(Re)Imagining Africa in Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2018)

Okwudiri Anasiudu
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0312-1110
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
okwudiri.anasiudu@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

This article examines Ryan Coogler's film *Black Panther* (2018) and the critical conversations it raises, which are problematized by its perceived failure to accurately represent Black diasporic experiences, the racist vitriol against it and its concern with commercial success. The present article deepens and advances this conversation by focusing on Coogler's strategies of representation in the film, which foreground a compelling positive image of continental Africa within the tenets of postcolonial theory. Coogler utilizes three strategies, including 1) contrasting settings and counter-narratives which challenge prevailing notions of Africa in media/popular representation and museum exhibitions; 2) the use of inversion of the traditional dynamics between the centre and the periphery, which challenges dominant power structures by emphasizing Africa's agency and significance on the global stage; and 3) the positive characterization of continental African women as war generals and geniuses, highlighting their empowered agency and challenging gender stereotypes. Such representation stands in opposition to the 'dark continent' metaphor and Afro-pessimism, which have historically perpetuated negative perceptions of African countries as the spectacle of the Other. This article argues that, by employing these strategies, Coogler invites readers to engage in a dialogue that reconsiders *Black Panther* as a text that contributes to the postcolonial reconstruction of narratives on the people and continent of Africa.

Keywords: African women; Afro-pessimism; *Black Panther*; counter-narrative; postcolonial Africa

About the author

Okwudiri Anasiudu graduated with a First Class in English Studies from the Department of English Studies University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. His research interests are within the fields of Anglophone Literature, Afropolitanism, Literary/Discourse Stylistics with insights drawn from Functional Linguistics, and Cultural Studies with a focus on popular culture. He seeks a trans-disciplinary synergy in the reading and interpretation of literature. He has published in journals such as *African Identities*, *Journal of Gender and Power*, *Imbizo*, *Journal of Language Culture and Society*, *Topics in Linguistics*, *Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, *Journal of Language and Literature*, *Working Papers*, and *Kiabari.* His ongoing research is a collaboration with Professor Ikenna Kamalu on a Tertiary Education Trust Fund-sponsored research project in Nigeria, focusing on the metaphorical representation of corruption in selected Nigeria newspapers.

Introduction

The representation of Africa often tends to be negative and framed within the 'dark continent' metaphor (see Curtin 1964; Achebe 1978; Hawk 1992; Bunce 2015; Dokotum 2020).[1] This metaphor signifies both presence and absence. In terms of presence, it suggests or calls attention to indices such as constant ethnic wars, despotic leaders, and poverty that limit the continent's ability to realize its full potential. These indices underscore the "Africa-in-crisis trope" (Iheka 2021, 2) or speak of institutional deformities due to Africa's problematic history, with which it has not been able to properly reconcile (Mudimbe 1988, 188). In terms of absence, the dark continent metaphor implies the nonexistence of progress, development, culture, and civilization. The origins of this metaphor can be traced back to colonial texts influenced by Eurocentric ideology, formulated by authors and thinkers such as Shakespeare, Hume, Jefferson, Cuvier, and Hegel (see Hall 2003b, 240; wa Thiong'o 1997, 9; Adichie 2009, 1–2). Such framing informs, to a large extent, how Africa is constructed, disseminated, and consumed in discourse modes like cinematic vision or news media (Dokotum 2020, 1; Self 2020, xiii). Regrettably, the disproportionate focus on negative aspects regarding Africa carries significant consequences. It perpetuates Afro-pessimism, that is, an apprehension of hopelessness, negativity, gloom, corruption, and underdevelopment attributed to the continent (Gikandi 2011, 9; Nothias 2012, 54).

Building on the foregoing, this article investigates three strategies that Ryan Coogler's film *Black Panther* (2018) deploys in reconstructing the negative image of Africa, or the prevailing stereotype of the 'dark continent'.

The first strategy is the use of counter-narratives and the inversion of the very negative trope of Africa. This is demonstrated in the juxtaposition of a Wakanda, a fictional country in Coogler's representation with which the fictional Western news media is familiar, with another Wakanda antithetical to it, and the use of contrastive exchange between Killmonger and the curator of the Museum of Great Britain, which exposes the role of the British Museum as a receptacle for stolen African artworks and as an agency for the falsification of the history of African art. The second strategy is the inversion of the typical centre/periphery dynamics in order to re-imagine Africa as a geopolitical centre in global politics by showcasing another image of Wakanda (different from its impoverished status), which occupies a geopolitical status as a leader in advanced healthcare, artificial intelligence, and rare earth minerals, and provides aid to the world. The third strategy is Coogler's positive symbolic characterization of continental African women, exemplified by the empowering roles of Wakanda's women as military generals, subject matter experts, and national leaders.

My analysis draws insight from the critical lens of postcolonial theory, a strand of cultural studies (Udumukwu 2021, 264) and cross-cultural criticism (Ashcroft et al. 2003, 2) with an 'internationalist' context of emergence (Adesanmi 2008, 37–38) which is concerned with how cultures and people are negatively represented and with various attempts to counter such negative representation. Postcolonial studies have evolved from seminal works such as Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *A Dying Colonialism* (1965), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), and *Toward the African Revolution* (1964), and Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (2021), and *Portrait of a Jew* (1962), as well as groundbreaking contributions by scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Bill Ashcroft, Achille Mbembe, and others. Their

ideas have significantly influenced the development of postcolonial theory, culminating in its establishment as a theoretical framework in 1990s with diverse thematic concerns and foci (Barry 2002, 192). Within this framework, this article interrogates *Black Panther* and uncovers the limitations of Euro-Western representations within the discursive formations of postcolonial contexts (Olaniyi 2010, 637). The article also shows that negative representations of Africa rely heavily on stereotypes of the people and continent as strange or different (Udumukwu 2021, 258). This is similar to the notion of the 'Other', a contrasting depiction that has historically shaped perceptions of the East in relation to the West (Said 2003, 2).

