Interrupted Silence

ACTIVELY
ENGAGED
INTELLECTUALS
INTELLECTUALLY
ENGAGED ACTIVISTS

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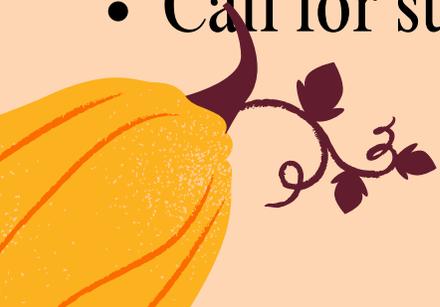
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Next quarter's course schedule:
Undergrad

INT 100: Introduction To International Studies
Tues/Thurs: 1:00PM -2:30PM SQ
TBA-LPC, Dr. Jacob Stump

INT 200: International Political Economy
Mon/Wed: 9:40AM-11:10AM, 4:20PM-5:50PM SQ
TBA-LPC, Dr. Jacob Stump

INT 203: International Movements and Social Change
Tues/Thurs: 1:00PM-2:30PM
TBA-LPC, Prof. Gil Gott

INT 206: Identities and Boundaries
Mon/Wed: 9:40AM-11:10AM
TBA-LPC, Dr. Gil Gott

INT 301: Senior Seminar
Tues/Thurs: 9:40AM-11:10AM
TBA-LPC. Dr. Shiera Malik

INT 329: Beyond Imperialism
Tues/Thurs: 11:20AM-12:50PM
TBA-LPC, Dr. Sheila Malik

Welcome letter

Welcome to the Fall and Winter Newsletter at International Studies! We at INT@DePaul are thrilled to welcome you to read about the happenings in the department during Fall 2025.

Following up on our successful student conference of Spring 2025, we are now planning for our Second Annual Student Conference in Spring 2026. Calls for paper and abstract submissions can be found in the flyer in this newsletter. You can also email the organizers at intstudiesconference@gmail.com. The project abstracts are due December 9.

INT faculty are busy creating new, exciting courses for students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Prof. Shiera Malik is teaching her new course, INT 381, African Diplomacy at the United Nations, in Winter quarter. The course, cross listed with the Grace School of Public Diplomacy, will trace the evolution of African diplomacy by examining speeches and documents from the UN, as well as historical texts. It is a fascinating account of how the topics of colonization, economic development, cultural diplomacy and global governance are shaped by African political thought.

Prof. Kaveh Ehsani will be teaching INT 350: Conflict in the Middle East. The course focuses on how conflict is experienced by people on the ground through complex historical, power and social structures. Dr. Ehsani will focus on Iraq before and after the US invasions, and the Palestinian territories.

A shout-out to our student representatives, Usha Chelluri, Kei Smith and Rosbel Garza-Hernandez. An even louder shout-out to Favour Onyinechi Ilfrueze and Sam Rafet, who planned and edited this newsletter.

We ask alumni to keep in touch and let us know how they are doing in their respective fields for the next newsletter in Spring 2026.

Happy holidays to everyone.
Dr. Shailja Sharma

Highlighted events

Your major is a skill set. Learn how to use it.

Freelancing 101: a workshop for LAS students

Learn the fundamentals of freelancing with **Prof. Bruce Leech, Executive Director of DePaul's Coleman Entrepreneurship Center!** This workshop for LAS students will teach you:

- How to turn your skills, interests, or ideas into freelance work—**accessible to *any* LAS major**
- The top essentials every new freelancer needs to get started, with simple tools to shape ideas into a clear, workable business model
- Purpose-driven & social impact pathways

Beginner-friendly; no business experience required!

Questions? Send them to asouchuk@depaul.edu.

in: arts & letters hall 314
on: feb **23** 2:45 to 5:15 pm -or- march **5** 6:00 to 8:30 pm

Register here; space is limited!

DePaul University COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DePaul University DRIEHAUS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS Coleman Entrepreneurship Center

28th January 3 pm
Room 314 in Arts and Letters Hall. Lincion Park Campus
2315 N Kenmore Ave

**UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION IN IRAN**

WE HAVE ALL SEEN THE HEADLINES ON IRAN: POPULAR PROTESTS, FEAR AND ANGER, SABRE-RATTLING BY OTHER COUNTRIES. IF YOU THINK WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE WORLD, COME AND PARTICIPATE IN A Q&A WITH DRS. KAVEH EHSANI WHO HAS DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN ENGAGING WITH POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN IRAN AND IN THE DIASPORA. HE WILL GIVE US A SHORT UPDATE AND ANSWER QUESTIONS FORM THE AUDIENCE IN THIS INFORMAL EVENT.

A CONVERSATION AROUND BAD BUNNY

990 W FULLERTON AVE INT OFFICE
FEBRUARY 17 2026 4:30-5:30PM
WITH DR SHIERA MALIK

JOIN INT SUDIES FOR A MID-QUARTER RECHARGE! WE'LL WATCH BAD BUNNY'S SUPERBOWL HALFTIME SHOW AND ANALYZE IT THROUGH OUR PROGRAM'S CRITICAL LENS. JUST AS OUR CURRICULUM EXAMINES GLOBAL POWER DYNAMICS, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND CULTURAL FLOWS. WE'LL UNPACK HOW INTERNATIONAL ICONS OPERATE WITHIN AND CHALLENGE EXISTING SYSTEMS. SNACKS PROVIDED. NO RSVP NEEDED - JUST BRING YOUR CRITICAL EYE FOR GLOBAL CULTURE!

