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From the Streets to the Ivory Tower: Kiswahili in African-American Cultural Discourse

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Abstract
"From the Streets to the Ivory Tower" provides an overview of the role Kiswahili, an East African language, has played in African-American cultural discourse. Highlighting selected texts, the essay argues Kiswahili contests the presumed primacy of Western languages and cultures and serves a transgressive, albeit somewhat contested, role in the burgeoning manifestations of Black Power/Nationalism/Diaspora. Debates about the language's efficacy were common in academic and popular journals in the middle and second half of the twentieth century; however, all arguments notwithstanding, Kiswahili remains a recognizable, commonly taught, and often referenced African language—from literary texts (Scott-Heron, Killens, Reed) to advertisements (Afro Sheen) to cultural celebrations (Kwanzaa) to children's books (Feelings)—in African-American discourse.

Keywords African Diaspora · Karenga · Reed · Killens · Scott-Heron · Kiswahili

Introduction

On Thursday, August 23, 1951, Representative Frances P. Bolton delivered a speech to the United States' House of Representatives in which she proudly celebrated the 35th anniversary of Karamu House, a cultural center in her home district of Cleveland, Ohio. Bolton described the center as "one of the greatest democratizing forces in our America," and she paid tribute to Rowena and Russell Jelliffe, the Oberlin College graduates who had started the center at the behest of Cleveland's Second Presbyterian Church Men's Club in 1915 (Selby 1966: 11–21). The community center was informally known as the "Playhouse" until 1927, when Hazel Mountain Walker, Cleveland's "first colored school principal" (Gillespie 1956), led a group that

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discovered, in a Kiswahili dictionary, a name to match the African decor of the new theater: "The name 'Karamu' seemed to jump right out of the page. Meaning a central place in a village where people held their dances and festivals, the word had a soft cadence and exotic look ... Karamu's definition had double significance, 'center of the community, a place of enjoyment.' That was *it*!" (Newald 1963: 92). The name for the new theater stuck, and by 1941, the entire complex had been renamed and incorporated as Karamu House, Inc. (Selby 1966: 62).

Hazel Mountain Walker's choice of *karamu* anticipated a trend throughout the African Diaspora of using African languages, particularly Kiswahili, to assert African identity. If, in fact, Walker chose *karamu* as much for its meaning as for its "soft cadence and exotic look," then it is clear her interest lay not in what Kiswahili could provide as a language of instruction or as a lingua franca, but rather what it could provide as a rhetorical marker of Africa-ness. Walker's prescience in utilizing Kiswahili in this way can be understood as a variation of what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin call the "metonymic gap" so often found in postcolonial writings—"that cultural gap formed when appropriations of a colonial language insert unglossed words, phrases or passages from a first language, or concepts, allusions or references that may be unknown to the reader" (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 137). This particular metonymic gap, while technically not "postcolonial," produces an unfamiliar reference in and around its Cleveland locale, but it is not in the first language of Walker or later members of Karamu House. Instead, it is a consciously chosen, appropriated, and performed gap through which *karamu* signifies both a particular place in Cleveland and a powerfully imagined cultural identity.

The naming of this community center in Cleveland also exemplifies "linguistic counter-penetration," the phenomenon that Kenyan scholar Ali A. Mazrui (1998) has defined as the cultural and conceptual strategy which serves to "counteract the growing Eurocentricization of the world" (42). The use of Kiswahili in this process of counter-penetration has been manifested primarily through various means of linguistic performance, through which many non-Kiswahili speakers have creatively appropriated and performed Kiswahili words or phrases for personal, political, and artistic purposes. In *The Power of Babel*, Mazrui defines linguistic counter-penetration as an "aspect of, and a device for, cultural and conceptual counter-penetration" through which Africans, or other marginalized peoples, are able to penetrate and disrupt the presumed supremacy of Western languages and cultures. More specifically, he argues that "the very presence of African languages in the West constitutes a form of (macro-)linguistic counter-penetration" (42–43). Because linguistic counter-penetration is both an "aspect of" and a "device for" cultural and epistemological counter-penetrations, the presence of African languages in the West potentiates a need to reconstitute the linguistic, cultural, and epistemological systems that have for so long denigrated their African counterparts.

To state the obvious, language matters within what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has famously called "contact zones," or those "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). Pratt borrows the term "contact zone" from the field of linguistics, wherein "contact language refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of different native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in context of trade" (6). When cultures clash, there are

always forms of resistance through which the cultures mutually influence each other, leading to variations of what Pratt terms “transculturation” (6), a concept that contests tidy, totalizing notions of asymmetrical imposition. Scholars Lutz Diegner and Frank Schulze-Engler (2015) co-edited a special edition of the journal *Matatu* which they introduce by stating their purpose: “to contextualize the concept of ‘contact zone’ within contemporary East Africa [and] to apply theories of ‘contact zone(s)’ fruitfully to East African literature in Swahili, English, and hybrid languages…and to link them up with regional, continental, and global academic discourses” (10). Kiswahili occupies a significantly different cultural space in East Africa, of course, but Diegner and Schulze-Engler bring together a collection of essays that consider the implications—linguistic, cultural, even political—of Kiswahili’s multitudinous regional role, all within the context of Pratt’s concept of the contact zone.

One contributor to this special volume, Said Khamis (2015), focuses particular attention on what he calls the “interpolation of Swahili in Afrosporic texts.” Khamis argues that the “interpolated items themselves define the notion of the contact zone,” and that what I call Kiswahili performative utterances add much more to a particular literary text than “local color” (55). In other words, the mere presence of Kiswahili in texts written in a “dominant language” fosters a number of potential effects—it can elicit nostalgia, create playful satire, engage with contested histories, or even represent the interface of oral and written traditions. Whatever the effect of these interpolated items, Khamis grounds his discussion through the contact zone and recognizes how power is at stake in these instances of textual interpolation. Khamis’s argument provides a theoretical frame for thinking about how Kiswahili functions in the multilingual cultures of East Africa, while I want to extend his and these other theoretical trajectories by suggesting that African-Americans’ transgressive use of Kiswahili in literary and cultural texts outside of a culture of linguistic competence exemplifies a mode of textual-linguistic resistance that disrupts Western languages and penetrates the hegemonic discourse that sets the predominantly white, Western world against its perceived darker, non-Western Other.

