



**(POST)COLONIAL MELANCHOLIA, ETHNIC ABSOLUTISM, AND
PLANETARY HUMANISM: EXPLORING (IMPERIAL)
AMNESIA/NOSTALGIA, RAC(ISM), AND CONVIVIALITY IN *OPEN
CITY***

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Abstract

*Anchored in the theoretical arrangements of postcolonial melancholia, this paper examines the melancholic consolidation of inclusive exclusionary narratives prompted by unresolved imperial amnesia/nostalgia in Teju Cole's *Open City*. Drawing on the theoretical framework of postcolonial melancholia, it foregrounds the ways in which the neo-traditional pathology perpetuates the morbidity of heritage, Empire's denial of its loss, and racial and ethnic absolutism. Planetary humanism arises as a counter-discourse to ethnic absolutism, racism, and imperial nostalgia or amnesia, envisioning an ethics of shared vulnerability that sustains the fragile coexistence of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural identities. The protagonist, Julius, experiences black criminality, racial segregation, and disruption of the past rooted in sustaining postcolonial melancholia. His recollection of the violent events of history dismantles the Empire's facile declaration of racially pure history. The other immigrants, Farouq and Khalil, become victims of the pathological conditioning of the European societies, spotlighting the themes of xenophobia, guilt, and rac(ism). Julius and Farouq challenge the Western conviction that multiculturalism has collapsed, envisioning instead a resilient cohabitation of differences that reanimates the ideal of conviviality amidst the anxieties of the post-9/11 epoch. In *Open City*, postcolonial melancholia and ethnic absolutism engage in an overlapping relationship, and planetary humanism cripples this cyclical relation, marking a thematic transition from nostalgia/amnesia toward the emancipatory registers of synchronicity, multiplicity, and conviviality. The paper aims to desacralize imperial and colonial powers, exposing their melancholic, fictional, and mythical portrayal of colonial history and racial stereotypes, thereby nullifying the Empire's claim to omnipotence and advancing the possibility of an ethical, convivial mode of being-in-the-world.*

Introduction

Within the theoretical dimensions of post-postcolonialism, postcolonial melancholia emphasizes the “aftermaths of the events of 11 September, the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, and rising anxieties in Europe and the United States over Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism”



(Dworkin 531). According to Paul Gilroy, postcolonial melancholia is prompted by “the loss of a fantasy of omnipotence” (99), accentuating Britain’s inability to come to terms with the loss of its empire. Britain’s melancholy foregrounds the multifaceted trauma of colonial history: economic, cultural, and psychological. The romanticization of Britain’s empire cripples the realities of the past, disavows the catastrophic consequences of its rule, and validates the myth of racial purity during colonialism. Metropolises are ignorant of the exploitation, gratuitous violence, and devastation that happened during the colonial period. Teju Cole posits that violence induced by colonizers has not vanished; “it is still with us today” (25). In postcolonial societies, particularly Britain, this melancholia remains persistent and unresolved, obstructing the progress of the (over)developed but no longer imperial societies. Postcolonial melancholia enables colonizers to fantasize about the unimpeachable continuity of the colonial past, fabricating the illusion that the empire remained compassionate towards the colonized. The paper proposes that the empire lives in self-deception about its demise—paralyzed by guilt, maintaining xenophobia and nationalism.

Postcolonial melancholia denotes the “morbidity of heritage” (Gilroy 99), demonstrating the pathological aspects of imperial legacy. Morbidity mirrors the ways in which inherited cosmologies, traditions, and history sustain trauma, guilt, colonial brutalities, and decay. This definition of melancholia posits that heritage is not always healthy. Teju Cole aligns with this view of heritage in his description of the debris of the World Trade Center; he remarks that the “place had become a metonym of its disaster” (49). Postcolonial melancholia is evident in the ruins of colonial cities, particularly in the form of monuments, museums, and historical sites. The past of imperial societies in the post-postcolonial world is shaping their present. Britain is trapped in the labyrinth of melancholia, abnegating from formalized violence, disruption, and identity crisis caused by it in the past. The immigrants have become victims of melancholic racism, as they face injustice, identity crisis, and xenophobia. The morbidity of the past affects contemporary Britain on political grounds, which claim that multicultural society has failed. The paper asserts that iniquitous behavior of metropolises towards aliens derives from melancholia, manifested in absolutists’ polarizing mechanism of racism, ethnicity, and otherness, halting access to multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and planetary humanism.

