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Option: Literature

Displacement and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

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Dedication 1

To those who wanted my failure

To myself and my efforts and pains

To the one who wiped my tears when my eyes flooded, to my mother, Fatiha DOUAKHA

To my prince, to the one who made me his little princess, my father Mouloud MEZAACHE

To those who caught me when I stumbled, my sister Khawla MEZAACHE and my brothers

Alaeddine MEZAACHE and Nasereddine MEZAACHE

To literature lovers

To my Mac and my books

To my literature inspiration Soumia MOUMENE

To my sister in law Amira AYECHÉ

To the dearest Amina SELLAMI

To my little handsome nephew Nizar
MEZAACHE

To those who do not want to read this work, please skip it and move on

To those who are intended to plagiarize these words

To all my beloved ones

Asma MEZAACHE

Dedication 2

I dedicate this work to my parents, my father may Allah grant him Al Jannah, for he is the reason I am the woman I am today. My mother who inspires me every day to work harder and be kinder. Also to my siblings, Nouha, thank you for being the supportive older sister even from the other side of the sea. Rim, and Mouanis, despite distracting me from my work by your audible banter, thank you for bringing life to the otherwise very quiet household, I am very thankful for having you by my side.

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the themes of displacement and identity in *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Throughout the novel, Adichie examines serious issues encompassing race, identity, and displacement. She delineates the tough experiences that the Nigerian immigrants face in foreign lands of both America and England which situate them in a completely new environment to feel the bitterness of loss and non- assimilation. This paper attempts to decipher the impacts of culture shock, identity crisis, and racial discrimination on the main characters and to address their experience with displacement as newcomers. The present study is conducted through the implementation of two literary theories, Post-colonialism and Ecocriticism to aid in analyzing the protagonist's struggle to cope with especially the new American society and how the environment affects her. This study finds out how the protagonist Ifemelu struggles to negotiate her identity as an immigrant in a foreign country and culture. This study also reveals how Ifemelu finally decides to go back to her home country, Nigeria, where she finds the meaning of peace and belonging.

Key Words: displacement, identity crisis, race, environment, racial discrimination, immigrants, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*.

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Introduction

Commonly, it is known that a large part of Africa including Nigeria was colonized and dominated by European powers which left it destroyed in all the fields. Africa is composed of fifty-four nations. The history of African literature is old, but it started to receive special attention in the 1950s. It is not effortless to give a clear definition of African literature because the field itself is very vast. Many scholars conducted several studies and investigations to study works and themes tackled by African writers about African main issues and reality, and this is what makes it a point of interest of scholars from all over the world. Typically, African Literature refers to the body of both oral and written literature produced by African writers in the African continent. Its scope is wide and its definition does not stop here, it has always been challenging to be defined.

The African literature comes from all parts of the African continent and not only the south as many people believe, but its audience is more than just African. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is considered as one of the best contemporary African writers nowadays. She has succeeded to gain many rewards and praises from known writers as she is the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award and this is what categorizes her work *Americanah* (2013) as her most powerful work. The central events of this novel spin around the harsh experience that the protagonist of the novel, Ifemelu, goes through. This novel takes the reader through many countries and stories.

Following the years of colonialism, post-colonial literature emerged. Even though they disagree about the medium of expression to produce authentic African Literature, many African writers (Like Achebe, Wa Thiong'O) attempt to portray and demonstrate the African image and the suffering of its people due to colonialism through their works. Adichie is extremely inspired by the writer Chinua Achebe; thus, she continues on the same path to be one of the best-known writers of African literature in general and Nigerian literature in

particular nowadays. A committed African writer, Adichie chooses to address issues important to African people. Through her voice, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie communicates to the reader what it means to be a black African in foreign lands (America and England), in her well-acclaimed novel *Americanah*. The novel turns around identity crisis, racial discrimination, and the new environmental impacts.

Today, the exposed experiences of contemporary immigrants catch the attention of authors and critics alike. Several studies are conducted about recent issues of immigration and identity formation. Coulibaly Aboubacar Sidiki and Coulibaly Zakaria, in their work “Immigration in the Confluence of Racial Implications in African Literature: A Reading of Adichie’s *Americanah*”, argue that identity is a crucial theme in *Americanah*. The novel tells about the main challenge Ifemelu and Obinze as Africans face when they move to America and England respectively. Both characters find themselves lost and their journey for defining themselves starts. The author sheds light on contemporary African immigrant’s experience by analyzing *Americanah* by Adichie. The authors attempt to examine the racial stigmatization that exists in America, as they explain the tension between Africans and African Americans. Throughout *Americanah*, Adichie shows how the main character faces racial discrimination as black African. When she first moves to America, she realizes that blacks are victims of racial discrimination in America and exposed to an identity crisis.

Americanah represents the relationship between people and nature and the impact of nature on people. The term ecocriticism is coined through conjoining the two terms ecology and criticism; and it means the science dealing with the relationship between literature and nature (physical environment). The term "green studies" can also be used interchangeably with ecocriticism. The concept of ecocriticism was introduced in the 1970s at the Western Literature Association meeting by *Michael P. Branch*. The latter explains that the term “ecocriticism” was first introduced in “literature and ecology: an experiment in

ecocriticism” 1978 by *William Rucckert*, while the term ‘ecological’ was introduced by the critic *Karl Kroeber*, in his article ‘Home at Grasmere: ecological holiness’ 1974 (Ganaie 2). The ecocriticism theory is used to study literary works by analysing the human/ nonhuman relationships, and attempts at discovering the role nature plays in the characters’ development, pushing the belief that many ecocritics share, that is the wilderness is the only true answer to self-discovery. Moreover, the notion of disappointment is one of the effects of ecocriticism. In *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino explain the relationship between expectation and reality and how the new environment shapes the feeling of disappointment. This idea is highly stressed in *Americanah*, as the protagonist Ifemelu experiences disappointment in America where her expectations about that country do not reflect the reality she faced when she arrived there. In the novel *Americanah*, the main character travels from her home country to a foreign land, and utilizing the ecocriticism theory we get to explore her feelings concerning her new environment, and how it affects her, and how even nature can contribute in making one feel unwelcomed, in an attempt to further understand the immigrant experience. We also get to discover the side characters’ interesting and diverse views and relations to nature.

Generally, Colonialism refers to the domination of the colonizer over the colonized, in terms of culture and politics. Post-colonialism refers to the era after colonialism as post-colonial literature refers to literature of colonized people. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* sheds light on the main stages of post-colonial literature (post-colonial texts). In addition to post-colonialism and the effects of colonialism on the colonized people and the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, they also highlight the main features of post-colonial literature including displacement and identity. This book will be extremely helpful for the analysis of this study since *Americanah* discusses the two main themes of identity and displacement of how the

protagonist Ifemelu struggles to find out her identity as a black African in a foreign country.

Slovic Scott's article "Ecocriticism 101: A Basic Introduction to Ecocriticism and Environmental Literature" describes the relationship modern human beings have with nature, a relationship that is built upon superiority and the urge to conquer what is considered as weaker. He then proceeds to mention the necessity for "environmental art" which is present in all types of entertainment media (literature, film, music...) in understanding the complex human/ non-human relations. Slovic adds that ecocriticism is merely an academic attempt at analyzing the already existing "environmental art", and he tackles the history and each of the waves in ecocriticism. His article is of a great help as it addresses the different aspects of ecocriticism that are used in the study of *Americanah*. Such as the study of each character's relationship with nature, and how the novel itself could be considered as a work of "environmental art".

The combination of the themes of identity and displacement is not chosen randomly. Such themes are the most controversial issues discussed nowadays as they become an interesting station for writers all over the world. However, the Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie succeeds to examine them clearly and deeply.

This study aims at investigating the issue of immigration and persistent impacts of immigration including racial discrimination, culture shock, and identity crisis. What is more, throughout *Americanah*, Adichie shows how the new environment contributes to shaping the culture shock that mainly affects the novel's protagonist Ifemelu. In this context, this study is willing to answer the following questions: How does the drastic change of landscape affect the main characters' psyche? What is the relationship between the main characters with their home country VS the host country? And what kind of statement does the book make about the environmental message from those relationships? Does the main character give in to selfish desires or does she try to hang on to the morality she learned in her home country?

How does Adichie represent the experiences of contemporary immigration? What are the main factors that contributed to the psychoanalytical development of Ifemelu and Obinze? Why does Ifemelu abandon her relationships with Curt and Blaine?

The analysis of *Americanah* will rely on two literary approaches to determine the examination of the mentioned themes. The first one is the post-colonial approach, which is going to help in analyzing Ifemelu's relationship with the new American society, and her struggle to maintain a Nigerian identity. The second approach is the ecocritical approach, which will guide us to expose the effect of the physical environment on the psyche of the main character.

This study is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is mainly a theoretical introduction to the framework of the study falling into two sections. The first section will shed light on Anglophone African literature encompassing post-colonial literature with a stress on its main figures and its known themes. Addedly, this chapter will also tackle the representation of the issues of race, identity, and displacement in the genre. More interestingly, the second section will inaugurate an itemized overview of both post-colonial theory and ecocritical theory.

The second and third chapters will be purely analytical. The second chapter will analyze the novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, by focusing on the issue of Americanization and identity. As well as focusing on the main character of the novel (Ifemelu), and her journey of character growth and her struggle with culture shock to keep her identity. Furthermore, the third chapter will examine the novel from an ecocritical lens. Hence, there is going to be a focus on nature and the environment and its effect on the main character.

By and large, the worth of this study is localized on the analysis of the quandary of identity crisis and its impact on Adichie's main character Ifemelu, in addition to her

experience of displacement between her mother country Nigeria and her new host country America, and how the new nature contributed in her exposure to culture shock. Undoubtedly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has been able to depict these issues as she extracts experiences and events from her own life, since, she is a black Nigerian who moved to America to fulfill her studies and she faced the same thing as her protagonist.

Chapter One: Anglophone African Literature: Writing about Identity and Culture in Post-Colonial Literature

This chapter is mainly a theoretical chapter which sheds light on Anglophone African literature in general, and on post-colonial literature in particular. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section will give an overview of post-colonial literature, its origins, characteristics, and main works. The second section will provide a depiction of the three major issues including race, identity, and displacement in relation to post-colonial African literature. The third section will introduce briefly the two main theories 'post-colonial theory' and 'ecocriticism' that will be used to analyze the selected case study in the next chapters.

I.1. Post-Colonial Literature: An Overview

Shifting from the past to the present, the discipline of post-colonial literature becomes more controversial. To understand post-colonial literature, it is important to identify its origins first. Generally, this kind of literature stands for both cultural and political analysis of the decolonization of a certain country that is first related to colonialism. However, it is a very broad term to define.

Ismail S. Talib defines post-colonial literature as "literature written by colonized and formally colonized people. This should include literature written in various languages, and not only in the language of the colonizer" (17). Talib highly emphasizes that this literature is the production of a colonized or previously colonized people. Furthermore, Talib argues that post-colonial literature is written in many languages including the languages of both the colonized and the colonizer. M.A.R Habib in his work *A History of literary criticism* believes that post-colonial literature and criticism have developed during and after the struggle of African, Asian, and Latin American nations, for independence from colonialism during the 1950s. Many works of postcolonialism appeared such as Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le*

colonialism, and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, then *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe in 1958 (738). The core interest of post-colonial literature is to address the impacts of colonialism and the process of decolonization on people and nations that were colonized, shedding light on cultural and political issues since colonialism affects the culture and the political system of the colonized in one way or another. This can be achieved through the establishment of new laws and force the colonized people to obey such laws or can be done by forcing them to adapt to the colonizer's traditions and rituals and to give up on their own, so colonialism punishes those who oppose.

The most prominent figures of post-colonial literature include J. M. Coetzee, Chinua Achebe, Franz Fanon, Salman Rushdie, and many other influential names. These authors are the ones who framed the post-colonial theory, even though they belong to different territories and different social backgrounds, they succeeded in producing significant works under the umbrella of post-colonial literature. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is worthy to talk about. In his first novel *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, Achebe tries to capture the first interaction between the Igbo community (the colonized) and the British white men (the colonizer) and the effects of such interaction which shapes the post-colonial literature (Thamarana 537).

In the context of colonial and post-colonial literature, the tension between the colonizer and the colonized in terms of writing led to the rise of the issue of language; where some writers have chosen the African language to write their works; whereas, others have preferred the English language (the colonizer's language). Therefore, two opposing views have appeared. On the one hand, Chinua Achebe -in his speech *The African Writer and the English Language*- argues:

Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other

choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it... I feel that English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings. (348)

Chinua Achebe favors the use of the colonizer's language that enables him to convey his African norms and experiences; he sees it as the best way to show the glory of the African culture. On the other hand, Ngugi WaThiong'o chooses not to join Achebe's side, instead, he favors the use of the African languages to depict reality. Emily Wilson, in *Kenya in Translation: An Interview with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o*, asks Ngugi about the larger implications of his choice. Ngugi answers in this way: "For me, being in prison writing is an African language was a way saying: 'Even if you put me in prison, I will keep on writing in the language which you put me in prison'" (Wa Thiong'o). Wa Thiong'o here challenges the prison and the use of non-African languages by resistance. Whatever happens, he will continue writing in an African language. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o argues that African literature should be written in African languages to depict the impact of colonialism on the lives of African people. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O-in his work *Decolonizing the Mind*- asserts:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy, and African Folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I'm of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer to whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. I have endeavored in my words to keep as close as possible to the vernacular expressions. For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can clean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people. (8)

Ngugi rejects the idea of the use of European languages because colonialism is not that

merciful to leave positive memories and he advocates the idea of decolonizing the mind to make African languages as a medium of thought and expression.

The issue of language is considered as a crucial problem to Africa in general and African literature in particular. Both Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o share opposing views, each one of them supports his argument concerning this issue of language during the post-colonial era. Generally, post-colonial literature has various common motifs and themes such as 'cultural dominance' and Racism', 'quest for identity', 'racial discrimination', 'inequality', 'hybridity'. Again, many post-colonial writers use such themes in their works to reflect upon the relation between the colonizer and the colonized. Besides, some post-colonial theorists including Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and many others believe that the field of post-colonial literature is related to several fields such as history, politics, philosophy, and literary traditions (Thamarana 540).

In this context, it is of great importance to understand some key concepts related to post-colonial literature. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, anti-colonialism refers to which extent the forms of opposition are expressed to resist any action of colonialism in all of the political, economic, and cultural institutions. This concept then put a strong emphasis on the demand to reject and dismiss the power of colonialism and to rescue the local control (12). Simply put, as its name indicates, anti-colonialism has to do with the idea that opposes colonialism of one country by another, resisting that heavy burden of colonialism in one way or opposing it in another, like the fight against the British colonial power in Africa. Moreover, anti-colonialism comes in many forms in different colonial situations such as the idea of racial liberation. By the second half of the twentieth century, this concept became known as a radical, Marxist discourse of liberation. Since anti-colonialism becomes useful in terms of resistance against any western domination, George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf believe that racial categories were misused and interpreted and this led to the

questioning of the existence of racism, and in some cases to make the white authority somehow unseen. Anti-colonialism recognizes well these racial categories, but it does not accept the denunciation of what is known as “essentialism” and “vulgar multiculturalism” (48). It is very logical to say that the first cause of racism is colonialism, in which they consider the colonized people as inferior and barbaric through exploitation in several fields due to the different races. George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf express:

Power is unequally distributed in every sphere of human social life. The greater the power inequality (whether racial or sexual, between classes or nations), the higher social power stands as an obstacle to peace and human liberation. Arguably the dominant/colonizer has power over the subordinated/colonized because of the differential positions inherited through history and social politics. The colonizer is inclined to perpetuate the cycle of abuse and coercion at the micro and macro levels to sustain the power base. (8)

Generally, the inequality is a result of two forces. However, there is always one dominant power over the other as the colonizer has power over the colonized due to some historical and political facts.

