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The Worldliness of South Sudan: Space, Home and Racial Meaning Making in Post
Independence Juba

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in

Anthropology

By

Zachary Mondesire

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Worldliness of South Sudan: Space, Home and Racial Meaning Making in Post Independence Juba

By

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Master of Art in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Hannah C. Appel, Chair

The world's newest state, South Sudan, became independent in July 2011. In 2013, after the outbreak of the still-ongoing South Sudanese civil war, the UNHCR declared a refugee crisis and continues to document the displacement of millions of South Sudanese citizens. In 2016, Crazy Fox, a popular South Sudanese musician, released a song entitled "*Ana Gaid/I am staying.*" His song compels us to pay attention to those in South Sudan who have chosen to stay, or to return and still other African regionals from neighboring countries to arrive. The goal of this thesis is to explore the "Crown Lodge," a hotel in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan, as one such site of arrival, return, and staying put. Paying ethnographic attention to site enables us to think through forms of spatial belonging in and around the hotel that attached racial meaning to national origin and regional identity.

The thesis of Zachary C. P. Mondesire is approved.

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2018

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Abbreviations

EAC — East African Community

GoSS — Government of South Sudan

IDP — Internally Displaced Person

UNMISS — United Nations Mission in South Sudan

UNHCR — United Nations Humanitarian Commission

SPLM/A — Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

Introduction:

In 2016, Crazy Fox, a popular South Sudanese musician, released a song entitled “*Ana Gaid*/I am staying.” In the song, he expresses his frustration with the ongoing national instability that endlessly reproduces nation-wide refugee crises. He asserts his refusal to become a refugee in what is now his own country. He professes, “*Ana gaid, ana ma mashi*/I am staying, I am not leaving” and continues throughout the song, to proclaim that for him, there is no other place that he could imagine living other than his home country, newly independent South Sudan. Crazy Fox’s position is a political one, embodying the tension between living in a space which one feels compelled to defend, even while that place may present any number of material or ideological threats. His lyrics capture the creativity and tension within the experience of individuals fleeing from and living through the violence that erupted in 2013. He thereby complicates most accounts of contemporary South Sudan. Crazy Fox’s song compels us not only to pay attention to refugee crises and displacement in the region (Leriche and Arnold 2013, Roessler 2013, Turse 2016) but also to those in South Sudan who have chosen to stay, or to return and still other African regionals from neighboring countries who have chosen to arrive. What kinds of lives are those who stay, return, and arrive, forging? How are they redefining self, community, and other in this moment of flux, transition, and crisis? Through what processes does racial meaning attach to national origin and regional identity? In this thesis, I use the Crown Lodge hotel in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan to think through forms of spatial belonging in and around the hotel that attached racial meaning to national origin and regional identity.

Without a sign or advertising banner, the term “Crown Lodge” only appeared as etched into the room keys. Built in 2012, the hotel was an unassuming, single-storied compound with a

large security gate. I lived in Crown lodge for three months in 2017. Owned by a South Sudanese national living in Canada, its day-to-day operations are managed by Kibrom, a recent immigrant from Eritrea. The average cost of a room was \$4/per night, paid in monthly or bi-monthly installments. The modest rooms provided simple services: a mattress, a small fan, and linens. The families with young children prepared meals on their own portable charcoal stoves. Practices like this rendered the space more akin to a home than a hotel, and many individuals resided there for long periods of time. The financial requirements of extended stays pointed to the level of relative wealth that set many of the hotel residents apart from other inhabitants of the capital city. The majority of the residents were unaccompanied men (or men living with one of multiple wives), thus the capacity to afford the luxury of this space as a home was often made possible because their families were elsewhere, often in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps throughout South Sudan and neighboring East African states (often Uganda or Kenya).¹

I arrived at this hotel in July 2017 through a close friend who had a professional connection to an ethnically Nuer former Member of Parliament. The MP had left his home and transported his wives and children to an IDP camp elsewhere in Juba at the start of the still-ongoing Civil War. One wife at a time, along with her respective children, would cycle through the hotel with him. As a Nuer politician, he feared that he and his family would be subject to targeted violence—his ethnic identity would lead government officials to assume, irrespective of his actual political behavior, that he was aligned with the opposition. This MP resided at the hotel for nearly four years, from late 2013 to the middle of 2017. Marko told me that this place would feel like a home: what struck me about this hotel was the extent to which he was right.

¹ The UNCHR defines an IDP as someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders. IDP camps are the temporary structures erected to house these individuals.

In 2013, after the outbreak of the still-ongoing South Sudanese civil war, the UNHCR declared a refugee crisis and continues to document the displacement of millions of South Sudanese citizens (UNHCR Report 2018). Multiple journalistic outlets have and continue to describe spectacular scenes of displacement, violence, and war in South Sudan (UNHCR 2017, BBC 2017, CNN 2017, Turse 2017, Prendergast and Clooney 2018, ReliefWeb 2018). In 2016, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) reported that “South Sudan is headed for a cataclysm because, above all, space for nonviolent politics has evaporated (USIP 2016).” The title of that 2016 report contained the now often repeated term “looming genocide.” What loomed, according to the USIP, were worsening and ethnically-charged conditions in South Sudan that have displaced over two million South Sudanese citizens (UNCHR report 2018). The USIP published this report as a call to the international community for intervention in order to prevent further death, violence, and displacement.

Crown Lodge features in this context as a site of refuge, allowing us to reconcile how life goes on even in a place over which genocide might be “looming.” Not only were South Sudanese citizens residing in the hotel but Africans from across the region (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda) were arriving. How can we account for arriving or staying put in a context of what USIP refers to as ‘looming genocide?’ What do histories and ongoing forms of encounter across formations of difference tell us about the worldliness of South Sudan, and allow us to think through relationships between Africans without the lens of xenophobia? How might an ethnography of Crown Lodge enable us to disrupt hegemonic representations of what is going on (McKay & Biehl 2012, Abu-Lughod 2016)?

The goal of this thesis is to explore the Crown Lodge as a site at which individuals have chosen stay, return to, and arrive in Juba. This hotel is a site in which residents made sense of the

history imbued in the geography that surrounded them, collectively confronted the insecurity around them by cooperating inside the hotel, and thought through the geopolitical position of the world's newest state. This paper documents the racial meaning produced by transnational encounters in this hotel. Methodologically, the intimacy that I developed with everyday life in this space was shaped by listening to the residents. I considered their beliefs, conceptualizations of community, and aspirations for safety as particular sites of socio-political meaning-making that existed alongside the humanitarian crises affecting the nation.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section offers a brief history of formations of difference from colonial Sudan to the contemporary politicization of ethnic and racial distinctions in independent South Sudan. The second section pays ethnographic attention to the neighborhood around the hotel. Exploring the formation and circulation of the place-names that characterize this location allows me to historicize the connection between hotel residents and the histories of difference that surround them. The third section discusses transnational relationships internal to the hotel that emerged between communities of multiple African regional identities in order to manage and confront their collective vulnerabilities. The last section utilizes ethnographic material from the hotel in order to engage with the vocabulary of racial difference that shaped exchanges between South Sudanese citizens, regional East Africans, and Euro-American whites. This section connects the inner social world of the hotel to the broader formations shaping the nation and its relationship to the region.