Kiswahili and the African Diaspora

But, what is Kiswahili? Why did it emerge as the most recognizable, most often taught, and most commonly appropriated African language? Scholars have wrestled with these questions for decades (Whiteley (1969), Coleman (1971), Khalid (1977), Indakwa (1978), Nurse and Spear (1985), Mazrui and Mazrui (1995, 1998), Chimerah (2000), Legére (2004)), but what seems certain is that Kiswahili is the language of the Swahili people, a relatively marginal ethnic group inhabiting stretches of East Africa’s Indian Ocean coastline. Its history intersects with narratives of Indian Ocean commerce, intra-African trade and exploration, Arabic and Islamic influence, Western colonial domination, and twentieth-century national language policies and politics. The language has spread from its cultural and geographical points of origin, and forms of Kiswahili are now spoken throughout eastern and central Africa, where it often functions as a lingua franca. Given the fluid nature of linguistic boundaries and the porous nature of political boundaries, it is nearly impossible to determine exactly where Kiswahili ends and other languages begin. Nevertheless, Kiswahili is thought to be spoken by approximately 100

million people and can be heard in a number of different countries, including Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, and Malawi (Mulokozi 2005: 6). While within continental Africa Kiswahili transgresses borders and boundaries amorphously, in the African-American context it occupies an ambivalent discursive role, particularly in questions about its efficacy—as an East African language—for expressing African-American diasporic identity given that, historically, many African Americans would claim a West African lineage. Even without consensus on its efficacy, when Kiswahili utterances penetrate non-Kiswahili texts and contexts, they participate in various strategies of contestation, such as abrogation and appropriation. When writers abrogate, they refuse "the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words, and when they appropriate, they take the language and make it 'bear the burden' of their own cultural experiences" (Ashcroft, et al. 2002: 37–38). Together, these strategies allow artists to confront the presumably normative culture of the center and create original works which reflect the complexity of historically asymmetrical relationships, and they enable artists to speak to various audiences simultaneously, thereby enriching their texts with double meanings.

Each individual utterance is utilized for different reasons and each demands its own contextual reading, but broadly speaking these utterances disrupt a discourse that has traditionally privileged White/Western ideas, languages, and cultures. Cleveland's Karamu House, for example, exemplifies abrogative and appropriative strategic doubling. Its very presence denies the totalizing power of English in its local neighborhood by drawing attention to the foreign sounding word and to the center itself. It signifies on numerous levels, ranging from the local (Karamu House) to the transnational (diasporic affiliation). The question remains, then, how does this cultural center's name relate to the broader discourse about African diasporic identity?

In addressing this question, I engage theories of diaspora that invoke *translation* as the central metaphor of diasporic formation, suggesting both the figurative and literal importance of language in theorizing diaspora. After all, unlike other diasporas, the African Diaspora has no shared "original" lingua franca or sacred language through which its members can communicate. Brent Hayes Edwards (2001) traces the history of *diaspora* to the three "classic" diasporas—the Jewish, the Greek, and the Armenian—and he notes that the African Diaspora adheres to several of the characteristics of these classics, in that it conceives of "an origin in the scattering and uprooting of communities, a history of 'traumatic and forced departure,' and also the sense of a real or imagined relationship to a 'homeland,' mediated through the dynamics of collective memory and the politics of 'return'" (52). Edwards develops his ideas on diaspora in his full-length work, *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003), by invoking the linguistic term of *translation* in his discussion: "Another way to put this point [of the differences inherent to diaspora] is to note that the cultures of black internationalism can be seen only *in translation*. It is not possible to take up the question of 'diaspora' without taking account of the fact that the great majority of peoples of African descent do not speak or write in English" (7). Furthermore, he claims that one can only "approach" a project on diaspora "by attending to the ways that discourse of internationalism *travel*, the ways they are translated, disseminated, reformulated, and debated in transnational contexts marked by difference" (7). Given the traumatic histories of the slave trade and

colonialism, there is always the danger of eliding the historical diversity of continental Africa and creating unity and sameness out of disunity and difference. In the particular case of language, reconstituting an African diasporic linguistic identity essentially means creating an identity that never actually existed; therefore, the increasing gravitation toward Kiswahili by African peoples is less about *re*creating a bygone African linguistic commonality than it is about creating an identity broad enough to traverse and to encompass the historical differences within the African imagined community.

In the pages that follow, I trace various African-American uses of Kiswahili words and phrases and theorize these appropriations as textual-linguistic performative utterances that attempt to simultaneously disclaim the primacy of Western cultures and languages and proclaim the cultural and linguistic legacies that have historically been degraded or elided through various forms of oppression. The ubiquitous performances of Kiswahili in the second half of the twentieth century are both symptomatic and symbolic of a transforming Black consciousness that attempts to confront racial inequality throughout the diaspora. Kiswahili is both appropriative and abrogative when it functions through textual-linguistic performative utterances, and the appearance of Kiswahili creates multiple meanings that simultaneously disclaim and proclaim, all the while mediating the complex relationship between text and context. Performative uses of Kiswahili are not engaged in a multilingual project, necessarily, for the Kiswahili utterances typically lack any engagement with syntax or developed vocabulary. Instead, such Kiswahili phrases and words function as performative utterances that invoke particular cultural allusions and "links" in a multifaceted, multicultural, and multilinguistic communicative "chain" (Bakhtin 1981). In doing so, these utterances mark out a type of speech community that ignores linguistic competence and favors the performative value of potentially subversive linguistic tactics.