Critical review of *Black Panther*

Black Panther (2018) as a screenplay was written by Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole, with Coogler also assuming the directorial role. The film draws inspiration from the Black Panther character initially introduced in Marvel Comics, created by the renowned writer-editor Stan Lee and artist-co-plotter Jack Kirby (Dargis 2018, n.p.). The origin of the concept 'Black Panther' has a historical context that can be traced back to 1966 in the United States of America (see Adeleke 2009, 8). Its emergence coincides with the demand for social justice by Blacks in the diaspora, culminating in the establishment of the Black Panther Party in 1966 by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale (Leonardatos 1999, 958). Their objective was to establish a Black movement that fostered Pan-Africanism and promoted solidarity among Black communities (Williams 2008, 18), and to "cultivate a sense of African identity and culture among Black individuals as a means of defence against a pervasive and dominating Eurocentric worldview" (Adeleke 2009, 98). Therefore, the term 'Black Panther' as a conceptual space signifies Black pride, or solidarity, and provides a philosophical ideation of a unified approach to addressing the existential

challenges faced by the Black Diaspora. The term later became the title of the comic book by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, which, in turn, inspired the title of the film.

Before its release, the film faced racist vitriol and derogatory comments from the group Down with Disney's Treatment of Franchises and its Fanboys (a white nationalist/supremacist organization), due to the insufficient number of white actors in the movie and despite Coogler's positive representation of Africans (Reynolds 2023, 173). Subsequent to its release, Bakari (2018, 11) aptly observed that *Black Panther* signifies a pivotal juncture in the redefinition of Africa, accentuating the broader international cinematic encounter with African cultural immersion. In praise of its commercial success, Eckhardt (2018) notes that the film achieved substantial commercial success, to the tune of approximately $1.3 billion as of April 2018, and also that it underscores what an African nation that remained uncolonized would be like, using Wakanda as an example. This is based on the notion that Wakanda's technological advancement is attributed to its not being colonized by Western powers, unlike most countries in Africa (Eckhardt 2018, 2). Reynolds (2023) reiterates Eckhardt's argument, delving into the impact of colonialism on colonized nations, and drawing on the insights of Albert Memmi's notion of the colonizer and the colonized. Buttressing her point, Reynolds (2023, 177) argues that while the exact consequences of colonization for countries such as Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as numerous other islands and nations, may remain uncertain, the evident ramifications of colonization are manifested in the current circumstances of those countries as economically impoverished.

Black Panther (2018) has also been described as a "sugar-coated narrative" (Varda and Hahner 2020, 4). This view stems from the notion of the film's erasure of the historical experiences which forged the Black Panther movement that emerged in 1966, and its

glossing over of Black existential struggles in America (Lebron 2018, n.p.). Another strong criticism of *Black Panther* is that it negatively portrays Black revolutionaries. This is particularly evident in the characterization of N'Jobu, who is surveilled by Zuri, and his son Erik Steven Killmonger (N'Jadaka), who is depicted as a villain and is alienated as racially impure despite being Black; conversely, Everett K Ross, a white CIA operative who shares no blood ties with Wakanda, is saved by Shuri from imminent death. Not only that, Everett is portrayed as a hero for assisting in the preservation of Wakanda during a civil war. Coogler's inclusion of such a role for a white CIA agent has been interpreted as a metaphor for the complex messianic dynamics rooted in Euro-Western perspectives or Hollywood's representation of Africa in films featuring the continent (Mokoena 2018, 17–19).

Another issue of concern in the review of *Black Panther* is Williams' (2018, 29) supposition that Wakandans are not truly Black. Williams' premise is based on Wakanda's advanced civilization and deliberate isolation, which excludes Wakanda from the broader historical experiences of Black communities both in the Diaspora and in continental Africa. The weakness of this premise is that it overlooks the fact that the people of Wakanda encompass diverse expressions of Blackness, and their unique story should not be forced to conform to Western conceptions of Black identity. Williams' viewpoint subtly reinforces colonial and neocolonial sensibilities that suggest that Africans are incapable of achieving the greatness of Wakanda on their own. In contrast, Ryzik (2018) introduces a critical perspective on *Black Panther* rooted in fashion stylistics. This foregrounds the distinct fashion sensibilities of the African characters, drawing inspiration from fashion aesthetics associated with Africa. This fashion assemblage in *Black Panther* highlights an African fashion mosaic and reflects its rich cultural and artistic imagination. It also signifies an evolving fashion dynamism which Ruth Carter, the costume designer for the *Black Panther*, seeks to amplify by incorporating indigenous fashion and stylistic designs peculiar to African identities such as those of the Tuareg, Zulu, Maasai, Himba, and Dinka peoples – representing some of the distinct nationalities comprising postcolonial Africa (Ford 2018, n.p.).

These cultural aesthetics in terms of fashion, body art, scarification, and the barefoot uniform of the Dora Milaje have been described as elements of the 'dark continent' metaphor (Dokotum 2020, 255). Dokotum's deprecatory view of such cultural repertoire speaks of an epistemic lens informed by immersion in what Mudimbe (1988, 188) calls a "colonial library". This is an intellectual perspective influenced by Euro-Western forms of perception that tend to distort, deform, or exoticize Africa discursively. Sadly, it reveals symptoms of imperialist nostalgia and the underlying politics behind Dokotum's (2020) view that *Black Panther* is an outsider's interpretation of African culture (Madowo and Attiah 2018, n.p.). Dokotum's (2020) view overlooks the differences between the continental African material culture peculiar to the Tuareg, Zulu, Maasai, Himba, and Dinka people and the Black diasporic material culture.

Counter narrative: Balancing the story

The plot of *Black Panther* opens with a conversation between a son and his baba (*baba* is an honorific appellation common in Africa which is used to address an elderly man or a father). The son makes a plea to his baba, "Tell me a story" (Coogler 2018). In this context, a story refers to an oral narrative that may encompass both fictional and factual space and time. It is passed down through generations, carrying the cultural memory of a people and reflecting their collective identity. The specific story being requested contains the wisdom and philosophy behind the origins of Wakanda, as implied by the baba's question, "Which one?" and the

son's response, "The story of home." This opening scene is crucial as it emphasizes the importance of place and time within the realm of oral tradition through its portrayal of Wakanda as a thriving society that predates the arrival of Europeans in Africa and continues after it. It also stresses how oral traditional storytelling contributes to the construction of a people's identity, depicting the people of Wakanda with their history, technology, legends, and myths, as well as highlighting the amalgamation of the five distinct cultural groups that united to form the nation of Wakanda.

