

The fear of cultural belonging

Sharon Dodua Otoo's transnational writing

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Introduction: Afropolitan literature as an example of transcultural writing

In contemporary Europe, cultural conflicts, persisting racism and the lack of a broader acceptance of plural identities are all social problems, with which literary discourse too comes to terms. Aside from being dealt with from the standpoint of the majority culture, over the last decades these phenomena have also been thematised and creatively elaborated by several so-called 'Afropolitan writers'. Being an effect of globalisation

and late modernity, or, according to Achille Mbembe (2007), a ‘worlds-in-movement phenomenon’, those authors live and write out of a dual attachment to the Western world and to the African continent. They are therefore characterized through a very fertile and demystifying ‘double glance’ on societies and cultures which for long have been very distant, contributing to give contemporary literature an ethical turn. In fact, as has been pointed out by Eva Rask Knudsen and Ulla Rahbek in their recent publication entitled *In Search of the Afropolitan*, this new category of contemporary writers is supposed to assume “a mobile and decentralised position that disavows earlier deeply hegemonic phases of modernity, as it calls for a reorientation of ideas about Africa and African culture and identity” (Rask Knudsen & Rahbek 2016, 1). At the same time, Afropolitan writers are aware (and in some sense the ‘stakeholders’) of cultural complexity, often refusing to oversimplify or essentialise the notions of blackness and whiteness.

So, without generalising too much, Afropolitan literature could be defined as a supranational concept addressing questions such as multi-local and diasporic identity, as well as new European citizenship, being deeply linked with the concept of cosmopolitanism, as proposed by Kwame Anthony Appiah in *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a world of Strangers* (2006). In his essay, Appiah uses the formula ‘universality plus difference’, coming to terms with a concept originally and conventionally related to white European culture, which has now been critically and creatively reinvented and reversed. Evidently, the concept of Afropolitanism stands opposed to the tendency (which is especially to be found in media discourse) of considering African and afro-descending writers not primarily as intellectuals, but as native informants; but it also goes beyond the sometimes fairly rigid categorisation as ‘postcolonial writers’, which is

more common in academic discourse. According to the ethical commitment of these writings, Rask Knudsen and Rahbek commentate:

... Afropolitans, due to their (globally) itinerant lives, are in a particularly advantage position to realize the ethical responsibilities inherent in Appiah's proposition, yet in a specific counter-discursive way, because the knowledge they have also relates directly to what European or Western culture has made of African difference over centuries of imperial or colonial impact. Afropolitans employ that knowledge actively as power to effect a radical change in perception. (Rask Knudsen & Rahbek 2016, 15.)

Furthermore, Afropolitan literature may include authors of different generations, like Ben Okri (Nigeria, 1955), Chiamamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria, 1977), Taiye Selasi (London, 1979), as well as Igiaba Scego (Rome, 1974), being the English-speaking and -publishing proponents much better known as those using Italian, German or 'minor' languages for their literary work. At last, Afropolitan writing is frequently associated with new concepts of 'World literature' or 'Global literature', too.

In my contribution, while dealing with the fear of cultural belonging, I will focus on the narrative work of the Black British-Ghanaian writer and activist Sharon Dodua Otoo, reflecting on how blackness and ethnicity, together with a migration background, constitute main factors in the negotiation of identity, in Western society. In fact, emotions like fear, disease and cultural-based misunderstandings are shaped by literary representations that, as in the case of this 'Afropolitan' writer, may open new identity discourses and counter-narratives. Without a doubt, these specific discourses could also be analysed from the point of view of the transcultural theory, as developed

by the German philosopher and sociologist Wolfgang Welsch (1994, 1999 etc.). Indeed, they are the expression of cultural exchanges, which prevent us from thinking about cultures as closed systems, or as ‘monades’. According to Welsch, in fact, the new cultural formations transcend traditional concepts, being characterized by the creation of network-like relationships. The increasing level of internationalisation, migration and cross-media networking is radically changing social interaction and self-representation, as Welsch points out in a series of significant and duly quoted contributions. It is therefore no longer possible to think about Western societies as homogeneous constructs, for they are the product of hybridisation and networking. Yet, to come to the point, most academics will agree with Welsch and with this constructive analysis, diametrically opposite to the Clash-of-Civilisations theories and related political views, but unfortunately many common European citizens and journalists are not on the same page. Cultural conflict, fear and misunderstanding in contemporary societies and the aesthetics of fear, disease and violence are therefore to be analysed using a set of methods that are not provided by Welsch’s model. As Dagmar Reichardt recently pointed out:

Welsch brings greater precision and evidence solely to the morphology of the cultural relativity and to the taxonomy of the research object (leading essentially to its enlargement), and yet he eschews such precision when it comes to give parameters for how to act methodically. Testing the methods of analyses remains therefore a challenge for the future, and its importance and applicability can be proven only through scientific practice. (Reichardt 2017, 45.)