These are the events being held by the INT Department in collaboration with other departments , with everything happening around the world today we have decided to have an event titled "Understanding the situation in Iran which touches base on the several issues going in the country of Iran at the moment and this event will be held by Professor Kaveh Ehsani. Our second event is a freelancing Info session to educate our students on more topics concerning Freelancing.

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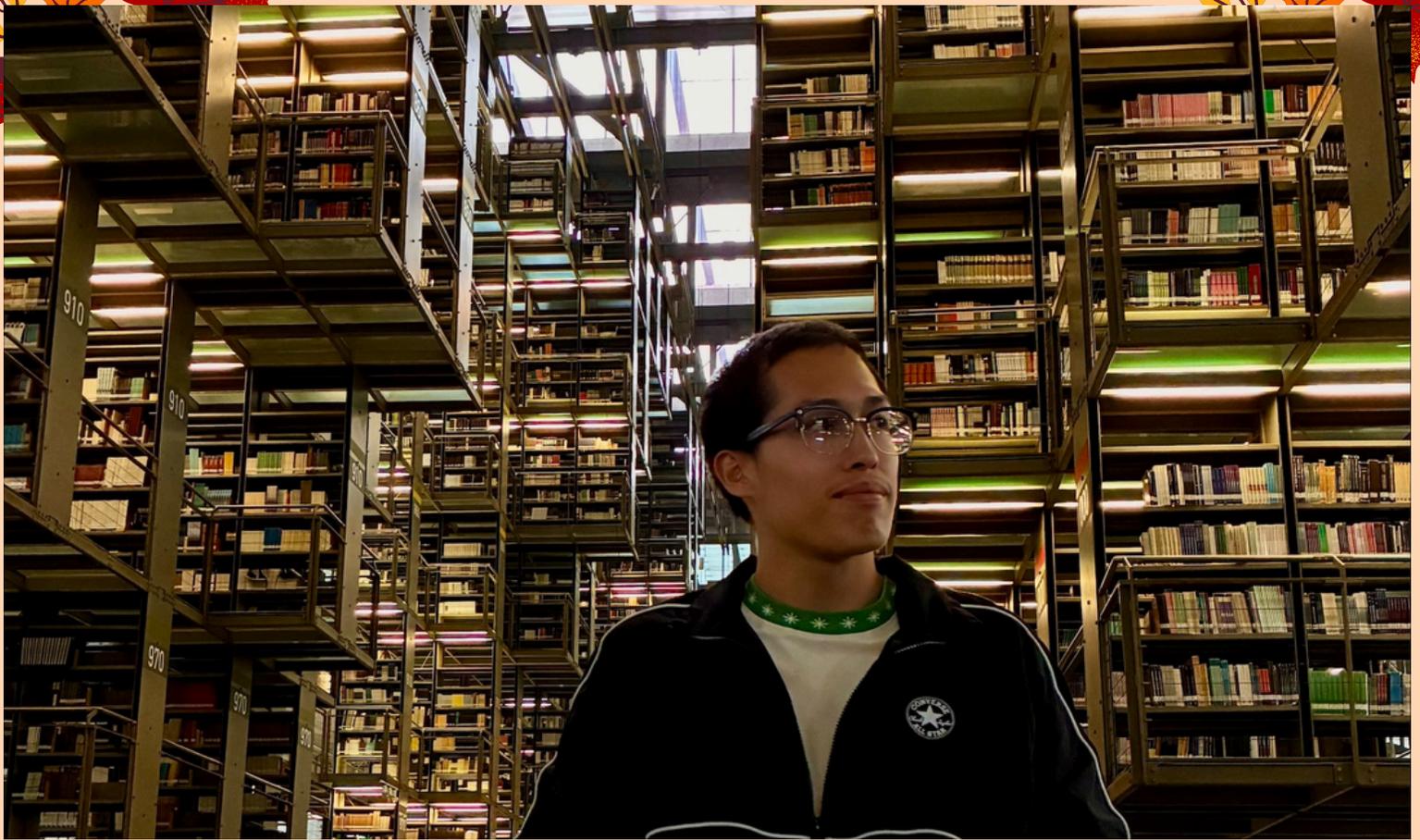
My name is Rosbel Garza, I am the Graduate Student Representative with the Department of International Studies here at DePaul University. did my undergrad at the University of Kansas in Global & International Studies as well as History, with an emphasis on Latin-American forced migrations and food systems.

Growing up as a Hispanic man in central Missouri/Kansas, I learned first-hand about the politics of being and belonging.

The town eventually ended up in, Lawrence, Kansas's progressive atmosphere and history of abolition demonstrated the potential for communal identities and alternative ways of life. While in Kansas I was deeply involved in the local chapter of Food Not Bombs, organizing alongside students,

adult

professionals, and teenagers to fill empty plates with not just vegan food, but locally sourced food straight from the farms of local abolitionists. I continue this work here in Chicago through organizing alongside Disability Justice/Rights groups. | currently live in co-operative housing located on the South-West side of the city, where I continue to learn about the quirks, flaws, pros, and cons, of living in holistic community with strangers.