History of Race and Nation

Historians have and continue to describe the region of what is now independent South Sudan as isolated from its regional neighbors (LeRiche and Arnold 2012) yet now new histories have emerged that situate South Sudanese history within broader regional contexts (Johnson 2016). Johnson tells us that throughout the 20th century, until the onset of the Sudanese civil wars (1955-1972 & 1983-2005), the relevance of the southern Sudanese region was characterized by precolonial tribal migrations and 19th-century networks of trade in ivory and slaves (Idris 2001 & 2005, Johnson 2016). For many historians, the south has figured in Sudan as a site of war. Scholarship has traced the root causes of this antagonism through a racialized continuum caught in struggle, African on one end and Arab on the other (Oduho and Deng 1963, Beshir 1968, Abdel-Rahim 1969, Albino 1970, Wai 2013 [1973]). Historians like A. J. Arkell (1961) who have claimed that the modern history of Sudan began in 1821 upon the Turco-Egyptian invasion, seem to implicitly base their claim on the racial implications of the country name itself. If *Sudan* derives from the Arabic *bilad as-sudan* or “land of the blacks,” how could that term have emerged without an implicit reference to the whiteness of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire? Scholars like Mahmood Mamdani (2009) and others have departed from naturalized distinctions between African and Arab, born out of singular narratives that traced the linear influx of migrant Arab populations in the 16th century (Wai 1981), penetrating the interstices of otherwise purely “African” locales. Mamdani instead centers the formation of racial, ethnic, and tribal ideas both “from below” through local assertions of Arab lineage and “from above” through colonially imposed ideas that fortified boundaries around ethnic and racial difference within a political economy of tribal affiliation with land and land ownership (Mamdani 2009).

Some historians have argued that contemporary Southern political friction is the product of the 1930 British Southern Policy, which positioned southern tribal identities as the means of colonial administration (Mamdani 1996), isolating the southern regions of Sudan from the north until the reversal of this policy in 1946/7 when the British empire ceded control of Sudan to the northern government centered in Khartoum (Ruay 1994). As captured in memoir (Lagu 2006, Wöndu 2011), many South Sudanese trace their ancestry to precolonial migrations throughout Uganda, and the northern areas of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kenya. Thus it is clear, from the memoirs of Joseph Lagu and Steven Wöndu who were both leaders in early southern political mobilization, that ideations of southern Sudanese cultural, racial, and ethnic connections to “Africa” are foundational to southern political consciousness. It was this tension between whether south Sudan would figure as an Afro-Arab bridge in a unified Sudan, or operate as an autonomous political unit able to decide whether or not to be “African,” that characterized decades of conflict (Arop 2012).

The two primary southern resistance movements during the first and second civil war were the Anyanya and the SPLM (Sudan People’s Liberation Movement). The struggle for independence was itself racialized as one between Black Sub-Saharan African Christians and Arab North African Muslims. The Anyanya and the SPLM differed fundamentally on the issue of southern autonomy. The Anyanya rebels were secessionists and the SPLM, led by the late John Garang, were committed to a “New Sudan” inclusive of both its southern and northern socio-cultural elements. The commitment to unity was the result of southern political actors interested in advancing the southern voice within Sudanese nationalist politics (Johnson 2016, Mamdani 2016). Thus, the period of the SPLM marked the emergence of Equatorialian skepticism of dominant “Nilotic” groups (the overwhelming majority of the political leadership was and continues

to be Dinka and Nuer).² This relationship between Dinka and Nuer on one hand and Equatorians as a whole on the other, has become increasingly salient throughout the recent history of the new state. As Steven Wöndu(2011) recounted in his memoir, the SPLM/A call for a united Sudan was often considered a betrayal of the original Anyanya claim for an independent sovereign state in the south. In 1991, a failed coup against John Garang, succeeded in solidifying the dissent within the SPLM/A that split over whether southerners should continue to fight for independence or vie for equal footing in a united Sudan (Young 2005, Wöndu 2011, LeRiche and Arnold 2013).

Historians have documented South Sudanese independence in 2011 as the result of popular will, referring to the nearly 99% majority support for the independence referendum (LeRiche and Arnold 2013). Because the liberation struggle was racialized from its outset, race and racial meaning have thus continued to be salient upon independence. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the 2005 agreement between the SPLM/A and the government of Sudan, ended the second Sudanese civil war and mandated the formation of the GoSS (Government of South Sudan) to be based in Juba (Badiy 2014). The leadership of what was the southern liberation movement are now the leaders of the ruling political party in the independent nation. The current President, Salva Kiir Mayardit, and former Vice President Riek Machar were comrades in the southern liberation struggle. As has been largely covered by journalistic outlets³ the still-on-going civil war that erupted in 2013 began as a contest over power *within* the SPLM/A between these two figures and their supporters. Tension erupted when former Vice President Riek Machar, accused of organizing another coup, was ousted from the Vice Presidency and the SPLM vice

² There are three provinces that composed historic southern Sudan, Upper Nile, Equatoria, and Greater Bahr El Gazal. Greater Bahr El Gazal is traditionally associated with the Dinka/Jieng community. Upper Nile has been the traditional home largely of the Nuer, Anuak, and Shilluk communities. Equatoria which contains the capital city Juba, is the traditional home of numerous smaller (numerically) communities such as the Bari, Kuku, Madi, and many others. Upper Nile comprises the northeast corner of the nation, Greater Bahr El Gazal the northwest and Equatoria in the south.

³ See: Daniel Howden (2013) *South Sudan: the state that fell apart in a week*. BBC News (2014) *South Sudan: What is the fighting about?* Al-jazeera Inside Story (2013) *South Sudan: Sliding into civil war?*

chairmanship. Their antagonisms split the party (Roessler 2013). The subsequent violence between the party factions spread throughout the country characterized largely as a Dinka-led targeting of Nuer as retribution for Riek Machar's antagonism towards President Salva Kiir Mayardit (Roessler 2013, Young 2014, Turse 2016). I offer this brief history because the axes of difference it chronicles—Arab and African, Dinka and non-Dinka, nation and region, colonial pre- and post—are also the axes along which residents in the Crown Lodge and beyond make sense of national, regional, and racial identity. Linking the residents of this hotel to this history outlines the worldliness of their daily lives. These histories of regional political configurations have and continue to animate the interplay between significations of (geographic) space and racial meaning making both within Crown Lodge hotel, and in South Sudan more broadly.

