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**The Immigrant and the Other**  
In the Selected Works of Bharati Mukherjee and Chimamanda  
Ngozi Adichie

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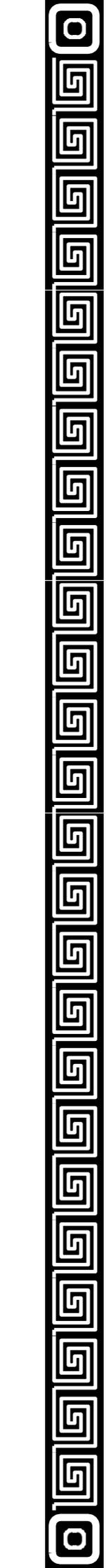
Title

# The Immigrant and the Other

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Ngozi Adichie

Submitted by:

Abdelmounaim KHANFRI



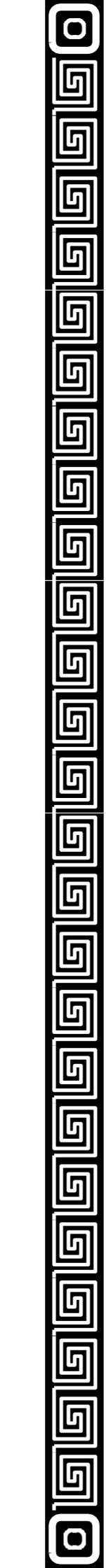
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## Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this doctoral thesis titled "The Immigrant and the Other In the Selected Works of Bharati Mukherjee and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie". I conducted all research and analysis presented within this thesis, and I am responsible for the content and its originality.

I have acknowledged all sources of information used in this thesis, and a complete list of references is provided in the bibliography.

I have not submitted this thesis, or any part of it, to any other institution in order to obtain a degree.



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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Saadoune Farida for her invaluable mentoring and support throughout the writing process. Your encouragement, expertise and feedback were fundamental in helping me accomplish this goal.

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This achievement would not have been conceivable without the support and contributions of these individuals.

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# Dedication

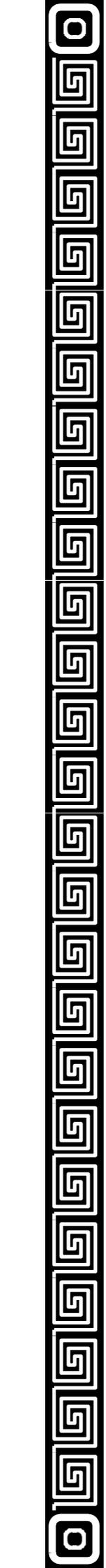
I dedicate this work to the following people in my life:

My dearest wife: Your unwavering love and support are the bedrock on which I stand. Thank you for your persistent inspiration and for being my companion in everything I do.

My son, Djoud. You are my source of boundless joy and incentive. Watching you grow motivates me to be the best version of myself.

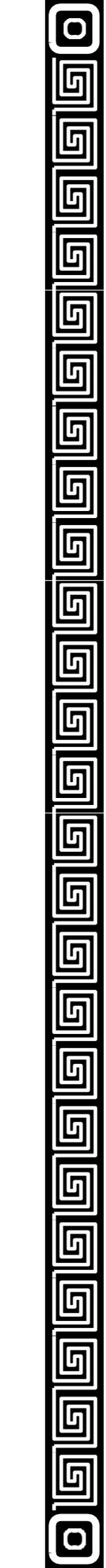
My parents, Abdelhamid and Meriem. Your sacrifices and guidance have shaped me into the person I am today and any achievement is the fruit of your love and dedication for which I am forever grateful.

My wonderful siblings, Salah, Lokman, Asma, Sara and Hadjer: Your presence in my life is an endless basis of strength and bliss. Thank you for your love and for always having my back.



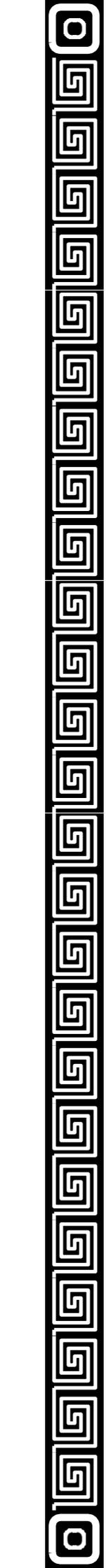
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## Abstract