Before the term post-colonial literature gained popularity, another important kind of literature was used to refer to that literature of British former colonies known as the Commonwealth Literature. The first idea that comes to the mind about the term Commonwealth Literature is the British Commonwealth of Nations, these nations include sovereign states encompassing the United Kingdom and some of its former dependencies. Hence, this is how Commonwealth Literature- as a term and a new kind of literature- is inaugurated. As reported by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, this kind of literature is used to describe the literature of former colonies and dependencies belonging to

Britain and not England; this concept started to take place within English studies at the beginning of the 1960s in all of the United States and England. Referring back to post-colonialism, contemporary post-colonial studies serve the intersection of what is known as “colonial discourse theory” or Commonwealth literary studies (44-5).

The origins of commonwealth literature and its development seem to be dubious and ambivalent, which makes it hard to give it full definition. In the same vein, Denis Fonge Tembong in his work *The Ambiguous Status of Commonwealth Literature: A Critical Consideration*, claims that this term is ambiguous, which has to do with works of English language written in the British former colonies, as well as it encompasses a group of fictional works based on cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, both of “post-colonial literature” and “commonwealth literature” are two terms that may cause major problems and complicate things. However, it is important to define each one independently, this would help to distinguish between the two and keep them as two separate entities because as they seem related to each other, still they carry a difference. Unlike commonwealth literature, post-colonial literature is much more attached to history, i.e. told by its history; for instance, the distinction of African written literature and African oral literature is new. This difference took its right path with the arrival of colonialism, but this does not mean that there was no African literature before the coming of colonialism. Moreover, another principle that distinguishes postcolonial literature from commonwealth literature is the language, in this context post-colonial literature is either produced in or translated into the English language, while commonwealth literature is written in the English language. Additionally, the concerns of both kinds of literature shape another difference especially in terms of spaces and places, unlike commonwealth literature, post-colonial literature is marked "resistant descriptions", post-colonial writers use detailed descriptions of people, practices to "resist" stereotypes of

the colonizer (458-463). Commonwealth literature drew the path to post-colonial literature, each of these has a different meaning and different characteristics, but they are under the same umbrella, assuming that Commonwealth Literature vanished with the coming of the post-colonial Literature, both of the two terms are widely used today.

Post-colonial literature is a very controversial field nowadays, it comes as a reaction against the practices of colonialism in which it identifies the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Hence, this kind of literature encompasses or concerns those countries which were once colonized, mainly by European countries, and seeks to portray the challenges and outcomes of colonized people. This study intends to be limited to African literature published during the post-colonial era known as African Post-colonial literature.

I.2. The Representation of Race, Identity, and Displacement in Post-Colonial African Literature

Because of the Eurocentric nature of the European world, minorities have had a difficult time voicing their concerns, leaving the margin, and becoming a part of the solely white center. However, the existence of rich and complex cultures aside from the 'center' is undeniable. African literature is considered as one of the oldest in the history of humanity, but the arrival of the Europeans to the continent and the unjustified immoralities that took place against the natives unnerved the settlement of the African culture. The racism that took place left an unsettling effect on the black people generally and black authors specifically. In their article "Examining African Self-Consciousness and Black Racial Identity as Predictors of Black Men's Psychological Well-Being", Martin R. Pierre and James R. Mahalik suggest that acts of racism and discrimination can lead to feelings of "rage, anger, frustration, bitterness, resentment, grief, despair, or any combination of these emotions". This shows the extent of the colonialism's outcome, and its negative effects on African people, their culture and their identity (29).

Elements of racism and white supremacy were even evident in some works by European authors; perhaps *Heart of Darkness* is one of the most famous examples. *Heart of Darkness* is a novel by Joseph Conrad that falls under the colonial literature genre, it was, and still is, heavily criticized for the racist undertones that are evident in the work. The way Joseph Conrad describes the native people in his work extracts all aspects of humanity from them. The following is an illustration from the novel, *Heart of Darkness*: “Black figures strolled about listlessly pouring water on the glow, whence proceeded a sound of hissing, steam ascended in the moonlight the beaten nigger groaned somewhere” (6). The novel also describes the inhuman treatment of the native Africans: “They were building a railway, six men advanced in file, toiling up the path, they walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and kept time with their footsteps” (9).

Chinua Achebe was one of the African authors who could not stand still and pretend to be unbothered by Conrad’s work, hence, he wrote his most famous work *Things Fall Apart* which is a response to Conrad’s work. In his work, he attempts to fix the false stereotypes attached to the African and black identity, because of the supremacy of the white people. In their article ‘*Challenging the Colonial Stereotypes or Conforming to Them: Investigating Achebe’s Intent in Things Fall Apart*’, Shafiqul Islam and Israt Jahan Shuchi comment on Achebe’s writings saying: “His writings also attempt to question all the misrepresentations and reductionist portrayal of Africa in the western discourses in which Africa is depicted as a dark continent without its own heritage, history, culture and civilization and also presented as mere mysterious, primitive, impenetrable, animalistic, and exotic others” (10).

Agreeing with Islam and Shuchi, Fakrul Alam states: “one of Chinua Achebe’s goals in writing *Things Fall Apart* was to correct a whole history of misrepresentations of his people and country in occidental discourse” (qtd. in Islam and Shuchi 10). Similarly, to a lot of other committed African authors, Achebe –through his writings- seeks to correct the false

stereotypes that follow African people due to the misrepresentation in European literature.

African authors do not only struggle to fix misguided stereotypes but they also want to create literary works with relatable black characters. The author of the thrilling contemporary young adult novel *Children of Blood and Bone*, Tomi Adayemi, asserts in an interview with *The Stylist* magazine: "...[I] wanted to make sure that I did it in a way that the people who haven't gotten to see themselves, see themselves" (Adayemi). She also mentions how she uses writing as a therapeutic outlet, and a way to practice self-love and regain her pride in her heritage, and race (Adayemi). The young author explains further this idea: "A lot of us as authors are writing to save ourselves, we can't save ourselves from the past but we try and heal from the wounds that we have from that period, as well as try and save those coming after us" (Adayemi). The author also constantly mentions the dark skin colour of the characters, as a way to avoid white washing them, and as a constant reminder for the black readers to feel represented (Adayemi).

Adayemi does not only focus on bringing pride into her racial identity but also her cultural identity, not only using the Yoruba language, but also by using Nigerian mythology as an inspiration to create the magic system in her fantasy novel. In one of her interviews she describes her work as an allegory for the black experience, hence, the magic and the fantasy world plays as a reflection of the reality of black people.

Elements of displacement, and diaspora are not uncommon in African literature. According to Matthew Omede Solomon's article "Migration and Displacement in African Literature: a Postcolonial Study of Segun Afolabi's *Life Elsewhere* and Adichie Chimamanda's *Americanah*", "migration and the diasporic experiences come to the fore in undermining or shaping the factors that define African literature" (45). In the same vein, Solomon, quoting Linda Bakker et. al (2014), claims that this feeling of 'Otherness' is due to the immigrants' loyalty to their homeland. When it comes to refugees however, they usually

hold grudges toward their homelands' system for leading them to departure from their mother lands (46). The French geographer Jean-François Staszak defines 'Otherness', in his article "Other/Otherness" that was published in *The Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (2008), as:

...[Otherness] Is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ("Us," the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them," Other) by stigmatizing a difference _ real or imagined_ presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. To state naively, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. (2)

The topics of displacement, diaspora, and space are mostly tackled in postcolonial literary works because people of these ex-colonies struggle with defining their own identities. Hence, they struggle with defining their place in this world, especially considering that the European colonizer used identity as a colonial tool, to make the colonized people forget their own identity which facilitates the process of weakening and taking over their lands.

In his article "Place and Displacement in Cameroon Literature", Ngoe defines place as "an intrinsically and notoriously ideological phenomenon that goes beyond the mere existence of someone in a physical location to the very selfness that one arrogates for himself in relation to culture" (2). Hence, the act of displacement is the act of being disconnected from one's culture, and the loss of one's selfness. He further explains that displacement can either be physical or psychological, considering that the term displacement can refer to more than the mere geographical sense of the word (2-3).

A prime example which discusses the themes of displacement and diaspora is Nol Alembong's poetry collection *Forest Echoes*. The collection is one of the author's most well-known works. It tackles the previously discussed themes of displacement and diaspora. The author discusses the idea of "inside" and "outside" as a way to discuss the issue of place, he depicts the inside as a place for physical and intellectual growth. Accordingly, being inside

represents the association with a certain culture, belief system and space. In other words, it means to be connected and able to seek growth as you know who you are and from where you come. Similarly, to other poets, Alembong uses complex and puzzle like statements that require reading between the lines in order to understand the deep meaning of the phrases (Ngoe 7). Alembong writes “Inside, Heads were being cleared for the tale” (5). By the word ‘cleared’, the poet means ‘to cleanse’ or ‘to purify’; the word ‘tale’ on the other hand refers to ‘knowledge’ which is ‘orature’. Hence, the statement says that in the inside ignorance is replaced with knowledge. Unlike the “inside” which is only associated with positive connotations, the “outside” is associated with mostly negative connotations like chaos, emptiness, and deception. For example, “outside, the hen passed for the partridge/...the pig for the boar” (7). The narrator of the poem mentions that during the pre-colonial period, he was separated from his people by a river, which is used in African orature as a symbol for barrier from other people and from other worlds (Ngoe 7).

African authors could not stand still and watch their identity be taken away from them; from older to younger generations they used their writings as a way to preserve, and show their pride in their identity. They also used their works to correct the false stereotypes that Europeans created about them. Achebe reacted to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*’ misrepresentation and racial injustice, while Adayemi still works on showing black representation in white dominant literary genres.

I.3. A Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will deal with the two literary theories used in this study, the post- colonial theory and the ecocritical theory which will help to examine the themes of identity and displacement since they are the main discussed points of the following chapters.

I.3.1. Post-colonial theory

As it was highlighted, postcolonial literature is the literature produced in those

countries that were once colonies, notably of European influence such as Britain and Spain. As usual, colonialism leaves heavy impacts encompassing issues related to identity, race and culture, and even language which was largely debated by many writers. These issues and more are the main discussed within the sphere of post-colonial theory. Many theorists define this term differently, the prefix 'post' may refer to 'after' as it may refer to 'before' colonialism. Babatunde E. Adigun comments that the prefix 'post' may not mean 'after' as after-colonial. However, it is more associated with the continuous process, yet stressed by the colonial power as its main interest (2). Furthermore, Babatunde E. Adigun highly approves that post-colonial theory is not always after colonialism. Thus, it is based on a continuum that is to say it existed and still existing. Lazare S. Rukundwa and Andries G. van Aarde in their work "The Formation of Postcolonial Theory" emphasize that the definition of the post-colonial theory itself is challenging. First, the prefix "post" may give two distinctive meanings in one word, many theorists tried to discuss this issue, such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, and Moore. In the same vein, Slemon assumes that the term 'postcolonial' itself is what rises the debate within the post-colonial theory field. Moreover, Moore sees that the notion of 'post-colonial' is 'naïve, inadequate, or utopian' (1172). However, Slemon again argues that imperialism gave birth to what is known as 'colonialism', as previously mentioned, imperialism comes to interpret the interactions of the colonizer and the colonized. Second, the contextual framework of post-colonial theory is another challenging aspect in its definition, since it is directly related to race, culture, settler, and native; many theorists come to ask questions like when does a settler become a colonizer? and when does a settler become a native? And the answer to these questions makes the post-colonial theory more problematic (qtd. in Rukundwa and Aarde 1172-4). The historical background of post-colonialism made its definition unclear.

Britain colonized many nations by creating a massive power to dominate the

colonized from different sides, and this is what shapes the post-colonial theory. As already noted, the prefix 'post' in the concept of post-colonial theory is largely questionable.

Nowadays, the post-colonial theory has gained influence in several disciplines encompassing humanities and social sciences. Commonly, multiple authors relate this term primarily to resistance to the colonial, despite that common idea of resistance. Robert J.C. Young argues that he favors the historical uniqueness of that term, and believes that post-colonial refers to the results of the colonial. Besides, he assumes that post-coloniality (post-colonial) describes the condition of the post-colonial, while post-colonialism mainly describes its politics. Furthermore, Young argues:

At its simplest level, the postcolonial is simply the product of human experience, but the human experience of the kind that has not typically been registered or represented at any institutional level. More particularly, it is the result of different cultural and national origins, how the color of your skin or your place and circumstance of birth define the kind of life, privileged and pleasurable, or oppressed and exploited, that you will have in this world. (13-14)

Additionally, the interests of post-colonialism are concentrated on geographic zones. The question that may come into one's consciousness is from where the postcolonial came. In the same vein, Robert J.C. Young uncovers, "My argument has been that postcolonial theory has been created from the political insights and experience that were developed in the course of colonial resistance to western rule and cultural dominance, primarily during the course of the anti-colonial struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (14). However, Young adds that post-colonial theory has nothing to do with the scientific sense which cannot be understood through social sciences, it is rather related to a variety of perspectives and concepts dealing against each other. Furthermore, the post-colonial theory describes a set of

ideas and practices as it is about negotiating the challenges of cultural translation (13-25).

Despite that post-colonial theory is defined by many theorists and several authors gave their point of view towards it still it is debatable, but it is inappropriate to deny from where it comes or its origins, it is after colonialism because it is the result of the colonial.

Generally, many authors and theorists of the post-colonial theory stress and define it in terms of a resistance notion towards colonialism, which is largely based on political as well as cultural experiences. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their work, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, insist on both representation and resistance. Post-colonial debates came from post-colonial resistance especially poststructuralism's intersection with post-colonialism (86). In the same spirit, the term 'resistance' in post-colonial theory refers to any opposition to the colonial authority. In his work *Changing the Story: Postcolonial Studies and Resistance*, David Jefferess believes that resistance represents the critical side of post-colonialism, however, post-colonialism refers to the project of resistance itself, so the two terms complete each other. The idea of colonial power and the idea of resistance is neither political nor economic structures, but cultural structures which portray the violence caused by colonialism (7-12). Yet why to resist? The first thing that colonialism change by its coming is not politics but culture, no one accepts to damage the native culture, the colonized should resist and fight the colonizer to preserve the native identity and the native culture from disappearance.