In the case of comparative literature studies, I personally would suggest using the analytic tools the texts themselves call for, whether they are focused on gender-specific themes or on postcolonial ones; whether the theme and the aesthetics of migration are in the foreground, or whether, as in the case in point, we are dealing with an imagological reflection on Black- and Whiteness and on related themes concerning identity construction and identity performance in contemporary metropolitan society.

As for the writer I have included in my contribution, here are some biographical details: Sharon Dodua Otoo was born in London in 1972, from emigrated Ghanaian parents and she was raised in England. She moved to Berlin in 2006 and since 2010 she has been involved with the Initiative Black People in Germany (Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland), and she is the editor of *Witnessed*, an English-language book series of the German publishing house Assemblage (located in Münster). In this series, in 2012 she came out with her first fictional text, in English language: the novella *The things I am thinking while smiling politely* (2012) (German language version republished in 2013), followed in 2014 by another one, entitled *Synchronicity*. Both texts were translated by Mirjam Nuenning in German language and released by the same publisher. The writer and activist, who in the same years published several short stories and on-line essays in English and German, became renowned by a larger public in 2016, when she was awarded with the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis, one of the most prestigious awards for literature in German language. Otoo's winning entry was the short story *Herr Gröttrup setzt sich hin*, which is still unpublished but available in (the original) German language at the web site of the Austrian television channel ORF. So, as we see, we are dealing with a translingual writer, whose main

publications are the expression of transnational editing policies, and whose main literary acknowledgement is symptomatic for the transformation not only of the German-speaking societies, but also of the German (*deutschsprachigen*) Literature.

The disease of naming

My analysis of Dodua Otoo's narratives, in terms of representation of individual disease and cultural anxiety, begins with a (quite long) quotation from her novella *The things I am thinking while smiling politely*. At a first glance, it is the story of a heartbreak occurring to the protagonist and narrator, a Black-British woman living in Berlin, mother of siblings, and PhD-scholar in German literature; but at the same time, this interpersonal crisis is the protagonist's occasion for analysing herself and her childhood in England, where she grew up in an African family with migration background. This way, the author gives an insight not only into the current German society, but also into the British society of the 80s and 90s (and as we see, most of the identikit of Otoo's main character descends from the author's own biography).

Names are important, but I no longer know mine.

I have never cared much for my so-called maiden name. Some officially suited white lady once glared at me in barely-hidden disgust when, in response to her customer-service-trained polite enquiry, I told her that it really didn't matter how she pronounced it.

'Yes it does!' She clenched her teeth slightly but definitely as she spoke. 'It is your surname!'

My eyes spotted something quite amazing on a wall somewhere to the right of her head. Perhaps she had identity issues of her own. In any case, I really didn't

care. I didn't even quite know how to bend and squash my Ghanaian name to suit English tongues – and leaving it to freely expand across my lips in its full tonal glory would simply underline even more how much I really did not belong. I wish Auntie had thought of that and had given me appropriate Afro-centric guidance before abandoning me to the indoctrination generally referred to as the British education system. I may have better learnt how to handle my identity in public.

And yeah, the other reason that I mistreated my name was I did not want to be associated with my father any second longer than strictly necessary – [...] Several month after we were married, I discovered the Peters was also the surname of a German colonial aggressor and, although I didn't begin to hate it then, I stopped adorning myself with it, like it was some magnificent fur coat, but begun instead to treat it like an ugly scarf: functional and necessary in cold weather, but not my item of choice and it wouldn't matter much if I misplaced it one day, of perhaps lent it to someone in need, and it was never returned. [...]. (2012, 9–10.)