This thesis examines the construction of immigrant identity and the concept of the *other* in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. Through a comparative analysis, we investigate the novels' depiction of the experiences of immigrants navigating cultural displacement, redefining the notions of belonging, and confronting the societal gaze that designates them as *other*. This work explores how Adichie and Mukherjee employ contrasting narrative strategies. It scrutinizes *Americanah*'s depiction of the yearning for home and the complexities of bicultural identity, particularly for those caught between Nigeria and the USA. In contrast, this work explores how *Jasmine* depicts a more fluid and patchy experience, highlighted by persistent reinvention of the *self* and the protagonist's deliberate shedding of her past *selves*. Furthermore, it examines how both novels engage with the concept of the *other* through an analysis of how the characters are designated as foreigners within their adopted societies, enduring prejudice and trying to surmount the cultural and racial boundaries constructed by the dominant culture. Additionally, the study explores the internalized *otherness* experienced by the protagonists and the way they negotiate their sense of *self* in relation to their past and present. In order to get a broad outlook at the topic, we opted for a multidisciplinary approach by deploying the post-colonial literary approach, cultural studies and psychoanalysis allowing for a deeper understanding of the many facets of cultural and psychological journey these immigrants embark on. Through the comparative examination of these two novels, the study sheds light on the multilayered immigrant experience and the constant quest for *home*. It contributes to a broader understanding of the psychological and social challenges confronted by female immigrants as they navigate the intricacies of cultural adaptation and self-definition.

**Keywords:** Immigrant; Otherness; Identity; Home; Post-colonialism;



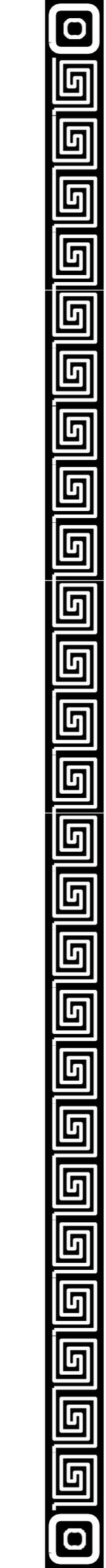
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## Summary in French

Cette thèse examine la construction de l'identité immigrante et le concept de l'autre dans *Americanah* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie et *Jasmine* de Bharati Mukherjee. À travers une analyse comparative, nous étudions la représentation dans ces romans des expériences d'immigrants confrontés au déplacement culturel, redéfinissant les notions d'appartenance et faisant face au regard sociétal qui les désigne comme autres. Ce travail explore la manière dont Adichie et Mukherjee emploient des stratégies narratives contrastées.

Il examine la représentation dans *Americanah* de la nostalgie du pays d'origine et des complexités de l'identité biculturelle, particulièrement pour ceux qui se trouvent entre le Nigeria et les États-Unis. En revanche, ce travail explore comment Jasmine dépeint une expérience plus fluide et fragmentée, marquée par la réinvention constante de soi et l'abandon délibéré par la protagoniste de ses identités passées. En outre, il examine comment les deux romans traitent le concept de l'autre à travers une analyse de la manière dont les personnages sont désignés comme étrangers au sein de leurs sociétés d'adoption, subissant des préjugés et tentant de surmonter les frontières culturelles et raciales construites par la culture dominante. De plus, l'étude explore l'altérité intériorisée vécue par les protagonistes et la façon dont elles négocient leur sentiment d'identité par rapport à leur passé et leur présent. Afin d'obtenir une perspective élargie sur le sujet, nous avons opté pour une approche éclectique en déployant l'approche littéraire postcoloniale, les études culturelles et la psychanalyse, permettant une compréhension plus approfondie des multiples facettes du parcours culturel et psychologique que ces immigrantes entreprennent. À travers l'examen comparatif de ces deux romans, l'étude met en lumière l'expérience multicouche de l'immigration et la quête constante d'un chez-soi. Elle contribue à une compréhension plus large des défis psychologiques et sociaux auxquels sont confrontées les femmes immigrantes alors qu'elles naviguent dans les méandres de l'adaptation culturelle et de la définition de soi.

Mots-clés: Immigration; Altérité ; Identité ; Foyer ; Postcolonialisme



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## Summary in Arabic

## ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة، بعين فاحصة وفكر ثاقب، تشكّل هويّة المهاجر ومفهوم الآخر في روايتي "أمريكانا" لتشيماماندا نغوزي أدينشي و"ياسمين" لبهاراتي موخرجي. وعبر تحليل مقارن بسبر أغوار النصين، نستقصي تصوير الروائيين لتجارب المهاجرين وهم يُجرون في خصم الانزياح الثقافي، ويُعيدون صياغة مفاهيم الانتماء، ويُجاهون نظرة المجتمع التي تُسمّمهم بالغربة والاختلاف.

يتمقّ هذا البحث في استكشاف الأساليب السردية المتباينة التي توسّلت بها كلٌّ من أدينشي وموخرجي. فيتمحصّ في رواية "أمريكانا" تصوير الحنين إلى الوطن وتعدّيات الهوية ثنائية الثقافة، لا سيما لأولئك العالقين بين نيجيريا والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وفي المقابل، يستجلي كيف تُصوّر رواية "ياسمين" تجربة أكثر سيولةً ونشاطاً، تتجلى في إعادة اختراع الذات المستمرة وتعمد البطلة التخلص من ذواتها السابقة.