What is conspicuous in the film is the fact that contrasting representations are the fulcrum upon which Coogler bases the themes of *Black Panther*. This is achieved by contrasting the representation of Wakanda in the oral tradition narrative with the representation of the BBC Global News Media portrayal of Wakanda. These two contrasting perspectives provide a more balanced understanding, rather than a one-dimensional view, underscoring an attempt at a "balance of stories" (Achebe 2003, 79) and cautioning against the danger of embracing a single narrative, as emphasized by Adichie (2009). Comparing the two representations allows for an understanding of how the Western news media, on the one hand, and African oral narrative and ethnophilosophy, on the other, portray Africa. Importantly, it shows that the Western news media does not have all the knowledge on Wakanda; hence, its attempt at representing Wakanda is often laced with stereotypes of Wakanda as the "spectacle of the Other" (see Hall 2003b). The phrase "spectacle of the Other" refers to the projection of Wakanda as a strange space, with a history filled with tragedy and unhappiness (see Mbembe 2001, 3; Wainana 2005, n.p.). Such framing and reductionist viewpoints are essentializing.

These contrasting representations demonstrate the limited knowledge of the Western news media of Wakanda as flawed and distorted, due to Wakanda's deliberate

concealment of its true identity. But what is the motive behind such camouflage or disguising, behind feigning poverty and hunger to the outside world? To fully comprehend the rationale behind this camouflage, it is pertinent to ponder on Vibranium, Wakanda's rare mineral resource, and its symbolic significance. This is because there is a correlation between Wakanda's camouflage strategy and its need to make the knowledge of Vibranium hidden for both ecological and self-preservation. This stems from the immense power associated with Vibranium, as well as the potential abuse of Vibranium for negative purposes.

Thus, camouflage becomes a strategy through which Wakanda averts, to a large extent, the disastrous outcome of letting Vibranium get to the wrong individual or organization. This is because Vibranium could be exploited and weaponized to cause harm to life. There are instances of Vibranium-related violence, such as Klaue's theft of Vibranium, resulting in an explosion; the violence in the shooting scene at The Museum of Great Britain; the breaking into a CIA Safe House; and the violent scenes at the casino in Busan. This is despite the many medical and energy benefits of Vibranium, and moreover, the civil war in Wakanda was fought with technology laced with Vibranium.

It is crucial to map the allegory which Vibranium evokes in relation to crude oil and uranium, two important resources which have caused significant crises in African countries due to their mismanagement. The pattern of violence associated with the quest to own and use Vibranium echoes the violence associated with the extraction, refining, and control of resources like oil and uranium in Africa, which Vibranium symbolizes. Such pursuits have engendered violence and environmental damage in places like the Niger Delta in Nigeria and Arlit in Niger (Iheka 2021, 55).

Despite the necessity which drives Wakanda's deployment of camouflage, its shift from camouflage to the unveiling of its true

identity as a foreign policy, points to an important concern raised by Coogler that African countries can learn from. This is the need for African countries to discover and unveil their authentic essence and make contributions to the global community in ways similar to the way in which Wakanda opens up its space, technology, and science to the world. Just as this unveiling changes the global perception of Wakanda, Africa's discovery and unveiling of itself holds the potential to shape the global perception of Africa in the long term and to challenge the prevailing one-sided narrative that confines African countries within the narrow precincts of Western imagination, which, mistakenly, is often assumed to be an absolute truth. Instead in the context of Nietzschean philosophy, the concept of truth is viewed as a product of human interpretation and is not an immutable, absolute reality. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that this truth is a malleable construct that can vary from one perspective to another. Consequently, it is imperative to engage in ongoing questioning and critical examination of such a one-sided representation. Failing to confront and thoroughly interrogate this singular viewpoint over an extended period of time can have profound implications for how Africa is perceived and understood. The persistence of a single, unchallenged narrative can lead to a distorted and skewed perception of the African continent. This emphasizes the significance of actively engaging with and contesting such prevailing representations to ensure a more accurate and multifaceted comprehension of Africa's diverse realities (Hawk 1992, xvi; Bunce et al. 2017, 2–3).

Another significant attempt at addressing a negative representation of Africa is the film's portrayal of the Museum of Great Britain. The museum displays artefacts and material culture from Africa and functions as an institution which holds profound significance as a source of data on other people's material cultures. Such material cultures, as Lidchi (1997)

notes "are amongst the most objective data [which] provide an intelligible baseline from which to begin the more difficult task of interpreting cultural meanings" (162). Concerning Africa, the term 'material culture' refers to physical artefacts, objects, and structures created and used by various African communities throughout history. These artefacts may include pottery, tools, sculptures, clothing, buildings, and other tangible items that hold cultural significance. What Lidchi (1997) underscores is that cultural artefacts exist independently of any subjective interpretation or bias. They can be examined, measured, and analyzed without relying solely on personal opinions or perspectives. Hence, artefacts are objects that researchers and historians interrogate to delve into the more complex task of interpreting the cultural meanings of African peoples.

The scene in which Erik Killmonger, also known as N'Jadaka, visits the Museum of Great Britain, with African artworks on display in glass cases, vividly provides an animated illustration of the issue at hand. When Killmonger looks at an artefact and asks the lady, "Where is this one from?", the curator mobilizes a colonial sense of omniscience and replies, "The Ashanti tribe, modern-day Ghana, 19th century" (Coogler 2018). Killmonger does not stop there; instead, he pushes the question further, pointing at another artefact, "And what about this one?", and the curator replies, "Edo people of Benin, 16th century" (Coogler 2018). The sense of an assumed authority in African art history, demonstrated by the curator's categorical statements, is an attitude difficult to ignore. Ironically, the curator's ignorance of African art history is exposed when Killmonger poses another question, pointing to an artwork shaped like a hammer with a distinct appearance. The curator confidently provides an incorrect answer, describing the hammer-shaped artwork as originating from the Fula tribe in Benin in the 7th century. This erroneous response probably reflects her

standard reply to museum visitors inquiring about such art.