Furthermore, Ann Marie Smith and Keith H. Johnson in their analysis of two novels *Somebody's Daughter* (2018) and *The Meaning of Consuelo* (2003), argue that for characters to develop adult identities, there must be symbolic gender rebellion through resistance in terms of language, since post-colonial theories are applied to criticize the Western domination which shows rebellion in opposition to westernization (18). Ugwuanyi Dele Maxwell highly encourages the opposition to post-colonialism in Africa which corresponds

well with Ngugi's point of view through his call for a total opposition and resistance against the neo-colonial system that was largely credited with regard to the political disturbance in his home country Kenya (87-8). The notion of resistance is of great importance in the context of post-colonial theory, its general idea lies in the opposition to the colonial power. However, each theorist and each author have a different point of view concerning this term. Some believe that resistance does not necessarily mean to oppose the colonial dominance, but it seems likely that Wa Thiong'o's standpoint is more persuasive.

The literary theory of post-colonialism is a journey of exploration of how colonialism affected several life aspects of countries that were once colonized. Usually, the supporters of this theory are those from colonized countries who try to preserve their identities. One of the major post-colonial theorists is Edward W. Said whose theory is widely discussed and it is known as 'Orientalism'. Edward Said is known as a cultural critic, he is also mainly known by his book entitled *Orientalism* (1978) which is based on the idea of how the western sees the orient. Mahault Donzé Magnier in his work, *Edward Said: Orientalism*, asserts that the origins of orientalism can be traced back to the Middle Ages and Renaissance as an interaction with the orient. In the nineteenth century, this literary and artistic term came out, orientalism is more related to themes including 'exoticism', 'sensuality', and 'fantasy' of the orient. Besides, 'orientalism' does not only serve as an approach of representation, it also acts as a way for Europeans to get in touch with a new culture that they did not face before (2). At the same time, Lutfi Hamadi adds that Said's post-colonialism theory refers to the wrong impression that Western novelists, philosophers, and explorers created, which shows the orient as uncivilized in comparison with the civilized west. Whereas chaos, corruption, and civil wars prove that the impacts of colonialism are still existing, from another look, Edward Said views that the European colonial rule of the East negatively affected the objective texts even those written by well-known Western Orientalists (40). In addition to the idea that orientalism is the

way how the Western perceives or sees the Orient, it does not necessarily mean to perceive the Orient as savage and uncivilized. What is more important here is that orientalism comes to put a position to define the orient and differentiate it from the Western.

Typically, Orientalism is based on those assumptions that the West fixed in the mind of Westerns, the assumptions are more likely to be negative and unfavorable like savage, barbaric and uncivilized people. Priyansh Ranjan agrees that the word 'orientalism' of the adjective 'orient' is mainly associated with eastern countries. Moreover, in conformity with Edward Said's view, orientalism depicts much more the countries of the east, it is more about the misrepresentation of the culture of the Eastern countries by the West including the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. Thus, it refers to the West's depiction of the East (85).

Furthermore, Edward Said declares: "There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter" (7). In addition to that, Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978) gives the illustration of Britain, France, and the United States as imperial powers of which their political societies define their civil societies causing political infusion. He believes that these political realities are too vague and unspecified to define. Furthermore, his main idea is that the interest of the European and the American in the Orient is principally political, but this interest is shaped by culture. Edward Said argues: "Therefore, Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world" (12). Although, the term 'Orientalism' consists of the word 'Orient' it is more related to the 'Occident' through which it shows the false image of the Orient to define the west and to distinguish it from the east. This means that European define

themselves by the Orientals, for instance, they describe the Orient as barbaric and civilized which lets the Europeans become civilized. It is quite important to spread and develop the Orient culture so that the West shape and perceive the Orient in a positive manner.

Postcolonial theory is used to approach the experiences of colonized nations along with colonialism at the end of the twentieth century. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* argue: “We use the term ‘post-colonial’, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (2). Therefore, post-colonial literature emerges as a literary theory to depict literature of colonized nations mainly those colonized by European powers, as well as the literature of writers whose countries were once colonized. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is one of the post-colonial writers, who have given attention to different themes including culture, religion, colonialism politics, education...etc. Wa Thiong'o succeeds to reveal the impacts of British colonialism on his Kenyan people through his work *A Grain of Wheat* which shows to the world the sufferings and the effects that colonialism left.

Postcolonial theory is going to help read texts about issues of race, identity, and displacement. Postcolonial theory can easily recognize this pattern that differentiates between Europeans and others from other races, mainly Africans (since the case study which will be studied in the next two chapters features African protagonists).

I.3.2. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism, is a term that describes the critical approach that deals with literary works concerning human, non-human relationship, while focusing on the negative impact of humans on the bio system. Ecocriticism is used interchangeably with the terms ‘environmental criticism’ and ‘green cultural studies’. The critics of the field do not have a standard definition for themselves, but rather it is dependent on their own relation and

understandings of environmental issues. Some critics see that the prefix ‘eco’ refers directly to ecological connotations; while other consider it as a commitment to political activism. It is believed that the multiplicity of opinions leads to the decrease in authority and validity of ecocriticism as a critical theory (Marland 1).

Ecocriticism is built upon the belief that we are living in an era of environmental crises, and that call for action is necessary in order to revise humans’ relationship with their surroundings. Hence, the Ecocritic’s aim is to judge as well as expose all the notions that damage the bio system, and to introduce ‘better ways of imaging’ (Marland 1). The environmental issues debate started during the 1960’s, with works like *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson, as well as different works published during the 1960s and 1970s, however; the first professional organization of ecocriticism was only formed during 1992, in the USA, a sister association was created in the UK in 1998. The recognition of the theory was slow due to numerous factors including, questioning whether it belongs to the humanities, considering that ecology is a more scientific field, the feminist and the postcolonial theories were at the center of most scholars’ attention, as well as “...the difficulty of speaking for earth itself”. The role of ecocriticism in its early stages was to come up with a free space where they can explore ‘the general physical presence’, as well as to question humans’ treatment, and reaction to it (Marland 2).

During the first wave of ecocriticism, authors wanted to convey beyond the linguistic aspects, and focus more on properly getting their message across. Lawrence Buell came up with a check list for the ‘components’ of environment conformed works:

- 1.The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.
- 2.The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest.
- 3.Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation.

4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in this text. (Buell 7-8)

The first wave in Britain, similarly to the first wave in the US, was marked by an interest in using language to speak of the non-human, and to enforce and encourage environmental awareness. It was also marked by the use of poetry. It was initiated by Jonathan Bate, with works such as *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991), and *The Song of the Earth* (2000). Bate considered romantic poetry as a way to get emotionally involved with the non-human. Despite the slight similarities between the two, Buell and Bate disagree when it comes to implementation of the theory's philosophy. While Buell's ecocriticism is more political and seeks change, Bate's is pre-political and is about dwelling and feeling earth. Bate argues that even though Marxism and feminism seek social justice, ecocriticism should not have a set of expectations, for him "ecopoetics" is about awareness, and that practice is a different topic (Marland 8).

There are two different categories in ecocriticism; 'deep ecology', and 'surface ecology' (Marland 8). On one hand, 'deep ecology' is the belief that humans are less than the environment and nature, from another hand 'shallow ecology' is the belief that nature exists to serve mankind. Both deep and shallow ecology continue to change and develop and are still being studied. Overall, the first wave of ecocriticism inclines more towards deep structure, as it mainly focuses on the reestablishing the relationship between humans and the environment.

The second wave shares some values from the first wave. It preserved its relation to the physical and natural environment, however, it differs in the fact that the second wave does not shy away from investigating the critical theory of ecocriticism. In the UK, The British philosopher Kate Soper introduced in her book *what is nature? (1995)* the concept of balancing the traditional "nature-endorsing" approach with a counter argument, the "nature-

sceptical” approach, but the philosopher emphasized that no approach should dominate the other. But rather “they should be informed by reflection to each other” (4). In the introduction of his book *Green Studies Reader* (2000), Laurence Coupe referred back to this dual view concept by stating “green studies debates nature in order to defend nature”. In the US, Dana Philips offered revising “environmental literature”, questioning the function of criticism when the literary work is based upon depicting a real representation of nature. The British author Dominic Head also shared his skeptic view regarding the realistic aspect of environmental literature, by stating that the literary works need to hold more novelistic characteristics.

The second wave was able to unveil a deeper and more complex aspect of ecocriticism, an aspect that intertwines not only with nature, but also social and sexual politics. Two major cultural theories that were already established are feminism and post-colonialism. These two fields represent the back bone of understanding how nature played a role in constructing ideological hierarchies, as well as a way of understanding environmental justice that deals with the unequal distribution of goods across lands and helps in destroying the hierarchical prejudice of the Anglo-Saxon male dominance. Some ecofeminists celebrate the feministic belief that women are ‘closer to nature’, while others contradict this belief by adopting the ‘Motherhood environmentalism’ view which is built upon the belief that siding nature to the marginalized group (female), is not the correct way to end the social inequalities between the two genders, but rather the very existence of that dichotomy should be questioned. Marland summarizes this view by adding “one of the key contributions of feminist and ecofeminist thought to contemporary ecocriticism is its unsettling of binaries such as culture/nature, male/female, body/mind, civilized/primitive, self/other, reason/matter, human/nature and so on” (852).

The post-colonial and the ecocritical fields of study as well have always been connected, because of the exploitation of the colonized countries by their colonizers, and

profiting off of their lands and goods. This kind of exploitation continues to our modern day through neocolonialism, which led to the call to reassess environmentalism. Rob Nixon discusses an even more alarming concept in his book *Slow Violence and the environmentalism of the poor* (2011), where he unveils another side of neocolonialism where first world countries not only take advantage of the lands of poor countries but also use it as their own 'backyard' to get rid of their toxic waste, as an attempt to silence environmentalists.

The third wave, as Scott Slovic points out in his article "The Third Wave of Ecocriticism: North American Reflections on the Current Phase of the Discipline" started in the year 2000, despite the fact that it was only referred to as such during 2009. Slovic states that one of its characteristics is that it successfully globalized ecocriticism. Another notable characteristic of the third wave is the focus on not only the human non-human relationship but also the human, animal relationship.

The last wave, which extends to our present day, is primarily characterized by shared materiality, which was inspired by ecofeminism and precisely material feminism, and corporeality (Marland 855). In his article "Material Ecocriticism and the Creativity of Storied Matter", Serpil Oppermann defines material ecocriticism as "the study of the expressive dynamics of nature's constituents, or narrative agencies of storied matter at every scale of being in their mutual entanglements. It seeks to explore the narrative dimension of the material world in terms of the stories embodied in material formations" (57). Marland explains three different issues that material ecocriticism tackles; first, that the relation between humans and the environment is inevitable because they share a physical realm, second is that all of the 'shared matter' has 'agency', and finally, the outcome of this fusion whether political or ethical (856).

Henry David Thoreau is considered as one of the most important figures in ecocriticism, his book "*Walden*" (1854) is still to this day one of the most notable works in the field of green studies. The book mirrors the author's own desires and philosophies when it

comes to rebelling against modern life style and building a stronger bond with nature. Thoreau inspired a lot of people throughout history, including Ernest Hemingway, Martin Luther King, Theodore Roosevelt, and Mahatma Gandhi (Jimmy 3). Thoreau's philosophies help in questioning, and even breaking the human centered mindset that a lot of the modern people adopt. Neema Bagula Jimmy, backing this argument states: "It should be borne in mind that when people engage with stories about animals or acorns or trees, the tendency is to think they're all about us...you arrive at a literary analysis that is totally centered on your less significant human thoughts, actions, desires, and motivations" (3).

Ecocriticism is a theory used to study and analyze literary works. As the subject matter of green studies and the environment becomes more relevant in the latest years, naturally, authors as well as critics start to tackle the topic on their works. Serpi Oppermann states:

it studies the relationship between literature and the science of ecology by applying ecological concepts to literature. Its aim is to synthesize literary criticism and the environmental matters by focusing on the literary analyses of the representations of nature in literary texts, and the literary constructions of the environmental crisis in eco- literary discourses. (1)

Hence, they attempt at relating literary works and nature by discussing the way the environment is portrayed in the work.

Finally, authors all around the world resort to writing when it comes to important matters like colonialism, which results into the post-colonial theory that plays an immensely important role in African literature as a whole. It tackles different yet pertinent matters like race, displacement, and identity. Similarly, to post-colonial literature, ecocriticism found its own unique audience of authors and critics who are passionate about green studies and analyzing the environmental elements present in the literary works.

Chapter Two: Identity and the Issue of Americanization in Adichie's *Americanah*

The second chapter is a practical chapter which examines the impact of immigration experience. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is based on the issue of an identity crisis, racial discrimination faced by the protagonist of the novel Ifemelu. The second section deals with the analysis of Ifemelu's relationships and how they affect her in the long run and what she learns from each one.

II.1. Negotiating Identity in *Americanah*: Ifemelu Between Nigeria and America

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born on September 15, 1977, in Enugu, Nigeria; however, she grew up in Nsukka where she received her primary and secondary schools. Adichie was blindly inspired by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe's literary representation of generally African and particularly Nigerian people. In 2013 she published her incredible novel entitled *Americanah*. The reason that inspires her to write this novel is her own experience, she shares the same experience with her novel protagonist Ifemelu, they are both considered as blacks in The United States. Many authors received this novel as an artistic literary piece including Colum McCann, author of *Let the Great World Spin*. She always succeeds to catch the attention of the reader because of her unique style of writing, she focuses on details and expresses character types in a captivating and unfamiliar way. The story of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie bears resemblance to the story of her main character, Ifemelu, of her novel *Americanah*; the decision to elect the mastery piece *Americanah* for this work is based on the strong correlation between the author and her character.

Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is published on May 14, 2013. It is her third novel after *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). This novel is a fictional novel written in English, it consists of 55 chapters and 608 pages. *Americanah* gained a worldwide victory for the reason that it tackles very controversial issues at the present such as race and immigration in addition to love and the American dream. The story

is about two Nigerian young lovers Ifemelu and Obinze who powerfully fell in love with each other, they lived a very beautiful love story as a young couple until things happened and led them to separation.

Ifemelu is a young successful woman, she moved to America to fulfill her studies and left Obinze in Nigeria. Obinze wanted to join her but because of the post- 9/11 he could not move to America, so he chose an undocumented life in London and lived as an illegal immigrant. Both Ifemelu and Obinze were separated by distance and time, she remained silent all the time because of the traumatic experience she lived in America. In their immigration adventure, they share the same hardships as black African in white European societies. In this regard, both, Ifemelu and Obinze, struggle with racial discrimination because of their black skin color. The current study will focus on Ifemelu's experience as she starts questioning her own identity as she arrives in America.

The story of Ifemelu is told in terms of flashbacks. Adichie opens *Americanah* with Ifemelu's scene in America preparing to return to her home country Nigeria after spending 15 years in America. She is in Trenton at Mariama African Hair Braiding salon having her hair braided before she moves home. Ifemelu is born and brought up in Nigeria, her mother is a religious woman and her father is a well-educated and wise man. Moreover, an important character in Ifemelu's life is her aunty Uju who always gave her pieces of advice and tips for her relationship with Obinze. She is an intelligent woman who dreams to be a doctor, but she chooses to be a mistress of a wealthy man called the General who offers her everything.

