# Shifting Personality, Narcissism, and Trauma Among African Immigrants in the Diaspora: A Horneyan Reading of Teju Cole's *Open City*

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**Abstract**

Discourses on African Diaspora literature have mostly hinged on issues of hybridity, displacement, cross-cultural alienation, and Diaspora compromise as essential responses to the condition of the African immigrants in their host country. Such narratives, however, often neglect the importance of individual traits and personality formation as unconscious constructs by African migrants in response to the harsh reality they face, and an attempt to cope with or escape daunting psychosocial stressors that permeate the Diaspora space. This paper interrogates the character formation of the African immigrant in the Diaspora, exemplified in the characters of Julius, Farouq, and Moji, in response to the prevailing social, cultural, political, and economic environment in the Diaspora. Using Karen Horney's strand of psychoanalysis, the paper accounts for the narcissistic, traumatic, and dynamic identity and personality traits of African Diaspora immigrants in Teju Cole's *Open City,* and puts forward the argument that these anti-normative behaviours are a technique adopted to survive incidence of racism and alienation in the Diaspora.

**Keywords:** Identity, Narcissism, Trauma, Horneyan psychoanalysis, psychosocial stressors, African Diaspora immigrants.

## Introduction

The migration of Africans to the Diaspora, whether voluntarily or under duress, arising from the political disillusionment, social isolation, religious discrimination or cultural tensions experienced in most African states, has accounted for the presence of a large population of Africans in the Diaspora. Most of them flee the shores of the African continent with the hope of a better life and opportunities in different parts of the world. This migration started as early as the 20th century. From the early 1950s to the late 1990s, 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 for independence became unattainable as a result of several factors. An estimated, 27,000 highly skilled Africans left the continent for the West (Selasi 1). Arthur 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, including Africans who 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, 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 (1).

The argument by Arthur reinforces the fact that, the transnational migration of African diasporans was first a coerced movement, and then it became voluntary; to escape unfavorable conditions of living within the African continent. Teju Cole, the writer understudy in this paper falls under the voluntary migrants to the diaspora. 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 driven some Africans away 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 rights activist are examples of Africans who left Africa because of their sexual orientation. There are also Africans in the diaspora fleeing from issues of terrorism, kidnappings and religious intolerance like the Chibok Girls and a host of others. In the 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 nationalities. 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 continues to shape the global outlook, it is important to consider the contributions of diaspora writers in their representation of individual experiences and personality traits of migrants in the diaspora.

"Personality refers to important and relatively stable aspects of behaviour" (Ewen). The self-conception of the immigrants in the Diaspora and how their host society perceives them facilitates how they perform their everyday lives. Personality is portrayed in Cole's *Open City*, and is knitted against the conditions of being detached from a specific cultural background; be it racism or psychological anxiety in the multicultural context of the diaspora. The text enacts the lives and experiences of the African diaspora characters who are descendants of slaves or former slaves and recent voluntary immigrants in the diaspora. As immigrants who undergo or endure a physical change in environment, they also experience a significant personality change. Their personalities as immigrants are reconstructed to reflect the political, social, and cultural situation of their race. Abani attempts to paint an insight into the role race; culture and language play in carving the African diaspora character's sense of personality when he states:

> All the people who have touched my face, slapped it, punched it, kissed it, washed it, shaved it, all of that human contact must leave some trace, some of the need and anger that motivated that touch […]

The aforementioned influence of cultural diversity on personality when viewed from Cole's *Open City*, underscores an analysis of the cultural and psychological anxiety of African diaspora characters like Julius, Moji and Farouq in response to the prevailing reality of race relations and cultural clash in the diaspora. This text demonstrates the African diaspora characters' experiences; their psychological strains and trauma as they migrate from one society to a new cultural milieu. The psychological strain arises because of this movement and mental detachment manifesting as psychological issues such as narcissism, depression, alienation, shifting personality, anxiety, intra-personal conflict, and low self-esteem that embody the personality of the African diaspora character; constructed as a defence in response to feelings of entrapment, helplessness, and difference in a society rife with racism and conflicting cultures. Morrison lends weight to the aforementioned when she asserts that:

> My curiosity about the origins […] of this carefully invented, Africanist presence has become an informal study of what I call African-Americanism. It is an investigation into the ways in which a non-white, African-like (or Africanist) presence or persona was constructed in the United States […] The United States are not the only ones to contribute to the construction of this personality and identity […]

In other words, the prevailing socio-cultural circumstance does not only constrain the African diaspora character's psychological integration into the host society, it creates a transient personality for them.