As we can easily recognize, in these lines the character's name is a kaleidoscopic mirror of her identity, which is represented as a crossroads of tensions: the difficulty of being accepted without any friction by the British society, beyond the officially exhibited political correctness; the assimilation process by which every foreign name is anglicised, losing its 'authenticity'; the refusal of the father's name, as a symbol of a disease-causing familiar past and masculine authority; the expectation of changing life by adopting the deeply rooted and "sexy" name of her "sexy" husband (2012, 10), as the mirage of a renewal of her own. In fact, the narrator, once fallen in love and married with a German, very enthusiastically accepts her husband's surname as hers, provided

she does not discover its colonial background. The narrator's idealising image of German culture is therefore dismantled and debunked: as if to say, a colonial past could unexpectedly appear behind every European, and not only British surname, as the return of a repressed collective memory. However, this kind of return of the repressed seems to be perturbing, *unheimlich*, primarily to those border-crossing subjects who are going to carry these names for the first time, since they are linked to this memory as victims, and not to the virtual heirs of the former "colonial aggressors". In a nutshell, the protagonist's difficulty in dealing with her own name, albeit recounted with humour and with light and delicious self-irony, is the clear expression of the difficult negotiation of her identity within the European, British and German contexts. While she tries to re-construct her identity, no longer in a public-oriented way, but re-enacting it in the direction of the private sphere, i.e. her new German-British-Ghanaian family, she undergoes a sense of un-belonging that recalls more remote episodes of her life, as if she were in a spiral of memory from which she cannot evade.

In fact, in both the narration of the present in Berlin, and the flashbacks on the narrator's childhood in London – and using an oscillating chronology slowly leading to the explanation of the relationship rupture – figures of blackness and whiteness are constantly performed and discussed. Yet, these figures are not interpreted in a merely unilateral or conflictual way, being often linked to gender and generational aspects. For example, when it comes to how ethnic difference is perceived and performed in today's Berlin, there is a remarkable attitude difference between the protagonist and her children: although the latter are exposed to racist comments even at school, they apparently do not suffer them, reacting with cleverness and feeling superior not only to their only-white schoolmates, but also to those teachers

who do not seem to have any ‘intercultural competence’ at all. Furthermore, as to the question of naming and self-naming, the siblings bear their hybrid Ghanaian and German names with no discomfort whatsoever, relating to them with the spontaneity that may be common to the new generation of teenagers growing up in a multicultural metropolis:

I invited Beth to join me in the kitchen, where I made her a hot chocolate with squirry cream and marshmallows, just like she always loved it. I told her all about how Till and I chose the name “Bethany”, that both her and Ash’s names came from the Bible. I heard for the first time how pleased she was that she had also been named after Auntie, and how she hated it whenever people shortened her second name to “Pat”. We laughed until the tears rolled down our cheeks when Beth told me how horrified she was, the first time she heard Ash’s second name. I tried to absolve myself of all responsibility. Till had wanted to honour his grandpa Heinrich, a German communist who had been arrested and killed during Nazi Germany. “Yeah whatever,” Beth had responded. “But you could have anglicised it. Or ... taken his second name ... or something!”. She shook her head in disgust. “Heinrich! I mean ... what were you thinking?”

[...] I thought back to similar homework assignments I had had. Sitting in the classroom, the eyes of those behind me burning my neck, the eyes of those in front of me, scanning my expression for authenticity. “What is her African name? And does it translate to ‘most prized cattle grazing on the savannah’ in English?” I thought back to how much I hated my teachers in those moments. (2012, 76–77.)

To get to the point, in a moment of the protagonist's life when she is upset because of her husband's betrayal, all kinds of identity-making and future-prospecting issues (such as the self-naming and the naming act related to her and to their children), are deeply questioned. This leads the narrator to reflect on the relevance of blackness and racialisation during her own childhood and to compare her own identity-formation to that of her children, implicitly comparing British society of the 80s to 21st century life in Berlin. Despite all societal and generational differences, there is one perturbing constant feature, i.e. the feeling that black people are the object of the gaze of the white majority, which forces her to reflect on how they are viewed. To better argue that, let's look at Dodua Otoo's text:

Berlin is a place where anything goes, and you can wear whatever you like, but if you are a Black woman in the underground, be prepared to be looked up and down very very slowly. I cannot tell you how many times I have glanced down at myself in horror during such moments to check if my jeans were unzipped or if my dress was caught up in my underwear. White people look at me sometimes like I am their own private Völkerschau. Staring back doesn't help. It counts as part of the entertainment. Where else can a tourist make you feel like you – the resident – are actually the one who does not belong? Welcome to the Kreuzberg district of Berlin. (2012, 85.)