Surrounded by Difference, Signifying Difference in Space

Crown Lodge is located in a western neighborhood of Juba, adjacent. Within *Atlabara*, the hotel was specifically situated between two major streets. Paying attention to the past and present of this neighborhood, enabled me to methodologically follow Katherine Mckittrick by “allowing the pavement to answer questions (Mckrittick 2006).” If this project is interested what forms of meaning-making emerge for individuals staying and arriving in Juba amidst the current crises, then Mckittrick’s intervention in human geography through the lenses of race and gender have helped me think through the ways urban residents have and continue to define themselves and the places they inhabit. It is important to link the socio-historical context of this hotel within geographic formations of social processes both because geographies shape daily practice and inform identity formation, as well as outline the contours of racial and gendered difference through “geographies of domination (Mckittrick 2006).” Though questions regarding independent South Sudan depart from Mckittrick’s focus on the racial-sexual geographies of domination that have transformed and have been molded by the experiences and practice of Black women through the transatlantic slave trade, *Demonic Grounds* nevertheless offers valuable insight into locating race and gender in a contemporary African city, in addition to providing a different lens to theorize and map racialized urban space in Africa.

The two place-names that characterized the neighborhood point to the dominant ideologies and racialized forms of slavery that historically shaped the political landscape of southern Sudanese region in general and the capital city in particular (Beswick 2004, Jok 2010). The name of the neighborhood is a product of local pronunciation of an Arabic phrase meaning “get out.”

The name calcifies the memory of 1947, the year when northerners took over the colonial administration of southern Sudan from the British Empire.⁴ The local story recounted by many of my interlocutors describes the northern effort to consolidate state power in Khartoum on the eve of Sudanese independence from Britain. Northern soldiers went door-to-door displacing residents, telling them to “get out” so that their land could be surrendered to the colonial state. Thus, congealed in this place-name is a history of contested land ownership and colonial displacement. The naturalization of this term reveals the “racist paradigms of the past and ongoing hierarchical patterns” that forged the southern struggle for liberation that now, upon the achievement of independence, contest these place-names and suggest new terms that rewrite how one imagines this space (Mckittrick 2006). The past and present of the racial hierarchies that appeared in this neighborhood highlighted both the physical materiality and imaginative arrangements of its human geography (Said 2000, Mckittrick 2006).

The second term, the name of a nearby market comes from Arabic phrase meaning “the market of no men”, is a particularly gendered signification that hinged on a social process analogous to the one described above. Many of my interlocutors dated the origin of the term to the 1947 period as well. Yet, multiple periodizations exist within popular memory.⁵ Rather than flatten overlapping memories and histories with a singular chronology of well-known historical events, this calls for methodologies that account for this multiplicity (Falola and Jennings 2003). As Mckittrick points out, it is the racialized Black subjects that “make geography what it is;” (2006: ix) geography does not simply exist in stasis and its links to socio-historical events are always multiple. There are at least two origin stories of the market’s name. The first recounts

⁴ The 1947 “Juba Conference” marked a shift in powers from the British colonial administration who would relinquish administrative control in 1955, to the central Sudanese government located in Khartoum. It is also important to reiterate that the geographic categories (north and south) map onto the racial Arab-African racial continuum outlined in the previous section.

⁵ Indebted to Noah Salomon for this insight

how northerners (who claimed to be Arab) searched the market for (Black African) southern men to conscript into the colonial army. In order to conceal their gender identity and avoid kidnapping, the men strategically dressed as women, covering their faces and bodies in clothes loose enough to camouflage their gender identity. When prompted by northern soldiers asking for men, they answered: “there are no men.” The second story narrates a time when northerners rampaged through the area, raping the local women without consequence. When northerners boasted about the level of corporeal control they held over the local southern population, they professed there were no men in this area to defend the women.

Today, however, people have changed these place names, adding still more layers of history. While many of the streets in this neighborhood had numbered signposts, as is common in many urban spaces around the world, few individuals utilize this numbering system. This street was known by its popular name which is a reference to how the spatial layout of the street—particularly wide and lined by multiple cafes and shops with outdoor seating—rendered everyone’s face visible. As Mckittrick centers Black womanhood and femininity, she reminds us how geographies of domination do not simply erase black subjectivity, rather, it is the active Black subject that respatializes and rewrites herself into a “humanly workable” geography (Mckittrick 2006). The workability of human geography is relevant to the historical strategies of past residents to avoid capture and dispossession and to contemporary instances of renaming space, both of which speak to the active Black subject redefining and remaking her space.

The shops and cafes in this neighborhood are largely owned and operated by immigrants from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The presence of these community serves as a reminder that people are arriving even within this context of instability. Jocular references such as those captured in the following interaction pointed to how understandings of belonging intertwined with

ideas of territory (Prestholdt 2014) in order to produce racialized labels. This racial thinking emerged from the local response to the sudden saturation of a South Sudanese geographic space with immigrants from elsewhere.⁶

One afternoon I was walking home with a group of local journalists. When one of them turned to ask me where I lived. He laughingly remarked that the name of the neighborhood rhymed with *Asmara*, the capital city of Eritrea. His jocular reference to the Eritrean capital city to describe a neighborhood in Juba indexed affective expressions of newly articulated South Sudanese ownership over land, nation, and the employment market. The voluminous presence of Eritreans as store-owners and residents has prompted locals to rethink the demographic nature of this section of the neighborhood and to produce racialized meaning centered on the perception that foreign nationals were dominating local employment. In the case of Eritreans (and Ethiopians by association), local understandings of their national origins were intimately attached to the maximal difference of their appearance (fair complexion) and their language (Tigrinya and Amharic). Bernard Magubane (1979) reminds us that the prejudices, aspirations, and ideologies that accompany socioeconomic relationships are the foundation of racial formations. It is thus the link between light skin valorization and the perceived attainment of financial benefits (namely employment) that positions Eritrean immigrants at the nexus of light-skin valorization and the persistence of white privilege on the African continent (Pierre 2013, Nyamnjoh 2016).

The juxtaposition of contemporary re-naming practices with the historical formation of place-names reveals the transnational, racial, and gendered redefinition of space that compels us beyond hyper-local ideations of South Sudanese community. This process of renaming points to a reterritorialization of this place, evidencing how individuals who have decided to reside in

⁶ It is likely that their presence is neither sudden nor recent. In my Dissertation, I intend to explore why their presence is read as something new.

South Sudan during this period of flux and transition think through the implications of colonial ideas of difference in the contemporary moment. It illuminates that histories of colonial contestations over space in independent African localities are not only based on a colonial encounter with White British (Belgian, French, etc) officials (Glassman 2011). Refining Glassman's argument to think through the re-signification of space, helps me think through how the racial thought linked to "colonial" space in this context does not primarily reference White or British colonial thinkers. Rather, it indexes "indigenous racial thinking" (Glassman 2011:6) that generated ideas of difference between Africans grounded on varying claims to lineage and regional origin. link to perceived differences in appearance (fair or dark complexion) and language. What is important is the continued racialized struggle for belonging, once articulated between northerners (Arabs) and southerners (Africans), now exists between fair complexioned Africans (Eritreans and Ethiopians) and dark complexioned Africans (South Sudanese nationals).