Postcolonial melancholia engenders colonial amnesia, colonial nostalgia, and racial and ethnic absolutism. The colonial history remains unacknowledged, “surfacing only in the service of nostalgia and melancholia” (Gilroy 2), fortifying ignorance of the ungodly acts of colonizers, erasing the sufferings of the colonized Africans, and of Muslims, particularly in post 9/11 Europe. Imperial nostalgia reaffirms the veracity of righteousness in the colonial empire, whilst imperial amnesia disconnects the empire from the bloodstained racism that transpired from colonial violence, power imbalance, and hierarchical yet ideological structures of colonialism. In contemporary Britain, “black settlers and their British-born children are denied authentic national membership based on their race” (Dworkin 525), locating “blacks as permanent outsiders” (Dworkin 522), perpetuating racial and ethnic absolutism in post-imperial societies based on biological hierarchies. The colonial powers are reluctant to discern “British racism as a product of imperial and colonial power” (Gilroy 94), maintaining the mythologized version of the empire. The unexamined colonial and racial dimensions sustain the myth that the interconnectedness between contemporary racism, xenophobia, and nationalism is worthless to be scrutinized. The



paper contends that (post)colonial amnesia and nostalgia cause continuity of the raciological ordering of the world, sustaining identity crisis, melancholia, racism, and ethnic absolutism while obliterating multiculturalism.

Ethnic absolutism trammels plurality, multiculturalism, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism, reinforcing the racial hierarchies, stymying cultural diversity, shared dignities, and coexistence of multiple ethnicities. Ethnic absolutism plays a role in “securing the modes of inclusive exclusion” (Gilroy 8) of aliens in the post-postcolonial world, betraying the well-arranged order of the power structure. The indigenous have been excluded from the mainstream, put on the margins by colonizers, and considered inferior to Whites in terms of their race, ethnicity, and origin. Racial absolutism follows the trajectory of the sixteenth-century Spanish theologians who claimed that “blacks were by nature and Divine Will greatly inferior to us” (Gilroy 74). The amplification of racism enhances the marginalization of minorities, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment. Teju Cole endorses this idea as he spotlights the consequences of 9/11, which made “Belgium a difficult place for an Arab to be” (Cole 137), exposing the dual policies of New York City, rooted in the absolute belief about the Muslim immigrants—that they would never truly be part of Europe. Xenophobia and Islamophobia reinforce the myth of immigrants being antagonistic to the European cosmologies, epistemologies, and values. The research paper asserts that ethnic absolutism affects identity politics in the Western world, curtailing cultural fluidity, shared values, and multiplicity, and intensifying social fragmentation and racism.

Postcolonial melancholia triggers xenophobia, Islamophobia, and nationalism, deepening racial and ethnic absolutism. The melancholic patterns have transformed into the “mechanism that sustains the unstable edifice of increasingly brittle and empty national identity” (Gilroy 106). The escalation of (post)imperial melancholia augments ethnic absolutism as melancholy sets up exclusionary policies in the form of xenophobia, and racism is the “brutal result of raciological ordering of the world” (Gilroy 39). Ethnic absolutism magnifies melancholia in the shape of racial hierarchies, its rigidity towards multiculturalism, cultural diversity, national identity, and ethnicity, and harsh treatment of immigrants. Gilroy proposes that when “race becomes an issue, a melancholic tone becomes audible” (106), showcasing the overlapping relationship between postcolonial melancholia and racial/ethnic absolutism. Cole’s setting of New York City induces melancholia, which cultivates racism, in his remarks, “the racist structure of this city is crazy making” (Cole 193). Ethnic absolutism sustains racial segregation on the one hand; on the other hand, postcolonial melancholia reinforces societal dysfunction and racial and ethnic absolutism, particularly in the form of colonial amnesia and nostalgia. The paper argues that ethnic absolutism guarantees the sustainability of the postcolonial melancholia, colonial nostalgia, and identity as a fixed phenomenon, whilst the melancholia provokes racial absolutism, which breeds nationalism, xenophobia, and exclusionary strategies formulated by the postcolonial polity.

In opposition to the postcolonial melancholia, ethnic absolutism, xenophobia, and nationalism, Paul Gilroy foregrounds planetary humanism. Planetary humanism is “capable of comprehending the universality of our vulnerability to the wrongs we visit upon each other” (Gilroy 4), placing all human beings on the same page, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, religion, culture, and traditions. The (re)linking with the history plays a vital role in the implementation of planetary humanism. Cole brings the recognition of the sufferings to the forefront through his



mentally distorted characters, who demand revision and reassessment of imperial and colonial history. Cole argues that “it’s a difficult thing to live in a country that has erased your past” (25), accentuating the necessity of accepting the exploitative empire. A true planetary humanism necessarily eliminates racial stereotypes, segregation, inequalities, hierarchies, and other forms of ethnic and racial absolutism. At the heart of this humanism is the acknowledgement of shared vulnerabilities, disrupting colonial nostalgia, exploitation, affliction, and humiliation inflicted by colonial powers on Others in the past. The paper claims that a genuine planetary humanism mandates scrutiny, reassessment, and realization of the imperial exploitation, violence, and maltreatment of the colonized.