علاوةً على ذلك، يتقصى البحث كيفية تعاطي الروائيين مع مفهوم الآخر من خلال تحليل الطريقة التي يُوسم بها الشخصيات بالغرابة داخل مجتمعاتهم المُتبناة، حيث يتحملون وطأة التحيز ويُحاولون تحطّي الحواجز الثقافية والعرقية التي شيدتها الثقافة المهيمنة. كما تستكشف الدراسة الغربة الداخلية التي تختبرها البطلات وكيفية تفاوضهنّ مع إحساسهنّ بالذات في علاقتهنّ بماضيهنّ وحاضرهنّ.

وسعيّاً إلى إحاطة شاملة بالموضوع، اخترنا منهجاً انتقائياً يجمع بين المقاربة الأدبية ما بعد الكولونيالية، والدراسات الثقافية، والتحليل النفسي، ممّا يُتيح فهماً أعمق لأوجه التعدّد للرحلة الثقافية والنفسية التي تخوضها هؤلاء المهاجرات.

ومن خلال الفحص المقارن لهاتين الروائيتين، تُسلط الدراسة الضوء على تجربة الهجرة المتعدّدة الطبقات والبحث الدؤوب عن الوطن. وهي بذلك تُسهّم في توسيع فهمنا للتحديات النفسية والاجتماعية التي تواجهها المهاجرات وهنّ ينتقلنّ في دروب التكيف الثقافي وتحديد الذات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهجرة؛ الغربة؛ الهوية؛ الوطن؛ ما بعد الكولونيالية

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## General Introduction

Post-colonial literature is rich with stories of immigrants and their journeys into the unpredictability of their quest for a better life. Authors, especially those who were migrants themselves, use these narratives to explore how migrants adapt and integrate into American society, revealing insights into American culture, group dynamics, and individual psychology. Literary analysis can help us understand these themes because literature reflects both a society's beliefs and its internal struggles, offering a window into the collective psyche and how ideologies shape people's relationship with their world. The "migrant voice" is unique and powerful because it voices the complex emotions of feeling both foreign and at home, of navigating new surroundings while longing for the past, and of the challenges faced when crossing physical and cultural borders. These stories detail the hardships of migration, including loss, change, conflict, and emotional burdens. However, they also offer new perspectives and experiences, both familiar and unfamiliar. For those who have left their homes behind, writing can become a source of solace and a way to connect with their identity and experiences.

In this regard, and taking into consideration the two novels chosen as corpus of analysis in this dissertation, the term "Afropolitanism" has expanded in popularity through recent years as a concept used to designate a new generation of Africans who live and embark on journeys between diverse locations. It blends African and cosmopolitan identities, providing a fresh perspective beyond the traditional single narrative and forced political context associated with Africa. However, the concept raises questions about the boundaries between being "cosmopolitan" and being "African", by integrating these two terms, we need to consider what aspects of African identity might be lost or gained in this new definition. African writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, contest the concept of rigid borders and historical definitions of identity. For Adichie, identity is more personal

and shaped by one's current environment and experiences rather than solely by their past.

This allows for multiple and overlapping narratives, where African writers are seen primarily as artists and creators, rather than simply defined by their citizenship.

In this regard, Cameroonian cultural critic Achille Mbembe emphasizes the idea of “the worldwide human” when he stated:

The awareness of this imbrication of here and elsewhere, the presence of the elsewhere in the here and vice versa, this relativization of roots and primary belongings and a way of embracing, fully cognizant of origins, the foreign, the strange and the distant, this capacity to recognize oneself in the face of another and to value the traces of the distant within the proximate, to domesticate the unfamiliar, to work with all manner of contradictions. (Pucherova 410)

### **Background and Context:**

#### **Biography of Adiche:**

Born in 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an African literary figure whose words have reverberated universally. A novelist, essayist, and public speaker, Adichie's novels investigate themes of belonging, identity and the intricacies of the human experience. Adichie grew up in Nsukka, Nigeria where she was encircled by a family of university researchers since her father a professor while her mother was the university's first female administrator, this was portrayed in her novel *Americanah* where she stated the impediments Obinze's mother faced being a university professor including strikes, low and unpaid wages. Adichie's family nurtured a tendency of education and storytelling in their daughter. It was here, within the vivacious Igbo culture, that Adichie started her literary career.