The Language of US: Kiswahili and Black Cultural (Trans)nationalism

Perhaps no one person and no one organization are more responsible for promoting Kiswahili in the broad context of African-American cultural discourse than Maulana Karenga and his nationalist organization, US. In the wake of the Los Angeles-area Watts uprising of 1965, US occupied an important role in the developing discourse of Black Cultural Nationalism. US oriented its entire vision of cultural nationalism around a Kiswahili utterance—*Kawaida* ("custom" or more broadly "habitual behavior")—which Karenga (1977a) described as the "only black ideology created in America." Karenga was and remains an influential thinker in the development of various iterations of black nationalism. Upon the 49th anniversary of US's founding, Karenga (2014) wrote, "we of US saw ourselves as revolutionary *and* cultural nationalists…dedicated to the far-reaching, deep and radical transformation of ourselves, society, and the world only revolution could achieve" (3). Here, Karenga dismisses the distinction between revolutionary nationalists (e.g., Black Panthers) and so-called cultural nationalists such as US. As historians Peniel Joseph (2006), Keith Mayes (2006), James Smethurst (2005), Scot Brown (2003), and others recount, rivalries abound among various black nationalist groups during the 1960s–1970s, but Karenga maintained that there was a false distinction between *cultural* and *revolutionary* because "the defining feature of any people or nation" is culture (5); therefore, revolutionary nationalism must be

understood in relation to the culture of the revolutionary people. In his early history of the Black Power Movement in the United States, Van Deburg (1993) notes Karenga's importance in "leading the West Coast 'back to black' movement in clothing and hairstyles; championing the teaching of Swahili as a 'non-tribal' language of 'self-determination'; sponsoring community-based arts events; and inaugurating the celebration of black holidays such as *Uhuru Day*" (171). *Uhuru Day* commemorated the Watts riots of 1965 by invoking the ubiquitous Kiswahili word *uhuru* (freedom/independence), a word that was central to Jomo Kenyatta's rhetoric in establishing himself as the first leader of independent Kenya. To be sure, it is difficult to overstate Karenga's influence vis a vis African-American interest in Kiswahili as a linguistic marker of diasporic identity.

Following Watts, US helped to circulate the notion of Kiswahili as a revolutionary language and as a signifier of African diasporic identity. The group was profiled in popular magazines such as *The New Republic* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, and it inspired an entire jazz album, *Kawaida* (1969), by a group of prominent musicians, including Albert and Jimmy Heath and Herbie Hancock. Historian Keith Mayes (2006) writes, "the Watts rebellion certainly gave birth to the leadership of Karenga, US, and the new political culture of black nationalism in southern California" (231). Karenga's message spread through a number of print and broadcast media outlets. In one example of US's increasing public profile, US member and Korean War veteran Ngao Damu appeared on the cover of the July 15, 1966, *Life* magazine, along with a group of young boys wearing yellow shirts with "Simba" written across their chests. The caption announced: "THE YOUNG LIONS: In Shirts Labeled 'Simba'—Swahili for Lion—Young Militants are Drilled in Watts." Brown (2003) identifies Damu and notes that he "was a key original member of US who had a great deal of influence on the US paramilitary wing called *Simba Wachanga* ("young lions")" (40). *Life* devoted a special section to a retrospective analysis of Watts, including a full-page picture of Karenga wearing his then trademark green *buba*, a type of poncho that he wore, in part, because "it bugs white people" (Dunne 1966: 85).

In addition to his own writings and his visibility in these popular magazines, Karenga regularly appeared on radio stations in Southern California in order to spread his message of cultural nationalism and of African Americans' need to reclaim their self-determination through cultural symbols and accouterments, including language. In one such appearance, on KPFK radio on April 28, 1969, Karenga (1969) was joined by his wife, Haifa, and her first words were "*Habari gani*," which she translated as, "What's happening?" (Watson). Within a few years, Kiswahili's rhetorical reach could be seen in commercial advertising, when Vincent Cullers developed an ad campaign for Afro Sheen that employed Kiwsahili to convince consumers that Kiswahili was the language of "black is beautiful." Buying ad space in magazines such as *Ebony* and sponsoring the television dance program *Soul Train*, Afro Sheen by Johnson Products Company of Chicago (1972b) sold the product with lines such as "*Watu wazuri Hutumia Afrosheen* (beautiful people use Afro Sheen)"; "*kila kitu* is 'everything' in Swahili. Afro Sheen's new Holding Spray is everything a hair spray should be"; and the caption "*Kama baba, kama mwana* (like father, like son)," which accompanied an image of a father and son (1972a). Taken together, this enhanced multimedia presence exemplified Kiswahili's popularization among African Americans, which can be attributed in large part to Karenga and US.

The legacy of US is most recognizable in Kwanzaa, the cultural holiday its members first celebrated in December 1966. Many people erroneously believe *Kwanzaa* is a Kiswahili word describing an African harvest festival, but Karenga never made such a claim and, in fact, has been earnest in explaining the conceptual and linguistic underpinning of the holiday. *Kwanza*—with one "a"—is a Kiswahili word meaning "first," but *Kwanzaa*, according to Karenga (1977b), identifies "an indigenous Afro-American creation and [it] is the only nationally celebrated non-heroic Afro-American holiday in the U.S. and thus, must be viewed and valued as such by us as a people" (13). As Karenga tells it, the story of the additional "a" in Kwanzaa exemplifies the inherently split identity of African Americans:

> [at] the very beginning of US, there were only seven children in the organization and they wanted to put on a program in which each of them represented and explained a letter of Kwanzaa. So we … adjusted the spelling of the word to their wish and in the process … proved at the inception of the holiday where our priorities are. (16)

The priorities included celebrating African-Americans' double consciousness, to borrow DuBois's term, and providing a positive means of affirming a set of core values.

The core values of Kwanzaa, and of US's *Kawaida* more generally, are expressed in Kiswahili as the *Nguzo Saba*, or the Seven Principles: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith). Each of these principles is, in a sense, what I have termed a performative utterance—individually, each represents a deep concept allegedly rooted in African cultures, while collectively they comprise a constructed set of values that serve as a guide for everyday living. Kiswahili is utilized in the construction of the *Nguzo Saba*, but one need not be competent in the language to understand and practice the principles. Instead, the use of Kiswahili is imagined to provide linguistic legitimacy to the very ideological system it constructs. True, US often provided Kiswahili lessons and classes to its members and the wider community, but in the case of the *Nguzo Saba*, Kiswahili articulates an African past and fosters nationalistic unity without ever engaging in the grammatical or syntactical minutiae of the language. US's cultural nationalism appropriates various and disparate African cultures in order to construct a flexible cultural history for African Americans and a meaningful ideology for US that is most effectively expressed through Kiswahili.

