorates into depression and inferiority complex as Olu is "too startled to speak," (p.120) after the remarks. Dr. Wei on his part complicates issues by referring to Kweku's separation from Folasade when he said, "Your mother, for example. Ms. Savage.

Not Mrs. With a different last name than yours, Sai. Is that right? I'm assuming- and it is just an assumption, I acknowledge –that your father left your mother to raise you alone?" (p.120), this again, rouses so much anger in Olu. The interpersonal and intra-personal conflicts within Olu become quite overwhelming and he adopts aggression as a defense mechanism for coping with his anxiety.

And again, the derogatory view or perception of Africans in the diaspora by other races is exemplified at the instance Dr. Wei (an Asian-American) attempts a comparison between Kweku and his son Olu; at the level of their potentials for being irresponsible as well as possessing a genetic flaw in their family. Olu responds with anger when he said; "I'm just like my father. I'm proud to be like him…He's a surgeon like I am, the best in his field." Completely engulfed by the anger, almost losing his sense of self continues; "The problem isn't Ling wants to marry an African. It's not that she's marrying me, and she will. No, the problem is you, Dr. Wei. Your example. You're the example of what they don't want. Both of them, Ling and Lee-Ann, and why is that? Why aren't there pictures of them in your place? What was it, 'the father is always the example?' Both of your daughters prefer something else." (p.121). Though Olu's ties to his family and African heritage is being strongly defended in his exchange with Dr, Wei as he celebrates them both in response to Wei's bias commentary on Africa and Kweku; it exposes the cracks not only in a family that should have been built on love, care, and peaceful coexistence but on other races.

Kweku's departure or detachment from his family and children at the vital stage of their growth and mental development haunts the character formation and emotional stability of Taiwo as she struggles with behavioral problems with friendship and develops intimidating personae to shield or disguise her underlying fears, resentment, and unhappiness in the diaspora. As Kruk (2012:4) expounds on this saying; promiscuity and teen pregnancy (fatherless children are more likely to experience problems with sexual health, including a greater likelihood of having intercourse

before the age of 16, foregoing contraception during first intercourse, becoming teenage parents, and contracting sexually transmitted infection; girls manifest an object hunger for males, and in experiencing the emotional loss of their fathers egocentrically as a rejection of them, become susceptible to exploitation by adult men)

Although not all his observations are true in Taiwo's personality, she exhibits promiscuous tendencies and hunger for older men that exposes her to exploitation by her married Professor as a law student. This affair results in a scandal that is reported on the major newspaper headlines in American. This forces her to run into exile and to finally stay with her twin brother Kehinde. The events are traumatizing and leave her depressed and dejected. And even when Kehinde tries to console her she accuses him of being "…busy becoming a world-famous artist," (p.176). On the strength of those words, Taiwo expresses how her alienation from family pushed her to find comfort and solace elsewhere. On another scale, Kehinde's opinion of her behavior was that she acted "like … Bimbo …a "Whore." This personal insult which is an assassination of character and shouldn't have been uttered by a true brother who knows his sister's worth or sense of togetherness as bonded by family has broken every sense of belonging. Taiwo rises in defense of her ego in anger and threatens to kill him. The intra-personal and interpersonal conflict within Taiwo as she suffers social ostracism and self-imposed isolation generates a personality rife with anger, promiscuity, and depression.

## Conclusion

This paper has accounted for the dynamic personalities of the African diaspora characters in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*, hinging its arguments on the postulation by Horney that societal happenings plunge the psyche into turmoil and in an attempt to cope or escape this anxiety, the African diaspora character adopts different behavioral patterns. It should also be noted that sometimes, the diaspora character's anti-normative behavior is not a choice s/he willingly makes but is propelled by societal friction and boxed into corners where de-individuation becomes the norm or normal way to survive. Most times, the

African diaspora character has the stakes of his or her adopted or foreign society against him and only his psychological derangement offers the aggressive society the satisfaction of where they feel he belongs. So, on knowing that the hostile environment sees them as guilty victims of a crime yet to be committed, the African diaspora characters de-individuate, act different, eccentric by finding other means to redirect or rechannel their anger and disenchantment with society and the Kweku's family epitomizes that. Almost every family member is either guilty of anti-normative behavior or de-individuates to fulfill a particular longing or nagging desire.

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