Planetary humanism consoles the co-existence of different ethnicities, multiplicity, and plurality, illustrating the possibility of a convivial world in the West. The acknowledgement of the historical sufferings endured by the colonized and the Empire’s realization of its cataclysmic strategies are central to the implementation of planetary humanism. Gilroy asserts that a true planetary humanism “necessitates a secularization of suffering” (Goswami 109) promulgated by the Empire. The revisiting, (re)reading, and elucidation of the genocide, exploitation of human rights, and erasure of subjectivities in the past are vital in the maintenance of planetary humanism. Teju Cole validates the (co)existence of multiple cultures, traditions, and immigrants from different countries in New York City. The protagonist, Julius, witnesses young men from Africa “selling bootleg DVDs, the Nation of Islam stalls” (Cole 17). The tolerance of different races, cultures, ethnicities, and religions is the key objective of planetary humanism, a central theme portrayed by Teju Cole in *Open City*. The sustainability of planetary humanism assures the future-oriented viability of conviviality, multiculturalism, and plurality. The paper argues that planetary humanism offers a way forward for coexistence among multiple ethnicities, embracing multiplicity, and fostering a convivial world.

Postcolonial melancholia, ethnic absolutism, and planetary humanism converge in Cole’s *Open City* to spotlight the longstanding impact of (imperial) nostalgia/amnesia, and racism on Others, immigrants, particularly Muslims, and African Americans in the postcolonial and post 9/11 West. The postcolonial melancholia and ethnic absolutism perpetuate nostalgia, xenophobia, and racism in *Open City*. The melancholia is evident in Julius’ exploration of the city, which includes historical monuments, museums, and the debris of the twin towers, augmenting ethnic absolutism. Ethnic absolutism consolidates racism, nostalgia, and melancholia, developing an overlapping relationship with postcolonial melancholia, as these all prolong one another. Conversely, planetary humanism emerges in opposition to the cyclical relation between ethnic absolutism and postcolonial melancholia, reassuring the existence of mixed races, ethnicities, cosmologies, epistemologies, and religions. The paper posits that true planetary humanism legitimizes the tolerance of different cultures, rituals, and traditions, dismantling racial hierarchies, melancholia, and nostalgia, and maintaining plurality, multiculturalism, and conviviality.

Literature Review

Rodwell Makombe's article "To Be of Other Worlds: Imagining a New Politics of Identity in Teju Cole's *Open City*" offers a nuanced exploration of decolonial narratives in the form of cosmopolitanism, advocating a "pluriversal world order that appreciates the diversity of humanity and allows for intercultural exchange" (Makombe 144). His analysis situates *Open City* at the



crossroads of decoloniality, spotlighting the ways in which the novel serves as an ambassador for the pluriversal world, demanding co-existence of multiple ways of living, being, knowing, and existing. In Cole's portrayal of New York City, Julius witnesses "Chinese women danced in formation" (Cole 156), and at another site, "Korean-American and Chinese-American interns" (Cole 197), showing a diverse existence of humanity within the city. Teju Cole endorses Makombe's idea of decolonial cosmopolitan identity through the experiences of the protagonist, who embraces multiculturalism through his visits to different museums, listening to music of numerous cultures, exploring the art, and scrutinizing and (re)assessing history, colonial violence, racism, and the reasons behind the maintenance of the raciological ordering of the world. Rodwell Makombe (re)claims that co-existence is achievable by strategic engagement with the coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge, delinking from the (post)colonial world, on the contrary, (re)linking with new humanism, politics of identity, and pluriversal existence of the world.