Questions arise, then, about US's choice of Kiswahili. Why, for example, choose Kiswahili for this syncretic amalgam of African and American culture? Karenga has said that he chose Kiswahili for three basic reasons. First, he suggests it is a "non-tribal" language and "thus shows no ethnic or so-called 'tribal' preference"; second, because it is "pan-African in character," as are African-Americans; third, Karenga and US chose Kiswahili as a "matter of self-determination according to [their] own needs and understanding and [they] reject racists' attempts to identify it with slavery or any other negative in order to discredit it" (1977b: 53–54). Though the claim of a non-tribal Kiswahili may be open to debate, given historical evidence of Swahili culture, Karenga is correct to say that because the Swahili are a relatively small and politically marginal ethnic group other African groups would not feel threatened by

elevating Kiswahili to represent an array of African peoples. Karenga's Kiswahili-centered vision has had its share of critics, several of whom have questioned the value of Kiswahili and what they perceived as Karenga's puerile performative antics. For example, US's ongoing feud with the Black Panther Party (BPP) has been well documented by Scot Brown and others, and it is clear the BPP rejected *Kawaida* and the notion that an abstracted Black cultural essentialism was necessary to achieve political gains. For example, a BPP member, Linda Harrison (1970), claimed cultural nationalism was "essentially grounded in one fact; a universal denial and ignoring of the present political, social, and economic realities and a concentration on the past as a frame of reference." She went on to argue that the "'I'm Black and Proud' theory" of Black cultural nationalism—including the supposition that a "common language; Swahili; [sic] makes all of us brothers ignores the political and concrete, and concentrates on a myth and fantasy" (151). Here, Harrison views the cultural performance mandated by US as frivolous, and she singles out the era's most public proponents of Kiswahili, US and Karenga.

Controversial or not, ideologically misguided or not, the organization and its leader are foundational to Kiswahili's dominant role among African languages in African-American cultural history. African Americans did not begin speaking Kiswahili in large numbers, but Kwanzaa has grown into an established annual celebration, Black Studies programs with Kiswahili opportunities have become the norm at major academic institutions, and Kiswahili utterances have been utilized in a number of creative ways, indicating Kiswahili's role is not simply a relic of 1960s Black America. Furthermore, US's promotion of Kiswahili led to its common incorporation into many works of Black Power's cultural cousin, the Black Arts Movement (BAM). As James Smethwurst (2005) demonstrates in his history of BAM, Karenga influenced high-profile artists across the country—Amiri Baraka (New Jersey), Kalamu ya Salaam (New Orleans), and Hadi Madhubuti (Chicago), to name a few—whose roles in BAM provided clues as to the breadth of Kiswahili's infiltration of African-American cultural discourse.

Spreading Kiswahili: Tell It to the Children and Take It to the Streets

In 1971, Muriel Feelings (1976) published a children's book titled *Moja Means One* to teach children of African descent how to count in Kiswahili, the East African language Feelings had encountered while teaching in Uganda in the late 1960s. She dedicated the book "to all Black children living in the Western Hemisphere, hoping you will one day speak the language—in Africa." Feelings (1981) followed it a few years later with *Jambo Means Hello*, an alphabet book that sought to "introduce the reader to Swahili words." In the introduction to each book, Feelings provides a brief statement about the language's reach in central and eastern Africa, claiming that "one major importance of learning Swahili is that it serves as a common language and a unifying force among the many varying cultures and countries of Africa" (1971). In *Jambo*, she goes further and predicts, "because Swahili is spoken across such a vast area of the African continent, it could one day serve as the continental language." Feelings' prediction has never materialized, but her understanding of Kiswahili's reach as a regional and potentially continental language and her desire to encourage Black children in the West to learn the

language must be understood in relation to the broad appeal of Kiswahili during the 1960s and 1970s in the United States.

The presentation of Kiswahili as an African language writ-large matches the overall tone of Feelings's texts, and the final two paragraphs of *Moja*'s introduction make clear the motivation in suggesting Kiswahili's relationship to a generalized Africa:

> Part of our heritage is language. For example, in various Black communities in the United States, many of our people have taken Swahili names, Black students are learning Swahili in schools and colleges … I have written this book in the hope that young boys and girls of African origin will enjoy learning to count in Swahili, together with gaining more knowledge of their African heritage.

Feelings is right to point out the increasing prevalence of Kiswahili in formal and informal settings, and she clearly wants her work to be read in the broader context of Kiswahili's penetration of United States' cultural discourse, but the relationship between children of African descent in the West and Kiswahili introduces a potential incongruity between the East African language and the mostly West African heritage of African peoples in the Americas. Simply put, Kiswahili is likely *not* a part of the specific linguistic heritage of the targeted audience of "Black children living in the Western Hemisphere." Even if Kiswahili was not adopted by all African Americans, however, its increasing role in the era's debates and its linguistic legacy is written into many literary works of the era, as Kiswahili developed a rhetorical, if not specifically linguistic, role within the broader African-American discourse.

John Oliver Killens's *The Cotillion, or One Good Bull is Half the Herd* (1971/2002) exemplifies this ethos. The novel includes a foreword from the narrator, Ben Ali Lumumba, in which he claims to have written his book in "Afro-Americanese. Black rhythm … Black idiom, Black nuances, Black style. Black truths. Black exaggerations." He then goes on to appraise his own narrative: "Nevertheless and basically this is a Black comedy. I mean a Black black comedy. Dig it. And I meant to do myself some signifying. I meant to let it all hang out." Lumumba indeed lets it "all hang out" in this raucous satire of Black middle class aspiration, and his conscious "signifying," coupled with his use of Kiswahili later in the novel, provokes thoughtful consideration of the ways in which Kiswahili is signified in and through the African-American literary tradition. In *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates (1988) argues that Signifyin(g) is fundamental to the interplay between the African-American vernacular and literary traditions and that it is "the black trope of tropes" (51). As a de facto "ur-trope," Signifyin(g) forges complex rhetorical relationships among texts, and it simultaneously constructs and critiques its constitutive canon through a number of "double-voiced textual relations" (xxv). Gates proposes four specific types of double-voiced textual relations, including "tropological revision," which he defines as "the manner in which a specific trope is repeated, with differences, between two or more texts" (xxv). The use of Kiswahili in otherwise non-Kiswahili texts can be read as a repeating trope, particularly because references to and uses of Kiswahili constitute an intertextual and self-reflexive critique regarding the use of Kiswahili within African-American cultural discourse. That is, Kiswahili has represented, for some, a linguistic tool by which such diasporic fragments might be reassembled, but because the Ur-trope of African-American literary

discourse, Signifyin(g), is always double-voiced and self-reflexive, others have contested the notion that Kiswahili can foster diasporic identity.