Constructing Home, Family, and Friendship

I draw on Black and African feminists to think through how this “hotel” was transformed into a “home” for some, because these scholars offer a particular epistemology of Black and African agency that seeks to understand transformative practices that reshape the “condition of marginalization into a source of critical insight” (Chilisa & Ntseane 2010) with national, regional, and global import. Coupling the condition of oppression and marginalization with its transformation into a site of political practice bridges the analogous experiences that both Black American and Black African feminists document. When Ogun-dipe-Leslie (2001) poignantly asked whether we believe “African women are voiceless or do we fail to look for their voices where we may find them, in the sites and forms which these voices are uttered?” she placed a methodological onus squarely on the shoulders of those who seek to research and represent how African women connect theory to the intimacies of everyday life. This inquiry built from her (1994) work in which she described the “mountains” on the backs of African women that do not impede their women, referencing African women’s continued mobility despite various intersecting forms of oppression. In this section, I draw extensively from Black American feminists who have analyzed domestic life and intimate relations, within conditions of collective vulnerability, as themselves constitutive of politics. This literature focuses primarily on Black life in a majority White society in the United States, rather than the Black majority society in South Sudan. Nevertheless, when historically situated, these scholars’ analyses illuminate the ideas, emotions, and forms of community that emerged in the hotel space.

It often seemed inaccurate to call Crown Lodge a “hotel” and it certainly seemed inaccurate to consider the tenants residing within it as “guests.” Bell hooks (1990) offers a conception of the “homeplace” that allows me to think through how the residents, from multiple national and regional backgrounds, engendered communities that enabled individuals to return, to arrive, and to stay in a place. Even as I became accustomed to this uncertainty, I took for granted the feeling of safety and security that accompanied morning discussions over tea. While the majority of my conversations were shared with male residents of Crown Lodge, who were by far the majority, it was their wives, the Black women, whose work created and sustained the sense of refuge felt in this place. Whether it was Ruac’s wife preparing tea and meals, or Buthayna who mopped the rooms and washed the linens; these seemingly small acts of constructing a homespace “provided the groundwork” (hooks 1990: 386) that transformed the space from hotel to home. In her essay, bell hooks centers the role that Black women have and continue to play to “provide care and nurturance” (Ibid:383) even within relatively unpredictable socio-political climates. Within the Crown Lodge, we can further see how the act of creating an environment in which individuals of different backgrounds and nationalities is itself a political act.

The context for hooks’ work is the White supremacist society of the United States, yet she is sure to extend this conception of the “homeplace” to the work of Black women globally who experience and challenge the domination of white supremacist patriarchal society. hooks (1990) describes the production of a private homespace—amidst social conditions of oppression and domination that have disintegrated expectations of secure family life—as a radical political act. The decision that brought individuals to Crown Lodge was thus itself a particular political stance towards the often-violent upheavals of post-independence South Sudan. Though white supremacy dominates Black and African life globally (Pierre 2013), in this instance we can ac-

count for a *homeplace* that is constructed within the effect and aftermath of a still-ongoing civil war. As hooks notes the feeling of insecurity traveling to her grandmother's home even when the homes of "white folks" were vacant, she felt "those white faces" telling her that she was not safe. So too in Juba, the feeling of insecurity is not always born out of a hyper-visible threat, but rather an affective response to uncertainty, prior insecurity, and the fear of continued violence. Crown Lodge became a space of refuge that largely thanks to the work of (Black) women⁷, whose daily routines enabled residents of the hotel to collectively manage the conditions of poverty and refugee crises, they were fashioning "their own politics of the body" (Cox 2015: 27) that enabled them to affirm their presence, heal, and transcend the fatigue that has produced the radically subversive position of staying put (hooks 1990). These political assertions animated the (gendered) work that these women were doing in order to transform this space into a site of belonging.

The hotel had fifteen rooms and the majority of the residents were men. Ruac, William and his fellow Nuer compatriots regularly traveled between Juba and Bentiu (their hometown in Upper Nile region, still plagued by famine). They featured largely in the space as they convened nightly to discuss the day's events. Johnathan, who identified as Shilluk yet was fluent in Nuer, had spent most of his life in Khartoum. He periodically left to visit his family still residing in Khartoum. Kaong, a Nuer young man from the Gambela region, had recently arrived from Kampala in search of employment. Of the remaining inhabitants at any given time, one or two were Dinka, three were Somali, three or four were members of an Eritrean family residing together. Some were fleeing the threat of state surveillance, others were in South Sudan in the hopes of making a better living than they would in their former homes, still others (such as the Somalis)

⁷ This is not meant to homogenize all African women, nor to define "Black" as synonymous with "African," this paper is an attempt to demonstrate multiple processes of racial meaning making and productions of difference. Rather, I mobilize "Black women" in this context to highlight the analogous experience documented by both Black African and Black American feminists.

worked as drivers delivering food and medical supplies to the conflict zones outlying the capital city.

As many of these interlocutors discussed, their choice to leave their homes to come to the Crown Lodge was deliberate. However fragile and transitional (hooks 1990), their decision to reside in this hotel was well-researched and resolute as the best means to navigate the uncertainty around them. Johnathan in particular, had compared and contrasted this hotel with other similar establishments, explaining that because this hotel had no visible sign, no restaurant, and no television; it was uniquely secure as the only individuals who might enter would be the tenants themselves or close friends and relatives. The few periods of time in which Kibrom would set up a TV for public consumption, it would quickly disappear once the crowd it attracted led residents to express their feelings of insecurity.

As the majority of the residents were Nuer, their fears of state surveillance and potential violence centered on their perceived assumptions of the Dinka-dominated political establishment, that could associate them with Riek Machar and thus potential political dissidence. Even Johnathan, who was ethnically Shilluk, feared that since his life history was so adjacent to Nuer that he could pass as one, felt unsafe in the home he owned in a predominantly Dinka neighborhood. If he faced antagonism, he often explained, he would have no neighbors with whom he could seek refuge. As a result, he rented his home to someone who felt safer in it. When they would speak of the violence they witnessed during the fighting since 2013 clash, they would often lower their voices and replace the label “Dinka” with an undifferentiated demonstrative pronoun “that tribe” or “those who are currently ruling the nation.”