In the article "Postcoloniality, spatiality and cosmopolitanism in the *Open City*" Madhu Krishnan examines the ways in which contemporary cosmopolitanism (re)engenders colonial ideologies, upholds a continuum of racial hierarchies, and suppresses multiplicity, acting as a form of camouflage to disguise the ongoing raciological ordering of the world. She argues that spatiality in the postcolonial world emphasizes a space where "the illusion of freedom of movement serves as a mask for the continuation of violence" (Krishnan 675). The author demonstrates the tension between (dis)location, dis-placement, indigenous histories, and diaspora through Julius' exploration of the historical monuments, sculptures, and arts. Teju Cole foregrounds the "sight of a white man teaching Chinese to an Asian Woman" (Cole 207) in New York City, rebuts the political claim that multicultural society has ceased, slightly deviating from Krishnan's postulation. Cole showcases that cosmopolitanism, along with the embracement of colonial violence, paves the way for multiculturalism, plurality, and multiplicity. The immigrants of different countries can co-exist, live, and accept their ways of being, provided that the metropolis confronts the violence they caused in the past. Krishnan posits that cosmopolitanism is marked by sophistry, as it ostensibly reassures plurality, tolerance of Others' ways of living, and multiplicity, hiding cosmopolitan skullduggery, manipulating indigenous perspectives, disrupting genuine multiplicity, and obstructing polyresonance.

In his article "Flights of Memory: Teju Cole's *Open City* and the Limits of Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism," Pieter Vermeulen showcases multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and the role of memory in a post-postcolonial world. Vermeulen emphasizes the "counterpart of the cosmopolitan flâneur to indicate the limits of the cosmopolitan imagination (Vermeulen 42). The author's exploration of *Open City* highlights the ways in which cosmopolitanism serves as a disconnection and dissociation from the past, asserting that cosmopolitanism is a failure as it limits the understanding of the sufferings, violence, and destruction of humanity in the colonial era. Cole mirrors melancholia induced by the cosmopolitan aesthetics, recounting an event from the past—when New York became an important port for the "launching of slaves' ships" (155), mentioned on monuments in the multicultural society. Teju Cole aligns with Vermeulen's view, exploring the melancholia, colonial amnesia, and colonial nostalgia engendered by the raciological ordering of the city, which is evident in the recalling of different tragic tales of the colonial settlers in America, the killing of Indians, and the slave trade. Pieter Vermeulen illustrates the darker side of



cosmopolitanism in the world, which carries colonial historical baggage, demanding acceptance of past sufferings and understanding of the cosmopolitan aesthetics of the present, and a full manifestation of conviviality irrespective of color, race, and culture.

Philip Aghoghovwia's review "Interiority as Narrative Agency in Teju Cole's *Open City*" delves into the thematic exploration of *Open City*, probing Afropolitanism, nationalism, solitude, immigration, globalization, and the devastating impact of migration on the Afropolitan identity of the protagonist. The researcher emphasizes that interiority plays a role for the protagonist in "rejecting the cultural commonality implied by the friendly gesture" (Aghoghovwia 30) of other Africans in the (open) city. Aghoghovwia's analysis foregrounds the ways in which Julius' interiority, solitude, and ability to adapt to Western culture force him to accept a cosmopolitan identity on the one hand, and on the other hand, it does not have any positive impact on Julius' sense of Black brotherhood, belonging, and identity. Teju Cole deconstructs this claim of Aghoghovwia through Julius' narrative of the city, where he confesses "it became clear that we were not all equal" (74) in the post-postcolonial and post 9/11 world. Cole rebuts the interpretation of Julius being ignorant of the Blacks, and an admirer of the Whites in New York City, as he brings the protagonist's sense of identity as an Afropolitan to the forefront. In Aghoghovwia's point of view, Julius's interiority shapes him negatively, making him willfully obtuse in his refusal to embrace the brotherhood, manifest cultural communality, and enunciating his identity as an African Black subject in the city.

In her article "Cosmopolitan Dilemma: Diasporic Subjectivity and Postcolonial Liminality in Teju Cole's *Open City*", Delphine Fongang delves into the shortcomings, identity crisis, psychological dislocation, and racial inequalities of immigrants within the diasporic communities. She claims that cosmopolitan polity engenders "an environment of continuous struggle and adaptation by African diasporic subjects" (Fongang 152). Fongang's analysis delves into themes of displacement, dislocation, and diaspora, positing that diasporic experiences of African subjects, marked by cosmopolitan existence, are inglorious. Demonstrating on Julius' mother diasporic experience, Cole remarks that "Julianna Muller had become Julianne Miller" (74) when she migrates from Germany to the US. Teju Cole concurs with Fongang that diaspora is detrimental to African subjects through his illustration of Julius' displacement, identity crisis, and immigration to New York City. Fongang showcases the ways in which the diasporic life of Nigerians thrusts them into a liminal space where they are unable to manifest their conventional identities and forced to live with new imposed identities, cosmologies, and epistemologies. She maintains that it is onerous for immigrants, particularly Africans, to be entwined with American locals completely, accentuating the urgency for the continuous negotiation of border thinking, diasporic spaces, and transnational policies imposed on them in the Western world.