As this essay demonstrates, Kiswahili commonly repeats with signal differences and provides intertextual associations that make a transgressive and transnational claim to a burgeoning diasporic identity. In order to "read" Kiswahili utterances as manifestations of Signifyin(g), I argue that African Diasporic identity is constructed and supported by the inherently transgressive and fragmented diasporic community, and the ongoing critical revision of Kiswahili constitutes a complex, oppositional linguistic discourse that attempts to penetrate Western ("white") linguistic systems. Critiques of the diasporic utilization of Kiswahili are woven into the tradition through critical repetition, which we see in Lumumba's ability to satirize himself in *The Cotillion* without undermining his entire narrative. In his study of the "sacredly profane novel" of African-American satire, Darryl Dickson-Carr (2001) claims that although there is a lack of ideological consistency within the tradition of the twentieth-century African-American satirical novel, there are several "essential characteristics: unremitting iconoclasm, criticism of the current status of African American political and cultural trends, and indictment of specifically American forms of racism" (16). Killens' novel certainly meets these criteria through its ideologically double-voiced representation of the relationship between African Americans and Africa, which empowers the novel to provide simultaneous commentary on white racism and on the idiosyncrasies of diasporic cultural politics, and it inscribes a Black transnationalism through which Kiswahili is performed rhetorically and linguistically.

Through his own imaginative and colorful language, Lumumba tells the story of the Lovejoy family, particularly the aspirations of Daphne, a racially mixed woman from Barbados who wants her daughter, Yoruba, to participate in a cotillion sponsored by the "Femmes Fatales, a fancy colored women's club in Brooklyn." The club had decided to break from tradition and invite a select number of "culturally deprived" girls from Harlem to take part in the festivities (42). Matthew, Yoruba's father and an aspiring Black nationalist, remains skeptical of the club he describes as the "Fems Fat Tails," but Daphne seeks the favor of these upwardly mobile Black women because she believes they can guarantee a bright future for her daughter. Yoruba's ascent to the position of debutante is disrupted, however, when she encounters Lumumba. The pair had been childhood friends, but Lumumba disappeared and spent years away at sea, where he developed a thoughtful pan-African consciousness. In pursuit of Yoruba, Lumumba persuades Daphne to see the folly of her desire to mimic High Society when they both witness firsthand the moral depravity of a White cotillion on Long Island. Following her disillusionment, Daphne is powerless to stop Lumumba and Yoruba's plan to turn the Femmes Fatales' stuffy cotillion into something "black and beautiful," a clear subversion of the group's mimicry of class conventions.

Intra-racial tensions drive the satirical thrust of the novel, but these superficially local tensions are represented through a loosely defined black internationalism which recurs throughout the novel—repeated allusions to Negritude; a mention of South African singer Miriam Makeba (7) and an Ashanti stool (84); numerous references to Zanzibar, Timbuktu, and other African locales; the West Indian heritage of Yoruba's mother, Daphne; and the two primary characters' names, *Lumumba* and *Yoruba*. Such diasporic imagery immediately links the happenings in Harlem to a broader context. For instance, Yoruba's father, with "the smell of whisky on his breath," commends his

daughter for her decision to attend the Grand Cotillion wearing an African robe and natural hair by saying, "I knowed I named you right. … You are truly an African beauty. Truly African beauty! So help me Brother Malcolm" (214). Matthew aligns his daughter with both Africa and America, thereby imbuing Yoruba with a diasporic identity comprising both African and American components. The point here is that in a novel replete with African and diasporic imagery, most critical attention hardly broaches the implications of Killens' juxtapositions, focusing, instead, on the domestic critique. If we read the representation of New York City's African-American community through the transnational frame, however, we can see how the two are necessarily interrelated and how the Kiswahili performative utterances fit into the larger dialogic complex of *The Cotillion*.

Early in the novel, Lumumba reflects on Yoruba's beauty in lyrical tones:

> She strolled like she was used to carrying bundles on her lovely head, as if somehow she conjured up from the depths of some dark mysterious whirlpool of sweet remembrance deep inside her, she called up memories of the roads her great ancestors used to travel on their way to Lagos and Accra. Enugu, Bamako, Ouagadougou. Her distant cousins still strolled down those distant highways. *Uhuru!* Skin-givers—plank-spankers! *Ujamaa*. (5 emphasis mine)

Lumumba imagines a deep memory of Yoruba's ancestors, but in doing so, he produces a discordance: these ancestors walk the roads of West Africa, including what are now Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Burkina Faso, but the language invoked—Kiswahili—is East African. The linguistic performance of these Kiswahili utterances—*Uhuru* and its rhetorical connections to the freedom fighters of Kenya's Mau Mau rebellion, and the invocation of Julius Nyerere's vision of African socialism called *Ujamaa*—contributes to the broader cultural and linguistic performance of the novel, enhances its already robust internationalism, and suggests a way in which performed Kiswahili utterances can be read as a part of the Afro-Americanese signifying so central to discussions of *The Cotillion*.

When it comes time for Yoruba to *act* and subvert the Femmes Fatales' cotillion, "every single one of [her] firm and militant resolves was melting by the second … It was so much easier to talk militant and act militant than it was to do militant" (230). Yoruba's uncertainty at her moment of truth exemplifies the anxieties of the novel by forcing her to face the distinction between superficial performance and political action. Until this moment, Yoruba had been caught up in the game of Blackness, and she had been living in a world where "the World Series of Blackness was played every hour every day every week, to see who was the very Blackest of the Black" (65). In this game, Blackness was performance—robes, dashikis, new names, hairstyles, and catch phrases—and required little action for which one could be held accountable. In his description of Yoruba's Black world, Lumumba thrusts a satirical jab at Kiswahili's role in the game: "In Yoruba's now world, Black was the 'in thing' and the 'end thing.' Alpha and Omega, or words in Swahili to that effect. She had gone all the way with the Black thing … and, unlike some (not all) of her Black (in quotes) brethren, she still showered every morning" (66). Lumumba's tone is increasingly cynical in this passage, as the parenthetical annotations indicate, but his throwaway comment about "words in Swahili" is especially revealing in relation to the novel's linguistic fabric. There are, of