Cox’s (2015) work has helped me think through the oscillation of the Crown Lodge between formulations of home, shelter, and hotel through embodied practices that produce safety

and stability, within an atmosphere of political violence, that mirrored the *shapeshifting* of young Black women in her work in Detroit. Cox's concept of *shapeshifting* also has implications for the homeplace as the young women in her work "mimicked and redefined home" within a Detroit homeless shelter (Cox 2015). Following Cox, tracing the praxis of *shapeshifting* in and through this hotel has helped me think through how residents confronted and challenged the systematic and material hardship that threatened their lives and the lives of their families. Daily enactments of community laid bare what Cox has described as "collective vulnerabilities" (Cox 2015: 7) that cut through the multiple national and regional African communities convened in this hotel. Collectively thinking through their vulnerabilities fortified transnational friendships that refined the construction of the homeplace and praxis of *shapeshifting*, strengthening these bonds as political positionalities (Abu-Lughod 2005, Markle 2013) that challenged and sought liberation from the dangers that had attracted so many of them to this space.

One night, the wife of the newly married Eritrean family went into labor. The late night is notorious for unpredictable violence. As such, nocturnal mobility has become taboo for many. If one were to travel at night, one would need an enclosed vehicle such as a car or truck, yet the Eritrean family only owned a motorcycle, which offered no first line of defense to what one might encounter along the way. They enlisted Johnathan who was one of the only residents who owned a car. When he agreed to help, he accepted the role of both bodyguard and driver. Though Johnathan was ethnically Shilluk, his charisma and ability to communicate in local languages enabled him to blend in and thus to communicate if they were stopped either by a search at a police checkpoint or by armed gunmen. Without Johnathan, they would have been unable to communicate (linguistically or otherwise) in any potentially threatening situation that they might encounter. If stopped by police, they could not communicate in Dinka or Nuer. If stopped by orga-

nized gunmen, they would have been unable to defuse the confrontation in any local language. Transforming his car into an emergency vehicle, he drove with the high beams and flashers switched on throughout the entire journey. He feared armed gunmen awaiting unassuming travelers on the roads or in the hospital parking lot. The neighborhood with the only reliable hospital was a neighborhood evidently well-known for organized crime. When they arrived, the hospital staff refused to open their doors, themselves fearing armed gunmen, until they saw the pregnant young woman. Johnathan excitedly relayed to me this story as an achievement, as if he had conquered the dangers of nightlife in Juba, “stepping outside of the boundaries meant to contain” (Cox 2015: 5) the vulnerable lives of residents who had chosen to remain there. His excitement for the presence of the newborn and his role in enabling the process illuminated how transnational friendships (Markle 2013) within this homeplace were at the center of daily exchange.

In a context where relations across ethnic or racial difference can and have often led to various forms of hostility at most and separate personal lives at the least, these relationships have led to cooperative forms of support. Yet what was most striking was Johnathan’s excitement at his role as facilitator. That he (a dark complexioned South Sudanese citizen) had the means to materially assist this family (fair complexioned Eritrean immigrants) at once overturned assumptions of South Sudanese helpless victimhood, as well as broader assumptions that if anyone had the material means to be a caregiver, it would not be the dark-skinned local.⁸ This interaction illustrates how relationships across racialized national boundaries (South Sudan and Eritrea in this example) are not solely characterized by antagonism, as expressed in the above reference to Asmara. Transnational relationships that emerged in this space moved through geographies that

⁸ I make this claim based off of comments that Johnathan made, along with many of my interlocutors in Juba where the de-valorization of dark-skin occurred alongside the valorization of light-skin. Ass

themselves carried racialized histories of domination, contestation, and the struggle for southern autonomy. If this thesis explores the kinds of lives that those who have chosen to stay, to return, and to arrive in Juba are forging then we must also explore the formations of belonging that attach racial meaning to the transnational encounters that result from those choices.

Grafting Racialized Vocabulary onto National/Regional Origin

Within the hotel compound, race became increasingly visible as residents utilized racial labels to make sense of how the state's geopolitical decisions affected their daily lives. Nyamnjoh (2016) pushes us to think through Whiteness in Black majority African societies, to understand how it operates, is pursued and utilized to attain greater status and privilege. In an around the hotel, national labels transformed into racial signifiers—South Sudanese to *Janubi*, Ugandans and Kenyans to *Wewe*, Eritreans and Ethiopians to *Habesh*, Euro-American Whites to *Wadjon* and *Abuna*. The reduction of national and regional identity to racial labels enabled residents to combine light-skin valorization and the status and privileges of whiteness, in order to mark psychic and cultural differences between individuals. This racialized vocabulary arranged the day-to-day interactions in an around the space of the hotel, underlining differences between groups even as they lived and ate together.

Ideologies of race have been inscribed into regional politics of southern Sudan from the era of Anglo-Egyptian colonization (Mamdani 2009). It is important to highlight that this paper's focus on race and racial categories does not seek to outline the anatomy of racism or dominant racist discourse (Goldberg 1990). I am interested in the indexical value of racial labels that signify ongoing racial formation in South Sudan (Goldberg 1993, Pierre 2013, Omi & Winant 2015 [1998]). Following Omi & Winant who situate racial formation at the intersection of social structure, individual experience, and political life in the U.S., helps me to think through a theory of race that does not signify spectacular social conflict. Rather, racializing processes in this instance are key to analyzing and recognizing the "persistence of white privilege" in contemporary

African localities (Pierre 2013, Nyamnjoh 2016), as well as how the discourse and praxis of racial ideas associated with skin color, heritage, and national origin structure everyday life (Pierre 2013).

When applied to African localities, the concepts of racial identity and ideas of Blackness or Whiteness most frequently describe racialized experiences in South Africa (Steyn 2001, Dolby 2001) or other national spaces in southeastern Africa that have had to manage a white settler population (Rutherford 2001, Hughes 2010). Some scholars have decried the naturalization of Blackness and Africinity, as it has produced an ideology that determines anything non-Black in Africa as out of place (Mbembe 2002, Akyeampong 2006). Explorations of racial ideologies in Africa must continue to analyze race beyond corporeality (Hesse 2007, Pierre 2013), that account for how race can attach to national origins, regional, ethnic and cultural identity. In this section, I will explore three political and geopolitical areas that generated racial meaning in daily life: the current Dinka-dominated political regime, the state's geopolitical vision vis-a-vis its accession to the EAC, as well as its relationship to the non-resident population Euro-American white humanitarian worker.

Racializing Hierarchies within South Sudan

Regional and national differences have taken on new racialized meanings in South Sudan. Racial meaning has continued to be salient in South Sudan because the independence struggle was itself racialized. The political desire for southern secession emerged from political and economic inequality that positioned Black Africans in the south as mis/unrepresented in a govern-

ment located in and dominated by the north and northerners distinguishing themselves through claims to Arab lineage (Arop 2012). The secession of South Sudan has cemented *Janubi*, the local Arabic term for southern, as a political identity that has now become categorically separate from *Sudani* (Arabic for Sudanese) which definitively no longer refers to South Sudanese. As explained to me by a writer for Al-Mawgif newspaper (the primary Arabic-language newspaper in South Sudan), the redefinition of *Janubi* as a category of citizenship and political inclination has taken on racial meaning associated as well, as it references differences in language, skin color, religion, and clothing between Sudanese and South Sudanese. Yet, the label *Janubi* itself has come to contain striations that structure everyday socio-political life between *Janubeen*/Southerners themselves.