Julius, the protagonist of Cole's *Open City* embodies this claim. Cole's *Open City* is narrated from the perspective of Julius, a young Nigerian doctor who is completing his Psychiatry Fellowship at a hospital in America. As Julius undertakes routine evening walks to free his mind from the mental stress of his duties at the hospital along the streets of Manhattan, his solitary or alienated existence at home and the hostile social, political, and cultural reality in America are revealed. It is no surprise that Sunden posits that "Julius can be described as both fugue (someone who is in a dissociated mental state and travels compulsively), and Flaneur (someone who walks the streets and is obsessively observant)" (2). However, this paper attempts a Horneyan reading of Teju Cole's *Open City,* to project the psychological implications that inform what is observed as the personality traits of the key characters in the story. The paper avers that cultural detachment, anxiety, and how societal structures in the Diaspora function, impact the personality of the African immigrants in the Diaspora, and has a direct effect on the formation of neurotic traits as escape routes or defence mechanisms by African immigrants living in the Diaspora.

## Mapping the Poetics of Horneyan Psychoanalysis

In the *Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, Horney defines neurosis as "a psychic disturbance brought by fears and defences 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 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 feelings of anxiety and to relate 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 independence; 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 defences. 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 defences". The personality conflict experienced by the psyche of the individual brings about the growth of protective shields that can also be termed defences. 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 defence techniques. These defence techniques can be divided into two categories namely interpersonal and inter-psychic defenses. Interpersonal defences are adopted in the interaction with other people. While the interpsychic is employed within an individual's mind.

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In *Open City*, Cole's depiction of Julius portrays the failure of migrants to acculturate or integrate into American society and therefore becomes the basis for psychological conflicts in the African migrants, because their cultural detachment goes beyond physical appearance and affects even the mind. Sacks seconds this position by saying that the frequent migration of an individual from one society to another is a catalyst for trauma. There are cases of personality conflict sprouting from Julius's cultural detachment. This personality conflict is described by Horney as a struggle between conflicting sides. The mental battles between multiple cultures spark anxiety in Julius' life as he strains to traverse between European and American culture and his African roots in the diaspora. This means there is a battle in his unconscious between the ideal and the reality in the diaspora. Cole's *Open City* juxtaposes European and American cultures. This becomes glaring through Julius' persistent unconscious and conscious comparison between the European culture and American culture. For instance, Julius escapes alienation and isolation from his African roots through music. He explains his disgust at American radio stations when he states, "I generally avoided American stations which had too many commercials for my taste" (4). He goes further to promote his passion for European internet stations and states the estranging effects of foreign languages on the psyche or mind of the African immigrant when he states:

> Instead of tuning to Internet stations from Canada, Germany, or the Netherlands, and though I often couldn't understand the announcers, my comprehension of their language being poor, the programming always met my evening mood with great exactness (4).

Julius's inability to fully integrate into the diaspora space creates for him, an unpleasant situation of loneliness and despair. This situation leaves him traumatised and also illuminates the central or inner conflict in Julius; a feeling of alienation. The cultural differences and sense of helplessness that besiege him greatly influence his behavioural pattern. On a visit to the American Folk Museum, Julius finds himself assailed with a sense of dichotomy in his mental contemplations between European art and American art. He finds meaning only by placing things in contrast: "weather vanes, ornaments, quilts, paintings-evoked the agrarian life of the new American country as well as the half-remembered traditions of the old European ones" (36). Julius maintains a personal distance in his appreciation of these artworks. He sees himself as an outsider. As he claimed; "Each of the portraits was a sealed-

away world, visible from without, but impossible to enter" (37). In his stay in America, and Belgium and his flashback to Germany, these societies are for him; "visible from without, but impossible to enter" (37). This sets him apart from the diaspora mainstream. This further sustains his trauma and heightens his feelings of alienation and depression. Julius' feeling of alienation and depression is best captured in the words of Johnson: "A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption: he loses his place, he enters into an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behaviour and code is very unlike and sometimes offensive to his own."