Analysis

Teju Cole's *Open City* foregrounds the ways in which morbidity of heritage consolidates (imperial) nostalgia/amnesia, bolstering rac(ism), xenophobia, and identity conflict in post-postcolonial and post 9/11 world. In *Open City*, Julius' patient's V., in her book *The Monster of New Amsterdam*, divulges that colonial history was "full of violent events" (Cole 24). V.'s sorrowful revelation of the horrors of the past asserts that "it's a difficult thing to live in a country that has erased your past" (Cole 25), crippling the colonial myth of non-racial history. V., suffering



from depression, dwells on torturous anecdotes from her past life to reject colonial amnesia, demonstrating the brutality of colonialism, and asserting the morbidity of colonial heritage. She emphasizes Europeans' repudiation of the violence they imposed on the colonized in the past. Julius's exploration of New York City, revisiting of colonial history, and scrutiny of historical figures, exposes the sophistry of (post)colonial countries after the formal end of colonialism, dismantling the Western claim of racial purity. The paper contends that imperial amnesia disclaims the colonial baggage, eradicating the violent, racist, and exploitative parts of history, severing ties with the history of Blacks.

In *Open City*, Teju Cole foregrounds the coercive events that transpired during the period of colonialism to expose the hostility of colonial history. Julius hates heroic portrayal of Idi Amin Dada in a film, recalls his villainous acts, "Idi Amin murdered some 300,000 Ugandans [Indians] during his rule...expelled the large community of Ugandan-Indians, destroyed the country's reputation... [becoming] grotesque stains on Africa's recent history" (Cole 29). In his recollection of Idi Amin's era, Dr. Gupta, an Indian surgeon speaks ill of Africans, "when I think of Africans, I want to spit" (Cole 29). For the West, postcolonial melancholia is the very name of passing "time not by laughing at ourselves and our plight" (Gilroy 132), engendering rac(ism) as metropolises are unable to embrace the destruction they caused, abjuring from the systemic disenfranchisement. The protagonist's reminiscence of the past events showcases that imperial powers are trapped in postcolonial melancholia. Contemporary metropolitan politicians recollect the memories nostalgically, sustaining imperial nostalgia, forgetting the painful anecdotes of imperial history, and perpetuating racial hatred on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and culture.

Open City disrupts the colonial claim of the racially pure history, dismantling the colonial nostalgia/amnesia. Julius discerns Alexander Hamilton's grave, "the soldier of approved valor... whose talents and virtues will be admired" (Cole 46). The empire's fantasized portrayal of its history reflects the inability of the colonial powers to negotiate the loss, suffering, and violence. Cole divulges the postcolonial nostalgia as he illustrates the mythical representation of the empire, unveiling the fact that the "British took over the Dutch possessions" (Cole 47). Julius recalls the brutality of imperial domination, drawing attention to the injustices, tyranny, and plundering. His recollection of the burden of imperial history rebuts the empire's heroic depiction of colonial history as a prestigious, civilized, and modernized past. Julius draws attention to the historical baggage that imperial powers refuse, emphasizing the revisiting, reassessment, and scrutiny of colonial history to avoid melancholia, injustice, and racial and ethnic absolutism. The paper posits that (post)colonial amnesia/nostalgia assists the empire in relinquishing the burden of the past through the mythologized description of its racially innocent history.

Cole exposes the Empire's tawdry treatment of the colonized, showcasing the violent acts of the colonizers in Nigeria during colonialism. Julius has to leave his homeland because the "killings were endless, there were bodies in the streets; the son of my mother's sister, and his entire family was slaughtered" (Cole 69). The exploitation, brutality, and torturous events of the past prompted Julius to "leave because the future was uncertain" (Cole 69) in Nigeria, unveiling the morbidity of the heritage that the Empire carries. The protagonist's recollection of the gratuitous violence accentuates the Empire's fantasized claim of a racially pure, innocent, and humanity-focused colonial history. The colonial amnesia emboldens Europe to disavow the devastation it



caused in the past, proving itself a philanthropist. Cole rebuts the myth of pure history, exposing the cruelties of the colonial era, and emphasizing the dire need for the manifestation of the colonial historical baggage. The paper asserts that postcolonial melancholia encourages the Empire to deny the association and responsibility for the exploitation, violence, and racism, intensifying the colonial amnesia/nostalgia.