As mentioned earlier in this text, the identification of *Equatorian* as its own political identity in contrast to Dinka or Nuer, emerged with the rise of the SPLM/A and the articulation of the southern liberation struggle toward a unified reformed Sudan, rather than an autonomous southern state (Wöndu 2011). The identification of *Equatorians* as a cohesive group is a demand for recognition (Englund & Nyamnjuh 2004) of minoritized groups who continue to experience socioeconomic inequality in a society administered (and dominated) almost entirely by those who identify as Dinka or Nuer. I take Harri Englund's (2004) position that agendas associated with the politics of recognition center on the idea that misrecognition is the source of continued suffering. This complexity highlights the ways that tensions between Dinka and Nuer groups articulate in some instances as competition over who should occupy the dominant strata of society.

Though Archie Mafeje told us in 1971 that ideologies of “tribe” and “tribal” differences obscure, simplify, and mystify the “real nature of economic and political relations between Africans themselves” (Mafeje 1971: 261, see also Fluehr-Lobban, Lobban, and Zangari 1976,

Mamdani 1996), the lexicon of tribe nevertheless continues to circulate. Mafeje's now 50-year old insight helps me think through Jemima Pierre's insistence on the permeation of racial meaning in Africa and how tribal labels come to signify that meaning. Racializing logic is salient here because the Equatorial description of Dinka and Nuer individuals differentiates them as having much darker complexion, of a taller physical type, carrying psychic and cultural characteristics (often associated with cattle) and political behavior that is wholly different from themselves. The descriptions of Nuer (that Equatorians often utter) are reminiscent of the Anthropology of Evan's Pritchard (1937) who initially turned the discipline to the Dinka and Nuer (and the political symbolism of their cattle) of southern Sudan and Richard Seligman (1930) whose *Races of Africa*, classified the continent's "sub-Saharan" population by physical and cultural type. Old categories are given new meaning as political contexts, anxieties, and claims change. The feeling among Equatorians pointed to the now broken promises of liberal democracy, that drew them into a liberation struggle for rights and now—rather than rewards (Nyamnjuh 2002a) for their efforts, patience, and support—they experience new forms of subjugation at the hands of their own compatriots.

Mobilizing Racial Difference to Discern East African Neighbors

In #RhodesMustFall (2016), Francis Nyamnjuh mobilizes many years of work on identity, mobility and epistemological transformation in situating 18th century southern African colonial official Cecil Rhodes as a *makwerekwere* ("stranger") and subsequently seeking to understand the "Rhodes Must Fall" movement in the context of resilient colonialism as well as the

long and enduring articulation of African immigrants in South Africa as *amakwerekwere* or “undeserving outsiders.” The uneasiness associated with *makwerekwere*, Nyamnoh (2016) tells us, is the ease with which they might be mistaken for being “one of us.” Their foreignness is only betrayed by their inability to communicate in local languages. Nyamnjoh’s work helps me think through ideas of difference in South Sudan between local citizens and regional East Africans because he offers a lens that does not center xenophobia (Harris 2002, Neocosmos 2006, or “Afro-phobia” Matinshe 2011) as a psychological and often violent remnant of apartheid racial oppression. Rather, he explores race and racial formations in Africa, building on work that recognizes the persistence of colonial racism while examining and denaturalizing the strict link between physical complexion and ideologies of whiteness and blackness. Specifically, his integration of “undeserving foreigners” into the ideology of whiteness denaturalized from white bodies (Hunter 2002, Hesse 2007 Pierre 2013), has helped me think through how, alongside resentment for East African immigrants in South Sudan, there is also a state-led admiration for the perceived strength of their democracy and rule-of-law.

East Africa is particularly salient both as a political unit and a culture area because South Sudan applied for membership in the East African Community (EAC) in 2011, almost immediately after its independence from Sudan (African News 2016). It officially became a member state in 2016. Many believe that this decision was primarily defensive (against potential further northern aggression), though members of the GoSS have described it, to me in personal interviews⁹, as a gesture towards African racial fraternity, and an opportunity to learn good governance “on the job” from East African states who have been independent much longer than South Sudan.

⁹Interviews in July and August 2017 with Advisor John Gai You, Alfred Taban MP

One of the elements of the treaty that established the EAC includes the construction of a “Common Market” that stipulates the free movement of capital, labor, goods, and services between member states.¹⁰ The movement of people between East Africa (Uganda and Kenya in particular) and South Sudan is by no means a recent development. Recent political developments, however, have rearticulated this mobility through arrangements of citizenship, employment markets, and access to services that produce different forms of spatial signification, new relations to capital, and new conceptions of belonging (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000). In and around the hotel, discussions regarding the presence and influx of Kenyans and Ugandans were reminiscent of Nyamnjoh’s conception of *makwerekwere*. In South Africa, it seems that conception of the “undeserving” centers on whether or not one had struggled through apartheid racism. Why should strangers enjoy the spoils of a war they did not fight? Similarly, emergent from a liberation struggle characterized by historical racial oppression (that continues to circulate in the place-names that surround the hotel) many South Sudanese locals felt that Kenyan and Ugandan immigrants have arrived to reap benefits of a liberation struggle, in which they did not participate.

Ugandans in particular, along with Kenyans were identified as *Wewe*. *Wewe* is the KiSwahili word for the singular “you.” This term was a site at which locals made sense of the state ideology that oriented the nation towards East Africa. *Wewe* produced subjects that were now foreign to a new state yet also representatives of a broader regional integration project shaping the new nation.¹¹ Adjacent to Crown Lodge, there were two Ugandan young men, Richard and Mukose, running a small shop frying chapati, and East African flatbread that originated in India. Their place was dingy, furnished by broken plastic chairs that were jerry-rigged to take advantage of every ounce of their utility. Working daily from early morning until nearly mid-

¹⁰ EAC treaty, Article 1

¹¹ See Shore (2000) and Balibar (2004) for analogous politico-cultural projects that manufacture “Europe” as a region.

night, they claimed their corner of Juba by communicating openly with one another and their acquaintances in Luganda, circulating their own daily Ugandan newspapers. In daily micro interactions of impatience, South Sudanese patrons shouted “*Wewe!*” at either Richard or Mukose. They often buttressed their exclamation, inquiring to one or both of them “Is this your country?” This day-to-day instance of interrogation accompanied *Wewe* to mark both Ugandan foreignness as well as familiarity with East African cultural emblems through the deployment of Swahili vocabulary.