Outside of work and school, I enjoy being surrounded by nature and writing poetry. While definitely miss the endless prairies of Kansas, Chicago's numerous parks and outdoor spaces offer different, but perhaps still as engaging, ways of connecting with the land. I find that most days I'm wandering from park to park, sitting down for a moment to write either poetry or for my work, then continuing my journey.

Senior Student Representative

Hi everyone! My name is Kei, and I'm an International Studies major. I'm excited to be the INT department's senior student representative this year! On campus, I've been involved with the Labor Education Center and the Social Transformation Research Collaborative. My current research topics include labor policy in healthcare and nationalism in military psychiatric care. In my free time I enjoy creative writing, printmaking, and going to museums and libraries.

I'm Usha, a Junior majoring in International Studies and Geography. I'm passionate about exploring feminist perspectives within international contexts, particularly how gender intersects with global social justice, migration, and development. I'm excited to bring these perspectives to my role as Student Rep and advocate for inclusive student voices.

Hobbies/Interests:

I enjoy reading, writing short stories and traveling.

Area of Focus:

I aim to prioritize equity and inclusion on campus by amplifying diverse student voices, especially those relating to gender justice, intersectionality, and global perspectives. I'm committed to fostering a supportive environment where all students feel represented and heard.

Recommendation:

A book I've really enjoyed recently is Yellowface by R.F. Kuang. It offers a sharp and thought-provoking exploration of identity, cultural appropriation, and the complexities of representation---topics that resonate deeply with my interests in feminist and postcolonial studies.

Student Worker

My name is Simon I'm a student worker and an editor. I am a Latin America and Latino Studies and Anthropology major.
This is the first news letter I am a part of, thanks INT for welcoming me and being so supportive of my studies. I was part of the conference on student activism, my presentation was on the history of Lincoln Park as a contested space and the legacy of organizing, coalition building, and community history.
"I hate the indifferent. I believe that living means taking sides."

Hi, my name is Favour Ifurueze. I'm an International Studies major with minors in Diplomacy and Public Health at DePaul University. I'm passionate about human rights, international law, and creating meaningful change through global advocacy. As a Nigerian student studying in Chicago, I'm driven by the goal of using my education to make an impact in communities, especially in areas where justice, health, and equality intersect.

The Theoretical Framework For Understanding Binti:
Julia Gabris

Nnedi Okorafor's Binti trilogy defies Western logic, portraying colonial and power structures in today's world in an African science fiction realm. Binti undergoes multiple transformations throughout the series that complicate her relationship with herself and who she identifies as. This paper analyzes the Binti trilogy through three theoretical frameworks that examine boundaries of identity, space, and knowledge. In applying Édouard Glissant's concept of opacity, Katherine McKittrick's notion of the ungeographic, and Edward Said's theory of discrepant experiences, this analysis explores how Binti's movement across physical and cultural boundaries reveals the underlying power structures that shape legibility and meaning. In Édouard Glissant's "For Opacity," he argues against the notion that understanding someone means fully explaining, defining, or grasping them. For Glissant, this is an old Western ideology that reduces an individual identity or a collective culture. In attempting to grasp an understanding of someone, it is we often unknowingly use our own perceptions and biases toward this individual, without their knowledge or consent, and thus reduce them and put them in a framework of our own understanding of the world. The right to opacity, Glissant explains, is the right to not be fully understood or reduced, but to choose to self-identify anyway. In contrast to the traditional way of understanding opacity as the condition of lacking transparency, Glissant argues the opposite, that in utilizing this right, one's identity is strengthened: "The opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence."1

The 2 unknowing is imperative over the possibility of misunderstanding. Opacities can co-exist, and it is about seeing the interconnected framework that brings them together, over understanding what created the framework. Throughout the Binti trilogy, Binti grapples with her identity several times over, as she crosses physical borders, and in the face of misunderstanding from those who surround her, establishes the right to opacity within herself. When Binti first arrives on the ship to Oomza University, she grapples with the internal anxiety of leaving not only Osemba but crossing planetary boundaries as she leaves Earth. In referring to Himba culture, Binti states: "We stay put. Our ancestral land is life; move away from it and you will diminish."2 However, even in the face of this reality, Binti still chooses to commit to this voyage, even knowing it breaks traditional Himba culture, and that she is the only non-Khoush on the ship: "I was the only Himba on the ship, out of nearly five hundred passengers."3 This decision creates misunderstanding between the culture she is accustomed to and what the other passengers do not understand. When meeting with her Khoush group leader, she is immediately questioned about the otjize on her skin and the anklets she wears on her ankles: "Why are you covered in red greasy clay and weighed down by all those steel anklets?" 4 What Binti wears as protection, her group leader sees as weighing her down and while Binti does submit to this man's demand for transparency by answering his questions about her culture she also establishes herself in a new environment. While no longer needing them to protect her from snake bites, as Binti is outside the border of the desert, she decides to keep "two on each ankle.