In *Open City*, Cole exposes the anti-immigrant views, foregrounding the anti-black. In the Army School, Julius fathoms that blacks and whites “were not all equal” (Cole 74), indicating the racial hierarchies, challenges to multiculturalism, and exclusionary policies of the Empire. The post 9/11 world is difficult for immigrants to live in the West. Farouq considers “Belgium as a difficult place for an Arab to be” (Cole 137), showcasing the hindrance to cultural plurality, multiplicity, and coexistence of multiple ethnicities. In a post-postcolonial world, shaped by melancholia, immigrants are perceived as traitors because “immigrants are doomed in perpetuity to be outsiders” (Gilroy 122). The Empire is not prepared to acknowledge the civilizational betrayal, for anti-immigrant policies, instigated by the melancholic reactions, are considered politically (in)-correct. The idealization of the Empire’s greatness, purity, and innocence provokes rac(ism), xenophobia, and prejudices about different races, cultures, ethnicities, and religions. The remembrance of the violent events of history spurs anti-black, anti-Muslims, and anti-American racism. The paper claims that rac(ism) against the Empire results from neo-traditional pathology of the heritage, while a toxic relationship with the past triggers anti-American racism.

Open City accentuates the theme of racial discrimination, spotlighting the criminalization of difference for whiteness and blackness, reinforcing postcolonial melancholia. Julius endures the disciplinary containment of difference, “he’s black said the girl, but he’s not dressed like a gangster, I bet he’s a gangster, her brother said” (Cole 30). The Blacks are supposedly criminals because of their skin color. At the Nigerian Army School, Julius undergoes punishment for non-conformity; his music teacher, Musibau, accused Julius of stealing his newspaper. Julius expresses the codified repression of the identity, “it was a case of mistaken identity... he stole a newspaper... he is a disgrace to the Federal Republic of Nigeria” (Cole 79-80). This structural racism augments the melancholia in Julius, relinking him with the heavy burden of the colonial world in which Africans were afflicted with the wounds of barbarianism, sub-humanity, criminality, and the uncivilized nation. Julius experiences racism due to his complexion, pointing out the ways in which the melancholia of the past maintains the structural racial ordering of the world, where Blacks are considered barbarians, primitive, uncivilized, and criminals. The paper argues that racial and ethnic absolutism sustains postcolonial melancholia in the form of racism, while postcolonial melancholia maintains rac(ism) in *Open City*.

In *Open City*, Cole evinces the Empire’s inability to bargain with its violent history, controlling the portrayal of the ferocious events of history. Teju Cole asserts that “one who has the power controls the portrayal” (114). The colonial and imperial powers control the depiction of Blacks, and the rest of the world, discriminately speaking, the stereotypical representation of the world is influenced by melancholic reactions. For colonial powers, “White is a race...black is a race, but Spanish is a language. Christianity is a religion, Islam is a religion, but Jewishness is an ethnicity” (Cole 113), creating the binaries, racial, religious, and cultural hierarchies. For the



Empire, either an individual is “white or black; smoke weed, chase brown, toot rock” (Gilroy 96). The post-imperial powers consider the white race as superior, and the black inferior, Muslims as extremists, and Americans as intruders. These racial ideologies and identities are the result of colonial amnesia/nostalgia, which traps the Empire in the mythologized version of colonial history. The paper echoes the sentiment that the Empire is still unable to negotiate its brutalities, portraying itself as a mode of civilization, modernity, and progression.

In *Open City*, Teju Cole foregrounds the postcolonial melancholia, which results from the unresolved nostalgia/amnesia of World War II. During the “Second World War, and these damned Germans... had planes and paratroopers! ... the Nazis marched in, and stayed, like parasites” (Cole 85), reflecting the melancholia of the loss, guilt, and grief. In response to these racist brutalities, “Israel is doing terrible things in [Palestinian] occupied territories” (Cole 112). Farouq thinks that Germany is responsible for the calamities that occurred in Israel, for him “Germany should be responsible for Israel, if anyone should bear the burden, it should be them, not the Palestinians” (Cole 118). The melancholia of the gratuitous violence escalates the exploitation in the contemporary world, upholding the racial discrimination due to religion, ethnicity, and culture. In the contemporary period, the morbidity of heritage ceases the colonial overdeveloped countries, making it impossible for them to find a way out, as the Empire is trapped in the past, unable to propel itself, and come out of the melancholic patterns that sustain racism, exploitation, and its myth of still being the great Empire.