Determined to be a professional novelist, Adichie chased her dream of carrying her studies in the United States where she received a degree in communication and political

science. She proceeded with her dream to get a Master's degrees in creative writing and African studies, which improved her expertise and developed her understanding of the continent that shaped her identity. Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* published in 2003, paved the way for a life and reputation of a celebrated African and world-wide author. In this story she depicted the political uproar in Nigeria, which reverberated with readers globally, earning her the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book.

Her ensuing novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* confirmed her talent being Africa's top voice in contemporary literature. Her other novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, was an influential historical novel that highlighted the disastrous effects of the Biafran War earning her the Orange Prize for Fiction. *Americanah*, on the other hand, explored the journey Nigerian female immigrants undertake to get to the United States which established her status as a leading storyteller for which she won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction.

Adichie is also social advocate for women rights and social justice. In her TED Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, she contested the perils of stereotyping and the positive impact of implementing a variety of accounts. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is considered a literary celebrity, who through the power of her novels probe the human experience and provide a clearer picture of African's endeavor for an identity, cultural understanding and their concepts of home and belonging.

In her novel *Americanah*, we follow the journey of Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman who migrates to the United States in search of better opportunities. The novel explores her experiences navigating American society, confronting racial prejudice, and grappling with the constant sense of "otherness." Ifemelu also faces numerous challenges as an immigrant, from navigating the complications of the visa system to dealing with racial proliferation and stereotypes based on her race and nationality. She also struggles with the

constant longing for her home country and the feeling of never truly belonging anywhere. The story intertwines Ifemelu's life in America with the experiences of Obinze both as an illegal immigrant in London and as a successful businessman back in Lagos, Nigeria. Through Ifemelu's journey, Adichie offers a minute and discerning examination of the immigrant experience, highlighting the complexities of navigating new cultures, the challenges of racial discrimination, and the constant search for identity and belonging to a home that evades any successful attempt of definition.

### **Biography of Mukherjee:**

Bharati Mukherjee was born in July 27, 1940, in Kolkata, India, she was a creative writer whose works investigated the intricacies of the immigrant experience. She became a distinguished voice in Indian-American literature, using her fiction and non-fiction to explore topics of cultural displacement, identity struggles, and the challenges facing new immigrants from Indian origins in America while crossing physical and cultural borders. Mukherjee's early life was marked by mobility because she was born into an affluent Bengali family, she, just like immigrants in her novels, was voluntarily displaced in her childhood through India, England, and Switzerland. This early contact with diverse cultures is what led to shaping her literary standpoint. After completing her education in India, she moved to the United States in 1961, eventually earning a Ph.D. in English from the University of Iowa. (Soderberg)

In 1963, Mukherjee married Clark Blaise, the Canadian writer, their common experiences of migration and cultural hybridity further shaped her writing style. Her first novel, *The Tiger's Daughter*, published in 1982, brought her fame as a gifted storyteller. This novel, and many of her subsequent works, explored the lives of Indian immigrants in the West, grappling with issues of identity, belonging, and the clash between tradition and modernity. Mukherjee's most acclaimed novels include, *The Middleman and Other Stories*

(1988) which is a collection of short stories that delve into the lives of immigrants and explore themes of cultural displacement and the search for belonging. *Desirable Daughters* (1997) on the other hand, scrutinizes the lives of two Indian sisters who immigrate to the United States with conflicting experiences and ambitions. Bharati Mukherjee's short stories and essays have been recognized as significant works by appearing in prestigious anthologies like "The Best American Short Stories" and "The Oxford Book of American Short Stories." Additionally, her writing has been widely reviewed and discussed in various publications across the United States, Canada, India, and Britain. (Maxey 4) Mukherjee also wrote non-fiction works like *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977), which is a memoir she co-authored with her husband, providing a personal and insightful look at the city of her birth. Throughout her career, Mukherjee received numerous awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and the Guggenheim Fellowship. She also occupied a distinguished position as a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, inspiring generations of students and writers. Bharati Mukherjee passed away in 2017, leaving behind a rich literary legacy. Her novels offered a rich and multidimensional perspective particularly in the context of migration and cultural encounters that reverberate with readers worldwide, offering poignant and thought-provoking explorations of the human condition.

In her novel *Jasmine*, published in 1989 and which is the corpus of this dissertation, she wrote the story of Jyoti, a young Indian woman who undergoes a series of reinventions and transformations throughout her life. The novel is told in a non-linear fashion, jumping between different time periods and locations, reflecting the fragmented nature of Jyoti's journey. Jyoti's story begins in Hasnapur, India, where she is born and raised. As a child, she is told by an astrologer that she will be widowed and exiled. This prophecy foreshadows the tragic events of her life. At the age of 17, she marries Prakash, a man she

barely knows, and they plan to move to the United States. However, on their wedding day, Prakash is killed in a political riot, leaving Jyoti traumatized and alone. Motivated by fear and the yearning to leave, Jyoti escapes India and embarks on a journey of reinvention where she adopts a new identity, Jasmine, leaving behind her past life and memories.