The Theoretical Framework For Understanding Binti:
Julia Gabris

Enough to jingle with each step."5 This moment establishes Binti's culture outside of the practical use; she explains the ankles to have a deeper meaning, despite the leader telling her she no longer needs them in her new environment. In the end of The Night Masquerade, Binti is now revealed to be a multi-being of Himba, Enyi Zinariya, Meduse, and with microbes from New Fish, and yet in the face of all these new parts of herself, Binti's opacity is more established than ever. When Binti dies in the Khoush battle and returns to space, she is returning to the place that initially felt so foreign to her and was plagued by her otherness, which is now the place where she can embrace all the new parts of herself. At the end of the trilogy, Binti takes her freshly made otjize and uses it on all parts of herself, wiping it on her okuoku, and "into the five anklets [she] now wore on each ankle."6 Even in the face of no longer knowing who she identifies with, Binti self-proclaims, not looking for understanding from others or herself. Binti discovers a true opacity within herself, not diminishing the culture she is accustomed to, with the new parts of herself. This revelation established that boundaries are never as set as they appear to be. As Binti crossed physical boundaries, she discovered new epistemic and identity boundaries that, in her right to opacity, she does not have to fully understand. In Demonic Grounds, Katherine McKittrick challenges geographic frameworks that render certain spaces and bodies as illegitimate or nonexistent. Her concept of the ungeographic highlights the dispossession of Black and marginalized communities from their land. She argues that this is because marginalized communities have been made to exist outside of proper geography and treated as not fully legible.

When power structures dominate the narrative it creates the belief that "dispossessed black bodies are naturally in place" when they exist outside 4 of the framework, or thus the ungeographic. Therefore, implying that "dispossession is an important racial narrative" and highlights the devaluation and knowledge of Black geographies, the dangerous implications of which are laid out in Binti's story.8 The Khoush burning down the Root creates an ungeographic space that not only physically displaces Binti's family from their homeland but also works to unroot the Himba culture built there. Throughout the trilogy, Binti portrays the Root to be with deeper meaning than just her family house and presents it as a family heirloom existing at the beginning of Himba culture: "It's been in our family for longer than the existence of its name. One of the first homes built in the Himba village of Osemba, the Root was made entirely of stone."9 The act of burning through a structure built on the foundation of the "old root of an undying tree" symbolizes an effort to sever people from their land-based ways of knowing.10 Through McKittrick's framework, this destruction reveals how spatial violence operates as a boundary making practice that denies the legitimacy of marginalizing geographies by attempting to erase them altogether. Binti herself also becomes ungeographic at the end of the trilogy, not because she does not belong in space but because the dominant cultural frameworks can no longer recognize her existence on Earth as legitimate. Binti herself becoming a victim of the Khoush's violence in the end exceeds the categories through which she understood her belonging on Earth. Binti is ungeographic in the sense that her existence is beyond recognition, and those on Earth consider Binti to be dead, not knowing of her reexistence.

The Theoretical Framework For Understanding Binti:
Julia Gabris

When approached by prospective Oomza 5 University students, asking Binti for a recommendation letter, the students state that they are like Binti as they are people of "time and space."11 This reaffirms Binti's ungeographic state; she exists beyond the normative state of recognition, revealing how boundaries of belonging are enforced through legibility rather than physical location alone. This legitimacy reveals the domination of power structures in giving a geography meaning, and when these power structures refuse to recognize places and bodies, it illegitimizes culture. In Edward Said's Discrepant Experiences, he examines how unequal perspectives and power relations produce polarized experiences. Consequently, imperial powers dominate narratives that privilege certain experiences as universal while rendering others as marginal or invisible. Said notes how experience is subjective and different cultural groups can experience a historical event differently, and discrepant experiences underlie political tensions. Said emphasizes that discrepant experiences are not merely differences in perspective, but the result of power structures that allow colonizers to define humanity. As he notes, "Rather than affirming the interdependence of various histories on one another and the necessary interaction of contemporary societies with one another, the rhetorical separation of cultures assured a murderous imperialism contest between them the sorry tale is repeated again and again."12 The "rhetorical separation of cultures" as Said describes it uphold power dynamics that prioritize not affirming independence rather than relying on the interdependence of experience to create mutual understanding. Discrepant experiences are central to the conflict dynamics in the Binti trilogy. Prior to the initial attack of the Meduse against the Khoush on the ship, the longstanding violence between the two groups is largely understood through Khoush centered narratives that frame the Meduse as inherently violent and irrational.

Witnessing the death of her friends and being the lone survivor, Binti initially relies on this narrative for her own understanding. However, upon hearing the Meduse Chief's explanation, it reveals a radically different experience of the same history. As the Chief explains, "My stinger is my people's power.They took it from us. That's an act of war."13 For the Meduse, the stinger does not merely represent a weapon, but a source of collective life and cultural unity that was ripped away from them. The Khoush only understood the stinger through a weaponized framework, which is the perspective Binti recognized it through before speaking with the Chief. The discrepant experience between the Khoush and the Meduse offers entirely new perspectives to the narrative that demonstrate clearer reasoning for the attack and offer understanding of the ongoing history. This conflict is revealed not as a clash of incompatible cultures, but as the result of unequal power structures that allow the Khoush to define the meaning of legitimacy. Beyond the conflicts with the Khoush, discrepant experiences also shape Binti's relationship with her own family following her transformation. Binti becoming a mediator for the Meduse and part Meduse herself is understood by her family as betrayal rather than an act of survival. While the Himba do not align themselves with the Khoush themselves, they nevertheless trust the boundaries of their realm of familiarity and view Binti's transcendence of planetary and cultural borders as a threat. For Binti's family, they now see her as "befriending the enemy of humanity." 14 These discrepant experiences contribute to the conditions that leave the Himba vulnerable to violence from multiple sides, including the destruction of the Root.Through Said's framework, discrepant experiences show how dominant narratives of belonging 7 and legitimacy shape who is legible and how boundaries create understanding.