Teju Cole evinces the “ruins of the World Trade Centre, [after the attack] the place had become a metonym of its disaster... [9/11] not the site of the events of 9/11 but to 9/11 itself, the date petrified into broken stones” (Cole 49). This melancholia (re)engenders rac(ism), ethnic absolutism, and xenophobia, generating a classic anti-immigrant view of the Muslims. This racist view, which saw Muslims as “enemies competing for scarce resources, was converging with renewed fear of Islam...[Muslims] were insensitive to how common, and how futile, was their violence in the name of monolithic identity” (Cole 101). Farouq, a Muslim character, suffers from xenophobia because of his religion. Cole showcases that America considered every Muslim to be an extremist. The melancholia of 9/11 reinforces ethnic, racial, religious, and regional absolutism, which the Muslim community has to tolerate in post 9/11 America. The postcolonial amnesia/nostalgia disavows the suffering, loss, and destruction the empire went through on the one hand; on the other hand, the melancholia consolidates religious, cultural, ethnic, and racial hatred between the West and the Muslim community.

Open City illustrates the way post 9/11 melancholia buttresses racism against America. The racial, ethnic, and religious inequalities in the post 9/11 world heighten the hatred towards America. Khalil’s racist remark that “America is a version of Al-Qaeda” (Cole 116) showcases the amount of racism immigrant Muslims have against the Americans, the way Americans’ hatred of Al-Qaeda bolsters Xenophobia, rac(ism), and inclusive exclusionary policies, ostracizing the minorities, Muslim-politan, and Afropolitan from the mainstream. For the other Muslim character, Farouq, America reflects the variety of the world, and he does not “view America as monolithic” (Cole 120) as Khalil does. Farouq’s sentiment emphasizes America’s innocence, purity, and policy of multiplicity, dismantling Khalil’s racist remarks. The racism against America and Muslims induces the melancholia of the destruction of the Twin Towers. Teju Cole emphasizes melancholia



as a tool of rac(ism), which relinks the imperial powers, immigrants, and Muslims with imperial amnesia/nostalgia. The paper asserts that racism fortifies the melancholia, shapes people's perceptions, and secures the stereotypical modes of portraying America and the Others, elevating the racial prejudices among the suffering Nations.

In *Open City*, rac(ism) is interrelated with the postcolonial melancholia as their consequences dovetail, sustaining shared inequalities. The consolidation of the post 9/11 melancholia triggers racism, xenophobia, and social inequalities. Farouq struggles with xenophobia in America to the extent that he has no "desire to visit America, and certainly not as an Arab" (Cole 121). "Ethnic absolutism comprehends their evil and their affiliation to fundamentalist Islam" (Gilroy 122), viewing Muslim immigrants as demonic figures. In the post 9/11 world, immigrants face injustice, which induces racism, hatred, and melancholia, as Julius expresses that he would refrain from "visit[ing] the United States as a solitary North African Muslim with leftist beliefs" (Cole 121), demonstrating America's rigid behavior towards immigrants, specifically endured by Muslims. The anti-immigrant policies place obstacles to multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and plurality, escalating rac(ism), Xenophobia, and melancholia. The melancholia of the 9/11 incident induces hatred of Muslims, perpetuating the exclusive policies disguised in the form of cosmopolitanism, and reviving the melancholia. The paper argues that postcolonial/9 September 2001 melancholia amplifies the racial and ethnic absolutism, while racism enhances the melancholia, both sharing a similar purpose of ostracism, discrimination, and toxicity through inclusive exclusionary politics of existence.

Open City emphasizes the reassessment of colonial history to navigate rac(ism), melancholia, and Xenophobia in postcolonial/9/11 world. Cole accentuates the forgotten events of history to erode rac(ism), melancholia, and anti-immigrant policies trammeling the coexistence. "Shedding light on a forgotten chapter in colonial history" (Cole 24), invalidates the colonial amnesia/nostalgia, undermining the Empire's facile description of its past, bringing the historical complexities to the forefront. Linda Coley asserts that the Empire "need to know more about their impact in the past upon different regions of the world" (Gilroy 94), which is a prerequisite to the acceptance of the loss of omnipotency. The acquiescence to the loss of the Empire is a way out of the labyrinth of neo-traditional pathology in the contemporary era, diminishing antipathy between the Europeans and the immigrants. The racial and ethnic absolutism, spurred by morbidity of heritage forms pathological cultural societies. In these systematically dysfunctional communities, hostility among the metropolis, Afropolitan subjects, Mus-politan, and immigrants increases. The desacralization of the imperial narratives of omnipotency subverts the racial absolutism, eroding the colonial amnesia/nostalgia, and xenophobia in the postcolonial and post 9/11 world.