Jasmine's illegal journey brought her to Florida, where she works as a maid and struggles to adapt to American life by adopting another identity, adventurous Jase. Years later, Jasmine re-invents her identity once more, becoming Jane Ripplemeyer and marrying a kind and understanding man named Bud. They settle in Iowa and build a seemingly stable life. However, Jasmine's past continues to haunt her, and she grapples with the trauma of her experiences and the question of who she truly is.

The novel explores the complex theme of identity and how individuals can reinvent themselves in response to trauma and displacement. Jasmine's constant name changes and shifting identities reflect her search for belonging and a sense of self. The novel concludes with Jasmine/Jane apparently discovering a sense of peace and constancy in Iowa. However, the ending remains ambiguous, leaving the reader to question whether she has truly escaped her past and achieved a sense of wholeness. Therefore, *Jasmine* is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that explores the human capacity for resilience and the complexities of identity in the face of trauma and displacement.

### **Literature Review:**

The experiences of immigrants and their struggles with *otherness* have been a recurring theme in literature, providing significant discernment into the cultural convolutions related to dislocation, identity formation, and defining and re-examining the concept of home by navigating new social landscapes. We will try in this review to explore the depiction of The Immigrant and the Other in Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, by highlighting the shared and distinct

experiences of the two novels' protagonists coming from two different but similar post-colonial countries in their exploration journey of life in the United States. Imbolo Mbue's novel *Behold the Dreamers* is another African novel through which we follow the story of Jende and Neni Jonga, a young Cameroonian couple who have immigrated to New York City with their son Liomi in search of a better life. Both characters were portrayed as exploration of the complexities of life as undocumented immigrants where they face persistent challenges, from the fear of deportation to the daily struggles of making ends meet. These events force both African and American families to face their own susceptibilities and deal with the harsh realities of the American Dream. The Jonga family symbolizes the determination of immigrants striving for a better life and their shame of returning home empty handed denouncing the fallacy of the American Dream.

Another African novel that shares with both novels the hurdles facing immigrants in their physical and cultural journey to America is Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. In this novel, we follow the story of Sepha Stephanos, an Ethiopian immigrant living in Washington D.C. after fleeing his country's revolution 17 years ago. The novel alternates between Sepha's present, where he runs a struggling grocery store in a gentrifying neighborhood, and his past in Ethiopia, marked by political upheaval and the loss of his father. He grapples with isolation and the weight of his past while navigating the complexities of life in America. The story explores themes of displacement, cultural identity, and the search for belonging. Indian novels on the other hand, provided a rich legacy of immigration and otherness as their main themes. *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian novel that shares with *Jasmine* the perpetual redefinition of identity. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel follows Gogol, a first-generation Indian-American grappling with the expectations of his parents and his own desires as he struggles with his name, a symbol of his heritage, and the constant negotiation between his Indian and

American identities. (Sanga 109)

In addition to this, *The Predicament of Illegality: Undocumented Aliens in Contemporary American Immigration Fiction* (Llobrera) is a dissertation that highlighted the variety of themes related to immigration including the redefinition of identity both for Immigrants and Americans focusing on the variety of roots immigrants choose to embark on an illegal journey to America. Journal articles were no exception, since through their reviews and investigation, they broadened our understanding of the predicament of immigration and the ensuing cultural traumas. *Afropolitan Narratives and Empathy: Migrant Identities in Adichie's Americanah and Sefi Atta's A bit of Difference* is an article by Dobrota Pucherova where she investigated the portrayal of identity formation and the traumatic outcome of displacement for Nigerian women. *Unhousement To Rehousement: A Cultural Encounter, Ethnicity to Identity In The Novels of Bharati Mukherjee* written by Anita Goswami, is another pertinent journal article that examined Mukherjee's novels concentrating on all the female protagonists who are depicted as victims of the politics of ethnicity and identity. In her investigation, she described immigrant women as mindful of their difference in term of color, race, and gender.

Many books also provided a good insight into the predicaments of identity formation and belonging to many countries. *Afropolitan Literature as World Literature* is rich book by James Hodapp in which he focused on the universality of African literature due to its contemporary themes such as immigration and identity formation that became major preoccupations for both African writers including Adichie and post-colonial writers around the world. The book also examines global Africanness depicted in novels and the struggles immigrants endure in the West highlighting the fact that the majority of Africans living in Africa cannot basically travel freely around the world. *The Art of Multiculturalism: Bharati Mukherjee's Imaginal Politics for the Age of Global Migration* is another book in

which Roland Benedikter and Judith Hilber demonstrate via their talented investigation of Bharati Mukherjee's literary works from. They illustrate how an 'immigrant' from India to the U.S. like Mukherjee can carve a niche in world literary canon and become an established literary author. The book also embodies the idea of creating a space where diverse individuals can feel welcome and contribute to a global, cosmopolitan environment.