Julius Nyerere's Second Scramble for Africa Speech at the World Assembly of Youth, 1961

In the book From Language to Language: The Hospitality of Translation, author Souleymane Bachir Diagne discusses Translation in a colonial context, one which has shaped the linguistic experience for much of the Global South. Colonialism created a sort of linguistic hierarchy of hospitality, and the colonized peoples of the Global South are living in a bilingual world of diglossia, "in which everything leads them to accept and believe that one of their languages, the one said to be 'native,' has essentially less value than the other, whose natural 'prestige' thereby legitimizes its domination," (Diagne, 2025). In 1961, Africa was in a state of partial decolonization, and the future that lay ahead was increasingly fogged by the influence of Foreign Powers during the Cold War. African nations and independence movements were being forced to choose into two global alliance networks based upon economic ideologies: a Western, Capitalist Bloc that sought to continue the economic status quo of the colonial system with the illusion of independent states, or an Eastern, Socialist Bloc that, while aligned with Africa on paper, didn't treat them as equals in practice. In this era of chaos, Julius Nyerere attempts to point towards a third way for Africans with his Second Scramble for Africa speech. Given at the World Assembly of Youth in 1961, Julius Nyerere breaks free from the illusion of reciprocal hospitality to articulate an early interpretation of the Pan-African ideology, calling for Africans to unite in a rejection of the Core vs Periphery, East vs West binary that the Imperial Powers sought to impose upon the Continent. The language of Diplomacy is often rich with complexity, which can make it difficult to understand when the context surrounding the speaker, their audience, their time period, and the role they play in the world is not understood. The Speaker, Julius Nyerere, was born in Tanganyika in 1922. He attended the University of Makerere in Uganda, East Africa's most prominent academic institution, where many African leaders have studied. He also spent time at the University of Edinburgh, imbuing him with a linguistic understanding of the colonial language of English alongside his native Zanaki, and the regional language kiSwahili. His time in the UK coincided with the beginning of the end of the British Empire, and his relationships with Indians and Ghanaians, nationals of two of the first colonies to gain independence from Britain after World War II, inspired him to push for his nation's independence (Chachage and Chachage, 2004). After returning to Tanganyika, he became the leader of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1954, and national leader after the 1958 Elections, which gave TANU political control. In 1961, the same year he gave this speech, Tanganyika achieved full independence from Britain without any major conflict, and Nyerere became Prime Minister (Browne, 2023). In his foreign policy, Nyerere is a Pan-Africanist and founding member of the Organization for African Unity (OAU); someone who "was against the idea of the Balkanization of Africa" (Chachage and Chachage, 2004). These beliefs likely led to his successful push to unite Tanganyika with Zanzibar to form what is now known as Tanzania in 1964. Tanzania was a safe haven for anti-colonial movements across the continent. Southern African anti-colonial movements such as the ANC (South Africa), SWAPO (Namibia), FREMILO (Mozambique), and ZANU (Zimbabwe), would all use Tanzania as a base of operations at some point during their independence struggles (Chachage and Chachage, 2004, and Browne, 2023). Nyerere didn't openly align Tanzania closely with either the Soviet Union or the United States as a member of the non-aligned movement, but economically, he was a believer in the Ujamaa Socio-Economic framework grounded in Socialist and Traditional African origins. The year in which the speech is given is 1961. The world was still in the process of decolonizing in the aftermath of World War II. Some, such as India, Ghana, and Indonesia, were beginning their journeys as independent nations, while many other independence movements were still ongoing in the Global South.

from INT 381 African Diplomacies at the UN

Julius Nyerere's Second Scramble for Africa Speech at the World Assembly of Youth, 1961

Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US was still raging in the aftermath of the Korean War, and each side was seeking to bring the newly independent post-colonial nations of the Global South into their respective spheres of influence, often through violence or foreign interference. Major meetings of the Global South, such as the Bandung Conference of 1955, the 1957 Cairo Conference, and the 1961 Belgrade Summit, had all taken place, establishing the Non-Aligned Movement, a group of nations aligned against neo-colonization and Cold War hostilities. The Congo Crisis raged on in 1961, and the recent assassination of Congo's Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, at the hands of the Belgians and the CIA surely weighed heavily on the event. The audience was the General Assembly of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY). WAY is, " the international coordinating body of national youth councils and national youth organisations. WAY works for promotion of young people and youth organisations in programme areas such as: education, employment, environment, human rights, democracy, population, health, drugs, peace, gender equality, community development, and leadership training," (WAY, 2025). While WAY is not itself a UN organization, it has close ties to the UN ecosystem of organizations and is a genuinely respected, collective voice of the youth on the global stage. Rather than the usual audience in global politics of government ministers and diplomats, Nyerere was speaking to a combination of youth activists, government leaders in youth services, and NGOs.