Yet, even as South Sudanese locals responded tenuously to the influx of East African immigrants and the national accession to the EAC, one must also account for the project of state race-craft (Pierre 2009, 2013) that produced concrete racial meaning by orienting the momentum of development southward towards Nairobi and Kampala. Pierre describes how the Ghanaian state mobilized a particular narrative of the racialized experience of European slavery that enabled the state to strategically position itself in the global African Diaspora. The ideology and practice of the African Diaspora (Drake 1975, Gilroy 1993, Harris ed. 1993, Edwards 2009) often focuses on racialized social life and mobility through the Atlantic Ocean and Americas. Yet, in relation to African Diasporic reclamations of Black and African-descendant unities and futures, we can conceptualize the GoSS’ project of regional integration through the notion of state race-craft in order to underline the race-craft of geopolitical decisions. In an interview in 2017, education advisor to the president, John Gaih Yoh, explained one of the state justifications for South Sudan’s accession to the EAC: “We are one race, the black African race. We have no yellow, no brown, all of us are blacks. That is why we had to join our brothers in the East, not in the horn. We have many shared cultural identities with East Africa, tribes that extend across national

borders.”¹² If this paper has asked, what kinds of lives are those who stay, return, and arrive in South Sudan forging, then we must account for how South Sudanese daily life is *becoming* East African, at least according to the state. Crucially, local ideas of racial difference that signify Kenyan and Ugandan immigrants as “undeserving strangers” are entangled in complex ways with the state project of East African unity.

Nyamnjoh (2016) and Pierre (2013) remind us that the conflation of whiteness with white bodies should not obscure how whiteness operates even without the presence of Euro-descendant white individuals (Pierre 2013, Nyamnjoh 2016). I draw on both the decoupling of whiteness from corporeality (Hesse 2007) and the presumed superiority of European “modes of thought” and “methods” (Grovogui 2006) to understand the South Sudanese admiration for good governance, which claimed that the GoSS might “learn” from the EAC member states. In another interview in 2017, Alfred Taban, the founder and owner of the *Juba Monitor* newspaper and newly elected national MP, referenced the national accession to the EAC in response to my question about increasing levels of organized crime in Juba. He explained to me that “47 years of war have left people traumatized. South Sudan needs examples from the East African community who have had democracy for 50 years... We have just come from the bush, we have just come from war.” This was an assertion of both a relationship of tutelage and a diagnosis of national psycho-pathology that acutely referenced western liberal democratic political models. The contrast between the presumed backwardness of “the Bush” (Dubal 2018) and forward-thinking of the long-independent East African states was an expression of whiteness that had less relation to actual white bodies and was far more intimately attached to the ideas, systems of thought and morality based in “global economic, political and cultural hierarchies” (Pierre 2013) that contin-

¹² Interview, John Gai Yoh, July August 2017

ue to evaluate African ideas and experiences as ill-suited for either local governance or global politics.

Habesh and the Valorization of Light-Skin

Unlike East Africans from Uganda or Kenya, the social and economic privileges associated with fair or light complexion indexed the *Habesh* community, which included immigrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia. Though Ethiopians and Eritreans identified themselves very differently, both politically and linguistically, in Juba they represented a relatively undifferentiated fair-complexioned mass. The logic of *makwerekwere* could not suit the place of Eritreans and Ethiopians in the hotel, because they cannot blend in or be mistaken for “one of us” (Nyamnjoh 2016). The intimate relationships in the homespace of the hotel were sites where the desire for and valorization of light skin (Pierre 2013) came to the fore. Pierre’s discussion of light skin valorization through cosmetic bleaching demonstrates the correlation between light skin color and the aspiration for positions of power, status, and prominence that also equal light skin with aesthetic beauty. Though cosmetic skin-bleaching was certainly ubiquitous in South Sudan as it is in Ghana and elsewhere on the African continent and around the globe, in the Crown Lodge the racial meaning-making that undergirded light-skin color preference (Pierre 2013) became apparent through relationships between local South Sudanese and *Habesh* immigrants.

The imagined and real relationships between Eritreans and South Sudanese (and likely between Eritreans themselves, as they also represent a range of complexions), hinged less on the idea of becoming *more* white than it did on becoming *less* Black (Pierre 2013: 104). The link be-

tween race and skin color was thus closely tied to the privileges, both aesthetic and political-economic, associated with whiteness (Gordon 1997, Pierre 2013). Light skin valorization marked Kibrom's relationship with many of the South Sudanese nationals living at Crown Lodge. Kibrom was a bachelor, had few possessions and often decried his financial woes through references to his slim frame. As the majority of the long-term male residents of the hotel were married, the issue of Kibrom's marital status in general and his marriage to a South Sudanese woman in particular, was a frequent topic of conversation. The payment of marriage dowries is a common custom in societies around the globe. In many ethnic communities in South Sudan, the transaction of cattle is the traditional method of dowry payment. When the marriage conversation would emerge, one of the residents might jocularly ask Kibrom how many cows he had to offer for a South Sudanese bride, referencing the ongoing practice of the group offering a sum of cash or cattle for the payment of a bride price established by the bride's father. Kibrom's standard response was that in his case, the father of his potential bride should offer him cows because he would be offering his *color*. In this instance, his perceived lighter complexion was so desirable that its aesthetic value alone could surpass the bride price and leave his imagined bride's family in debt to him. This jocular reference was a precise reference to social and economic hierarchies tied to skin color that link fair complexion to wealth, status, or influence, even without one having to visibly display any of these attributes (Pierre 2013). The linkage between light skin color and desirability and status is a function of a global formation that cut through the micro-interactions of the hotel space.

Identifying Whiteness in the Absence of White Bodies

Nyamnjoh (2016) distinguishes ideations of whiteness in Africa where colonialism was “non-resident” in contrast to areas where a white settler population resolutely installed itself as a land-owning community. This formulation enables more accurate examinations of racial formations of whiteness on the African continent that are more closely linked to the meaning of whiteness than the presence or visibility of white bodies. Understanding how whiteness operates in excess of corporeality (Hesse 2007) demonstrates how whiteness is a technology that can choose to manifest itself as spectacle (Apter 2002) or remain the unnamed and unmarked norm (Hill 1998) against which all else is contrasted.

My own embodied experience of racialization became the primary tool with which I have understood white racial identification in and around the hotel space. My body, style of clothing, the gait of my walk, the fact that I speak English fluently and the register in which I speak it, associated me with the tropes of whiteness (Pierre 2013) that index the moral, technological, and financial dominance of the U.S. government, global humanitarian organizations, and a foreignness that was beyond any of the East African regionals residing in the hotel. Depending on the identity of my interlocutors and the context in which we interacted, my knowledge of Arabic and Amharic, and the length of the hair on my face and head (and thus its level of curliness) identified me varyingly as Turkish, Egyptian, or *Habesh*. As I identify as a Black American, the attachment of whiteness to my body became an important site of understanding how whiteness exists beyond corporeality (Hesse 2007) and how the tropes of whiteness could construct me as a wealthy white international professional solely from my outward experience (Pierre 2013).