### **Research Methodology:**

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of this dissertation, we opted for an eclectic methodology in order to have a wholistic approach towards to the subject at hand. In other words, we will tackle the themes in this dissertation from a variety of perspectives ranging from post-colonial approach, cultural studies to psychoanalysis and stylistics to cover as much ground as possible in our analysis of the selected novels. The motivation behind our choice of the cultural studies approach is its analytical lens that approaches literary works from a variety of perspectives within their broader social, economic, and cultural context.

It goes beyond the traditional focus on the text itself and delves into the surrounding environment, exploring how power, identity, and representation are constructed and challenged within the work. Cultural studies underscore the crucial role of historical, political, and social conditions in which a literary work was created including the author's background, the target audience, and the prevailing ideologies of the time. This theory also draws on various disciplines beyond literary criticism, such as history, sociology, anthropology, and political science. This allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the text's relationship with the broader culture including how power relations are constructed and challenged within a text and examining how different groups, such as social classes, genders, and ethnicities, are represented and how the text perpetuates or subverts existing power structures. All these criteria serve our objectives and broaden the scope of this

study.

In addition to the aforementioned, we opted for the psychoanalysis literary approach which analyzes literary texts through the lens of the unconscious mind in search for the hidden meanings and motivations within the text. We also focus on the unconscious desires and conflicts of the characters within the text particularly their repetitive behaviors to uncover hidden motivations and psychological complexities. Through this approach we get to delve into the protagonists' sense of self and how they perceive their identity and that of the host country in their search for belonging and home. In addition to this, the researcher opted for the stylistic literary approach to offer a valuable lens for appreciating the artistry and craftsmanship of both novels by focusing on the specific language choices and techniques employed, it allows for a deeper understanding of the text's meaning and its impact on the reader.

### **Research Questions:**

In this dissertation we try to investigate and answer the following main research questions:

- 1) How is the experience of immigration, both legal and illegal, portrayed in *Americanah* and *Jasmine* both the challenges and the opportunities?
- 2) How do the selected novels explore the concept of *otherness* in relation to the gender, race, and class of the immigrant characters in the selected novels?
- 3) How do the immigrant characters negotiate their identities within the new context?
- 4) How does the novel depict the relationship between the immigrant characters and the host society in terms of the discrimination and prejudice they experience?

In addition to the above-mentioned questions, we will try to answer the following sub-questions:

- 1) How does the novel use literary devices like symbolism, imagery, and metaphor to explore themes of immigration and otherness?
- 2) To what extent is the depiction of the immigrant experience in their endeavor to create and redefine home similar/different in the selected novels?

**Motivation and Significance of the study:**

The objective of this research is to dig deeper into the literary depiction of the experiences of immigrants and their interactions with the *other* in their identity construction. Studying how immigrants are represented in literature and how *otherness* is constructed and challenged through ideology, prejudices, and societal anxieties will help us realize the struggles, triumphs, and the difficulties of traveling to new cultural landscapes. This can foster empathy and understanding of the diverse experiences of immigrants in our increasingly globalized world.

Despite the fact that the study of *the Immigrant and the Other* in literature is a primordial theme, this research aims to contribute fresh perspectives by approaching the topic from an eclectic perspective through an analysis of how representations of immigrants and *otherness* differ across cultures and literary traditions. This was done through the choice of two pos-colonial novels from two different parts of the world, Nigeria and India. Despite the fact that both writers share some colonial history, but through our dissertation we will try to highlight the differences in terms of the depiction of the female immigrant's journey, their construction of identity and their divergent view of belonging and home.

The researcher's interest in this topic stems from a desire to better understand the lived experiences of female immigrants and the hurdles they face in navigating new cultural spaces. Additionally, we intend to bring a fresh perspective of a male African researcher studying two novels written by two female writers where gender and cultural

roles are contested and in constant redefinition.

**Research structure:**

This dissertation is divided into four main chapters, the first chapter deals with the socio-historical context and theoretical background through which we will set the ground for the coming two practical chapters. In the first title *Decolonizing the Narrative: Speaking from the Margins*, we will investigate postcolonialism both as literary approach and as a literary trend to which the selected two novels and their authors belong. We will examine the field and the various disciplines it covers including history, literature, political science, and cultural studies which offers valuable insights into the struggles for justice and equality. Through the second title, *Jurisprudence of Otherness and the Creation of the Other*, we will delve into the critical legal framework and how the law constructs and reinforces the concept of "otherness." We will focus on how legal systems and legal practices can preserve power dynamics by creating and maintaining inequalities between different groups which includes creating categories like citizen and foreigner, and designating immigrants with degrading names such as *alien* that only intensifies the anti-immigrant sentiment and hinder inclusion. After that, we will investigate Homi Bhabha's concepts in relation to the post-colonial canon and the immigrant's experience which offer a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between colonizer and colonized, under the title *Mimicry and Ambivalence: Exploring the Intricacies of Identity*.