In *Open City*, Teju Cole accentuates a convivial world in which multiple cultures, ethnicities, and races co-exist. In New York City, "American blacks are like any other Americans; they are like any other people. They hold the same kinds of jobs... they send their children to school" (Cole 114), manifesting a planetary existence. Cole asserts that people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, races, and ethnicities experience shared vulnerabilities. In Cole's point of view, "for people to feel that they alone have suffered, it is very dangerous" (137), positing that individuals should avoid the melancholia of the past as they share calamities, exploitation, and genocide. Julius has persevered through years of diaspora, America suffers melancholy because of



the Twin Towers attack, Khalil and Farouq bear racism because of 9/11 melancholia and religious absolutism. Despite the drastic impacts of the neo-traditional pathology, Julius, an African immigrant, Farouq and Khalil, Arab immigrants, Chinese, Japanese, and other Asians live together, showcasing the theme of conviviality. The paper authenticates a fragile cohabitation where individuals from multifarious ethnic, racial, and religious groups can co-reside, making it possible for the people to navigate the racist ideologies prompted by the morbidity of heritage.

The manifestation of shared vulnerabilities secures the convivial ideology of existence. Cole remarks that “all death is suffering, others have suffered, too, and that is history suffering: suffering (118), following the trajectory of Paul Gilroy, who posits that a genuine planetary humanism “necessitates a secularization of suffering” (Goswami 109). People should think way out of the racist structures to deal with the pathology of the colonial and imperial powers. The melancholic attitude towards the ferocious history will bring nothing except amnesia/nostalgia. Julius, Farouq, and Khalil illustrate such sufferings. Israel has suffered, Palestine has undergone the consequences of Israel’s deterioration, and Germany’s six million were decimated. Cole and Paul Gilroy emphasize the secularization of the liabilities to end the precarities of the contemporary world. The characters Julius, Khalil, and Farouq believe that the elimination of postcolonial/9/11 melancholia is an essential weapon to dismantle the racial and ethnic absolutism in today’s world. The paper validates the exploration of the vulnerabilities irrespective of ethnicity, race, and religion, maintaining that humans share a common history full of violent events, making it necessary for people to understand that exploitation belongs to humanity.

Open City explores the theme of conviviality for tolerance of diverse ethnic groups. In his deliberations with Julius, Farouq confesses that seeing the “crowd of individuals from different places, appeals to the human side of me, and the intellectual side of me” (Cole 106), inspiring him to believe that “people can live together” (Cole 108). Julius describes the (open) city as a “world of brown and black, gray and white... one was white, Asian, and the other two were black” (Cole 175-186), showcasing the co-presence of people of multiple racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds in New York. The protagonist witnesses “Chinese women danced in formation” (Cole 156), experiencing multiplicity, plurality, and cross-culturalism. Julius enjoys the cultures of other immigrants, contending the co-existence of multiculturalism found in the tolerance of different epistemologies, cosmologies, and ways of living. Julius and Farouq endorse the idea that people’s tolerance of diverse races, cultures, religions, ethnicities, and epistemologies paves the way for a true planetary humanism. The paper argues that conviviality makes the co-existence of diverse ethnic groups possible in the postcolonial/9/11 melancholic world, disrupting neo-traditional pathology.

Conclusion

In *Open City*, the narrative of postcolonial melancholia intricately accentuates the racial and ethnic absolutism, elucidating the interconnectedness between the morbidity of heritage, colonial amnesia/nostalgia, and rac(ism). Julius endures racism due to colonial amnesia, spotlighting the pathological ideology of black criminality. The sustaining melancholia presumes the protagonist to be a gangster/criminal twice, showcasing the structural reinforcement of the criminalization of differences. By focusing on his character, the paper evinces the dire impact of colonial nostalgia/amnesia, which erases the history of Africans to maintain the mythical, facile,



and pure version of the Empire. Julius brings the calamities of colonialism to the forefront, exposing the violent history of colonial powers. Khalil and Farouq suffer rac(ism), Xenophobia, and post 9/11 melancholia. The anti-immigrant policies induce hatred against the U.S., making it possible for immigrants to give racist remarks about the state. The characters of Farouq and Khalil are trapped in an overlapping relationship between ethnic absolutism and post 9/11 melancholia. They have to experience rac(ism) because of their ethnicity, religion, and race, which is spurred by the melancholia of the attack on the Twin Towers. Julius and Farouq believe in the shared vulnerabilities, strongly believing that all human history is full of suffering. They condemn the absolute consideration of the violent events of history, showcasing the dire need for the realization of the truth that humanity suffers irrespective of ethnicity, race, religion, and color. The paper undermines the Empire's narrative of omnipotent, racially pure, and successful, desacralizing the imperial and colonial powers, exposing their melancholic portrayal of colonial history, constructed nature, and racial stereotypes, and advocating for convivial (planetary) existence.

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