Obinze and Ifemelu started dating each other when they were in high school. Later, they attend the same college in Nigeria, but at that time, faculty strikes put Ifemelu's educational future in danger. Thus, she decides to move to America with her aunty Uju and her son Dike because the general died, but Obinze could not join her because of travel restriction related to terrorism. During her first summer in America, she lives with aunty Uju where she realizes

how America is different from Nigeria, and all the American TV shows she used to watch do not reflect her expectations. In America, Ifemelu starts looking for a job but each time she gets refused until she finds a job as a nanny for a wealthy white woman called Kimberly whose brother Curt falls in love with her. Ifemelu's relationship with Curt is stable and happy, but it is complicated to some extent because of their different races and backgrounds, she decides to learn the American accent as a way to cope and assimilate with the American society. Auntie Uju finally graduates and becomes a doctor, she marries Bartholomew. However, her son, Dike, struggles with his identity as he is the only black student in his school.

Curt helps Ifemelu to get a job and her citizenship papers, during this time, Obinze moves to England with his mother and he stays there illegally. Like Ifemelu, he takes another identity to get a job. After three years in England, he returns to Nigeria and starts working for a chief and becomes a wealthy businessman. Ifemelu's romantic relationship with Curt ends up and starts a new one with a Black American called Blaine, but it fails. Ifemelu emails Obinze to tell him about her return to Nigeria, when she arrives in Nigeria she works at a magazine but she is not happy. They reunite, and Obinze must make a firm decision whether or not to leave his wife Kosi, and his daughter to be with Ifemelu. Finally, he decides to end this marriage and the novel ends when Obinze goes to Ifemelu's apartment to tell her about this decision.

Identity is mainly who you are, and what makes you different from other people, specific qualities and beliefs make the person unique, so people recognize him/her based on these characteristics. Identity may be related to family (parents), religion, or countries they live in, or some traits such as ethnicity and race. Generally, people share different identities, changing or losing identity may happen, but it is not common because it is not an easy process. In this regard, Francis Deng defines 'identity' as: "Identity is used in this book to

describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture” (1). Simply, it is the answer to the question “Who are you?” There is a higher chance that people who immigrate to foreign countries find themselves struggling with an identity crisis. Due to the big changes they face, these people will try to assimilate to fit in the new society, some succeed and some do not, then they face what is called identity crisis they start questioning whom they are, questioning their values and beliefs as well (Sidiki and Zakaria 169).

Martin Sökefeld in his article “Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology” argues: “The concept “identity” has undergone a paradigmatic shift in recent decades. Originally, its meaning was “sameness,” and in psychology this sameness meant “selfsameness.” Identity was understood as a disposition of basic personality features acquired mostly during childhood and, once integrated, more or less fixed. This identity made a human being a person and an acting individual. Inconsistency of personality—that is, nonsameness of the self, nonidentity—was regarded as disturbance or even psychic illness (417). Since identity is what shapes and makes an individual, the meaning of sameness is highly related to the self (individual) in psychology. Identity is received in terms of personality traits that individuals obtain from their parents, families, and environment which mirrors thoughts, emotions, and behaviors because personality traits are under the umbrella of identity. With age and with maturity the identity of a person grows stronger, the unbalance between the self and the identity may be considered as a psychological disorder. In this regard, Jane Kroger in “Identity in Adolescence: The Balance Between Self and Other” argues, “Identity in Adolescence has retained its developmental focus by examining some of the predictable ways in which young people, across varied social settings, may mature to reinterpret and make new sense of important relationships and their surrounding environments” (ix-x).

Throughout *Americanah*, the protagonist Ifemelu struggles to find out her identity that is lost due to the negative impacts of the changes she witnesses in America. Throughout chapter 11 from the novel, Ifemelu is in the hair salon, the hair braider Aisha attempts to explain to Ifemelu that it means nothing to mention your African country in front of Americans because they do not care from where you are: ““Where is she?” “In Africa.” “Where? In Senegal?” “Benin.” “Why do you say Africa instead of just saying the country you mean?” Ifemelu asked. Aisha clucked. “You don’t know America. You say Senegal and American people, they say, where is that? My friend from Burkina Faso, they ask her, your country in Latin America?” Aisha resumed twisting, a sly smile on her face... (Adichie, *Americanah* 18). According to Aisha, white Americans do not care from where you are, since Ifemelu is black, they only care about the skin color. The struggle of identity is also demonstrated in the following quote: “ ‘Later, she said, ‘I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair... If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional.’ ‘So there are no doctors with braided hair in America?’ Ifemelu asked. ‘I have told you what they told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed’ ” (146). Ifemelu is losing her identity day after day in America, she starts changing herself to satisfy the white American society, otherwise, she will not succeed in her life in America.

Postcolonialism is best known as the historical period that comes after the Western colonization (after colonialism) leaving negative effects on several fields such as culture and politics after many countries gained their independence. Thus, postcolonial literature includes interaction and reaction between the colonizer and the colonized, it tackles issues related to people that belong to colonized countries. One of the most controversial issues addressed in the postcolonial context and literature is identity due to its importance. In this regard, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin assert in their work *The Empire Writes Back*: ‘

More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism'' (1). Colonialism affects the colonized people from several sides, such impacts may encompass culture, politics, and economy. For instance, many colonized territories were forced to change their beliefs and values and adopt the colonizer's culture instead. Stephen Ocheni and Basil C. Nwankwo in their work "Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa" highly assume that colonialism has two main aims, either for political domination or country exploitation. The colonizer succeeded to seize the fortunes of Africa by the strategy of forced labor, through which the colonized people find no solution but to work for the colonizer (49). Thus, many writers such as -Salman Rushdi, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O- devote themselves to tackle issues of those people through writing. The works produced by these writers is labeled as Post-colonial literature.

Saman Abdulqadir Hussein Dizayi-in his work *The Crisis of Identity in Postcolonial Novel*- argues that postcolonial novel has gained a shift from the old novel style and themes for it expresses issues related to people, and societies. Furthermore, the postcolonial novel puts questions related to issues of resistance, nationalism, diasporas in addition to identity (1001). Since colonialism impacts the colonized countries in different aspects, literature after this period (postcolonial literature) should meet with these colonialism's consequences to tackle the most notable issues affecting people and their societies encompassing identity, culture, diaspora politics ...etc., so that literature depicts and conveys the reality to the world. Moreover, the postcolonial novel comes to portray the problematic situation of immigrants as one of the results of colonialism. Saman Abdulqadir Hussein Dizay defines identity as "identity in postcolonial novel is a focal point in which imaging the crisis and the conflict of the colonized' s struggle to find a way for the identification between the previous native heritage and history and the power of dominant culture that's imposed by the colonizers'' (1002). The postcolonial novel treats several issues especially

those related to colonized people who suffer or struggle with their identification crisis caused by western domination and power, as Edward Said points out in his book entitled *Orientalism*: ‘...The sense of Western power over the Orient is taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth (46).

Identity is one of the most crucial debated matters discussed in postcolonial literature and African postcolonial literature as well. What urges colonized people of colonized countries to take steps against the western power is the feeling of the commencement of losing the most important ingredients that shape their identity. On this point, Dietmar Rothermund in *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization*, states: “the ‘post-colonialists’ paid attention to the new African, Asian and Caribbean writers who expressed the quest for an identity which had been submerged by the colonial impact” (31). And this is why the issue becomes an emergency for colonized people for they sought to define themselves and to show their misery including racism and discrimination to the whole world. Since the study seeks to analyze an African English novel, the focus will be on African writers and their writings in general in which these writings reflect the plight of African people after their countries gained their independence.

It is known that Western colonial powers targeted the African colonized nations through changing their minds about their original culture and identity, which makes the colonizer’s power, culture, and identity always superior in comparison to the colonized. This is the main purpose of the colonizer to take away the identity of African people and impose Western identity instead. Furthermore, colonialism destroys the lives and cultures of the colonized people through imposing its dominance, language is a means of communication and it is a part of any culture. For this, colonialists convey their culture including thoughts, beliefs through language. Mohammad Khosravi Shakib in “The position of language in the development of colonization” argues: " During colonization, colonizers usually imposed their

language onto the peoples they colonized, forbidding natives to speak their mother tongues. In some cases colonizers systematically prohibited native languages" (117). Imposing the language on colonized people is one of the strategies that the colonizer uses to eliminate the identity of the colonized, students who were educated under the colonialism system were humiliated and even punished for using the mother tongue instead of the colonial language. Each country has its history which defines the past of its (colonized) people. Colonialism tends to change the educational system as cultural dominance. Schools all over colonized lands adopt new educational curriculums so that they assimilate into the European lifestyle and culture which leads to a total loss of their original identity, and punishment was a solution for those who oppose it. Throughout this study, Adichie attempts to show a similar effect on the protagonist's reasoning of how she sees herself when she moves to America.

Ifemelu, the protagonist of the novel *Americanah* is an ordinary young Nigerian woman who lives her big love story with her lover Obinze in Nigeria. However, their relationship seems to be dejected just after she departs from Nigeria to America with her Aunt Uju. Her journey in America is not as she expected because she is struck with the dissimilarity existing between Nigeria and America. The novel takes an ethnographic frame, Adichie tackles issues of people and culture with their customs, habits, and differences of both societies America as well as Nigeria. Throughout the novel, Ifemelu is so excited to go to America where she will feel and taste freedom. She builds some positive images about it in her mind. Despite this, she is a little bit hesitant about her departure. Ifemelu is not the only one who has higher expectations for what is waiting for her in America, even her friends verbalize such imaginary picture as her friend Ranyinudo addresses her by saying: " Ifem, you know you'll have any kind of dress you want in America and next time we see you, you will be a serious Americanah" (Adichie, *Americanah* 123). The quote is when Ifemelu is preparing herself and choosing a dress to go to America. It shows that Ifemelu

believes that she will find freedom and liberty in America as if she will change her identity to a real Americanah. The name Americanah is given to those Nigerians who come back from America (Mami 172). Generally, they return with unexpected and strange manners and behaviors, and this always happens with immigrants who spent a long time outside the country.

Most of the African immigrants immigrate to education, economic, or political objectives. Ifemelu is a young black woman who grew up in a black society, but she is not aware of her blackness or the fact of being black because she lives in a country where the dominant skin color is black. However, this is not the case when she flies to the lands of America. In this regard, Coulibaly Aboubacar Sidiki and Coulibaly Zakaria in their work entitled “Immigration in the Confluence of Racial Implications in African Literature: A Reading of Adichie’s *Americanah*” argue that the novel *Americanah* emphasizes two significant and essential challenges and difficulties faced by African immigrants when they migrate to America. These two challenges are the complicated relationship between African immigrants and African Americans, and the racial stigmatization that they experience from white Americans (165). The discussion of identity issues is highly related to racial discrimination that blacks face in America especially for their skin color. As Ifemelu arrives in the United States, the first thing that she faces is racism. She lives with her Aunty Uju in America, a neighbor called Jane talks about her daughter and says: “How old is she? Ten?” Ifemelu asked. “Nine and already trying to be a drama queen. We pay good money for her to go to private school because the public schools here are useless. Marlon says we’ll move to the suburbs soon so they can go to better schools. Otherwise she will start behaving like these black Americans.” “What do you mean?” “Don’t worry, you will understand with time,” Jane said” (Adichie, *Americanah* 137). In this quote Jane attempts to show how racism works in America, public schools are pointless and this is why they are made for black children;

however, white children go to private schools. Thus, black people in general are not wanted.

Ifemelu writes in her blog:

So there is, in much of America, a stealthy little notion lying in the hearts of many: that white people earned their place at jobs and school while black people got in because they were black. But, since the beginning of America, white people have been getting jobs because they are white. Many whites with the same qualifications but Negro skin would not have the jobs they have. But don't ever say this publicly. Let your white friend say it. If you make the mistake of saying this, you will be accused of a curiosity called "playing the race card." Nobody quite knows what this means. When my father was in school in my NAB country, many American Blacks could not vote or go to good schools. The reason? Their skin color. (Adichie, *Americanah* 448)

Ifemelu, finally, realizes that white people perceive themselves as superior and dominant in comparison to black people and even she mentions the case of her father who could not go to good schools because of his black skin.

Displacement is the fact of moving from one country to another. Colonized people and people whose countries are under war find themselves challenged to leave their countries for various reasons mainly improving their life conditions. Most of the time, the process of displacement goes in a forced manner, because displaced people suffer from wars, poverty, and bad living conditions, thus, they find themselves forced to leave to another country dreaming of better living conditions. Today, migration becomes popular, many people choose to leave their home countries and move to more developed countries to seek better opportunities, however, they face difficulties to assimilate into the new culture. Akram Al Deek in his book *Writing displacement: home and identity in contemporary post-colonial English fiction* defines displacement as:

Displacement therefore is encompassing, claustrophobic, estranging, ambivalent, multiple, and uprooting. This forces the displaced to cling to history, to hang on to memory; for when one is nostalgic, one remembers; for displacement alienates one from both time and place. And the displaced becomes alienated not only from places but also from himself, thus becoming fragile and disoriented. (25)

Displacement is not only that geographical shift, but it is an emotional shift as well. According to Akram Al Deek, displacement disperses displaced people, they feel alienated in foreign lands where they build a strong sensation of nostalgia towards their memories so they try 'to hand on the memory'(25).

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their book *The Empire Writes Back* argue:

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place...A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour. (8-9)

The post-colonial literature deals with the matter of the displacement as its main concern. Identity crisis is the central impact of displacement, displaced people cannot differentiate or determine the link that exists between themselves the place they are in, because displacement is not only defined from a physical side but also it has to do with the emotional side. The displaced self loses its vitality due to the harsh experiences of dislocation, slavery, racial discrimination, culture shock, and many other features. In *Americanah*, the protagonist Ifemelu drives from her home country Nigeria to the host country America to fulfill her studies with her aunty Uju, and this can be defined as displacement. Ifemelu encounters the

experience of displacement throughout her journey in America. Ifemelu painfully states: "...I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America..."

(Adichie, *Americanah* 359). Ifemelu's decision to go to America is her own decision, no one forces her to do so, despite this fact, the outcomes of displacement are serious. As a displaced immigrant, Ifemelu faces several challenges, as she lives in Nigeria her black skin is a normal fact that all people of her society have, but once she steps outside Nigeria, her black skin color matters because she is in the American white society. She becomes aware of her skin color only when she experiences displacement. Therefore, this issue costs her the traumatic experience of racial discrimination and marginalization.