This assertion accounts for Julius's experience with his neighbour Seth and his Wife Carla, who complain that the noise from his speakers disturbs them. The fact that Julius feels alienated from both cultures reveals his level of unhappiness which has grown into a depression. The idea of living in the diaspora but constantly reminiscing on African cultural heritage and belief system, reveals the psychological tumult that permeates Julius' unconscious. The battle between the notion of belonging to a society and its culture and the sharp contrast or disparity to his new space of existence in America becomes the basis of his feeling of alienation. Julius constantly alludes to African folklore in explaining the daily complications of existence in America like when he meditates that; "the swarm of hovering bees reminded me of certain Yoruba epithets for Olodumare, the supreme deity: who turns blood into children, who sits in the sky like a cloud of bees" (42). This makes it difficult for him to view America as his new home regardless of how long he has stayed there; he is still entrenched in African cosmology. When Julius sights a beggar on a train in New York, his mind returns to the Yoruba myth of creation saying:

> I got the idea that some of the things I was seeing around me were under the aegis of Obatala, the demiurge charge by Olodumare with the formation of humans from clay. Obatala did well at the task until he started drinking. As he drank more and more, he became inebriated, and began to fashion damaged human beings. The Yoruba believe that in this drunken state he made dwarfs, cripples, people missing limbs, and those burdened with debilitating illness. Olodumare had to reclaim the role he had delegated and finish the creation of humankind himself… (25)

From the above, it is obvious that his mental capacity to absorb society and its goings-on is seen from an African belief system or African mythology specifically, the Yoruba worldview. In Cole's *Open City* for instance; Julius though living in America refuses to listen to American radio stations because of their endless commercials: "Beethoven followed by ski jackets, Wagner after artisanal cheese" (5). This new reality develops into inner conflicts and emotional strains. The accumulations of these psychological traits come to bear on his personality formation. It heightens his alienation from both his African roots and his adopted American society and it is manifested as a feature of his eventual depression. As Horney (6) posits, the unconscious is associated with hidden conflict. This conflict can be divided into two stages: mild and malignant, "The former occurs when the unconscious elements are in mild conflict hitherto results into mild forgetfulness, slide instability in self-esteem and periodic moodiness". This forgetfulness haunts Julius as he claims to have:

> typed in the wrong four-digit code for my card. So I tried five times, with different numbers, all of them wrong…I had simply forgotten the number. A thought flitted through my mind: how terrible it would be to blank out like this while seeing a patient. This was the ATM card I had used for more than six years, and it had always had the same code". This event affects Julius' self-esteem. He begins to doubt his mental capability and intelligence. As Julius exclaims "such mental weakness, I thought (as the machine asked if I would like to try again, and I did, and failed again), was from a simplified version of the self, an area of simplicity where things had once been more robust (18).

Personality is the essence of individuality, and an individual's self-esteem is an essential component of his self-construction. Kowalski avers that "self-esteem is a very good index or internal monitor of social acceptance and belonging. In this respect, self-esteem can be referred to as "sociometer" (111). This proves that self-esteem is strongly correlated with induced anxiety over social rejection and exclusion. There is strong evidence that the African diaspora immigrants' characters are driven by a need to form relationships and a sense of belonging or to gain validation and acceptance from their adopted society. This enhances their self-worth. Possessing positive self-esteem serves as an escape from the threat of loneliness and social rejection in the diaspora. Julius' relationship and polemical interactions and discussions with Professor Saito and Dr Maillote become therapeutic to him and serve to improve his self-worth and help him to build a good impression about his person. It could be seen that Julius guards his self-esteem with so much passion because what is important in self-conceptualisation is that other people in a host society perceive individuals to have value and constitute an important component of that society's narrative. Julius' defence of his self-esteem when it is under threat during his encounter with a woman at Sixth Avenue emblemises how vital it is to his personality formation. In a personal monologue, Julius asserts the following:

> It took me some time to find a cab. When I finally hailed one, a woman suddenly stepped in front of me and said she was in a hurry and would I mind letting her take it? Yes, I said, almost shouting (the sound of my voice surprised me), I would mind. I had been standing in the rain for ten minutes and wasn't inclined to chivalry. I got in the car and immediately the driver said, where? I must have looked lost. I tried to remember my home address (40).