Since the outbreak of the civil war, humanitarian aid has become virtually the only cause for any Euro-American presence in South Sudan. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was established on the day of national independence, July 9, 2011, in order to “strengthen the capacity” of the newly formed GoSS (UNMISS Mandate). The Mandate determined that the capacity-building efforts of UNMISS would extend for an initial one year period with the intention of renewal as “may be required.” Seven years later, balancing between claims of progress made and work yet to be done (Al-Bulushi 2014), UNMISS remains an integral element of social and political life in South Sudan. The permanence of built form of the UNMISS compound itself delimits the imagination of South Sudanese political life without UNMISS as an integral element (Hoffman 2017). Using Hoffman’s linkage between architectural form and political imagination offers a way to think through the UNMISS less as an external force and more as “*part of the state itself*” (Harrison 2001: 669, emphasis in original), not only because of financial relationships but also because of the programmatic entanglements between the GoSS and UNMISS. The coeval construction of these two political entities marks the ways that locals must make sense of the presence of foreign humanitarian organizations, largely identified with the trope of Euro-American whiteness (Pierre 2013). While the presence of white bodies remains largely invisible, the institutions, moral economy, wealth and perceived technological superiority associated with whiteness is nevertheless a fact of South Sudanese socio-political life. All of this points to why an analysis of whiteness in South Sudan should include local understandings of white racial formation in the absence of visible or tangible white bodies.

As Euro-American whites have become increasingly undetectable, the local gaze on whiteness has generated a multitude of labels and categories as it defines an increasingly elusive white presence. Due to the often-unpredictable security situation (The U.S. state department

classifies security in South Sudan on par with Somalia, Afghanistan, etc.), humanitarian aid workers remain behind enormous security walls of large housing compounds, often adhere to a strict sunset curfew, and move around exclusively in Sports Utility Vehicles during the day. Thus, the various forms of security architectures: permanent, mobile, temporal—obscure the visibility of white foreigners while buttressing the racial tropes associated with them. There are at least three terms that refer to whiteness that circulate in South Sudan: *Abuna*, *Kawaja*, and *Wadjon*. As *kawaja* is often a reference to whiteness coupled with perceived Arab identity, here I will focus on *Abuna* and *Wadjon* as labels specifically for Euro-American whites. The evolution and diversity of terms for individuals racialized-as-white suggest a slipperiness of white bodies that is nevertheless anchored in the ideologies that their bodies carry.¹³

Abuna (“our father”) is deployed to refer to the missions and missionaries that have proselytized in southern Sudan since the 19th century. I first heard *Abuna* while visiting a friend in his home in Gumbo, an impoverished town in the eastern suburbs of Juba. As we walked through the neighborhood, groups of children would regularly stop and stare at me shouting, “*Abuna! Abuna!*” These children read whiteness into my skin color, behavior, and my clothing. I turned to my friend, who was a dedicated member of his local church, and asked: “Are they pointing at you? Do they know you from your church?” He responded laughingly, “No, they think you’re a missionary.” As Pierre (2013) argues, because tropes of whiteness index wealth, prestige, and influence, they operate without any tangible icons of those qualities. Without any perceivable connection to the church, children marked me as a missionary, which also linked me to the ideologies of expertise and superiority that shape references to and conceptions of missionary bodies, their work, and the reasons for their presence.

¹³ I am indebted to conversation with Tendayi Sithole in 2018 about whiteness as technology/witchcraft.

WadJon represented the local conception of what many called “humanitarian corruption.” Individuals mobilized this phrase to express disintegrations of local trust in the effectiveness of foreign aid (Hannock 1992), that are often considered a continuation of European missions to control and shape African political systems (Manji & O’Coil 2002, Abbas & Niyirajira 2009), with administrative procedure that serves to obscure and mystify what humanitarian organizations are *actually* doing (James 2012). Often uttered with a slightly more pejorative tone than other references to whiteness; the term is an elision of *wallad* (son) in modern standard Arabic and “John,” a generic name for a Euroamerican. Thus “WadJon” is the son of John, a metonym for the generic white man who is exploiting the South Sudanese conflict to his own financial benefit. The plural form of *Wadjon*, *awladjon*, (“sons of John”) describes the South Sudanese citizens employed by the humanitarian aid industry who have possessively invested in the material benefits, prestige, and influence of whiteness (Harris 1993, Lipsitz 1998). Another crucial reference to the function of whiteness in excess of corporeality, *awladjon* conceives of the function of whiteness within and through black bodies.

Conclusion:

In this thesis, I have analyzed what kinds of lives those who chose to stay, to arrive, and to return to Juba are forging. I have sought to demonstrate how life goes on within an atmosphere of uncertain hostility. I have utilized the Crown Lodge hotel in Juba, the capital city of South Sudan to think through daily life amidst uncertainty, demonstrating how forms of spatial belonging in the neighborhood surrounding the hotel, in the hotel itself, and in Juba more broadly have linked racial meaning to national origin and regional identity. Following the Black American and Black African feminists who have documented how conditions of marginality can be transformed into a source of critical insight, has helped me think through the work of (Black) women in the hotel space to construct stability and security. Though emerging from various global contexts, these scholars have nevertheless documented the analogous political import of domestic acts of cooperation, however fragile or transitional they may be (hooks 1990).

The neighborhood around the hotel signified persistent racialized histories of difference and struggles over urban space. The discussion of the place-names in relationship to contemporary re-naming practices, suggests that the re-signification of space is a process of belonging that attaches racial meaning to ideas of national origin. Old categories are given new meaning as political contexts, anxieties, and claims change. The struggle for space between north and south departs from the competition between South Sudanese citizens and *Habesh* immigrants, yet they both hinge on axes of difference linked to the trope(s) of whiteness, blackness, and their associated status and privilege.

The axes of difference chronicled in the outset of this thesis—Arab and African, Dinka and non-Dinka, nation and region, colonial pre- and post- — have contextualized how residents in the Crown Lodge and beyond made sense of national, regional, and racial identity. South Sudan is a generative site to think through how African racial identity and racial categories exist in excess of corporeality (Hesse 2007). Yet without losing sight of the body, the case of Kibrom and references to Asmara illustrated how *Habesh* identity is positioned at the nexus of light-skin valorization and the persistence of white privilege on the African continent (Ibid). In order to think through articulations of Blackness and Whiteness, we need to pay attention to the status and privileges linked to the trope(s) of whiteness that decouple race from the body and render it a resource for individual aspirations or state projects (Pierre 2013, Nyamnjoh 2016). The affinity for East Africa expressed by the GoSS revealed how geopolitical decisions and imaginations shape and produce racial meaning.

This thesis has been an exploration of a modest hotel as a transnational homespace. Paying attention to the intimacies of daily life in this space enables one to account for the meaning-making within lives that continue on alongside humanitarian crises and geopolitical transitions.

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