course, Kiswahili words to approximate "Alpha and Omega"—*kwanza na mwisho*, for instance—but Lumumba clearly has no interest in his or Yoruba's ability to speak the language. Instead, his allusion to Swahili satirizes the superficial performance of identity as though the linguistic "in thing" of Blackness simply requires one to speak a number of "in" catch phrases. Any meaningful engagement with the language, at the level of linguistic competence, is an afterthought (if not a superfluity) in a world of rhetorical and linguistic performance. Ironically, Lumumba himself has already utilized the ubiquitous *Uhuru* and *Ujamaa* in his description of Yoruba's imagined stroll across West Africa. In Lumumba's use, however, Kiswahili generally functions in dialogic and metonymic ways. The words interrupt the presumed linguistic coherence of the novel, invoke a chain of historical and cultural allusions, perform a particular type of identity, and stand in for an Africa writ large.

Campus Conflicts and Kiswahili

Killens' novel represents Lumumba's world-wise street smarts, but around the same time he was expanding his consciousness so informally, the curricula of educational institutions were expanding to include Kiswahili in various manifestations. In his analysis of African-American students' interest in Kiswahili, M. L. Temu (1992) claims that "to identify with Africa and to learn more about its wealth of culture, African American students in the 1960s urged their colleges and universities to include African languages in their curricula," and, indeed, by 1962, there were more students enrolled in Kiswahili classes than in all other African language classes combined (533–34). Kiswahili had taken hold as the most commonly taught African language early in the decade, and its popularity only grew as the advocates of Black Power converged with student activists and established demands for more inclusive and diverse curricula on a number of traditionally white and black campuses. This legacy has had a lasting effect, as noted by Eyamba Georges Bokamba (2002) in his history of African language instruction in the United States, in which he concludes that Kiswahili is "the most widely taught African language in the U.S. today [2002]." Data from the Modern Language Association's "Language Enrollment Database" (2019), which tracks enrollment in language courses from 1958 to the current day, support this assertion. The enrollment figure for Fall 1968 was 608 students, but by 1977 that number ballooned to 2225. There was a bit of a dip in the 1980s, but the most recent year (2016) for which data is available lists 1842 enrolled students in Kiswahili classes. No other continental African language even approaches these numbers. Arabic, spoken widely in North African communities, currently has over 30,000 enrollees, but this includes varieties of Arabic spoken throughout North Africa and the Middle East and likely reflects contemporary interest and American interventions in this broad geographical region. Ultimately, these numbers tell us that United States' educational institutional interest in Kiswahili that began in an era Black Power and cultural nationalism has continued, with some waxing and waning, and solidified Kiswahili's reputation and role as a popularly recognized and taught African language.

Explanations for *why* Kiswahili was and remains so popular are largely speculative. For Bokamba, "Inspired perhaps by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere's political philosophy of *Ujamaa*, or African socialism, and the policy of using Swahili as the

national language of Tanzania, black students viewed Swahili as the language of Africa and therefore of their ancestors" (17). The Tanzanian connection seems plausible, given the overall rhetorical popularity of Nyerere and Tanzania among those with a pan-African consciousness, but there is no clear cut explanation for the emergence of Kiswahili. Whatever the reasons, Kiswahili has definitely come to signify, linguistically at least, a connection to a common past. Asked about the "desire of black Americans to study Swahili," R.A. Snoxall (1970), who established Kiswahili instruction at UCLA and was one of Karenga's instructors, replied that "although this study was unlikely to provide a magic key to unlock an African past, and a mainly West African past at that, it could only do good to those who took it up, whatever the color of their skin" (65). Snoxall's casual response anticipates two key issues in the debate regarding Kiswahili's viability for African Americans—its impact in "real" terms and the apparent incongruity between the East African language and the predominantly West African heritage of African peoples in the West.

In general, the discourse that developed regarding Kiswahili provided challenges to Karenga's and other nationalists' enthusiasm for the language, and skeptics often echoed Snoxall's comment that, while worth studying, Kiswahili could not provide a "magic key" to an African past that never was. In *Negro Digest*, contributing writer Adhama Oluwa Kijembe (1969) argued, "some people gravitated to Kiswahili (Swahili), perhaps because it was the only African language they had heard about (almost to the point of cliché; 'Gee, don't all Africans speak Swahili?'), and, of course, Swahili was the source of that great word *Uhuru*, symbolizing the elusive concept of Freedom" (5). Kijembe's cynicism about the depth of knowledge regarding Kiswahili and the specific rhetorical power of *Uhuru* challenges the impact of Kiswahili within cultural nationalist movements in 1960s black America, and it challenges any blind faith in *Uhuru* as a panacea: "Knowing how to speak Swahili won't conjure up miracles for the hard-pressed Black American … merely intoning *Uhuru*, unlike the mythical *shazam*, won't turn anyone into Captain Marvel. Nor will it put money in the pocket or food on the table" (7). While Kijembe was probably correct in this assertion, such disparagement ignores the power of cultural forms and elides the relationship between cultural and political self-determination. Around the same time, Kijembe openly questioned the efficacy of Kiswahili in the pages of *Negro Digest*, Beverly Coleman, who had lived in Tanzania and went on to teach Kiswahili at California State College at Los Angeles, repeatedly showed her support for Kiswahili. In an essay in *Black World*, Coleman (1970) explored the "relevancy in teaching and learning Swahili" for African Americans, and she argued African-American students ought to study languages for the "psychological and sociological" benefits. In her 1971 essay in *The Black Scholar*, Coleman declared her view regarding the broader discourse about Kiswahili: "[Kiswahili's] existence and relevance to black people asks for no defense and needs none … the growing world status of Swahili neither competes for nor precludes the importance or international possibilities of any other African language" (13). Black internationalism is imbricated in Kiswahili's discursive role, and the academic debates either reflected or inspired the language's entry into a broader cultural and literary discourse, as well. Two "campus novels"—Gil Scott-Heron's *The Nigger Factory* (1972) and Ishmael Reed's *Japanese By Spring* (1996)—from different eras and with decidedly different esthetics, represent Kiswahili's contested role in this broad discourse.