Due to the context in which Nyerere's Second Scramble for Africa speech was given, it differs in tone, language, and intent when compared to the UN speeches of other African leaders during this time period. Through the lens of Diagne's thought on the colonial hierarchy in the hospitality of language, African leaders at the UN would, in a way, infantilize themselves. Their speeches were often carefully worded to express their peaceful nature, showering the committees and councils they spoke to with platitudes, attempting to set themselves apart from their previous colonizers without 'ruffling feathers'. Even Nyerere uses this kind of language in this setting. Also in 1961, at a meeting of the UN Trusteeship Council, Nyerere is quoted as saying, "I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to every Member of the United Nations, and particularly to the members of the Trusteeship Council, who have already contributed towards our transition to independence," and, ""People have often asked me why this transition to independence has been so smooth in Tanganyika. I am sure that there are many explanations for this smooth transition to independence. But one vital explanation is the fact that we are a Trust Territory under British administration," (UNTC, 1961). No such reverence for the Imperial Powers can be found in Nyerere's language in the Second Scramble for Africa. From the very beginning, Nyerere doesn't mince his words. The first pages of the speech are scathing criticisms of both the Western and the Soviet Blocs of nations, criticizing them both for their gluttony for power and resources. Nyerere accuses the Capitalists for using Wealth as a tool for domination, and accuses the 'Socialists' of forgetting their true purpose in pursuit of that same domination, with snippy quotes such as, "One millionaire is prepared to spend millions simply in order to destroy another millionaire," and, "Socialist Wealth now tolerates poverty–which is an even more unforgivable crime," (Nyerere, 1962). He puts Tanzania firmly in the Pan-Africanist and the Non-Aligned Movement Blocs by saying "I am a firm advocate of African Unity," and, "This division is not a division between Capitalists and Socialists, nor between Capitalists and Communists; this is a division between the poor countries of the world and the rich countries of the world," (Nyerere, 1962). When explaining why the Second Scramble for Africa is an apt term for the African state of affairs in the 60s, Nyerere points precisely to the Crisis in the Congo, explaining that Congo's weakness, its arbitrary borders drawn in the First Scramble for Africa, was being used by foreign powers to control it (Nyerere, 1962).

Julius Nyerere's Second Scramble for Africa Speech at the World Assembly of Youth, 1961

Nyerere warns that the Imperial Powers will begin arming African nations to fight one another on their behalf, shedding African blood for exclusively foreign interests (Nyerere, 1962). Nyerere explains that these foreboding signs of conflict must push Africans to unite together in the face of foreign influence, ending his Speech with, "The role of African Nationalism is different–or should be different–from the nationalism of the past. We must use the African national states as an instrument for the unification of Africa, and not allow our enemies to use them as tools for dividing Africa. African Nationalism is meaningless, is anachronistic, and is dangerous, if it is not at the same time Pan Africanism," (Nyerere, 1962). Nyerere's speech was generally meant to be a call to action for the youth rather than a genuine attempt to be hospitable to the Imperial Powers. But, as Diagne shows us with the Colonially-tied imbalance of hospitality in language, the Imperial Powers have never really been hospitable in return, unless the structurally subservient nation is agreeable and playing their intended role in the Imperial system. Hospitality, trust, and translation, all must go both ways, and some, like Nyerere in this speech, believe there's no point in being hospitable if you know that hospitality won't be reciprocated. Nyerere may still be giving this speech in the colonial language of English, but in giving the captive audience of the world youth leaders an early Pan-Africanist manifesto, Nyerere has used the language of the Imperial Core for his own gain, making the language a vessel through which to communicate African ideas directly to a wide and diverse global audience.

Julius Nyerere knew how to play the game of linguistics, translation, and diplomacy expertly. Under his decades-long rule, Tanzania was one of the most economically stable nations on the continent, promoting unity and competent leadership across the continent while managing to avoid becoming a victim of foreign intervention from either the East or the West. While the idea of a unified African Continent in the 20th century died before it ever really got a chance, Nyerere used the principles of Pan-Africanism and Diagne's Hospitality to forge a strong Tanzanian National Identity. Rather than using a colonial lingua franca to unify a disjointed nation drawn upon illogical colonial borders, Nyerere used the regional language of kiSwahili as the national language, reclaiming bilingualism in the name of Pan-African ideals. That choice has had wide-reaching benefits, and Kiswahili, not English or French, is now the default lingua franca used across East Africa, allowing Africans to communicate effectively without the distorting influence of a 'Core' language. There is nothing inherently wrong with being diplomatic and hospitable with your choice of speech and language, but as Nyerere shows us that hospitality does not have to be given to those who will never return the favor, and the Core-Periphery hierarchy of linguistics, and politics more broadly, can be broken.

Theoretical Framework Analysis
by
Abdullah Tanseer

This paper explores Glissant's concept of Opacity, Edward Said's method of Contrapuntal Reading, and McKittrick's concept of Site of Memory in terms of Nnedi Okorafor's Binti to reveal how boundaries, which can be cognitive, cultural, and spatial are neither fixed nor neutral. Rather than solidifying identities as enclosed and legible entities, they are contested sites where opacity, competing histories, and embodied memory resist reduction to dominant logics of classification and mastery.By approaching Binti through these lenses, this analysis not only demonstrates the depth of its futuristic imaginings but also situates Okorafor within broader critical conversations about epistemic sovereignty, counter-histories, and the politics of relationality.

Édouard Glissant's idea of the "right to opacity" rejects the idea of expectation that everyone must be fully understood or explained using a single, universal way of thinking. For Glissant, opacity does not mean being confusing or vague. Instead, it means that each person has a unique way of being that cannot, and should not, be completely translated into dominant systems of knowledge.

As Glissant writes,

"the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics."

"The opaque is not the obscure."

"The right to opacity would not establish autism; it would be the real foundation of Relation, in freedoms."