Julius demonstrates the neurotic need for power and self-admiration in this encounter with the nameless woman. He feels his dignity threatened and is caught in a moment of internal conflict as to the best approach to guard his self-esteem. As Solomon postulates Horney identified the fact that "character disorder emanates from degeneration in interpersonal relationships" (13-15). The disorder that emerged from his interaction with this nameless woman gave rise to basic anxiety that stimulated adoption of interpersonal defence mechanisms to shield his personality from being dented during his encounter with her.

Calvin et al (5) posit that "high self-esteem individuals are more likely to be maladjusted in terms of interpersonal problems. Narcissistic individuals may also be prone to aggression in response to an ego threat". His harsh response and swift entrance into the taxi are an indication of his insecurity and a show of strength to assert his self-esteem. It shows that Julius is estranged as he battles or is weighed down by the effect of psychosocial stressors like work stress. He muses about the nature of severe depression and other illnesses of the mind that afflict patients identified by the letter, 'V' or 'M,' alienation which is depicted in the scene in the theatre when he laments that "I sat alone. No, not alone, exactly: in the company of a hundred others, but all strangers to me" (29). The racism he experiences in his daily existence like his encounter with Dr. Gupta who, when he thinks of Africans, "want to spit"; or the ten-year-old boy and thirteen-year-old girl who because of his colour asked "Are you a gangster?' likewise, the prison guard also called him and the prisoner Saidu as "Fellas"; and when on one of his walks, he "saw…in the distance, beyond the listless crowd, the body of a lynched man dangling from a tree." (35) All of these propel and subject him to psychological conflicts. His high self-esteem becomes a neurotic defence against the feeling of fear, dejection and despair experienced by migrants living in the diaspora.

The over-magnification of self-esteem which is a neurotic need for power gives rise to narcissistic traits in Julius. Some of his actions show a lack of empathy and humane values. He adopts inter-psychic defences that serve ego-defensive functions in his relationship with both people of white and black races. His visit to the prison to see Saidu the immigrant jailed for instance; was done to satisfy his curiosity and to prove to Nadege his girlfriend that he is compassionate. But he deceives Saidu that he will return to see him – which he never did. A promise he has no intention of keeping and he

created a mental note not to visit that prison again. When his relationship with Nadege crashes because they had "drifted apart" Julius feels that Nadege's complaints about him seem "petty…and there hadn't been anything in them I was able to make sense of or relate to my life" (65).

Another instance of this narcissistic attribute is Julius' lack of sympathy for the disabled man he meets at the subway further emphasises his refusal to help. After Julius is attacked by a gang of African American hip-hop gangsters during an evening walk in the vicinity of Morningside Heights, Julius reports this violent incident almost in a journalistic tone, refraining from moralizing commentary and even self-pity. He maintains a distance in his perspective on the attack giving him a defence against the reality of just undergoing a traumatic experience. His narcissist trait is displayed during his encounter with Moji Kasali, his friend's sister when she tells him that:

> In late 1989, when she was fifteen and I was a year younger, at a party her brother had hosted at their house in Ikoyi, I had forced myself on her. Afterwards, she said, her eyes unwavering from the bright river lights below, in the weeks that followed, in the months and years that followed, I had acted like I knew nothing about it, had even forgotten her, to the point of not recognizing her when we met again, and had never tried to acknowledge what I had done. This torturous deception had continued until the present. But it hadn't been like that for her, she said, the luxury of denial had not been possible for her. Indeed, I had been ever present in her life, like a scar, and she thought of me either fleetingly or in extended agonies, for almost every day of her adult life (244).

Julius is unperturbed by her lamentations. He offers no condolences and never apologises at any point for his misdeeds. Julius's unarticulated sympathy in this context is insightful as well as worrisome. He adopts inter-psychic defences to escape his feelings of shame and guilt. His mind ruminates on issues like "the risen sun", Camus' journal entry concerning Nietzsche and Gaius Mucius Cordus Scaevola a Roman hero from the sixth century after listening to such a horrific experience he has subjected a sister of a friend. In this case, the independent, narcissistic self in Julius is grounded on a view of the self as autonomous, separate from other people and revealed through their inner thoughts and feelings. For this stable narcissistic attribute of Julius, Moji abhors him. The insults and baits she throws at Julius are a means of expelling long-held sentiments and anger at the man who sentenced her to a life of pain and self-loathing. Julius never contemplates any act of restitution for his crime of lust. The highhandedness of Julius and pride extends to his stay in Brussels.