Scott-Heron had already published a novel, *The Vulture*, by the time he published *The Nigger Factory* in 1972, but he is mostly known for his music and his spoken-word verse. His first book of poetry, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox* (1970), includes "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," which emerged as an anthem for many Black Power advocates. *The Nigger Factory* begins with a brief author's note, in which Scott-Heron proclaims a need for "new educational aspects" and leaves little doubt as to the political aims of the novel: "The center of our intellectual attention must be thrust away from Greek, Western thought toward Eastern and Third World thought. Our examples in the arts must be Black and not white … The education process will not whitewash them into thinking that their troubles are over. They will come out as Black people" (ix-x). *The Nigger Factory* depicts a student protest similar to the many actual campus uprisings of the late 1960s and early 1970s that agitated for Black and/or African Studies programs. It represents a student strike-turned-riot at the fictional Sutton University, an all-black institution located in Sutton, Virginia, and its subject matter is set in relation to Black Power, Black Student activism, and the textual-linguistic performance of Kiswahili. The novel rails against the alleged complacency of Black education, especially at HBCUs, and calls for action in developing relevant and functional programs for Black students. The call for a less Eurocentric curriculum also feeds into the central image of the novel, a radical student group who call themselves the "Members of Justice United for Meaningful Black Education," or MJUMBE. Kiswahili plays a foundational role in this group's formation and mission.

In addition to being an acronym, MJUMBE is also a Kiswahili word, *mjumbe*. Chapter two of the novel begins by informing readers that "*Mjumbe* is the Swahili word meaning messenger," but the narrator never delves more deeply into the implications of the word or of the language. And yet, the word inscribes the ethos of African-American student militancy and invokes a revolutionary spirit that seems to justify itself. That is to say, the lack of sustained explanation of *mjumbe*, or of Kiswahili in general, presumes the importance of the language, and the narrative fosters a relationship between this particular Kiswahili utterance and the actions of MJUMBE. In effect, Scott-Heron creates his own performative utterance. Instead of creating his novel around a familiar utterance such as *Uhuru* or *Ujamaa*, Scott-Heron turns an ordinary word into a powerful utterance that implicates Kiswahili in the broader relationship between the language and Black student activism. In order to appreciate its central role in the novel, readers must possess some historical understanding of the tumult found on many campuses—both traditionally white and black—in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the relationship between these campus uprisings and the broader Black Power movement, the particular demands of Black students regarding restructuring of curricula and, finally, the role of Kiswahili in this convergence of movements.

Like many actual student groups involved in campus protests of the era, MJUMBE begins its uprising by presenting a list of grievances to Sutton's administration. Things predictably get out of control and, with the campus in upheaval, MJUMBE member Ben King foolishly ignites a bomb, leading the National Guard to open fire and quickly quell any further rioting. At novel's end, King has likely been killed by the Guard's blasts, and the hasty campus revolution has been stopped without Sutton's President Calhoun ever seriously considering MJUMBE's demands. For its part, MJUMBE claims in a press release that a "Black Studies Institute is essential. This is a time in this country where a Black man or woman cannot afford to bypass the quantities of

information that are suddenly available about themselves." MJUMBE believes that Black Studies could be much more than token lectures, and, in fact, they claim that "Black Studies would teach us about ourselves and give us a direction that we have never had before" (112). MJUMBE represents the ideological position that comes through in so much of the literature about Black student activism, in that the group believes that a more meaningful education would challenge the Western-centric curriculum and provide Black students with the histories so often elided in fundamentally conservative educational institutions.

Unlike more familiar Kiswahili performative utterances, such as *Uhuru* or *Ujamaa*, *mjumbe* is a relatively obscure Kiswahili word for non-native speakers. Scott-Heron is correct—it does mean "messenger" or "representative"—but his acronymic use infuses the word with a multitude of meanings, packing into MJUMBE a number of rich antecedents and enlivening the acronym with a dialogic character that already exists in a "world of others' words" (Bakhtin 1981: 143). An examination of the key constitutive elements of MJUMBE—*justice, unity, meaningfulness, blackness, education*—reveals a connection between Kiswahili and the subject matter of Black student activism. This is no accident. Kiswahili programs had already been established on many campuses, and its currency was increasing in a number of public outlets. The members of MJUMBE, therefore, reflect the ethos of the times in their actions and their group name. They are clearly not Kiswahili speakers, but they find the language particularly useful in describing their counter-cultural agenda. Fast forward a couple of decades, and we see an institutionalized Kiswahili represented in an extremely different light by a satirical master, Ishmael Reed.

Written and published some twenty years after the apex of Black Power, Black Arts, and the historical uprisings represented by Scott-Heron, *Japanese by Spring* provides a satirical intervention into cultural disputes over Kiswahili's role for African Americans. Set amid the academic multicultural debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the novel repeatedly harkens back to the 1960s Black Power era in order to highlight the contrasting time periods. Benjamin "Chappie" Puttbutt, a conservative African-American professor at uber-conservative Jack London College in Oakland, CA, has strategically latched on to whichever intellectual movement he thought would best suit his march toward tenure at Jack London, so he is distraught when he is denied tenure and his would-be job is given to April Jokujoku, whom he thinks of as one of "the most successful cause pimps in the business" (33). Puttbutt always plays by the rules, but the rules keep changing, and he devolves into "a sort of intellectual houseboy" (69). When it looks like his career has stalled, Puttbutt and the rest of Jack London College are surprised to learn that the college had been taken over by a "mysterious Japanese group" (76). Fortunately for Puttbutt, he had been taking Japanese lessons for some time, and, as fate (or Reed!) would have it, the new acting president of the college is Dr. Yamato, Puttbutt's language instructor. Instead of being denied tenure, Puttbutt finds himself the "second most powerful man" at Jack London, where he witnesses firsthand the prejudicial biases never far from the surface on the increasingly conservative campus. The absurdly harsh Japanese takeover leads to the creation of a marginalized "European Studies" department and a mainstream curriculum dominated by Japanese history and culture, which sets the stage for Reed to aim his satire at a number of groups, including feminists, classicalists, and Africanists.