Glissant's opacity emerges from his broader Caribbean postcolonial thought, which is a critique of Western hegemony's demand that cultures conform to universal frames of comprehension, also known as transparency. Opacity names an ethical refusal of assimilation to clarity, asserting the dignity of not being fully knowable according to another's worldview. It redefines understanding not as something you take apart and master, but as something that grows through relationships.Opacity means that people, cultures, and even technologies don't have to be fully explained or sorted into existing categories in order to deserve respect or ethical treatment. It challenges the idea that understanding only counts when everything is made clear, measurable, and controllable. A clear example today is how governments use data, surveillance, and AI to classify migrants or protesters. These systems often demand total transparency, which is documents, biometric data, fixed identities, in order to grant rights or safety. Opacity pushes back against this logic, arguing that people should not have to be fully "read" by these systems to be treated with dignity.

A central figure in Binti is the astrolabe, a technological artifact that registers Binti's biometric and spiritual signatures. It knows Binti more deeply than she knows herself, yet its operations are never fully explained either to her or to others. The astrolabe cannot be easily turned into data that others can take and use. It responds to her through relationship, not as a clear tool that reveals her identity to outside systems of surveillance. This is not about being mysterious for its own sake. The astrolabe is opaque because the way it thinks and communicates does not fit into systems that demand everything be universally readable.

Theoretical Framework Analysis
by
Abdullah Tanseer

In Glissant's terms, as quoted:

"To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components."

The astrolabe does not unlock Binti as a code that others can use or fully understand. Instead, it exists alongside her and works through relationship, not control. Because of this, not everything about Binti can or should be fully known. Knowledge in Binti is about being with someone, not taking from them. Binti's relationship with the astrolabe pushes back against colonial ideas that knowledge must be complete, owned, and extracted.When opacity is applied to Binti's narrative, it shows a constant refusal to make everything fully knowable or classifiable. Binti is never reduced to a clear human-versus-alien identity, her Himba heritage remains present even within futuristic academic spaces, and the astrolabe is not explained as a single, universal piece of technology. Instead, the story resists turning people and objects into fixed, fully legible categories.

Glissant's idea of opacity shows that boundaries are not fixed or absolute. Instead, they are flexible spaces where new meanings and relationships emerge. The astrolabe reflects this logic: it refuses full transparency in order to resist being absorbed into a single, universal way of knowing. As a result, boundaries between human and non-human, familiar and alien, and known and unknown become places where difference can exist without being reduced or erased.This reflects Glissant's decolonial argument that ethical, relational knowledge does not require total understanding. This also resonates with broader cultural traditions, including Islamic intellectual thought, which values the idea of limitlessness for the knowledge. The Night Journey (Mi'rāj), for example, can be read as a metaphor for encountering what exceeds human comprehension. Together, these connections show how opacity helps us understand boundaries not just as limits, but as openings for meaningful relation.

Edward Said's concept of contrapuntal reading is an interpretive practice that urges critics to read literary and cultural texts not only within their dominant internal narratives, but also against and alongside the histories and experiences that those narratives marginalize, repress, or render invisible. Rather than treating a text as self-contained, contrapuntal reading attends to the simultaneous presence of multiple histories, particularly those shaped by imperialism and colonial power.As he said

"A comparative or, better, a contrapuntal perspective is required in order to see a connection between coronation rituals in England and the Indian durbars of the late nineteenth century. That is, we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them co-existing and interacting with others"

This method makes it possible to hear "other histories" that coexist with, interrupt, and unsettle the official story. Contrapuntal reading borrows its name from music, where counterpoint involves the articulation of multiple lines simultaneously, not to dissolve one into another, but to allow their interplay to create harmonic complexity.

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For Said, reading in this way means acknowledging that texts participate in larger historical and political configurations of power, empire, and resistance. It rejects a hierarchical privileging of a single narrative voice and instead synthesizes competing trajectories in order to reveal the text's embedded worldliness. This is evident in the relationship between British coronation rituals and the Indian durbars of the late nineteenth century. Read in isolation, English coronations appear as purely national ceremonies affirming bounded sovereignty, while Indian durbars seem like localized colonial spectacles. Contrapuntally reading, however, they emerge as interlinked performances of imperial authority: the coronation consolidates legitimacy within the metropole, while the durbar projects the same sovereignty across colonial space.

This contrapuntal structure is immediately visible when Binti travels through the desert with her Meduse companion Okwu: the desert signifies ancestral Himba continuity and spiritual rootedness, while Okwu's presence, an alien body once deemed an enemy by Oomza Uni, embodies the violent galactic moderniity that has already altered Binti's life. These systems coexist uneasily within the same physical space, each retaining its own internal coherence. When Binti arrives at her village, this tension intensifies as her family and community reject her not because she has abandoned Himba culture, but because her transformed body and Meduse connections render her unreadable within a singular cultural framework. The subsequent Khoush massacre of the Himba village makes Said's theory most explicit: Binti recognizes that the genocidal logic used against her people mirrors the earlier justification for the Meduse war, revealing how imperial violence operates across different cultural and planetary contexts while maintaining a consistent structure of domination.