The dialogue between Killmonger and the curator in the Museum of Great Britain exposes the ignorance and foundational falsity inherent in colonial institutions. This is observed when Killmonger corrects the curator's mistaken attributions by providing an alternative version of the artefacts' origin, revealing that they were taken from Wakanda during a British imperial mission and that the metal is Vibranium (Coogler 2018). Reynolds (2023, 179) asserts that this scene serves as an explicit critique of colonization, shedding light on the role played by former imperial powers in pillaging former colonies while being slow to acknowledge that stolen artefacts are displayed in their museums. The display of African artefacts at the Museum of Great Britain parallels the historical dehumanization of Africans, captured as slaves and exhibited on stands for sale or for entertainment, as objects. In both cases, narratives are constructed to serve the interests of the exhibitors for commercial purposes. The museum therefore serves as a stage for the reenactment of (neo)colonial dominance and control over African art. By employing rhetorical questions such as "How do you think your ancestors got these? Do you think they paid a fair price? Or did they take it, like they took everything else?", Coogler emphasizes the biased and flawed knowledge held by colonial institutions about the cultures they claim to represent through museum displays. The curator's response, which is based on limited knowledge of Wakanda's artefacts, distorts and falsifies the historicity attached to these material artefacts and Wakanda's cultural legacy.

Coogler's portrayal of the Museum of Great Britain raises thought-provoking questions about the institution's role as a custodian of African art knowledge. In the context of neocolonial power, the narrative about Africa's artworks presented by the museum's curator aligns with the historical British colonial mission in Africa, which often operated on limited knowledge or ignorance, leading to skewed and biased representations of the continent. If left unchallenged, such limited knowledge can significantly shape perceptions of African nations and their people, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and misconceptions. The British Museum, in this context, assumes the role of an ideological structure responsible for constructing knowledge and establishing a system of representation. It decides what aspects of African culture to display and how they are presented to the public. The curator's decisions, communication style, and the information provided all play a crucial role in shaping the portrayal of "other cultures" (Hall 2003a, 8), including Africa.

The Museum thus serves as a powerful medium through which cultural meanings are generated and conveyed, particularly concerning African cultures. The process of the exhibition and the subsequent conversations it sparks reveal a cause-and-effect relationship between the Museum's actions and their impact on the representation of African cultures. Such representation underscores the fact that the Museum's approach has far-reaching implications. It not only influences how African art is perceived and appreciated, but also sheds light on the larger dynamics of cultural power and the historical legacies of colonialism. By challenging the narratives presented in such institutions, society can work towards a more accurate, respectful, and inclusive representation of diverse cultures, including those of Africa. Coogler's cinematic portrayal offers a reflection of the real-world complexities surrounding the representation of cultural heritage and emphasizes the need for ongoing dialogue and awareness in shaping a more just and equitable understanding of African cultures.

What is at work in Coogler's portrayal of the scenes at the Museum of Great Britain is what Hall (2003a, 3) refers to as the "circuit of culture". This refers to the representation,

regulation, identification, consumption, and production of Africa, African identity, and Africanity in Western discourses as a 'terra nullius' devoid of cultural memory until the British encounter the continent. This perspective allows the British to assert their authority over African artworks and determine their naming, history, and even purpose. A historical example illustrating this notion of a 'terra nullius', which informed the looting of Benin and Asante sacred arts, is recounted by Hicks (2020) in the ground-breaking work *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution.*

Hicks (2020) calls attention to the case of the Benin Bronzes, an assortment of intricate brass sculptures and plaques crafted by the Edo people of present-day Nigeria. Hicks (2020) recounts that these artworks were looted by British forces during the Punitive Expedition of 1897, a raid on the Kingdom of Benin. Ola Rotimi's play, *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi: A Historical Play*, fictionalized this raid. The Benin Bronzes were transported to Britain and scattered among various museums – one of which is fictionalized as the Museum of Great Britain in Coogler's film. However, the narrative surrounding such artworks, as depicted in *Black Panther*, fails to capture their cultural and historical significance or original context. Instead, they were subjected to Western interpretation, perpetuating a lack of genuine understanding.

Another example is the case of Ghana, particularly concerning the Asante treasures. The artefacts from Asante displayed at the Museum of Great Britain call attention to the Asante Kingdom, which is located in present-day Ghana. The kingdom was known for its rich cultural heritage and skilled craftsmanship. During the colonial era, British forces looted numerous artefacts, including golden regalia and sacred objects, from the Asante Kingdom. These stolen items were displayed in museums like the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean Museums, and Brooklyn Museum

and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, among others (see Hicks 2020); this is symbolically paralleled by the Museum of Great Britain in *Black Panther*.

Similar to the Benin Bronzes, the Asante treasures were often presented through a Western lens, detached from their original cultural and spiritual significance. They were exhibited as mere curiosities rather than valued elements of Ghanaian heritage. In recent years, there have been growing calls for the repatriation of these treasures to Ghana, allowing for a more authentic and inclusive representation of the country's history and culture. Unfortunately, institutions like the Museum of Great Britain in *Black Panther,* where these artefacts are stored away from their original owners, may make the repatriation difficult. The reasons may be because of the sense of power the museum as a colonial institution wields, with the capacity to control the narrative around the artefacts, and the commercial value of these cultural treasures to the museum where they are being displayed.

This informs the curator's refusal to sell the artefact (a hammer) to Killmonger when Killmonger insists that the hammer should be taken off her hands. This is ironic, because the curator's ancestors, the British, did not purchase or pay a fair price for the artefact but stole it from Africa "like they took everything else" (Coogler 2018). The curator's presumption of epistemic authority over African sacred objects, despite her evident ignorance during the dialogue, reflects an attempt to perpetuate the legacy of cultural theft and the negative representation of the African artefacts confined within the museum's glass displays. This act is symbolic of the imposition of the British narrative framing on Africa's art narrative and history, which probably stems from the feelings of superiority, on the part of the 'conquerers' and 'administrators', over the conquered and the governed (Curtin 1964, v.).