This quotation allows us to approach Dodua Otoo's narratives from the point of view of gender discourse, which is very important in both English novellas and in the German-language short story. Linking gender issues with ethnicity, especially in *The things I am thinking while smiling politely*, this novella on the one hand explores the private and interpersonal

dimension of a mixed marriage, and on the other it examines the public dimension of metropolitan multi-ethnic coexistence. Thematising both dimensions, Otoo successfully avoids certain stereotypes. For example, the protagonist's husband, Till, could have chosen an 'authentic white German maiden' (to make a quite ironic conjecture) to betray his Black-British wife, but he does not: he falls in love with a young 'illegal' immigrant from Maghreb, who risks being deported after the protagonist reveals, as retaliation, their relationship to Till's boss (who actually is the most negative white German character of the novella).

Regarding the latter dimension of the public sphere, Dodua Otoo not only points out how the *black* female body is constantly sexualized by the *white* male gaze; she also hints at the objectivation practices of the non-white Other in Western society from a historical point of view, mentioning the institution of Human Zoos (Germ. *Völkerschau*), a phenomenon of the late 19th- and 20th-century where 'exotic' human beings from the colonies were publicly exhibited in cities of the industrialised world. In fact, disseminating similar references to the history of racism and racial discrimination throughout her narratives, Sharon Dodua Otoo draws upon her researches and socio-cultural activities, documented by the earlier mentioned book series *Witnessed* and by several on-line essays. In particular, in her essay "Vom Schauen und Sehen. Schwarze Literatur und Theorieproduktion als Chance für die weiße Mehrheitsgesellschaft" (2014) she argues that 'Black' literature and art, together with cultural theory, should be seen by the European collectivity as an opportunity to radically change its gaze on the 'racialized object'. Referring to Afro-American authors like bell hooks (and her essay "Representing Whiteness in Black Imagination", from 1992) and Toni Morrison (with *Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* 1992) she points out that it is necessary not

only to recount the possible reactions of the so-called ‘imagined black object’ to discrimination and verbal (but not only verbal) violence, but also and especially to reverse the gaze on the white majoritarian subject itself, in order to critically analyse the historical and cultural implications of it. So, going back to our novella, while the narrator is limiting herself to “smile politely” as a reaction to a large number of events where racism is the issue, the reader is invited to meditate on both, the gazes and acts of the white characters, as well as the reactions of the black ones. At the end of the narration, the reader should therefore be ready to critically analyse the various implications of the self-justification provided by the narrator’s husband for his choice to leave her:

“Es macht keinen Spaß mehr”, he says. I think about what he is saying – what he is about to say – and consider whether it would be kinder, gentler in English: *It’s no fun any more ...* “Fun?” I snort. It kind of erupts out of me. I pause and look at the balcony opposite ours, the one with the beautiful flowers. Obviously they do not have children. [...] Till looks me in the eyes, longer than he has in the last six months in total – which really isn’t saying much. “Es macht *mir* keinen Spaß mehr”. The additional emphasis “It’s no fun anymore *for me*” makes all the difference. Till has finally drawn a line in the sand. We continue to stand side by side, looking down on the street scene below us. Nothing has changed. And yet the world has just turned upside down. It takes me some time to realise that these two facts are not contradictory. Actually, in a few weeks, I will still be chewing on it. (2012, 97.)

Anticipating the reader’s reaction to these lines, the banality of the conclusion of the character’s relationship is not far from other, more explicit events affected by prejudice and racism.

When the main character learns that she no longer is the ‘object’ of her husband’s desire, she also painfully learns that even a relationship that was thought to be authentic is not immune from the distorted vision of the ‘other’ and, in this case, from the sexualising gaze of the white ‘male’ on the black female ‘object’.

The fear of belonging

As we have seen, through the case of our ‘Afropolitan’ writer, identity formation and identity performance are intimately linked to the gaze of the majoritarian other, which in fact is an implicit confirmation not only of the theoretical literature she refers to in her essays, but also of the principles of Imagological research. Nothing new under the sun, we could comment at this point, but coming to the core of my argumentation, I will try to point out where the specificities of Dodua Otoo’s narrative work lie, and, especially, why we can see a ‘fear of cultural belonging’ in it.