In *Americanah*, Adichie shows how African Americans and African Immigrants are unlike in terms of behaviors, way of thinking, and in terms of tolerance and forgiveness (how they tolerate the misbehaviors of each other) in America. Throughout the novel, the reader can easily realize that African Americans still blame Africans for their enslavement and deportation to America (Adichie, *Americanah*165). This idea of receiving and perceiving Africans is best illustrated in the following quote:

A firm, female voice from the back of the class, with a non-American accent, asked, "Why was 'nigger' bleeped out?" And a collective sigh, like a small wind, swept through the class. "Well, this was a recording from network television and one of the things I wanted us to talk about is how we represent history in popular culture and the use of the N-word is certainly an important part of that," Professor Moore said. (168)

This quote raises a debate by a girl who is present in the seminar of Professor Moore about the stereotypical connotations and indications of the term 'Nigger' in America, the fact that the debate is raised by an African student in front of African Americans does not suit the African Americans and they do not give it much appreciation. The African girl defends her side

unrelentingly and emphasizes that African Americans should not blame Africans for deportation or enslavement because they are the same and they come from the same origins. This is very clear in the following quote: “That is nonsense.” The firm voice again. A voice unafraid. “If my mother hits me with a stick and a stranger hit me with a stick, it’s not the same thing” (169). In other words, the African girl means if an American blames her for deportation or calls her Nigger is not quite the same thing when An African from her origins does so. Furthermore, Wambui explains: “Well, if you all hadn’t sold us, we wouldn’t be talking about any of this” (Adichie, *Americanah* 170). This shows how African Americans perceive their African ancestors in a bad and heavy manner due to history falsification concerning African slavery. African Americans held Africans responsible for selling their people for materialistic aims. However, it is confirmed in the African History that Africa did not use to be a materialistic society, by contrast, it values human life (Sidiki and Zakaria 165).

The main concern in this novel is the issue of identity, it harshly affects Africans, as it affects African Americans themselves. Throughout the novel, this issue exists at the level of the university as well. Remarkably, Africans and African Americans do not belong to the same student association although both of them share the same characteristics as Africans (Sidiki and Zakaria 166). The idea is mentioned in the novel *Americanah* that Africans attend the African Students Association, while African Americans attend Black Student’s Union. Wambui gives some pieces of advice to Ifemelu to deal with the situation of being a black African in American as she states: “If an African American call you a Mandingo or a booty scratcher, he is insulting you for being African. Some will ask you annoying questions about Africa, but others will connect with you” (Adichie, *Americanah*173). This quote shows that the struggle of identity is too harsh, some are warm-hearted and some are aggressive towards Africans, in both cases this situation makes Africans’ life hard in America. Another event that shows the difficulty of being a Black African is said by Mwombeki when Wambui

tries to help Ifemelu to find a job: "...looked over Ifemelu's résumé and asked her to delete the three years of university in Nigeria: American employers did not like lower-level employees to be too educated" (*Americanah*171). This shows that Ifemelu struggles in her Journey in America. It is not easy for her to cope with the new life, this fact makes it very difficult for Black Africans to find jobs because of their black skin color. Besides, this quote depicts how Ifemelu feels lost, it is too hard to not be endorsed neither by foreign white Americans nor by her African Americans brothers and sisters who share the same blood and who are supposed to share her pain. Furthermore, being black in America means shaping different interpretations and different perceptions of other people. The term 'Nigger' actually is used till now to refer to Africans (blacks precisely) and it is considered a racist description. The fact that African Americans humiliate and blame African seems to be strange and illogical, no one should blame the other because both of them come from the same race.

Coulibaly Aboubacar Sidiki and Coulibaly Zakaria in "Immigration in the Confluence of Racial Implications in African Literature: A Reading of Adichie's *Americanah*" argue:

Although Adichie's *Americanah* is a literary text, it is sometimes referred to as fiction, she actually brilliantly succeeds in showing through the character of Ifemelu the racial realities in contemporary America. For example, when Ifemelu leaves Nigeria for America, she realizes that black people are victims of racial stigmatization... In western countries mainly in America black people undergo all sorts of discrimination just because of their skin color. In the views of some Americans being black is an abomination or nothingness. (166-7)

Americanah is best known as a fictional work through the novel's protagonist Ifemelu and her bad experiences of racism because of her black skin. One of the first things that Ifemelu

does when she settles in the U.S is that she opens her personal blog *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. Throughout her journey in America, Ifemelu experiences the bad side of displacement away from her home. She faces racism in school and public places from white Americans because of her skin color she could not manage her life in America, Ifemelu feels puzzled in front of these issues to the point that she starts questioning her identity because she could not identify herself. Thus, she flees to her blog as a therapeutic haven from the noises of the loud, bright, American cities. Jessica Arévalo Hidalgo backs this thought explaining:

Ifemelu has the freedom to criticise and attack the various ways by which she feels oppressed. The blog is a central presence in the novel and Ifemelu's life since it portrays her experience as an immigrant in the United States. It is crucial to take into account that for our protagonist, it becomes real hard to be able to discuss racial issues with friends or University colleagues without sounding too radical or even racist. (13)

Ifemelu does not only find the freedom to talk about whatever she wants in her blog, but she is also able to gain an audience that relates to her experiences and shares her views when it is hard for her to find real-life friends and colleagues that she can speak with regarding racial matters.

Whenever she is in a thought-provoking situation usually her first thought is “maybe I should write about this”. As she does after her interaction with Aisha: “...It would have made for a good blog post: “A Peculiar Case of a Non-American Black, or How the Pressures of Immigrant Life Can Make You Act Crazy” (Adichie, *Americanah* 21-22). The issue of skin color and racism is best illustrated when Ifemelu looks for something useful to add to her personal blog, she meets a white man who clarifies many things about this issue: “even write

about adoption? Nobody wants black babies in this country, and I don't mean biracial, I mean black. Even the families don't want them'. He told her that he and his wife had adopted a black child and their neighbors looked at them as though they had chosen to become martyrs for a dubious cause" (Adichie, *Americanah* 5). The words of the white man make Ifemelu realize that blacks are not accepted and desired in that country, and even when a white couple adopts a black child is seen as a kind of victimization and exploitation. Thus, the writer here is trying to show to which extent the American society is racist (Sidiki and Zakaria 167).

Generally, Africans are rejected by both white Americans and African Americans who share the black skin color. Each individual has a proper identity, but this sense of self can be challenged when the individual faces life's struggle. *Americanah* is one single novel but never one single issue and story, from identity racism comes and vice versa. Whenever the issue of identity is mentioned it needs to be accompanied with the issue of racism, so those two issues complete each other. Moreover, Ifemelu initiates a blog where she draws her experience as a black African in America. This blog is like an escape to her, she always writes what she notices in that country. Usually, she writes to share her experience with people. Once she writes about a controversial topic which is race in America, but the interaction does not go well and the following quote shows that: "That evening she received an e-mail: YOUR TALK WAS BALONEY. YOU ARE A RACIST. YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL WE LET YOU INTO THIS COUNTRY" (Adichie, *Americanah* 377). The words Ifemelu receives are all in capital letters as if the sender wants to emphasize every single word and message. The first thing this email shows to Ifemelu is that all what she experiences and faces about race in America is true and that America is a racist country since a white American dares to send such tough words to a black African and blames her for being racist although it is the opposite. The second thing that Ifemelu identifies from this email is that her followers are not only the black community but also the white audience follow and read her posts. Such an email

does not ruin her, instead, she uses it to show the weakness of white people. In a hot debate about race between Ifemelu and other women at a dinner party organized in Manhattan, Ifemelu says:

The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America. When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will say we're overreacting, or we're being too sensitive. And we don't want them to say, Look how far we've come, just forty years ago it would have been illegal for us to even be a couple blah blah blah, because you know what we're thinking when they say that? We're thinking...should it ever have been illegal anyway? But we don't say any of this stuff. We let it pile up inside our heads and when we come to nice liberal dinners like this, we say that race doesn't matter because that's what we're supposed to say, to keep our nice liberal friends comfortable. It's true. I speak from experience. (359- 360)

Adichie's pen seems to be sharp concerning the issue of race and racism. According to Ifemelu, whatever the situation and whatever the circumstances, race and racism exist in one way or another, and if anyone contradicts this truth, he or she is lying. Ifemelu came from a black country, she is not aware of her blackness, but when she comes to America she finds herself a black in a white society. Even though, she has several relationships with both black and white men, nobody could understand her experience as a black African lady in America.

II. 2. Ifemelu's Relationships and Their Effect on Her Identity

Ifemelu's approach to romantic relationships in the novel is important as well as complex, her aunt Uju's relationship with the general, however, has as much as a deep effect in Ifemelu's life and future relationships (Scarsini 56). The two women were so close that it is possible to say that she learned from her aunt's relationship, almost as much as she learned from her own.

The main character of the novel Ifemelu has always been close to her aunt Uju. They have a strong sisterly relationship with each other because of the small ten years of the age gap between the two women (Adichie, *Americanah* 53). The older they get, however, their relationship becomes more complicated, as Ifemelu still pursues her aunt's closeness, but does however call her out on her bad behaviors. During Ifemelu's teenage years, her aunt gets in a relationship with The General who is an older political figure, with an already established family. Ifemelu's mother, as well as the people of their neighborhood, describe him as a "mentor" in the relationship (Adichie, *Americanah* 44). Ifemelu observes that the term is used as a way to hide the nature of their real relationship and that it is used by the mom "by giving the prayer and language the power to change the word" (Scarsini 57). This shows how much of a taboo these kinds of relationships are in Nigerian society. The word "mentor", and what it holds of male-supremacist connotations, plays as foreshadowing, not only for aunt Uju's future relationships but also Ifemelu's. The nature of their relationship seems to be built upon material benefits, The General pays for aunt Uju's car and apartment. Ifemelu's mother and the other women of the neighborhood seem envious of this kind of financial benefit and despite knowing the true nature of the relationship, Ifemelu's mother commends aunt Uju's "success". Ifemelu, however, despite her young age reminds her mother of the real state of affairs by stating "Mummy, you know Aunt Uju is not paying one kobo to live there" (Adichie, *Americanah* 49).

The General proceeds to get aunt Uju a job at the hospital, despite her wanting to

open a private clinic which further accentuates the controlling nature of the relationship, she justifies this behavior as being the nature of men by stating “some men like that” (*Americanah* 76). She even admits that its part of the reason she liked him by stating “I was attracted to his power” (78). Aunt Uju only breaks up with the old man when she invites him over but he chooses to spend the weekend with his family, she gets angry at everyone around her, and when Ifemelu points out the fact that she should be angry at The General instead, aunt Uju beats her for the first time. Afterward, she feels guilty and admits to thinking that he is an ugly man, at that moment Ifemelu feels like she is more mature than her aunt. To Ifemelu's disappointment, aunt Uju's taste in men does not change nor get better through time. After moving to America she dates Bartholomew, when she first tells Ifemelu about him she states “He is an accountant, divorced and he is looking to settle down. He is from Eziowelle, very near us” (Adichie, *Americanah* 115), which leads the reader to believe that race and social status are what matters most to her, and not traits like good personality and such. The reader is proven right by Bartholomew's sexist, arrogant, and narcissistic behavior (Scarsini 59-60). Even though she ends up breaking up with him as well, aunt Uju still cares more about the superficial aspects of relationships. This is evident through her reaction to Ifemelu's breakup with Curt because she scolds her for breaking up with a well-off man and dismissed the fact that the nature of the relationship was harmful to her (Scarsini 63). Finally, the two relationships of aunt Uju represent unequal power dynamics that the protagonist observes and critiques.

Ifemelu's approach to love and relationships is different from her aunt's because not only she is more interested in people's personalities more than their financial and social status but she also makes it clear that she would not change her mind to satisfy her significant other. For example; she neglects Obinze when he tells her that she should read "real books". Their relationship, at first, seems like a healthy and fair one. Valentina Scarsini describes their

relationship as “a positive adolescent relationship”, but then proceeds to point out that Ifemelu still ends up submitting to Obinze’s wishes by agreeing to move to a university of his choice. Their relationship, however, seems to get stronger after Ifemelu decides to move to the U.S. Obinze supports her decisions and it seems he wants the best for her. He serves the purpose of being the link between her homeland and the new world she is discovering in America, he was the one she turned to for help when she could not find a job, and whenever she had a hard time in the U.S. Eventually, Ifemelu goes through a traumatic experience with another man and she feels too shameful that she started avoiding messaging him and eventually they lose connection (Scarsini 64-5). The couple meets again when Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, they end up meeting in a library, as a tribute to their first meeting where they had a lengthy conversation about books and literature. Ifemelu ends up confessing to her past mistakes thanks to Obinze’s encouragement and understanding nature, and eventually, they rediscover their feelings for each other (Scarsini 66). Finally, we can say that Ifemelu and Obinze’s relationship is the healthiest in the novel, the novel shows, on countless of occasions, how she feels when she is with him, empowered, free, and happy "To hear Obinze’s voice again. He calmed her. With him, she could feel whatever she felt, and she did not have to force some cheer into her voice” (161). It seems that she only embraces herself fully when she is with him “She rested her head against his and felt, for the first time, what she would often feel with him: a self-affection. He made her like herself” (73). From the beginning, they get along, and like each other immediately, not because of social or financial status, but rather because of how much they have in common. There is no "mentor" figure in the relationship, but rather they equally help each other out without one having more power over the other. In her article, Jessica Arévalo Hidalgo describes their relationship as "a clear reflection of the complicity and mutual understanding existing within the African community" (6). Hidalgo further adds that due to white supremacy and colonialism, black people act in a certain manner when

around white people, and in a different one when around their fellow black people, and in Ifemelu's case, she is mostly comfortable interacting with Obinze since he understands and relates to her.

In America, Ifemelu starts a relationship with a white American named Curt. Their relationship can be seen as a symptom of Ifemelu's identity crisis. Unlike her relationship with Obinze, and despite her judgmental nature of her aunt Uju, Ifemelu ends up making a similar unfortunate choice of dating Curt, merely for his financial situation. Ifemelu compares her relationship with Curt with the mainstream representation of relationships and notes how inaccurate they can be because Curt ends up being the clingy romantic one in the relationship while Ifemelu plays more of a passive, skeptic role. The two of them, however, change the relationship, Curt becomes more protective and possessive, while Ifemelu becomes more passive and dependent on him. When Curt introduces Ifemelu to his family, she feels like she is being observed under the gaze of white supremacy, that white women especially, feel superior to her, and that she is undeserving of dating a white man (Hidalgo 11). Eventually, the two end up in a relationship similar to The General and aunt Uju, as Ifemelu starts to be financially dependent on him, even though she fights for her independence at first by not wanting to leave her baby-sitting job and refusing to move in with him. She does, however, end up giving in to his job offer, yet she tries to keep it a secret which is an evident outcome of shame and embarrassment, which eventually makes her feel uncomfortable in this relationship. Curt's exaggerated protectiveness is not only present in the financial aspect of their relationship, but he also feels the need to protect her from subtle racist behaviors she experiences (*Americanah* 361). Ifemelu is at first touched by his thoughtfulness, but eventually, she gets tired of being treated as a weak, precious thing that might easily get shattered, and finally discovers that with him she is not truly being herself, and most importantly she is not happy (Scarsini 68-70).

In her article “Dating Life Experiences: An Exploratory Study of the Interrelationships between Personality, Online Dating, and Subjective Well-Being”, Diana Pernokis states “failure to meet the minimum requirement of satisfying relationships may negatively impact one’s well-being by leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and loneliness” (5). Curt and Ifemelu’s relationship is a perfect example of a relationship where one party, in this case, Ifemelu, is left unsatisfied and lonely despite having Curt by her side. The evident proof of her dissatisfaction is her cheating on him with her neighbor whom she barely knows.