In contrast, Killmonger's actions of breaking into the glass case symbolize his assertion

and claim to the art. Coogler's portrayal of the museum scene challenges Western museums as institutions and symbolic markets for devaluing African civilization and cultural heritage. This aligns with Hicks's (2020, 3–4) argument that Western museums, holding and exhibiting looted sacred and royal objects taken from Africa during colonial massacres, contradict their professed principles of education, enlightenment, and cultural preservation. This contradiction arises because these museums unintentionally become monuments perpetuating the violent propaganda of Western superiority over African civilizations, based on flawed "race science" (Hicks 2020, 4).

Coogler's portrayal of the Museum of Great Britain underlines its similitude to a war memorial that glorifies gains without acknowledging the losses suffered by the nations whose sacred objects were plundered by Western greed. It signals a call for concern which revolves around the question of why these looted artefacts continue to be exhibited instead of being returned to their rightful owners. One of the overarching reasons may be that the exhibition of these artefacts by the Museum of Great Britain, as shown in *Black Panther*, highlights the need to exploit the artefact's commercial value, disregarding the fact that at the same time they sustain the legacy of extreme violence and of the cultural destruction of colonized people. They bear witness to the histories of colonial atrocities, serving as constant triggers of the trauma of a dark past when ideologies of cultural evolution, intertwined with white supremacy, were used to loot Africa and produce Otherness, reinforced by racial hierarchies in Africa.

Re-imagining African women: Transcending the margin

Hollywood films, such as Antoine Fuqua's *Tears of the Sun* (2003), Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), and Edward Zick's *Blood Diamond* (2006), have depicted African women in demeaning terms, portraying them as weak, scared, and helpless, relegating them to passive and subordinate roles without direct agency. This may result from a history of misrepresentation of African women in terms of spectacles, objectified and sexualized, as exemplified by the infamous case of Saartjie (or Sarah) Baartman, known as the Hottentot Venus (Hall 2003b, 264). In contrast, *Black Panther* offers a positive and empowering portrayal of African women, breaking away from limiting stereotypes and showcasing them as strong, capable, and influential figures. Four women in the film exemplify this positive projection: Shuri, Nakia, Okoye, and Queen Ramonda. These characters demonstrate responsible agency and challenge the common negative representations of African women (Chikafa-Chipiro 2019; Chandiran and Sandra 2020, 2). The significance of Coogler's portrayal lies in the fact that it constitutes a refreshing and much-needed alternative narrative that presents African women as independent and capable individuals, not reliant on others for their survival. This deliberate design serves as a counter-narrative, challenging the normalized depiction of continental African women as inferior, docile, submissive, and expendable, or as objects of pleasure and convenience, as perpetuated by patriarchal rules, social codes, and taboos (see Shaka and Uchendu 2012, n.p.).

By showcasing Wakanda's women in empowering roles, Coogler creates the possibility for greater agency in the representation of African women. This cuts across cinematic and real-life representations of African women in positions of power, such as in conflict management, international relations, and as ministers of defence, promoting peaceful co-existence. Notwithstanding these undeniable contributions, in real-life scenarios, African women continue to face disproportionate marginalization in matters that directly affect them and where they should have unbiased influence. This persistent disparity undermines

the potential for more inclusive and comprehensive decision-making processes. Coogler addresses this by creating female characters who have a significant impact on policies and initiatives concerning Wakanda directly. This portrayal serves as an inspiration for more African women to participate in policy-making and paves the way for a more equitable and inclusive future (see Kpae and Masi 2019, 41).

Any positive representation of African women will significantly influence and shape the perception of African women on a subconscious level, since most representations of African women, as Uko (2017, 11) has persistently argued, remain negative. The irony of such a negative representation is foregrounded in the Igbo cultural idiom for portraying an African woman known as 'Nneoma'. This Igbo word is translated into English as 'good mother', whereas contextually it is a reference to a woman who must, despite enduring oppression and neglect, remain silent in the face of abuse, oppression, and even harm (Udumukwu 2007, 3). If such framing must be challenged because it endorses the subjugation of African women, any representation driven by the need to reconstruct this image must "transcend the margins" of societal labels (see Uko 2006) to rectify the negative images of African women (Udumukwu 2015, 230).

Black Panther contributes to this commitment to "transcending the margin" by positively imbuing female African characters with empowering qualities and positions, such as scientists, ministers, spiritual leaders, and great warriors, elevating their roles as agents and holders of sociopolitical power (Williams 2018, 28). A prime example is Okoye, a member of the border tribe and leader of the Dora Milaje, an all-female elite army in Wakanda. She embodies power, courage, and physical prowess. Another character is Shuri, T'Challa's younger sister, who serves as Wakanda's science and technology minister. Despite being only 16 years old, she showcases exceptional leadership skills and serves as a role model

for African girls with her confidence, innovation, logic, and futuristic thinking. She even instructs the CIA agent on operating the jet fighter, leaving him impressed by her ingenuity and brilliance.

The third empowered Wakandan woman is Nakia. She is symbolic of an inspiring and compelling image of the African woman. Nakia is depicted as a selfless idealist and is T'Challa's lover, belonging to the War Dog and River tribes. Her nobility shines through her sacrificial life, dedicated to serving the less privileged and those in danger. This is exemplified when she willingly risks her life on a rescue mission, disguising herself as a refugee to save kidnapped victims passing through the dangerous Sambisa Forest in Nigeria, a notorious den of terrorists. Nakia embodies empowered agency and self-awareness, demonstrated in her refusal to be a mere trophy wife for T'Challa. Her remarkable virtue and compassion drive her advocacy for the salvation of all humanity beyond the borders of Wakanda and her proposal for a new foreign policy for Wakanda, ensuring that aid and technology are provided to countries in distress.