Through a repeating juxtaposition of Kiswahili and Yoruba, Reed provides alternative linguistic and cultural markers that complicate any "mono-African" identity. The African American Studies Department at Jack London has both a "Swahili contingent" and "Yoruba contingent." These two factions compete with each other in a political battle over whose concept of African-American heritage is most appropriate. One morning at the Faculty Club, members of "the Afrocentric contingent" greet Puttbutt with the Yoruba verse, "Aja Aja Fun Fun ni" (16), but the Yoruba greeting has little effect on Puttbutt because he does not take the Africanists seriously. In fact, he believes that the "black factions" exhaust what little influence they have on frivolous internecine arguments. He knows, for example, that "the American-born Africans were fighting each other over identity, whether to be called black or African American, and the Swahili contingent, led by Matata Musomi, were fighting to keep Yoruba out of the curriculum" (16). Rather than develop a comprehensive understanding of Africans' identity, the Africanist scholars at Jack London pick sides and close ranks, leading to polarized monocultures within the department.

Matata, the head of the Kiswahili contingent, "treated the African Americans disdainfully," for "some Africans felt themselves to be superior to African Americans, their 'brothers' who were rounded up by women warriors and sold into slavery about the time of the Yoruba Empire's breakup" (28). Matata is obviously a radical proponent of the East African Swahili culture and heritage, and his contingent seems assured of its place in the 1990s' American academy. But, the novel challenges the institutionalized certainty of Swahili programs by representing a strong West African, Yoruba alternative, drawing attention to the limits of conceptualizing the African world in cultural binaries. The Africanist faculty at Jack London College seems more interested in "winning" the rivalry than they do in conceiving of a broad-based diasporic African identity. For instance, at one point Obi tells Puttbutt that the African section of the African-American studies program "will emphasize Yoruba, which after all was the language of [African Americans'] ancestors. Not Swahili, the language of slave traders" (114). This sentiment had also been suggested earlier in the novel by Sànyà, a local bookstore owner who had said that "Swahili was a slave trader's language with a [sic] Arab vocabulary and a Bantu syntax [and that] forces in the government had introduced Swahili into the American school curriculum so as to keep African Americans from the language of their ancestors: Yoruba" (28–29). The two cultural contingents clearly see their rivalry as a zero-sum game, in which one side's victory must be absolute.

Eventually, even Puttbutt seems convinced that Yoruba is the best alternative for the African American Studies Department. While he is speaking with a character named Ishmael Reed, Puttbutt tells Reed that he is "not taking sides anymore" and that from now on his "policy is one of enlightened self-interest" (131). He even tells Reed that he hired Sànyà to "replace the Swahili group in African-American studies" because, after all, "if we're going to study our ancestry then we ought to do it right" (131). The comic rivalry between Obi (Yoruba) and Matata (Kiswahili) represents previous and ongoing debates about which culture and language represents the most authentic heritage for African Americans, but Reed's caricature effectively denounces either extreme position and questions the very possibility or efficacy of defining or achieving *authenticity*. Although on one level it appears that Yoruba "wins" the cultural duel, such a reading ignores the double-voiced nature of *Japanese By Spring*, which ultimately rejects the reduction of African identity to *either* Kiswahili *or* Yoruba.

With his usual satirical acuity, then, Reed engages various manifestations of the academic "culture wars" in *Japanese By Spring*, but the prime satirical target is the factional feud within the Jack London's African Studies program. In order to appreciate Reed's insights, we need to recall historical context of how and why Kiswahili became the most popularly recognizable, the most often taught, and the most adaptable African language for diasporic Africans in the West. Such context suggests that amidst the tumult of the Civil Rights/Black Power era(s) in the mid- to late-twentieth century, Kiswahili emerged as a performative linguistic tool for African-Americans' burgeoning diasporic identity; the language never developed into the diasporic lingua franca that some had imagined, but the language did occupy an important site in contesting the presumed primacy of Western languages and cultures. More specifically, in the African-American context, there were attempts to institutionalize Kiswahili (educational), movements to identify through Kiswahili (cultural and personal), campaigns to sell through Kiswahili (commercial), and a broad discourse about the language's efficacy as a means of both contestation and identification. Yet, even given these debates, Kiswahili's discursive imprint remains vibrant and continues to serve a metonymic function in proclaiming African identity.

Conclusion

In the February, 1971, edition of *The Black Scholar*, a trailblazing journal in the field of Black Studies, a conspicuously boxed advertisement loudly declares, "SPEAK SWAHILI! The Language of Africans!" (1971: 25). The copy of the ad goes on to promote a conversational Swahili booklet that would be "ideal for black studies courses" and includes an address to which one could send money in order to purchase a copy. The footing of the ad echoes its header by declaring, "Speak Your African Language! SPEAK SWAHILI!" This reiterated invitation, if not command, to speak Swahili subtly shifts to include the possessive *your* in modifying "African language," connoting not just a personal connection to the language but also a personal ownership of Kiswahili. In targeting African-American consumers who are seeking linguistic connections to their African heritage, the ad also emblematizes the discussion I have developed throughout this essay by demonstrating the ubiquity of Kiswahili within African-American cultural discourse in the second half of the twentieth century.

While the aforementioned advertisement suggests movement toward linguistic competence for would-be Swahili students, my focus has been on the linguistic performance of Kiswahili in a number of literary and cultural texts. In focusing on this performative function, I am not disparaging the importance of Kiswahili; quite the opposite, I view the varieties of performance as important interventions in diasporic linguistic discourse. Furthermore, although I have limited my discussion to a relatively small number of texts, a broader analysis would reveal Kiswahili's reach throughout various literary and popular texts and contexts. The first interracial kiss on television in the United States took place between Captain Kirk and Lieutenant *Uhura*—a feminized version of the familiar Kiswahili utterance, *uhuru*; Chris Rock devoted an entire episode of *Everybody Hates Chris* to satirizing Maulana Karenga and Kwanzaa; Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* includes a character named Dr. Uhuru Simba ("freedom lion"); commercial advertisers have utilized Kiswahili to sell products as

diverse as the Chevrolet *Safari* to Starbucks coffee; and, it is not uncommon to see Kiswahili words transformed into first names—Nia, Zuri, or Amani, to name a few. These disparate examples exemplify the cultural-historical importance of Kiswahili's role in social linguistic analysis of diasporic attempts to proclaim an African identity, and they suggest directions for further study of this influential African language.

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