After their breakup Ifemelu finds herself wondering whether race had anything to do with the failure of their relationship, because there was no denying that the biggest obstacle in their relationship is, in fact, their racial differences. In this regard, Jessica Arévalo Hidalgo states, “his white privilege would always cause a discomfort that would remind her of the differences between them” (11). Even the voice of the narrator admits to their awkwardness regarding discussing race: “It was not that they avoided race, she and Curt. They talked about it in the slippery way that admitted nothing and engaged nothing and ended with the word “crazy”, like a curious nugget to be examined and then put aside” (Adichie, *Americanah* 360). Hidalgo proceeds to point out that Ifemelu and Curt’s relationship serves as a reflection of the real state of racism in the U.S, and that the relationship itself is covert racism, considering that black women only date white men for their privilege and that white men because of the desire to experience what is considered "exotic". This theory especially is very plausible considering that Ifemelu admits to being attracted to Curt's status. Curt also is described in the novel as an excitement seeking individual that keeps on looking for new experiences and adventures. In his article, *A Case Study Analysis of Racial Identity in Heterosexual Black and White Interracial Couples Living in The South*, Jamie Leigh Osby Williams states:

A qualitative study conducted by Porterfield (1978) yielded several motives involved in mate selection of heterosexual Black and White interracial couples. These motives

were divided into two categories: (1) non-race related motives and (2) race related motives. Non-race related motives included love, compatibility, and pregnancy. Race related motives included rebellion against society, curiosity and sexual desire of other races, social and/or economic mobility, White females' being less domineering, and Black females' being more independent. (20)

Despite Ifemelu turning a blind eye on his long history of dating "exotic" women, she finds it very difficult to accept being taken care of financially; she also struggles to keep up with his lifestyle. His lifestyle, though excites her at the beginning, grows to irritate her because of the nature of his almost naïve personality. She finally realizes that the two of them are completely different, him being the 'man-child' who got offered everything in a silver plate ever since he was a kid, and her being the black woman who had to suffer a lot to get to where she is today.

Ifemelu's second relationship in the U.S is with an African-American man called Blaine. She first met and spoke to Blaine on a train ride, and they start dating ten years later when they coincidentally meet again in a conference. Right, when she meets Blaine, Ifemelu describes him as the perfect American boyfriend, she is mesmerized and fascinated by his knowledge and mannerism, that she starts to mimic and adapt his routine, to which Scarsini points out that it might relate to Bhabha's concept of mimicry which deals with the colonized's mimicry of the colonizer (72). Ifemelu's mimicry of Blaine, however, is not entirely voluntarily, and satisfactory for her, for she does get disturbed by his observant nature of her behavior and even intimidated by it. Blaine even ends up complaining about one of Ifemelu's posts and telling her that she should have begun her post with his opinion about the topic. This act shows that Blaine believes that he is superior and smarter than she is.

Ifemelu eventually realizes how much intellectually dependent she becomes on him, so she tries to focus on satisfying herself, and making decisions on her own; hence she chooses not

to attend one of the events he organizes and to lie about it instead. When he finds out, however, he is perplexed as to how she does not share his opinion. He gets angry at the fact that she lied to him, so he blames it on her "Africanness", attaching negative stigma and stereotypes to being from an African country, and even showing subtle signs of racism. This further emphasizes the position of otherness Ifemelu is put in. In his article titled *Other/Otherness*, Jean-François Staszak, defines 'otherness' as "the discursive process by which a dominant in-group ("Us", the self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them", Other) by stigmatizing a difference - real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motives for potential discrimination" (2). The self in this case is Americans/ westerns, including Blaine, and the other being non-western people especially those born in third world countries, and the 'imagined stigmatized differences' being cognitive superiority. In his article "Transculturalism, Otherness, Exile, and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*", Augustine Uka Nwanyanwu points out: "Adichie's novel depicts the cultural other (the exile or economic migrant), in this case, the black person or the African migrant exile as a degenerate monster" (8). Blaine believes that he always knows better than Ifemelu does, no matter how many times she proves to him that she is just as educated and competent.

After the fight, Ifemelu starts avoiding all of the habits that she learned from him. Finally realizing that she is unhappy with him, she ends their relationship and decides to go back to Nigeria. Due to Ifemelu's relationship with Blair, she finally realizes what she truly wants as the narrator expresses: "It was simply that layer after layer of discontent had settled in her, and formed a mass that now propelled her. She did not tell him this... her relationship with him was like being content in a house but always sitting by the window and looking out" (Adichie, *Americanah* 7). The pressure she puts on herself to try and become the best version

of herself, the best version of herself that is suitable for Blaine who, in her opinion, deserves better, finally gets her to her breaking point. She is no longer able to pretend to be someone she is not. Just like with Curt, she realizes that they are too different and that she cannot live for the rest of her life trying to live up to Blaine's desires and expectation, she is not the academic woman that is full of knowledge that Blaine, and herself, want her to be, she is, however, an intelligent woman in her unique way.

Scarsini also mentions how the relationship can be a parallel to the migrant experience, stating: "Moreover, it mirrors the final stage in her migrant experience, that is, a complete integration within the American society which is nevertheless not experienced in a completely serene way, as if the protagonist were missing something in the achievement of this integration" (74). Hence, Blaine and Ifemelu's relationship is merely a representation of the immigrant experience. Her mimicking Blaine's actions and mannerism is the same as when foreigners try to blend into their new society, but complete integration is a complex and lengthy process, and the transition is never smooth which explains all of the issues the two face in their relationship.

In an attempt to understand this relationship, it is important to refer back to the relationship between African-Americans and Africans. Jessica Arévalo Hidalgo explains that it is no surprise that a lot of African-Americans blocked their memories of the traumatic past and that related to the slave trade, which leads to the two groups having different views on race. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* tries to portray the complexity of this relationship, and seems to paint Afro-Americans as being entitled to their nationality, and even having a sense of superiority compared to African born Africans.

Eventually, Ifemelu herself becomes a "hybrid" of American and Nigerian, considering both cultures greatly contributed to shaping her identity. This sense of hybridity though does not only make her part of both cultures, but also make her feel far from both

cultures, because despite living in the U.S she is never truly American, and despite being Nigerian she lost a lot of traditions while living in the U.S. Hence, we can say that Ifemelu is truly an *Americanah*. As Augustine Uka Nwanyanwu in his article "Transculturalism, Otherness, Exile and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*" points out: "living in America constantly represents loss of identity. While on her fellowship in Princeton Ifemelu suddenly realized that the price was loss of her identity" (21).

Ifemelu's journey from her home country to the United States, all of the hardships and the discrimination she faces due to displacement, results in some big changes in her identity. Not only that but her relationships with the people she is close to play just as much of a big role in the person she finally becomes.

Chapter Three: An Ecocritical Reading of Adichie's *Americanah*

“One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between man and nature shall not be broken” (Leo Tolstoy). The human being is the most important vital factor in bringing about environmental change since his existence has been dealing with the components of the environment. This feature contributes to defining the human being depending on his/ her environment. This chapter mainly deals with how the protagonist Ifemelu defines herself to place, and how she struggles with culture shock due to the new environment. Moreover, it focuses on how Ifemelu settles back in her home country when she gets back to Nigeria.

Additionally, the chapter analyzes Ifemelu's relationships from an ecocritical lens, what they symbolize, and their effects on her search for identity.

III.1. Place and Identity: How Place Defines Who We Are

Sometimes it is complicated to define a certain group of people, but one crucial element that people use, whenever they start identifying or defining themselves is the place where they live. Winston Churchill once stated: “We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us”. Buildings denote cities, neighbors, nature, and places that play an important role in shaping our deep feelings, character, and behaviors as we grow. Indeed, people's environments and places, they visit have an impact on the shaping of their identities and defining who they are.

Plenty of people are unaware and still undervalue the impact of the environment on their own daily lives. Such an impact process occurs unconsciously, for this reason, people do not take it into consideration. The environment surrounding us affects our mindset of behaving and thinking. By way of illustration, seasons and the weather that switches every single day shapes our mood, exactly as the Covid-19 virus issue is affecting our health and our whole life today. Mark H. Bickhard in his work “How Does the Environment Affect the Person?”

points out: "It is generally assumed that human beings perceive and understand the world through the senses, and that that epistemic connection with the world occurs via the transmission of information from the world through those senses into a mind" (63). The human race perceives the world in terms of senses, this can take place via the process of conveying the information that exists in the world to the human mind, which means the environment affects individuals through information existing in that environment and forwarded to their minds. To a certain group of people, it seems a little bit illogic how the environment affects us but it does.

For African people specifically, the environment plays such a great factor in their biological and physiological development. Nina G. Jablonski and George Chaplin argue in their article "The Evolution of Skin Pigmentation and Hair Texture in People of African Ancestry":

The specific effects of these environmental changes on human populations in Africa are not understood fully, but there is little doubt that they created opportunities for human biologic and cultural diversification by erecting and then eliminating geographic barriers to north-south and east-west migration. These changes alternately increased opportunities for the action of genetic drift and gene flow, such as across the Sahel corridor,¹ and created conditions under which biologic and cultural adaptations to rapid environmental change were promoted. (113- 4)

Then they proceed to explain that not only skin color, but also hair is the product of environmental factors, because of scientists' speculation that the hair texture that is common among people of African decedents is the result of the intense heat in the continent, and the hair being protection mechanism, protecting the brain and the scalp by "keeping them under cool condition" (118). Hence, not only does society shape the individual personality and identity, but the geographical placement and natural elements as well play a role in making

the physical appearance of different ethnic groups.

In *Americanah*, Adichie examines at length how people's perception of themselves and others is determined by the environment. When Ifemelu was in Nigeria she struggled with many issues but she did not have any concerns as far as her identity and race are concerned.

Throughout Adichie's novel *Americanah*, precisely in chapter 31, Ifemelu has a debate with a white man concerning the issue of race:

The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America.

When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will say we're overreacting, or we're being too sensitive.

And we don't want them to say, Look how far we've come, just forty years ago it would have been illegal for us to even be a couple blah blah blah, because you know what we're thinking when they say that?

We're thinking why the fuck should it ever have been illegal anyway? But we don't say any of this stuff. We let it pile up inside our heads and when we come to nice liberal dinners like this, we say that race doesn't matter because that's what we're supposed to say, to keep our nice liberal friends comfortable. It's true. I speak from experience. (Adichie, *Americanah* 359)

On the basis of Ifemelu's words, the notion of race encompassing the skin color (black) determines who she is, in other words, it determines her identity depending on where she lives.

In her blog, Ifemelu writes: "To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: in America, You Are

Black, Baby Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't "black" in your country? You're in America now" (Adichie, *Americanah* 273). Hence, the environment encircling her affects her identity. Basically, she is not conscious about her skin color only when she puts her feet outside her home country Nigeria, which she points out in the novel during her conversation with Curt. Curt asks her whether she still blogs about race in Nigeria and she responds "No, just about life, race does not really work here, I feel like I got off the plane and stopped being black" (Adichie, *Americanah* 586). This demonstrates that she did not have any problem with identity and race before moving to America because everyone was living in the same environment.

When a human being changes his own home he/she feels out of his original place or unassimilated into that new nature, but the outcome is always diversified. Chinenye Amonyeze in his article "Writing a New Reputation: Liminality and Bicultural Identity in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*" explains: "Adichie also portrays Emenike, another Nigerian immigrant in the United Kingdom, as a solicitous fob immersed in an invented life. He is a cultural exile lost to the knowledge of what it really means to be a true Nigerian with a sense of place" (6). Emenike is another Nigerian character who immigrates to the United Kingdom just as Obinize. He represents the 'cultural exile' towards his mother culture as an immigrant, the new place (UK) makes him a new person who is trying to adapt to the new culture and neglect his Nigerian culture. After about 15 years of absence, Ifemelu and Obinize arrive in their mother country Nigeria, they meet and they start talking about old friends, all of a sudden Obinize remembers the ambitious Nigerian boy Emenike who was in England with him:

Once I was with him in London and he was mocking this guy he worked with, a Nigerian guy, for not knowing how to pronounce F-e-a-t-h-e-r-s-t- o-n-e-h-a-u-g-h. He

pronounced it phonetically like the guy had, which was obviously the wrong way, and he didn't say it the right way. I didn't know how to pronounce it either and he knew I didn't know, and there were these horrible minutes when he pretended we were both laughing at the guy. When of course we weren't. He was laughing at me too. I remember it as the moment when I realized he just had never been my friend. (Adichie, *Americanah* 536)

The character Emenike tends to mock and humiliate all what is Nigerian and favors all what is foreign. He copes easily with the new environment and has no issue with his own identity since he adopts the British behaviors and culture and gets married to a white British woman. Thus, he does not seem occupied with the question of who he is in this new place since he chooses assimilation.

III.2. Culture Shock in *Americanah*

The fact of leaving a native country and moving to a foreign one is not entertaining as it seems to be. Being lost, disappointed, and overwhelmed is what comes first. Many people around the world literally struggle throughout the process of changing the country because they are exposed to a new culture, traditions, and lifestyle. The new environment proves to be challenging to adapt and to build a new life with new people who do not share your culture and race. These obstacles and challenges people face when they first start living in a foreign environment can be subsumed under the umbrella term 'culture shock'.

Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino in their work *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment* identify the feelings associated with culture shock and argue:

We feel disappointment before we process it as such; the instant between our affective response and an intellectualized one is fleeting.

Disappointment arrests us; it is both a sensation and a perceptual disruption, an experience that seems to distort regular temporality. Vitally, it arises from something

outside the feeling subject: we are disappointed with something or about something.

What does it mean to be disappointed by a landscape? That is, how precisely does this peculiar response to nature come about—and what are its personal and political consequences? Similar to regret, disappointment focuses the feeling subject's attention on counterfactuals—on outcomes that would have been better than the one at hand.