Lastly, Queen Ramonda is a symbolic representation of the royalty of the African woman in the film. She plays an iconic role as one of T'Challa's advisors and as a crucial member of Wakanda's High Council. Her matriarchal position of power indicates her significance in the kingdom. These four characters, Nakia, Shuri, Okoye, and Queen Ramonda, are powerful strategies employed by Coogler to redefine the image of African women. Although the king of Wakanda is always portrayed as a man, the powerful positions these women hold as the heads of the military, the fiercest warriors, the scientists, and the key spies, convey Coogler's attempt at reflecting a balanced gender relationship that supports the idea of balancing a story. These roles engender complementarity. A careful observation of the final battle in Wakanda, between Killmonger and T'Challa, where T'Challa and his warriors

emerge victorious, and the defeated Wakandan men who are on the side of Killmonger kneel to the triumphant women, symbolizes the empowerment and recognition of Wakandan women's strength and leadership. This leaves a lasting legacy, offering progress and inclusivity.

Reimagining Africa: Inversion of common centre-periphery imagination

Coogler introduces a radical idea in his portrayal of Wakanda. He uses inversion as a technique to challenge the prevailing geopolitical notion of Africa as a periphery. Though, historically, Africa has often been viewed as predominantly consisting of poorer nations in the developing world, many of which were once colonies (Boshoff 2009, 415), Coogler reimagines the continent as the centre by presenting Wakanda as a nation with significant power and advanced scientific capabilities. This departure from the typical Western perception of Africa as underdeveloped breaks down the power imbalance between the periphery and first-world continents like Europe (Engels-Schwarz-Paul 2020, 26). This typical Western perception is based on a centre-periphery model which Klemence Klaps and Andrea Komlosy (2013, 237) underscore as a model which "has had a unique impact on guiding global history narrative and analysis, since the 1960s, [and] several prominent studies have used this model to represent unavoidable occasions and entanglement of world-wide hierarchies and connections". Such a model has had a significant impact on the way global history is understood and analyzed in terms of hierarchies, power, and economic dynamics based on "unequal exchange" (Wallerstein 2006, 28), and makes connections with inescapable aspects of world history and truth in order to capture the asymmetrical socio-economic power dynamics between developed countries, the 'centre' (e.g., the USA, Great Britain, France, Germany), and less developed countries, referred to as the 'periphery' (e.g., Nigeria, Congo, Zimbabwe).

In another sense, the 'centre' denotes first-world countries, while the 'periphery' refers to third-world countries. Typically, the assumption and norm are that peripheral countries receive aid from wealthier and more developed core countries due to their weaker state institutions, lack of technology, political instability, poverty, overpopulation, exploitation of natural resources, and reliance on exporting raw materials to core countries. However, *Black Panther* challenges this conventional notion of centre-periphery dynamics through the fictional African country of Wakanda, which the West is not aware of, and which does not seek or accept aid from other nations. Coogler echoes Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1993, 24) concern about "the struggle to shift the base from which to view the world from its narrow base in Europe to a multiplicity of centres". One of these "multiplicities of centres" is Wakanda, a metaphorical representation of defiance of the expected dependency of peripheral states on external assistance from presumed centres like Europe, which is a significant departure from the norm.

This Wakanda, despite its isolation, is a technologically advanced new centre, comparable to a smart city. Within this portrayal, Wakanda possesses technology far superior to that of the West and faces the crucial decision of whether to share it with the rest of the world, particularly the United States. The level of advancement is such that when the CIA agent, Everett K Ross, encounters Wakanda's advanced technology, he is astonished at its capabilities, especially its advanced healthcare, which utilizes Vibranium, the nation's most valuable resource. This newfound knowledge opens up the possibility of Wakanda becoming a global leader, and presents a messianic vision of Africa as the potential saviour of the world. Though this portrayal may be futuristic and idealistic, it offers a hopeful perspective on Africa's untapped potential, emphasizing the

continent's need for rebirth and transformation to assume a significant and positive role in the global community.

Coogler's portrayal of Wakanda as a geopolitical centre is animated by specific symbolic actions, notably T'Challa's decision to establish a humanitarian mission to Oakland, an outreach centre for underprivileged African American children in California. The purpose of this centre is to provide social aid to refugees and share Wakanda's advanced technological knowledge. This represents a significant shift in T'Challa's perspective, as he had previously advocated for the strict preservation of Wakanda's culture, mineral resources, and technology within its borders, hidden from the outside world. He had feared that exposing such knowledge could lead to misuse. A similar viewpoint is shared by W'Kabi, who opposes allowing refugees into Wakanda, fearing that they might compromise the nation's unique identity with their problems and challenges.

This stance mirrors the conservative rhetoric supporting isolationism and the construction of geopolitical walls to safeguard Wakanda from external influences. The underlying fear here is rooted in concerns about colonialism, where the introduction of another culture might disrupt Wakanda's racial purity or homogeneity, which its isolationism aims to maintain. However, T'Challa's establishment of the outreach centre signifies his desire to transcend this isolationist approach and engage with the world beyond Wakanda's borders, reflecting a more inclusive and compassionate worldview. In the long run, this will foster transnational cooperation, knowledge exchange, and support for the marginalized, shaping the world's future.

A significant reversal of perception of Wakanda occurs at the end of the film when the hidden nation of Wakanda, unknown to the British, is unveiled to the world. What makes this reversal in the way Wakanda is perceived quite profound is the stark contrast between the isolated Wakanda, which proves to be a technologically advanced and culturally rich society, and the Wakanda which the British are familiar with. This revelation marks a paradigm shift, as Wakanda assumes the role of an aid provider to the world. What is underscored is that Wakanda's earlier isolationism, rather than being a sign of weakness or backwardness, is a symbol of resistance against the disease of Western colonialism. The film portrays the Western world as the true Other, from which Wakanda deliberately isolates itself. Notably, despite Wakanda's technological prowess when it reveals its true identity to the world, it does not seek hegemonic control of space, culture, or people. Instead, it aims to foster transnational complementarity by sharing its resources and capacities with other nations to improve the world, one of Nakia's burning desires.