First of all, Dodua Otoo deals with the migrant’s fear of belonging, i.e. the fear of the ‘first generation’ of people moving from traditional societies, bound to be forced to stay in the society of arrival for good, as it is often impossible for them to move back to their home countries. The following paragraph of Otoo’s first novella expresses this concept very clearly in narrative terms:

Even after all those years, Auntie had still not properly arrived in London. And we seemed to always have the backdoor open – metaphorically speaking at least. I grew up thinking it was completely normal for adults’ bedrooms to have several large suitcases and a chest standing in them, filled with items ranging from large saver packs of toothbrushes, through several

collections of buy-two-get-one-free packages of cereal, to a multitude of jelly shoes (various colours) with matching plastic basket bags (they had obviously looked great in the shop window). We were always preparing to go home. Indeed, Auntie still is. (2012, 95.)

The latter lines are actually dealing with the meaning of ‘home’, with its absence that is metonymically expressed by the objects described, all talking about the impossibility of arriving definitively. It is a theme which is central for Migration Literature and migrant collective consciousness, too, as it has been carefully analysed by scholars like Sara Ahmed (1999) and Jennifer Burns (2013) in several publications. In addition to that, from the point of view of the second generation, cross-border subjects, the parents’ trauma of having lost their ‘home’ frequently creates a disease-causing responsibility to mediate between the culture the elder generation left behind and the culture where this generation is growing up. In this case, the fear of cultural belonging could be linked to the apprehension of being associated with the parents’ culture of origin. At the same time, this younger generation – represented in our case by Dodua Otoo and in general by Afropolitan writers – whilst dealing with discrimination and racism, is usually fairly aware of its in-between position, of its ‘double gaze’ on two or more societies and cultures, from the inside and from the outside: a position that implies a mental complexity and analytical tools used by such writers and artists in an original way. In this latter case, the fear of cultural belonging could therefore also be interpreted as the desire not to belong, in order to preserve this kind of double perspective, and to develop a more and more conscious transcultural identity.

Yet, from the point of view of the aesthetics of identity-questioning and cross-cultural writing, Sharon Dodua Otoo’s

second novella and her German prize-winning short story are even more interesting. *Synchronicity*, first published in 2014 (the German translation), then (2015) in the original version, recounts a rather surreal story, in a realistic setting of present-day Berlin. It is the story of a young woman born in London but descending from a Ghanaian tribe (whose name of fantasy is “Etis”), now living in the German capital where she works as a graphic designer. In a first-person narration, this woman describes the loss of her capacity to see colours, which occurs day by day and colour by colour, causing her not only to face serious problems with an important project she accepted from her German customer, but also to question all certainties related to her life. As we, the readers, learn only gradually, and as the protagonist’s mother explains in a letter whose fragments are woven into the narration, the inability to see colours is only one of the consequences of the special abilities of the members of this Ghanaian tribe, who are all women capable of parthenogenesis, i.e. the faculty to generate children alone. Whilst the colours gradually ‘come back’ to the narrator – who passes from a ‘mono-colour’ to a ‘polychromatic’ perception, which involves not only the sight, but all the five senses – she also grows aware of the particular pain of her existence. In fact, all members of her tribe must leave their mothers for good when they grow up and must not depend on other people, neither the mother nor anyone else. At the end, and roughly summarizing, the protagonist faces the dilemma of choosing the way imposed by tradition, or breaking off from it in order to reconcile with her daughter, whom she had forced to leave home one year before, and who is now expecting a baby.

Concerning the narrative style of this novella, we can firstly notice the particular synaesthetic descriptions of the moments when the narrator is going to once again perceive ‘her’ colours.

The following lines describe, for example, the return of the narrator's red colour:

I shouldn't have been surprised. In the letter my mum had written to me, she had stated quite clearly that this was the re-colouring that had scared her the most. I had stabbing pains and the sensation of bleeding all over my body but thankfully I could see neither wounds nor blood.

As usual, the symptoms had begun in the early hours and were fairly mild. On waking, it felt like a tiny scratch had caused a droplet of blood to appear just above my right eyebrow. I wiped it with the tip of my little finger and was astounded when I looked at my glove that there was not even the slightest mark on it. Whereas yesterday the morning had been unpleasant, but bearable due to the scent of peppermint and fog in my nostrils, today only smelt of danger. My mum had known that I would also feel slightly nauseous and very dizzy. I also carried travel sickness tablets. (2015, 35.)