During a meal at one of the restaurants, Julius celebrates his dismissal of a young female waitress who shows interest in him when he says "She herself sat for a moment at my table, and asked where I was from. She was from about twenty-two or twenty-five, I guessed, with heavy-lidded eyes and a winning smile. I was flattered by the approach and her obvious interest in me; she was undoubtedly used to having a strong effect on men. But, flattered as I was, I was uninterested, and my response to her were polite and even a little curt, and when she stood up again, with her tray, it was less with displeasure than with puzzlement" (109). But a few minutes later, Julius flirts with an older Czech woman, who he estimates to be about fifty years old. He describes her reaction to his interest in her as "a surprise for the tourist, at the clearly expressed, if largely wordless, interest she began to pick up from me" (109).

It is worthy to note that Julius reports everything with a celebration of himself. Race relationships between Julius and the people in his host societies or the diaspora are couched in psychical manipulations and polemics to determine his personality; which is a construct of introspection and comparisons between him and these people. And his high self-esteem makes him feel "good about himself, he feels immortal and positive about life" (Vaughan and Graham 137). Julius' ego is further inflated after this incident. This helps him in coping with psychological issues of displacement and alienation.

Self-presentation and impression management are important aspects of personality formation for African migrants. Selves are constructed, modified and played out during interaction with other people. This is also significant in the personality that African immigrants display since these behaviours have consequences for how the Diaspora society reacts to African immigrants' presence in the Diaspora. Hence, African immigrants in the Diaspora regulate and control their personalities to blend with their present realities. Goffman (3) likens this process of impression management to theatre, where people play different roles for different audiences, while Synder (20) categorises the motives for self-presentation into strategic motive and expressive motive.

Generally, individual differences in self-monitoring suggest that high self-monitors adopt strategic self-presentation strategies because they typically shape their behaviour to project the impression, they feel their situation demands, whereas low self-monitors adopt expressive self-presentation strategies because their behaviour is less responsive to changing contextual demands. While Julius' neurotic trait falls under the strategic self-presentation motive on the one hand; his shifting or dynamic personality as it regards his self-esteem clearly shows a change in response to situational demands on the other. Julius' character traits could be misconstrued in certain contexts of his interaction with individuals in the diaspora. There is a conscious and unconscious attempt to constantly enact an escape mechanism not just in act but in contemplation. During an encounter between Julius and a Haitian man in Penn Station in Brussels, Julius' humane attributes come to the fore and his arrogance and high self-esteem are temporarily suspended when he states:

> I don't quite know why I paused that afternoon in front of one of the shoeshine shops. I have always had a problem with the shoeshine business, and even on the rare occasions when I wished to have my scuffed shoes cleaned, some egalitarian spirit kept me from doing so; it felt ridiculous to mount the elevated chairs in the shops and have someone kneel before me. It wasn't, as I often said to myself, the kind of relationship I wanted to have with another person (71).

The situational response of Julius here contradicts his earlier narcissistic response to Moji and the disabled man he encounters on the subway. This demonstrates that the unconscious elements in Julius are in mild conflict. This also accounts for the slide instability in his self-esteem. Julius becomes for a short period concerned with the condition of another human being. However, the need to uphold himself to a certain status in a diaspora society has kept a condescending gaze at him and other migrants, from the movies on Idi Amin and blatant condemnation from people like Dr. Gupta. He is compelled by the neurotic need for power when he says; "not wanting to disappoint him, gave in. I stepped inside and got up on a little stepping stool and sat in one of the buffoonish red thrones…I could feel his firm finger push against my feet" (17). This encounter with Mr. Pierre, the bootblack, echoes the shifting personality of Julius. From their conversation, a glimpse of Julius' hidden empathy is unconsciously revealed.