After that, we will deal with the concept of diaspora and what it incorporates including the complex experiences, identities, and communities that arise when people are scattered across different regions under the title *Diaspora and the Dynamics of Displacement*. In addition to this, we will criticize *The Myth of a Color-Blind America* in which we will highlight the racial practices prevalent today in the so-called Beacon of Democracy. We will move to talk about the idea that shaped the American discourse and

history in *Deconstructing the Myth of the American Dream* where we will investigate the delusion and mythical concept that attracts immigrants from all over the world to fulfill their quest for their *Eldorado*. In the last title of this chapter, *Immigrants' Quest for Home in a Shifting Landscape*, we shall examine the elusive nature of the concept of home because due to immigrants' dislocation, the term undergone a perpetual redefinition.

In the second chapter titled: *Immigrants' Journey of Self-discovery and the Identity Trauma*, we will start dealing with the analysis of the selected novels, Adichie's *Americanah* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. In the first title: *Jasmine's Shell of Other Selves and the Chameleon Effect*, we will delve into Jasmine's psychoanalysis by highlighting her constant transformation as a personality dissociation otherwise known as MPD, a technique she adopted to cover-up for her foreignness and assimilate into the American society. However, we will compare the aforesaid with Ifemelu's traumatic experience with her identity formation discovering her blackness in America as a designation which we will discuss in detail in *Ifemelu's Identity Trauma and the Search for the Black Self*. We will move to talk about the outcome of those identity traumas both protagonist face in America where they resort to mimesis in *The Art of Imitation: When Mimicry Becomes Identity in Jasmine* and *Mimicry, hybridity and the Third Space in Americanah*. Both novels depicted the perils and reality of the illegal journey that the immigrants undertake to get to their destination which intensify their alienation and isolation a point that we will discuss in *Navigating the Perils of Illegal Immigration in Jasmine* and *Becoming Alien on a Hostile Land: Americanah's Illegal immigrants*.

In the third chapter, *Curving a Niche on a Hostile Land and the Pursuit of Happiness* however, we will explore the American Dream being the pulling factor for the immigrant characters facing otherness, hostility and a persistent exclusion they encounter in America. In both *Chasing Shadows: The American Dream or Mirage in Jasmine* and *Disillusionment with the American Dream in Americanah*, we will delve into the psyche of

those immigrants and through the novels.

We will examine the validity of the Dream by emphasizing its fallacy and the blur picture it draws for these wanderers across borders. In *The Cost of Belonging: Jasmine's Quest for Home*, we will investigate Jasmine's techniques of integration and assimilation by yearning for the new incarnation of becoming American, a role she adopted to make America her home and cut any cultural ties with her roots. However, when it comes to Ifemelu, her hybrid identity played a role in her redefinition of home which in her case becomes Nigeria and we will also investigate the attitudes of the other immigrants in the novel towards going back home as a shame and a failure which we will see in *From Routes to Roots: Creating Home and the Shame of Return in Americanah*. The last title in chapter is *Renunciation of Race in Americanah* where we will highlight Ifemelu's blog as a social commentary on racism and being black in America.

In chapter four, titled *The Aesthetics of Immigration*, we will deal with Adichie's and Mukherjee's talent in investigating the immigrants' journey. In the first title, *Reflections of Adichie's Self in Americanah and Rooting fact into fiction: Autobiography in Jasmine*, we will examine the autobiographical account in both novels highlighting the fact that both writers are female immigrants themselves just like their female protagonists Jasmine and Ifemelu which demonstrate their reflections in their characters' life. In *Counter Discourse Strategies in Americanah and Jasmine*, we will examine Adichie's use of the English language along with Igbo as a counter discourse technique of the colonial discourse. However, we will see that Mukherjee identity being American not American-Indian is demonstrated in her use of English. In addition to this, we will discuss both writers' talent in narrating their events using techniques of flashbacks and foregrounding to highlight the indeterminacy of the journey of immigration itself. *Adichie and Mukherjee as Committed Writers* highlights the fact that both writers are committed to unveil the atrocities and adversities immigrants encounter both physically and culturally through

their realistic description which we shall see in *Exploring the Nuances of Reality in Americanah and Jasmine*.