As we can see from this example of the synaesthetic descriptions, which are repeated at the beginning of every chapter, from 10 to 21, in this novella *Dodua Otoo* works with an interesting estrangement effect, an effect through which the usual perception of reality is deactivated. A similar strategy is employed by the author in her Bachmann-Prize-winning short story, where the daily routine of a typical German breakfast celebrated by an old German couple is upset by an egg, that unexpectedly is not hard-boiled enough. This event causes a sort of familiar earthquake, which restores in the couples' memory the erased Nazi-past and the end of the war, when the husband – who now treats his wife in an authoritarian way – was saved by her from the retaliation of Russian soldiers. This estrangement effect is even intensified

by the narrative instance, changing from a neutral, extradiegetic habit to a personal, homodiegetic one, where the point of view is the one of the soft-boiled egg. The magical element related to a (widely speaking) 'African' collective imagination, we just observed summarizing the plot of the novella *Synchronicity*, is a further element related to this narrative strategy: in fact, the soft-boiled egg that also functions as a second narrator, seems to be an unborn soul, who migrates throughout the centuries and continents in search of his/her special occasion for coming to life.

Going back to Dodua Otoo's second novella, which deals with the issues of identity and belonging more than her German short story, we can say that she uses this particular anti-realistic effect of estrangement not only to address the theme of self-alienation and the anxiety of tradition. The painful conquest of a multicoloured identity performed by the protagonist and narrator could also be interpreted as an allegory of the individual and cultural process of the acceptance of differences, with all its difficulties. In this case, the transition from a mono-colour to a multicolour dimension could be interpreted as the change from a monocultural dimension into a transcultural one. Yet, the protagonist's decision to change radically her own nature and to find a new way of life, breaking with tradition, is associated not only with the fear of cultural belonging, but also with the fear of personal, sentimental, surely intimate belonging: a fear she slowly overcomes by falling in love with a policeman of Arab ancestry and discovering herself as a 'normal' human being who needs to exist in the mind of someone, taken care of by and taking care of someone. However, this personal and sentimental dimension of *Bildung* in *Synchronicity* is associated with the widening of the protagonist's horizon in the direction of ethical and societal issues, and therefore with *Bildung* in its original

and more complex meaning, deeply rooted in German literature. In fact, once finished her graphic project amid a number of difficulties, the protagonist of *Synchronicity* finds out that her German customer has planned to use her work as the decoration of a luxury brothel, and that this brothel will be placed in a building whose inhabitants are forced to leave their homes. Similarly, the protagonist and narrator herself had received an eviction letter and she has to leave her Kreuzberg-apartment, the district of Berlin heavily affected by gentrification. The sequence of personal and psychological dilemmas is therefore associated with a series of societal conflicts, and the protagonist of Dodua Otoo's novella is forced to make her choice on this latter level too.

Conclusion: self-alienation, societal alienation and ethical implications

This final consideration brings us to our provisional conclusion about Sharon Dodua Otoo's main concerns as a writer, editor and activist. In fact, in the literary examples I have analysed, the main characters seem to be involved both in the difficult negotiation of blackness in the private and the public spheres, where whiteness represents the majority, but also in other societal problems, like migration, discrimination of minorities, gender inequality, gentrification, and so on. The fear of cultural belonging that characterizes the plots of the two novellas is in fact deeply linked to the ability of identifying and thematising those problems, and this is why we could also speak about the desire not to belong, in this case as in many other contemporary writers characterized by a transcultural biography. Quoting the writer, it is "Negotiating the Dilemma Between Societal Alienation and Self-Alienation" where Dodua Otoo focuses on, and where she

also refers to writers like Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt (2012, 85), whose intertextual presence is quite evident, especially in her first novella.

Yet, recalling the ‘classification’ of Dodua Otoo as an Afropolitan writer, such as some of the characteristics of this literary movement I discussed at the beginning of my article, I now suggest we can more explicitly affirm that we are not simply dealing with postmodern elite writers with a solely European educational background, involved with themes concerning ‘second generation’ people living in big metropolitan areas. Afropolitan writers like Sharon Dodua Otoo are ‘making’ a literature characterized by ethical and political commitment, dealing with the local issues (for example, special districts of the metropolis they live in), as well as global issues (the African diaspora, the mental de-framing of what it means to be African in a global context, postcolonial issues etc.) often in a very remarkable way.

Indeed, this “radical change in perception” (Raks Knudsen & Rahbek 2016, 15) is not only about the “African difference”; it rather concerns a wide range of ‘differences’, and a wide range of estranging dynamics, the Western society is made up of.

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