In *Open City*, Cole portrays Farouq's personality as a cognitive construct that is influenced by the diaspora society. There are self-serving biases or attitudinal distortions that protect or enhance self-esteem. In Farouq's case, there is evidence of anticipatory self-serving bias, in which he makes external attributions for his failure. This act is what Berglas (5) has called self-handicapping; a means of explaining away one's failure. Farouq has a neurotic need for personal admiration and is petrified of being thought of as not significant by Julius. In their conversations, his defence or coping mechanism, his strategy of escape is to self-handicap himself. This is depicted in his narrative about his travels to Brussels from Morocco when he (Farouq) asserts:

> I had applied to do an M.A in critical theory, because the department was known for that. That was my dream, the way young people can have very precise dreams: I wanted to be the next Edward Said! And I was going to do it by studying comparative literature and using it as

> a basis for social critique. I had to begin late, because my residency papers were being processed, and the university made me do all my course work in eight months, from January 2011 through August of that year. Then I wrote my thesis, which was on Gaston Bachelard's Poetics Of Space. The department rejected my thesis. On what grounds? Plagiarism. They gave no reason. They just said I would have to submit another one in twelve months. I was crushed. I left school. Plagiarism? (128)

Farouq in this poignant narration highlights strong evidence of racial discrimination at work in the rejection of his thesis. The school's sentiments were not fuelled by his "command of English and theory"; rather, they were punishing him for world events in which he had played no role. Farouq's thesis committee had to meet after the September 11 attacks in the United States. In the committee's mind, they were thinking about "this Moroccan writing about difference and revelation, and Farouq's anxiety is exacerbated by this development. This arouses a conflict between the ideal image of Europe that he has always harboured and the oppression by the kind in Morocco. That among other things makes him feel depressed.

Furthermore, this depression cumulates into the growth of low self-esteem in the character of Farouq. As Hogg and Vaughan (132) observe, "low self-esteem is a product of the stressful and alienating conditions of modern industrial society, a sign of loneliness and social rejection" This is the situation Farouq is subjected to as a migrant in the diaspora. His illusion of Europe as an ideal space that supports human liberty and equality, a space he described as; "…a dream. Not just a dream, it was the dream: it represented the freedom of thought. We wanted to come here, and exercise our minds in this free space…But I have been disappointed. Europe only looks free. The dream was an apparition" (122). This is in sharp contrast with Morocco his native country which he remembers with fun memories and nostalgic feelings. A religious country with youth fully engaged in entrepreneurship and a rich history of how his ancestors the Moors once ruled Spain and his large family with the strong presence of his father the retired military officer. These conflicting tendencies or situations subject his mind to a complex situation of angst and self-pity that subject him to internal psychological conflicts. What Horney refers to as intra-personal conflict.

When Farouq's quest to acquire higher education collapses, he makes frantic efforts to earn a living as a janitor at an American school in Brussels. There he worked and was invisible ideologically and physically. For them, he was "just the janitor, you see, the man who cleaned the classrooms when their classes were finished". His attempt at asserting his ideological standpoint during a conversation with the school Principal symbolises an attempt to build his self-esteem. Farouq spoke about Deleuze's concept of waves and dunes and when the Principal says; "come to my office sometime and we'll talk more," it signals a sign of acceptance and for a brief moment; Farouq's self-esteem gets boosted. However, later events further devastate Farouq psychologically. When he goes to meet the Principal, "he not only refused to speak to me but actually pretended he had never seen me before. I was just a janitor, mopping the floor, nothing more than a part of the furniture. I greeted him and tried to remind him of our Deleuze conversation, but he said nothing. There was a line, and I was wasting my time in the attempt to cross it" (9) In his narration the evidence of rejection and anxiety is captured. His mood swings and his low self-esteem remain an offshoot of this prevailing situation of condescending looks from the Deleuze.

**Conclusion**

This paper has delved into how the workings of society are being harmonised in the psyche in determining or constructing individuals' characteristics, attitudes and behaviours. In applying the principles of Horneyan psychoanalysis, the paper has explored the personalities of the characters in Cole's *Open City*, accounting for their display of certain character traits as coping mechanisms and escape routes from the bias and segregated societies migration has plunged them into. Julius embodies

the spirit and character of voluntary immigrants, whose quests for a better future in the West are consistently tested and their mental health assaulted. Hence, surviving in such an environment requires the continued invention and reinvention of a person's personality and identity to survive the harsh socio-cultural and political climate in the Diaspora.

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