Nakia's passionate request that Wakanda should extend its wealth, expertise, and resources to those in need emphasizes that happiness cannot be achieved in isolation when others are suffering. T'Challa's first action is guided by sympathetic humanism, demonstrating Wakanda's commitment to humanitarian aid and its identification with Pan-African Blackness. Such a portrayal of Wakanda imagines, through the use of inversion, the centre's relocation from sites of capital accumulation in Europe and North America to Africa, previously configured as a peripheral site of capital extraction, in both human and other forms. This challenges global capitalism and the system that rests on the division of the planet into economic centres, peripheries, and semi-peripheries.

Wakanda's later shift in foreign policy thus reflects a profound ethical commitment and cultural dynamism that extends beyond its national boundaries. This policy revision acknowledges the presence of Blackness in diverse geographies, with individuals having affiliations and roots in Wakanda, and the nation opens its doors to them. This marks a departure from Wakanda's previous stance,

which perceived such affiliations as tainting racial purity, as exemplified in Killmonger's abandonment in the United States of America despite his Wakandan heritage. The new foreign policy aligns with an inclusive perspective that recognizes universal Blackness, embracing the existence of African hybrids in various geographies. These hybrid identities were once sources of cultural anxiety and psychological divisions. Nonetheless, a new generation of Africans views these hybrid identities as opportunities for reimagining new narratives of the future, known as Afropolitanism (Selasi 2005; Mbembe 2017; Ede 2020).

Amidst the crisis and tensions engendered by Wakanda's isolationist posture, Coogler crafts a redemptive narrative that weaves together Wakanda's national experiences, the civil war crisis, Killmonger's death, the pain of the Black Diaspora, and the challenges faced by poorer nations, to create an optimism built on global cooperation among nations of the world. This redemptive narrative culminates in a pivotal moment during the United Nations meeting where T'Challa announces Wakanda's decision to engage with the world. This gesture signifies the dissemination of Wakanda's ideology beyond the African continent. Symbolically, it serves as a powerful illustration of how African countries can reimagine themselves as providers of aid and technological expertise rather than as mere aid recipients. This transformative vision will position Africa to play a significant and proactive role in the global community.

Conclusion

The negative representation of Africa wields significant influence over how the continent and the countries in it are perceived. This image has spread and appears to have become the doxa: the common belief, due to the continuous repetition of negative representations of the continent as the dominant discourse. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these negative stereotypes often stem from ignorance and limited knowledge about the continent, just as the BBC Global News media wrongly represented Wakanda based on its limited knowledge, or as in the case of the curator of the Museum of Great Britain. Coogler addresses this issue through three strategic approaches: utilizing counter-narratives and dialogue, a positive and empowering representation of African women, and the subversion of the conventional centre-periphery narrative. By employing these strategies, Coogler emphasizes the importance of adopting a new aesthetic vision and epistemic consciousness, which are essential for the individual and national reconstruction of the African continent. Coogler's reconstruction is transformative as it reshapes how Africa is perceived and reclaims the continent's agency in shaping its narrative and global responsibilities. In essence, *Black Panther* serves as a call for change in how Africa is perceived and represented. It advocates for more balanced and empowering perspectives that acknowledge Africa's challenges and celebrate its successes. This shift in perception is vital in fostering a more accurate and respectful portrayal of Africa – one that appreciates its contributions and potential on the global stage.

References

Achebe, Chinua. 2003. *Home and Exile*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

Achebe. Chinua. 1978. "An Image of Africa." *Research in African Literatures* 9 (1): 1–15.

Adeleke, Tunde. 2009. *The Case against Afrocentricism*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Adesanmi, Pius. 2008. "Africa, India, and the Postcolonial: Notes Towards a Praxis of Inflection." In *The Postcolonial Lamp: Essays in Honour of Dan Izevbaye*, edited by Aderemi Raji-Oyelade and Oyeniyi Okunoye, 35–72. Ibadan: Bookcraft.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. 2009. "The Danger of a Single Story." Accessed October 12, 2023. https://pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/The_Danger_of_a_Single_Story-teacher-12.pdf

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. 2003. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature*. London: Routledge.

Bakari, Imruh. 2018. "African Film in the 21st Century: Some Notes to a Provocation." *Communication Cultures in Africa* 1 (1): 8–27.

Barry, Peter. 2002. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory. Beginning Theory* (4th edn.). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Boshoff, Nelius. 2009. "Neo-Colonialism and Research Collaboration in Central Africa." *Scientometrics* 81 (2): 413–434.

Bunce, Mel. 2015. "International News and the Image of Africa: New Storytellers, New Narratives?". In *The Image of Africa: Creation, Negotiation and Subversion*, edited by Julia Gallagher, 42–62. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Bunce, Mel, Suzanne Franks, and Chris Paterson. 2017. "Introduction: A New Africa's Media Image?" In *Africa's Media Image in the 21st Century: From the "Heart of Darkness" to "Africa Rising"*, edited by Mel Bunce, Suzanne Franks, and Chris Paterson, 1–13. London: Routledge.

Chandiran, Yasantha Devi, and Shanthini Pillai Joseph Sandra. 2020. "New Types of African Heroines in Hollywood: *Black Panther*." *Jurnal Wacana Sarjana* 4 (2): 1–16.

Chikafa-Chipiro, Rosemary. 2019. "The Future of the Past: Imagi(ni)ng Black Womanhood, Africana Womanism and Afrofuturism in Black Panther." *Image & Text* 33: 1–20.

Coogler, Ryan. 2018. *Black Panther*. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.

Curtin, Philip D. 1964. *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dargis, Manohla. 2018. "Review: 'Black Panther' Shakes Up the Marvel Universe." *The New York Times*, 06/02/2018. Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/06/movies/black-panther-review-movie.html

Dokotum, Okako Opio. 2020. *Hollywood and Africa, Recycling the 'Dark Continent' Myth, 1908–2020*. Makhanda: NISC (Pty).

Eckhardt, Giana M. 2018. "Black Panther: Thrills, Postcolonial Discourse, and Blacktopia." *Markets, Globalization & Development Review* 3(2): 1–7.

Ede, Amatoritsero. 2020. "How Afropolitanism Unworlds the African World." In *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature*, edited by James Hodapp, 103–129. London: Bloomsbury.