(572-3)

The inconsistency that exists between what a person wants and expects and what that person actually finds and obtains is what engenders the feeling of disappointment. Moreover, Kyle Bladow and Jennifer Ladino believe that disappointment for ecocriticism relies on its special characteristics of affection, which means it is formed by 'memory', 'language', in addition to other ways of cognition. Moreover, and according to the authors, disappointment splits something we are supposed to feel in relation to reality, besides, they argue that in order to disappointment emotion reaches the physical experience, there is a need of expectations (576). In *Americanah*, Adichie seeks to shed light on the experience of culture shock in general and on the disappointment of the protagonist as she arrives in America and realizes that her expectations cannot be met there. When Ifemelu reaches America, she has a shaken feeling blended with strangeness and loss. When it comes to environment and weather, Nigeria and America are two countries of an antithetical nature that have no meeting point. Moreover, in her famous speech 'The Danger of a Single Story', Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie emphasizes this idea:

I was also an early writer. And when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading. All my characters were white and blue-eyed. They played in the snow. They ate apples. And they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now, this despite the fact that I lived in

Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow. We ate mangoes. And we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to. (Adichie)

It is quite clear that Adichie's single story is completely identical to the one of Ifemelu, the only difference is that one is fiction and the other is real and this is why it is felt that Adichie is Ifemelu with a different name. The fact that Adichie had never been outside of Nigeria as a child led her to be obsessed and thirsty for all what is foreign. Inspired by the Western literary works she read at that time, all her childhood writings were about British people and their lovely weather. However, there is no need to discuss the weather in Nigeria because it has one weather along the year. In the same vein, the novel's protagonist, Ifemelu, has had certain dreams and expectations about life in America before she moves to it. However, Ifemelu, comes to realize that American reality does not correspond with her expectations:

EACH HEAT WAVE REMINDED Ifemelu of her first, the summer she arrived. It was summer in America, she knew this, but all her life she had thought of "overseas" as a cold place of wool coats and snow, and because America was "overseas," and her illusions so strong they could not be fended off by reason, she bought the thickest sweater she could find in Tejuosho market for her trip...The sweltering heat alarmed her, as did Aunty Uju's old Toyota hatchback, with a patch of rust on its side and peeling fabric on the seats. She stared at buildings and cars and signboards, all of them matte, disappointingly matte; in the landscape of her imagination, the mundane things in America were covered in a high-shine gloss. (Adichie, *Americanah* 127)

The virtual world of social media and fictional stories always show America as a paradisiacal, flourished, and evolved country as the land of dreams. Furthermore, Ifemelu is shocked, the American reality venously slaps her suppositions shaped about that country, she just wakes up from this dream as she reaches the lands of America. She recognizes that the American summer is not as chilly and smooth as she has assumed, and America is not ideal as

she has visualized. Thus, Ifemelu's high level of disappointment reaches the same high level of her expectations and imagination because she has judged the book from its cover. Moreover, Ifemelu struggles to find a job and struggles to cope with the new environment and society that she chooses to live in as well:

She walked back to the station, mourning the train fare. The trees were awash with color, red and yellow leaves tinted the air golden, and she thought of the words she had recently read somewhere: *Nature's first green is gold*. The crisp air, fragrant and dry, reminded her of Nsukka during the harmattan season, and brought with it a sudden stab of homesickness, so sharp and so abrupt that it filled her eyes with tears. (Adichie, *Americanah* 177)

Throughout Ifemelu's journey to find a job, she has received continuous waves of disappointment regarding her expectations and dreams of America. In the quote, a vivid sensation of nostalgia is evoked due to the weather. Ifemelu notices the changing of the season in America, the crisp air invites memories of the harmattan season in Nigeria, and Ifemelu becomes nostalgic for the country she left behind.

Throughout the novel, Adichie uses the environment to examine how the protagonist perceives everything around her. For instance, Ifemelu identifies places, more specifically, American cities and states by smell. In this regard, it is pointed out:

Princeton, in the summer, smelled of nothing, and although Ifemelu liked the tranquil greenness of the many trees, the clean streets and stately homes, the delicately overpriced shops, and the quiet, abiding air of earned grace, it was this, the lack of a smell, that most appealed to her, perhaps because the other American cities she knew well had all smelled distinctly. Philadelphia had the musty scent of history. New Haven smelled of neglect. Baltimore smelled of brine, and Brooklyn of sun-warmed garbage. But Princeton had no smell. (Adichie, *Americanah* 3)

At the very beginning of the novel, the protagonist, Ifemelu, recognizes and identifies the American cities by smell, as if each city has its specific unique smell that defines it and distinguishes it from other places she has been to. Probably, the impression of that young African lady about Princeton does not appear to suit her expectations of a prestigious American City and this is why she describes that city as scentless. While Princeton is scentless, to Ifemelu other cities, have other scents like Philadelphia which has a 'musty scent of history' and Brooklyn which smells of 'sun-warmed garbage'. It is worth noting here that Ifemelu is living an experience as a detached black African immigrant which means that she is in an environment that is different from her previous one. In the same vein, Ifemelu's destiny is different from Obinze's destiny, as she moves to America he could only move to Britain as an illegal immigrant. She used to text him in her first years in America, she described Manhattan city for him as an ordinary city but not that paradisiac city as she has expected because people there are not that mannerly, they spit on sidewalks and roads, there is dirt and not everything is clean. Due to these reasons, Ifemelu does not find Manhattan a paradisiacal city as she has imagined:

BECAUSE OF OBINZE, Manhattan intimidated Ifemelu. The first time she took the subway from Brooklyn to Manhattan, her palms sweaty, she walked the streets, watching, absorbing. A sylphlike woman running in high heels, her short dress floating behind her, until she tripped and almost fell, a pudgy man coughing and spitting on the curb, a girl dressed all in black raising a hand for the taxis that sliced past. The endless skyscrapers taunted the sky, but there was dirt on the building windows. The dazzling imperfection of it all calmed her. "It's wonderful but it's not heaven," she told Obinze. She could not wait until he, too, saw Manhattan. (Adichie, *Americanah* 145)

Moreover, the same idea kept emphasized at the end of the novel, Ifemelu's words are duplicated and emphasized at the end of the novel (chapter 51) by Obinze when she returns back

to Nigeria and meets him:

“What, you fell out of love?”

“I realized I could buy America, and it lost its shine. When all I had was my passion for America, they didn’t give me a visa, but with my new bank account, getting a visa was very easy. I’ve visited a few times. I was looking into buying property in Miami.” She felt a pang; he had visited America and she had not known.

“So what did you finally make of your dream country?” “I remember when you first went to Manhattan and you wrote me and said ‘It’s wonderful but it’s not heaven.’ I thought of that when I took my first cab ride in Manhattan. (Adichie, *Americanah* 535-6)

In order to understand a literary piece of a certain author, it is quite needed to understand the culture and the environment (ecology) in which the story is set, and these two elements are what shape and form the main concerns of the work. In *Americanah*, it is clear that the environment has a crucial role in understanding the experience of Ifemelu as an immigrant. Vera L. Norwood, in *Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the American Landscape*, argues: “Nature and culture are interactive processes; human culture is affected by the landscape as well as effecting change on it” (43). Moreover, Greg Garrard in his work *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies* argues that the study of the interaction between people and their surroundings can allow new interpretations and understandings of contemporary issues and concerns. Such interaction and its effects as culture shock and identity crisis are present in *Americanah*. Garrard explains further:

Ecocritics follow other political schools of criticism in formulating new critical criteria, reinterpreting and re-evaluating canonical texts according to those criteria, and proposing additions to the canon. They analyse the history of concepts such as ‘nature’, ‘wilderness’, ‘humanity’, ‘the animal’ and ‘progress’, looking for the cultural

origins of attitudes implicated in the present crisis, and asking how these concepts should now be modified. Landscapes, climate, weather, plants, animals and children acquire new symbolic meanings precisely insofar as they are threatened, which can change the way we read historic texts, shifting the balance – always under negotiation anyway – between reading those texts with the aim of historical understanding, and reading them according to our present- day sensibilities. (13)

In ecocriticism, there are some key conceptions such as ‘nature’, ‘wilderness’, ‘humanity’ ‘the animal’ and ‘progress’ that are regarded from the perspective of culture, Eco-critics analyze them from a cultural lens (Garrard 13). The environment is a part of culture, because culture has effects on how humans perceive and respond to the environment. Furthermore, once culture and environment are blended together, they can give a considerable description of people’s character. When a person has enough knowledge about his/her culture in addition to the possession of cognitive and emotional behaviors, the person’s awareness increases towards how culture can be affected by the environment as a member of a specific society. Therefore, culture and environment can recognize people at the same time, they define people differently depending on the different cultures and environments these people belong to. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu develops an ability to distinguish people’s origins from their personal character and behaviors. It is pointed out:

He looked tall. A man with skin the color of gingerbread and the kind of lean, proportioned body that was perfect for a uniform, any uniform. She knew right away that he was African-American, not Caribbean, not African, not a child of immigrants from either place. She had not always been able to tell [...] But the longer she spent in America, the better she had become at distinguishing, sometimes from looks and gait, but mostly from bearing and demeanor, that fine-grained mark that culture stamps on

people. She felt confident about Blaine: he was a descendant of the black men and women who had been in America for hundreds of years. (Adichie, *Americanah* 217)

It is said that if you want to understand a certain culture or society, go and live in the heart of this culture. In chapter seventeen of the novel Ifemelu describes her black American boyfriend 'Blaine'. In their first meeting, Ifemelu describes Blaine as tall and has a perfect body, and finally, she succeeds to classify him in the African Americans category although he did not say anything. Because of Ifemelu's long period of sojourning in America and her exposure to different cultures and natures and various races of people, she strengthens an ability to recognize things and people easily.

Usually, America does not proffer a friendly atmosphere to its incomers because of the diversity and multifariousness existing between cultures. Furthermore, the American landscape does not jolt only Ifemelu, but her cousin Dike as well. Ifemelu arrives in America with her Aunt Uju and her cousin Dike, he was puerile and immature at that time, and even when he grows up, his mother hides from him some facts about his father, and this leaves him rootless. As time goes on in America, Dike becomes an adult and attempts to end his life. His mother, Uju, and Ifemelu are shocked and both start to search for the reasons that let Dike consider ending his life. Ifemelu writes an email to inform Obinze about what happens, this circumstance introduces her to depression as if America infects and contaminates what is salubrious:

Ceiling, sorry for the silence. Dike attempted suicide. I didn't want to tell you earlier (and I don't know why). He's doing much better, but it has been traumatic and it's affected me more than I thought it would (you know, "attempted" doesn't mean it happened, but I've spent days crying, thinking about what might have happened). I'm sorry I didn't call to give you my condolences about your mother. I had planned to, and appreciated your giving me your phone number, but I took Dike to his psychiatrist

appointment that day and afterwards, I just couldn't get myself to do anything. I felt as if I had been felled by something. Aunt Uju tells me I have depression. You know America has a way of turning everything into an illness that needs medicine. I'm not taking medicines, just spending a lot of time with Dike, watching a lot of terrible films with vampires and spaceships. (Adichie, *Americanah* 461)

The American environment does not suit Dike, he really feels different and not one of the American citizens, even in his school he is described as aggressive by his teacher. Aunt Uju unlocks an investigation about the motive that pushes Dike to commit such ugly action.

Ifemelu shares her ideas with her aunt as she points out:

His depression is because of his experience, Aunt Uju!" Ifemelu said, her voice rising, and then she was sobbing, apologizing to Aunt Uju, her own guilt spreading and sullyng her. Dike would not have swallowed those pills if she had been more diligent, more awake. She had crouched too easily behind laughter, she had failed to till the emotional soil of Dike's jokes. It was true that he laughed, and that his laughter convinced with its sound and its light, but it might have been a shield, and underneath, there might have been a growing pea plant of trauma. (Adichie, *Americanah* 470-1)

It is evident that Dike has suffered first of culture shock then could not cope as years passed on. His mother, unfortunately, did not provide him with any help and did not show any understanding at all of his plights. Ifemelu is the only one who is able to discover what caused Dike to attempt suicide. Even if her realization is a belated one, still Ifemelu is right as she believes that Dike's action is the outcome of his experience in America. In other words, the experience of Dike as black in a white community and his strive and struggle to grapple and cope with such a situation drops him in a boundless depression, and for this reason, he considered taking his own life.

III.3. How to Stop Losing Yourself: Relationships and the Significance of Places in *Americanah*

As Ifemelu returns to her home country, after living in the U.S for years, she faces some issues settling all anew in Nigeria. She takes some time before she resettles into her home country's environment. The climate in Nigeria and in the U.S is significantly different, and Ifemelu is quick to remember how hot the weather is in Nigeria once her plane from America lands which is expressed in the novel: "the coolness dissipated quickly, warm humid air gagged the room, and soon Ifemelu was tossing in the wetness of her own sweat" (Adichie, *Americanah*481). Not only she is distressed by the weather of her home country, but also by the creatures that the environment offers as she complains about the buzzing of the mosquitos (481). She even thinks back in relief of the fact that she has a passport and could go back to the States if she wished. After living in the luxurious United states, Ifemelu is even disappointed in the landscape that faces her when she goes back to her home country. In a conversation with Obinze, after asking if she has changed after her experience as an 'Americanah', she answers: "my taste, I guess. I can't believe how much I find ugly now. I can't stand most of the houses in this city, I'm now a person who has learned to admire exposed wooden rafters" (Adichie, *Americanah*534). She is not the only person coming from abroad though, that feels out of place after returning to Nigeria. In the meeting she has at the Niger politan Club (a club of Nigerians who studied abroad, mostly in the U.S and Britain), most of the members share complaints about the absence of vegan and vegetarian restaurants and even dismiss the possibility of the creation of one because of the almost nonexistence of vegans in the country (503).

As the novel progresses Ifemelu shows that she slowly but steadily succeeds at getting reattached to her home country. Despite complaining about it when she first lands in Nigeria, she gets used to the warm and humid weather. As her colleagues, one studied abroad

hence used to cold western climate, and the other never left Nigeria, fight about turning down or turning up the AC, Ifemelu ends up voting for keeping the AC down saying she “does not like cold” (496). She also discovers the peacock birds that live on her neighbor’s roof, and shows great interest in them, she pays attention to every little detail about these giant birds, she ends up finding out that there are two females and one male, she tells Obinze that she wants to see the male do the mating dance (539). The birds play such an important and symbolic part that they even represent her time apart from Obinze after their argument:

One day, Ifemelu saw the male peacock dance, its feathers fanned out in a giant halo. The female stood by pecking at something on the ground and then after a while, it walked away, indifferent to the male’s great flare of feathers. The male seemed suddenly to totter, perhaps from the weight of its feathers or from the weight of rejection. (Adichie, *Americanah* 583)

When she gets her apartment, she develops the habit of observing the birds living on the roof on the house next door, the birds (two females and one male) seem to always cope well.

However, when she gets in an argument with Obinze, the author makes the stylistic choice of having the birds mirror their relationship by having the female bird reject the male bird’s mating dance.

Another sign of the progress she makes settling back in her home country is her acute awareness of her surroundings and geographical area and what characterizes it. On her first meeting with the CEO of the Zoe magazine, Ifemelu makes the bold decision of criticizing her about including a cream of broccoli soup recipe despite knowing that broccoli is not available in Nigerian markets, stating “most of your readers can’t go into the market and buy broccoli because we don’t have it in Nigeria “(Adichie, *Americanah* 484).

Eventually, Ifemelu shows complete contentment with her decision of going back to Nigeria, and of exploring her motherland all over again “...still, she was at peace, to be home...to have

discovered Lagos again. She had, finally spun herself fully into being” (Adichie, *Americanah* 585).

Because of being African, Ifemelu is expected to behave in a certain way towards nature by her American peers. Such assumptions create a clash between her and some of the people she met in the U.S. Ecocriticism can provide some theoretical explanation that allows readers to reach an interpretation of what causes such clash. In his article “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature,” Sandip Kumar Mishra makes a distinction between two shades of ecology: ‘shallow ecology’ and ‘deep ecology’. He states that the shallow ecology is the belief that nature exists to serve mankind and that they are “the masters of nature”, and that is because humans are cognitively superior compared to all creature in the planet. Hence, they should be in control of nature and all its goods and resources, like: forests, gas, oil...etc. Deep ecology, on the other hand, is the belief in protecting or not interfering in nature or “preserving its original form” as it is its own organism, and no organism is superior over the others (168).