This lens reveals that boundaries are neither neutral nor natural divisions but historical constructs shaped by imperial power. European cultural and political texts often assume stable national or civilizational borders, presenting them as self-contained and coherent. However, when read contrapuntally, these texts expose how such boundaries rely on the presence of colonized spaces that are rendered invisible or left unspoken. Contrapuntal reading shows that boundaries are fundamentally relational rather than absolute: the metropole and the colony do not exist as separate, opposing entities but are mutually constituted through shared economic, cultural, and political processes. Wealth, identity, and authority in imperial centers are produced through interactions that cross, blur, and ultimately destabilize formal borders, revealing imperial boundaries as contingent and unevenly maintained rather than fixed lines of separation.

Toni Morrison's notion of the site of memory to explain how Black interior worlds, who were historically dehumanized and erased, are re-inscribed through memory, landscape, and imaginative reconstruction. As McKittrick explicates, memory operates as a geopolitical and embodied process where the actual and possible interweave to create new senses of place and belonging, anchoring bodies otherwise consigned to erasure. For Morrison, the site of memory requires engaging both the actual world and its possible alternative worlds, in order to reconstruct interior lives and histories that have been suppressed or overwritten by dominant power structures.

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"The site of memory has to be real, and it has to be trusted as real, in order to recast the ways in which remembering and writing three-dimensionality—the physicality of the office, the bodies hemmed in, the problem of the twentieth century, ethnic locations is underscored by political reimaginations. Indeed, I am suggesting that the site of memory be used to rethink historical geographies, including interior lives, but also as a way to reaffirm contemporary geopolitical possibilities of black poetics"

In the third Binti book (The Night Masquerade), Binti convenes multiple leaders in a traditional calling ritual, agitating elders and unsettling established hierarchies. The ritual draws on an "old, old way" of Himba communication, cutting and passing a palm leaf, that predates advanced technologies like astrolabes, underscoring that tradition and innovation have long coexisted rather than replaced one another. As Binti draws the circle with otjize, the act becomes profoundly spatial and sensory: the fragrance triggers embodied memories of home, family, and communal life, collapsing distance between past and present. This moment unsettles established hierarchies because it places a young woman, marked by loss, hybrid identity, and contested belongin, at the center of a practice typically mediated by male elders. Chief Kapika's discomfort and insistence that certain decisions are "not for you to decide" reveals how ritual has been narrowed into a boundary-policing mechanism rather than a collective ethical forum. In McKittrick's terms, the ritual becomes a space where memory and landscape interact, allowing marginalized ways of knowing and being to be recognized and reasserted, and helping to form new collective spaces of belonging.This use of tradition closely parallels Islamic canonical models, particularly the life of the Muhammad, where inherited practices were not preserved as static customs but reactivated as sources of ethical knowledge and communal transformation. The Muhammad's reworking of existing Arabian rituals, such as pilgrimage, consultation (shūrā), and communal gathering, repositioned memory and place as active forces in shaping a just community rather than as relics of the past.

This lens reveals that boundries are not fixed lines enforced solely by institutions, but negotiated through spatial and ritual practices that determine whose knowledge is recognized. The ritual becomes a space where marginalized knowledge, previously excluded under the guise of "order", is reauthorized, demonstrating that epistemic boundaries are historically constructed rather than natural. Moreover, The agitatiion of elders reflects a fear of spatial disorder: once ritual space is opened, hierarchical control over territory and participation collapses. Boundaries, then, are revealed as spatial practices rather than merely social ones. Moreover, site of memory also reveals that that boundaries are enforced by controlling how the past is allowed to appear in the present e.g Tradition becomes a boundary when it is framed as static, frozen, and owned by elites.

When Binti leaves her Himba community without permission, Glissant's opacity, Said's contrapuntal reading, and McKittrick's site of memory operate simultaneously to reveal boundaries as negotiated rather than fixed.

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Opacity names the ethical refusal to be fully legible within dominant systems of understanding, protecting Binti from being reduced to transparent data, stable identity, or extractable knowledge. Contrapuntal reading situates this refusal within overlapping and uneven historical trajectories, exposing how seemingly neutral boundaries, such as education, civilization, or peace, are sustained by imperial logics that privilege universal knowledge while marginalizing Indigenous epistemologies. Site of memory grounds these abstract structures in lived, spatial practice, showing how memory, ritual, and sensory attachment allow suppressed histories to persist and reshape the present even across physical displacement. Together, these frameworks demonstrate that boundaries function not as neutral divisions but as contested zones where demands for legibility, historical erasure, and spatial control converge, and where resistance emerges through partial unknowability, historical multiplicity, and embodied remembrance.

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INT Students and Faculty Contribute to DePaul's Social Transformation Research Collaborative

This year, members of the International Studies Department were selected to participate in DePaul University's Social Transformation Research Collaborative (STRC), a program that supports humanities-based research as a source of justice and healing for communities historically shaped by, and still confronting, racism and violence. The STRC brings together interdisciplinary scholars and students whose work in literature, language, history, and culture demonstrates how the humanities deepen our understanding of society and empower us to build more just and equitable communities. The program emphasizes research not only as academic inquiry, but as a tool for social change.

Three members of the INT department were part of this transformative initiative: senior Kei Smith, Graduate student Rosbel Garza, and Faculty Fellow Dr. Shiera Malik. Through their participation, they contributed to research that centers justice, challenges systems of inequality, and explores how knowledge production itself can be a form of resistance and healing.

Their involvement reflects the International Studies Department's ongoing commitment to global awareness, interdisciplinary scholarship, and community-engaged research. Programs like the STRC show how our students and faculty are not only studying systems of power, they are actively working to transform them.

Dr. Shiera Malik

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