Engels-Schwarzpaul, A-Chr. 2020. "Peripheral Territories: Imagining Common Worlds Differently." *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 20: 20–38.

Fanon, Franz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox, Commentary by Jean-Paul Sartre and Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, Frantz. 1952. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Markmann. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon. Franz. 1965. *A Dying Colonialism*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier with an Introduction by Adolfo Gilly. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, Franz. 1967. *Towards the African Revolution, Political Essays*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Press.

Ford, Tanisha C. 2018. "Why Fashion is Key to Understanding the World of Black Panther." *The Atlantic*, 15/02/2018. Accessed July 10, 2023. https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/02/why-fashion-is-key-to-understanding-the-world-of-black-panther/553157/

Gikandi, Simon. 2011. "Foreword: On Afropolitanism". In *Negotiating Afropolitanism: Essays on Borders and Spaces in Contemporary African Literature and Folklore*, edited by Jennifer Wawrzinek and J. K. S. Makokha, 9–11. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Hall, Stuart. 2003a. "The Work of Representation". In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 13–74. London: Sage.

Hall, Stuart. 2003b. "The Spectacle of the Other". In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 223–290. London: Sage.

Hawk, Beverly G., ed. 1992. *Africa's Media Image*. New York: Praeger.

Hicks, Dan. 2020. *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*. London: Pluto.

Iheka, Cajetan. 2021. *African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kaps, Klemens, and Andrea Komlosy. 2013. "Centres and Peripheries Revisited: Polycentric Connections or Entangled Hierarchies?" *Review* 36 (3–4): 237–264.

Kpae, Gbenemene, and Juliana Masi. 2019. "Women's Participation in Conflict Management in Nigeria: A Case of a Rural Community in the Niger Delta Area." *American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 4 (1): 38–55.

Lebron, Christopher. 2018. "Black Panther Is Not the Movie We Deserve." *The Boston Review*, 17/02/2018. Accessed October 3, 2023. https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/christopher-lebron-black-panther/

Leonardatos, Cynthia Deitle. 1999. "California's Attempts to Disarm the Black Panthers". *San Diego Law Review* 36: 947.

Lidchi, Henrietta. 2003. "The Poetics and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 151–222. London: Sage.

Madowo, Larry, and Karen Attiah. 2018. "Black Panther: Why the Relationship between Africans and Black Americans Is So Messed Up". *The Washington Post*, 16/02/2018. Accessed: October 5, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/02/16/black-panther-why-the-relationship-between-africans-and-african-americans-is-so-messed-up/

Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mbembe, Achille. 2017. "Afropolitanism." In *Cosmopolitanisms*, edited by Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta, 103–107. New York: New York University Press.

Memmi, Albert. 2021. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, translated by Howard Greenfeld. London: Profile Books.

Memmi, Albert. 1962. *Portrait of a Jew*, translated by Elisabeth Abbott. New York: Orion Press.

Mokoena, Dikeledi. A. 2018. "Black Panther and the Problem of the Black Radical." *Journal of Pan African Studies* 11 (9): 13–20.

Mudimbe, Valentin-Yves. 1988. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Nothias, Toussaint. 2012. "Definition and Scope of Afro-Pessimism: Mapping the Concept and its Usefulness for Analysing News Media Coverage of Africa." *Leeds African Studies Bulletin* 74: 54–62.

Olaniyi, Tejumola. 2010. "Postmodernity, Postcoloniality, and African Studies." In *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, edited by Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson, 637–645. Oxford: Blackwell.

Reynolds, Felisa Vergara. 2023. "The Politics of Colonization in Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther.*" *Black Camera* 14 (2): 172–184.

Ryzik, Melena. 2018. "The Afrofuturistic Designs of 'Black Panther.'" *The New York Times*, 23/02/2018. Accessed October 3, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/23/movies/black-panther-afrofuturism-costumes-ruth-carter.html

Said, Edward, W. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.

Selasi, Taiye. 2005. "Bye-bye Barbar." *The LIP*, 03/03/2005. Accessed October 5, 2023. https://thelip.robertsharp.co.uk/2005/03/03/bye-bye-barbar

Self, Robert, T. 2020. "Foreword." In *Hollywood and Africa: Recycling the 'Dark Continent' Myth, 1908–2020*, by Okaka Opio Dokotum, xii–xv. Makhanda: NISC.

Shaka, Femi O., and Ola Nnennaya Uchendu. 2012. "Gender Representation in Nollywood Video Film Culture." *The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts* 7: 1–30.

Udumukwu, Onyemaechi. 2007. "Introduction." In *Signature of Women: The Dialectics of Action in African Women Writing*, edited by Onyemaechi Udumukwu, 3–32. Owerri: Onii Publishing House.

Udumukwu, Onyemaechi. 2015. *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Introduction*. Port Harcourt: Charles Martins Higher Education and Consulting Company.

Udumukwu, Onyemaechi. 2021. *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Introduction*. Port Harcourt: Maesa Publishing.

Uko, Iniobong, I. 2006. "Transcending the Margins: New Directions in Women's Writing." *African Literature Today* 25: 82–93.

Uko, I, Iniobong. 2017. *The Feminine Ontology and the African Reality: Changing Dynamics in an Evolving Society*. 52nd Inaugural Lecture, University of Uyo. Uyo: University of Uyo Press.

Varda, Scott J., and Leslie A. Hahner. 2020. "*Black Panther* and the Alt-right: Networks of Racial Ideology." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 37 (2): 133–147.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2006. *World System Analysis: An Introduction*. London: Duke University Press.

wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. 1993. *Moving the Centre: Towards a Pluralism of Cultures*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. 1997. *Writers in Politics: A Re-engagement with the Issues of Literature & Society*. London: Heinemann.

Wainaina, Binyavanga. 2005. "How to Write about Africa." *Granta: the Magazine of New Writings. The View from Africa.* Accessed October 5, 2023. https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/

Williams, Délice. 2018. "Three Theses about Black Panther." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 11 (9): 27–30.

Williams, Yohuru. 2008. "'Some Abstract Thing Called Freedom': Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Legacy of the Black Panther Party." *OAH Magazine of History* 22 (3): 16– 21.