One of the most memorable moments of the novel is when Ifemelu meets her boyfriend Curt’s cousins. The latter mentions that she enjoys walking barefoot in nature because it makes her feel more connected to nature. The boyfriend’s cousin proceeds to ask Ifemelu if she has ever done that expecting a ‘yes’ as an answer, but instead, Ifemelu replies with a ‘no’ failing to hide her amusement at the question “...a woman who had an organic farm and walked around barefoot and talked about how connected to the earth it made her feel. Did Ifemelu have such an experience in Nigeria, she asked and looked disappointed when Ifemelu said her mother would slap her if she ever stepped outside without shoes” (Adichie, *Americanah* 363). This incident is an example of the characters’ relation with nature and what type of ecology they mostly lean into. The characters in the previously mentioned passage both show more attitude toward deep ecology, the woman has a deep connection with nature,

and even though Ifemelu does not mirror her passion for the matter she still never shown any signs of superiority towards the environment, but rather a sentiment of indifference and non-interference. This incident might have been inspired by the author's own experiences in the U.S, where Americans expected her to act a certain way because of her racial and national background. During her TED talk *The Danger of the Single Story* in 2009, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie herself speaks of her experience:

My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove. (Adichie)

One character that seems to have more of negative relation with nature though, is Curt, Ifemelu's first boyfriend in the U.S. Curt is a family member of Kimberly, the woman that Ifemelu works for, she grows a liking towards him right after they meet, the attraction is mutual and the two start dating shortly after their first meeting. Being the rich, white, privileged American man that he is, Curt lives a very easy simple life, full of dating exotic women and traveling to exotic places. The novel makes it clear that he is a universe's favorite, and that he never once faced difficulty in his life. When Ifemelu starts dating him she finds herself drowning in his universe that is so much different from hers, "that was what Curt had given her, this gift of contentment, of ease. How quickly she had become used to their life her passport filled with visa stamps, the solicitousness of flight attendants in first class cabins, the feathery bed linen in the hotels they stayed in" (246). Curt shows more characteristics of shallow ecology because his relation with nature and the environment is solely based on his benefits, only traveling to different exotic places but never giving back or showing any sign of activism, hence, it is only exploitation for selfish reasons. It is also relevant to mention that his

relation to these places that he visits is similar to his romantic relationships with the different women that he dates from all various parts of the world "...adventurer who brings back exotic species, he had dated a Japanese girl, a Venezuelan girl..." (Adichie, *Americanah* 244). A relationship that is built upon exploiting and using what is to him a temporary fun toy to play with until he gets bored of it and finds the next one. Ifemelu completely loses her true identity when she is with him, she falls for his luxurious lifestyle, forgets her true duties and despite being an independent woman, she accepts his help when he offers to get her a job, she lives with him and allows him to pay for all of her necessities. As if she entirely forgot about the lessons she learned from Aunt Uju's previous relationships, she eventually becomes completely reliant on him, which drives her to her breaking point, which is cheating on him, which is also an action very out of her usual loyal character.

Ifemelu's next boyfriend, Blaine, might be considered as the exact opposite of Curt. Both him and Ifemelu care, in their own way, about nature. At first, the reader is given the impression that mostly only Blaine cares about the environment, because of various choices he makes throughout the novel, like only having organic food. Through subtle indication, however, we can tell that Ifemelu as well has a deep connection to nature and to her environment. For example, recognizing every state by its smell, connecting to the landscape of various places, like aunt Uju's new place where she was struck by the view "from the dining room window of Aunt Uju's house, the lake shimmered, a blueness so tranquil that it held the gaze" (224). Also, reading symbolism in the nature surrounding her like when she saw hope and new beginnings on the autumn leaves "the trees were awash with colors, red and yellow leaves tinted the air golden, and she thought of the words she had recently read somewhere 'nature's first green is gold'". Ifemelu's connection with nature seems to be even deeper and more authentic than Blaine's, because while he seems to be doing it out of his obsession with doing the right thing, because of his status in the society he feels like activism

is his duty as well as his circle of friends. Ifemelu on the other hand does not feel any obligation towards environmental activism, hence her relationship with nature is more authentic. Despite the huge difference between Blaine and Curt, the outcome of both relationships on Ifemelu is fairly similar, she ends up losing her authentic identity not because she is blinded by a deluxe lifestyle anymore, but rather because of how bewildered she gets when she meets Blaine. During their relationship Ifemelu feels insecure because of how “perfect” Blaine is, she idolizes to the extent that she is willing to change so much of herself to become similar to him. She wants to mirror his actions; she even starts mimicking different lifestyle habits of his, in an attempt to be as much of a good person as he is.

However, later on, after getting into an argument with him, she realizes how freeing it is to just be herself again, and the moment that perfectly embodies this feeling in the novel is when Ifemelu goes to her aunt’s house and eats all of the unhealthy inorganic treats that Blaine hates, “when Ifemelu burrowed into herself and ate whole chocolate bars, her feelings for him changed. She still admired him, his moral fiber, his life of cleanliness, but now it was admiration for a person separate from her” (Adichie, *Americanah*437). Despite their clear different attitudes towards nature, both Blaine and Ifemelu show more attitudes towards deep ecology; Blaine for being aware of environmental issues and wanting to make a difference, and Ifemelu by not interfering and not exploiting the organism that is nature.

Ifemelu’s final relationship is with Obinze. Since the beginning of the novel, Obinze is built to be someone special, her first love, and one of the only people who fully understood her. Even though she met other men, ones who are more good looking, who are richer, Ifemelu always ended up thinking about Obinze, which is a sentiment that a lot of immigrants from third world countries share. Despite building a greater life for themselves in more developed first world countries, they still have a feeling of longing towards their home countries, and in this case Ifemelu’s longing for Obinze and Nigeria, in this sense, the character of Obinze

represents the homeland. Throughout the novel there are signs of how each of the men represents their respective countries and societies; Curt and Blaine represent the superiority, Americans specifically and the west in general, feels towards third world countries, even if it's not racially driven (in Blaine's case). They also represent Ifemelu's initial identity crisis and the reason she wanted to change to fit their standards in order to satisfy them at the expense of her own comfort. Every second she is with Curt and Blaine she is disguised as someone else. When she is with Curt who represents the white supremacy in the United States she feels the need to play the passive and submissive role as he took care of her financial needs. With Blaine, who represents the ideal first world citizen, she finds herself insecure around him, as well as intimidated by him, and he only further solidifies her insecurities by belittling her choices and opinions. Ifemelu met both of these American men when she was in a very vulnerable position, a lonely young woman in a completely foreign country, where she can barely support herself financially, nor mentally because of the cultural shock and slight trauma and confusion, she was going through. They symbolize all of the pressure that American society puts on her. In the opposite position, Obinze is her childhood friend and lover that accepts her the way she is since day one and never pressures her to act like a different person. During their first meeting in the novel, Obinze was supposed to be on a date with Ifemelu's best friend, the beautiful, popular Ginika, however, he expressed to her that he wanted her instead, "...you're supposed to be chasing her (Ginika)" "I'm chasing you" She would always remember those words. *I'm chasing you*" (Adichie, *Americanah* 72). Aside from their romantic relationship, Obinze plays the binary opposition of Blaine and Curt, he represents Nigeria, the home country, and the Nigerian society. In Nigeria Ifemelu never feels the need to change herself, not her personality, nor her appearance, she feels welcomed and she feels home just like when she is with Obinze. In describing Ifemelu's feeling when she is with Obinze, Adichie says:

She rested her head against his and felt, for the first time, what she would often feel with him: a self-affection. He made her like herself. With him, she was at ease; her skin felt as though it was her right size. It seemed so natural, to talk to him about odd things. She had never done that before. The trust, so sudden and yet so complete, and the intimacy, frightened her. But now she could think only of all the things she yet wanted to tell him, wanted to do with him. (Adichie, *Americanah*73)

She eventually chooses to go back to Nigeria and be with Obinze, because, at last, she feels accepted the way she is without the need for pretending or disguising her true personality.

Finally, the environment and natural elements play a crucial role in shaping the both the physical appearance as well define the true character of people all over the world, hence, it is no surprise that traveling to different locations might be traumatic to some individuals. Similarly, in Ifemelu's case, her experiences of culture shock are evident throughout the novel. After Ifemelu's struggles with her identity in the U.S and all the discriminatory behaviors she faces, not only from strangers but from close friends and spouses as well, she slowly tries to hang into her identity and eventually succeeds, settling back to in her home country. It is also safe to assume that maybe the novel itself is not a love story, not between two people at least, it is the story of how Ifemelu fell in love with her homeland, Nigeria.

Conclusion

In the past couple few years, literary works about immigrants and the immigrant experience have been doubling in numbers, mainly because the phenomenon itself is more relevant now than ever. One particular work, that emerges from the rest is the hit novel *Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a novel that follows a young female Nigerian immigrant and her experience on the west. It tackles racism, diaspora, and all kinds of discriminatory behaviors that people of color, black people especially undergo. The study aims at analyzing the novel on an ecological and postcolonial level.

It is safe to say that the world is mostly divided into two types of countries, countries that have colonized and countries that have been colonized, the former, mostly being western countries, while the latter being eastern. Postcolonial studies tackle the colonizer-colonized relationship dynamic, and tries to revise the hierarchical nature of the world. Postcolonial literary works usually address issues like imperialism, racism, exploitation, and discrimination. It sheds light on the horrendous effects of colonialism, but most importantly it gives former colonized people the chance to voice their side of the story, contradict the false stereotypes that has been enforced upon them, and unveil the crimes that has been committed against them for generations. African postcolonial literature in particular, is considered as a major part of postcolonial literature as a whole, with authors like Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Chinua Achebe being considered as one of the most prominent figures in post colonialism.

Displacement is a very commonly discussed issue in African postcolonial works, as moving from one geographical place to another, whether voluntarily or not, like in the case of the slave trade, severely effect one's identity and lead into other issues like cultural shock and trauma. Along with postcolonialism, ecocriticism is used in the analysis of the chosen study *Americanah*. Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between the characters and the environment, with the emphasis on the negative ways humans affect nature. Both of these

theories are related in the fact that they attempt at unveiling the exploitation of human and natural resources by the colonizers. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as a Nigerian woman who lived in the United States herself, succeeds at encompassing all of the issues immigrants face in the west, and paints a realistic picture of this experience.

As the young Ifemelu goes to the U.S to finish her studies, she hopes of finding an American dream for herself. She soon realizes that the reality of living in the U.S is different from her fantasies. For the first time in her life she feels different, once she steps foot into America she becomes black. An overwhelming feeling of her losing her entire identity sweeps over her when she realizes that people are not seeing her as the person she is but rather she is just seen as the black girl, which is a huge change from her identity back in Nigeria where she is not considered different, so people just saw her as the person who she is. This marks the beginning of Ifemelu's identity crisis, she feels pressured into fitting in the American society, the process of assimilation however is not complete, hence, even though her stay in the U.S changed her identity, it did not however erase her Nigerian identity. The people who are closer to her, also played a great role into the person she eventually becomes. Auntie Uju being the closest she has to a sister, has an undeniable part in the building Ifemelu's identity, throughout their lives Ifemelu observes the mistakes that her aunt makes which helps her on becoming wary of unhealthy relationships. Curt, who is her first American boyfriend, helps her realize that she cannot play a passive role in a relationship, while Blaine solidifies the fact that she is not able to become who others want her to be, and she eventually chooses to be with the person who has always accepted her for who she is, Obinze.

Each individual is the product of his own environment and society, which is the reason why immigrants get a sense of alienation when they are in a new setting. Natural elements massively manipulate the human evolution and even affect the human physiology of each race, but even the original setting of one's homeland might feel like a strange place if

said person departs for a long period of time, which is the case with Ifemelu. She goes back to Nigeria after living for years in the United States, and as if she has completely forgotten her own homeland, she is startled by the hot weather, the insects, and the architecture. She takes her time however, as she eases back into a comfortable lifestyle in Nigeria, and simultaneously she gets back with her teenage love as if she was meant to be with him, her home, in Nigeria.

The author of *Americanah*, successfully transmits an authentic immigrant experience, from dealing with racism, discrimination, culture shock, and identity crisis, that the main character overcomes with a firm mindset. She also provides a realistic set of characters who play a big role in the main character's development, she also builds an engaging love story not only between two people but also between an individual and their home country.

The study uncovers the struggles of the main character, including diaspora, identity crisis, to culture shock. Walking along with the main character as she experiences life in the United States for the first time and witnesses her attempts at battling racism and discrimination, as well as her relationship with nature and her coping with the recurring environmental changes from Nigeria to the States. Furthermore, the study reveals the main character's struggles with her identity and how she eventually ends up choosing love and home over the American dream.

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المُلخَص

نحاول من خلال هذه الأطروحة تحليل مواضيع تشمل النزوح والهوية في رواية *أمريكانا* لتشيماماندا نغوزي أديشي. حيث تبحث أديشي في روايتها عن العديد من القضايا الحرجة التي تضم مسائل العرق والهوية والنزوح، كما أنها تقوم بوصف التجارب الصعبة التي يواجهها المهاجرون النيجيريون في البلدان الأجنبية في كل من أمريكا وإنجلترا والتي تضعهم في بيئة جديدة تمامًا وتتركهم لمرارة الخسارة وعدم الاندماج في المجتمع. نحاول من خلال هذا البحث دراسة آثار الصدمة الثقافية وأزمة الهوية والتمييز العنصري على الشخصيات الرئيسية وعرض تجربتهم مع النزوح كوافدين جدد. حيث أجريت هذه الدراسة من خلال تطبيق نظريتين أدبيتين، نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار والنظرية النقد الإيكولوجي للمساعدة في تحليل نضال الشخصية الرئيسية للتكيف مع المجتمع الأمريكي الجديد خاصة وكيفية تأثير البيئة عليها. تكشف هذه الدراسة مكافحة بطللة الرواية إيفيميلو للحفاظ على هويتها كمهاجرة في بلد وثقافة أجنبية. تستبين هذه الدراسة أيضًا كيف تقرر إيفيميلو في آخر المطاف العودة إلى وطنها الأم، نيجيريا، أين تجد معنى للسلام والانتماء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النزوح، أزمة الهوية، العرق، البيئة، المهاجرون، تشيماماندا نغوزي أديشي، *أمريكانا*.

Le résumé

Cette thèse analyse les thèmes du déplacement et de l'identité dans le roman *Americanah* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Adichie examine plusieurs problèmes critiques tout au long du roman, touchant la race, l'identité et le déplacement. Elle décrit les expériences difficiles que les immigrants nigériens confrontent dans les pays étrangers d'Amérique et d'Angleterre qui les mènent dans un nouvel environnement complètement, et les abandonnent à l'amertume de la perte et de la non-assimilation. Ce document tente de citer les impacts du choc culturel, de la crise d'identité et de la discrimination raciale sur les personnages principaux et d'exposer leur expérience du déplacement en tant que nouveaux arrivants. La présente étude est menée à travers la mise en œuvre de deux théories littéraires, le post-colonialisme et l'éco-criticisme afin d'aider à analyser la lutte du protagoniste pour faire face à la nouvelle société américaine en particulier et à la manière dont l'environnement l'affecte. Cette étude découvre comment Ifemelu, la protagoniste, lutte pour surmonter son identité en tant qu'immigrée dans un pays et une culture étrangère. Cette étude révèle également comment Ifemelu décide finalement de retourner dans son pays natal, le Nigéria, où elle trouve le sens de la paix et de l'appartenance.

Mots clés: déplacement, crise d'identité, race, environnement, émigrants, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*.