## **CHAPTER ONE: Socio-historical Context and Theoretical Background**

### **Introduction**

The colonial voice has long been the prime source of narratives about immigration and in shaping public perception about it. In this chapter, we will dig deeper into the immigrants' journey to decolonize these narratives, by providing voice to those who have been demoted as marginal. We will examine the legal and social frameworks surrounding immigration and their role in constructing *otherness* and shaping the national identity. This notion will be further examined through the perspective of nativism being the dogma that prioritizes native-born citizens and depicts immigrants as uninvited guests.

Nevertheless, we will explore the concept of "Mimicry and Ambivalence," in which immigrants adopt assimilation and cultural preservation techniques to successfully fit in. This investigation will be developed more by understanding the role of media in influencing public awareness about immigration. Moreover, we will investigate the concept of diaspora, the experience of dislocation and the constant quest for a homeland. Throughout this chapter, we will challenge the myth of a "Color-Blind America" and review immigrants' over idealization of the "American Dream". By doing so, we aim to form a broader understanding of the immigrant experience and their pursuit for home in a fluctuating country.

### **1.1. Decolonizing the Narrative: Speaking from the Margins**

English literature is becoming full of post-colonial literatures written in English in previously colonized societies. Therefore, post-colonialism as a field of study has given rise to an abundant range of theoretical ideas, concepts and debates, which have been dealt with considerably in books and articles produced and published from every continent and in previously colonized countries in particular. However, trying to provide the exact definition of the related terminology proves to be a challenging task. Post-colonial is

synonymous with the ambiguity and complexity of the different cultural experiences it implicates, as it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact to 'after-colonialism' or after-Independence. Nevertheless, some questions may arise: after whose colonialism? after the end of which colonial empire? As for some theorists, post colonialism is primordial. (Ashcroft, Griffiths et Helen 5)

Indian critic Aijaz Ahmad argues that the term 'colonialism' dates back to the Incas, the Ottomans and the Chinese, which is way before the European colonial empires began; thus, the term may cover all types of national oppressions. He suggests that 'Colonialism' is trans historical and that everyone at one time or another gets to be a colonizer, a colonized and post-colonial - sometimes all at once. Canadian critic Stephen Slemon argues that 'post-colonial' proves useful when it locates a specifically anti- or post-colonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others. (Childs et R. J. Patrick 2)

Contemporary theorists used the hyphenated term 'post-colonial' to denote the historical epoch succeeding the end of European colonialism. On the other hand, they used the unhyphenated word 'postcolonial' to refer to ideologies and discourses and intellectual formations which have emerged from cultures that experienced imperial encounters. Homi Bhabha shed light on this aspect by stating that 'our existence today is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present', for which there seems to be no proper name other than the current and controversial shiftiness of the prefix 'post': postmodernism, post colonialism, post feminism... ' (Bhabha 1)

However, post-colonial societies are in one way or another still subject to some kind of neocolonial control through the economic and political policies by which the great powers indirectly maintain or extend their influence over other areas or people, and unfortunately independence has not solved this problem. (5) Post-colonial theory also

discusses experiences of emigrants /immigrants, hybridity, slavery, resistance, diaspora, race, gender, and the colonized reactions to the prominent master discourses of imperial powers such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. (Bassnett 20)

The term 'post-colonial' is in many ways used to cover cultural effects of colonization from the past up until now. The semantic use of the term 'postcolonial' suggests an involvement with the indigenous culture after the departure of the imperial power which is defined by its perpetual imperial preoccupation throughout European history. As the literatures of post-colonial societies such as African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, and Pakistan quested for establishing the uniqueness of their language, education, and cultural and to break the link with former colonizing power, they divided English departments in universities into separate schools of linguistics and of literature. '*On the abolition of the English department*' is one of the prominent papers by the Kenyan writer and academic Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in which he gave a detailed account on the decolonization of African culture, education and languages. (Ashcroft, Gareth et Tiffin 130)

Renee Green, the African-American artist, highlighted the prerequisite of understanding cultural difference as the production of minority identities that 'split' - are estranged unto themselves - in the act of being articulated into a collective body. She stated that:

'Multiculturalism doesn't reflect the complexity of the situation as I face it daily. . .It requires a person to step outside of him/ herself to actually see what he/she is doing. I don't want to condemn well-meaning people and say (like those T-shirts you can buy on the street) 'It's a black thing, you wouldn't understand.' To me that's essentializing blackness' (Bhabha 3)

However, pre-colonial cultures endeavor for a voice is frequently faced by the *silencing* effect by the metropolitan institutions and practices. An effect which was discussed in detail in “*Can the Subaltern Speak*” by Gayatri Spivak. Spivak disputed the ability of studying third world subject without cooperation with the colonial project and she points to the fact that research is always colonial, in defining the *other*, the *over there* subject as the object of study and as something that knowledge should be extracted from and brought back *here*. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the *here* and *there*. So basically, we're talking about white men speaking to white men about colored men/women. Furthermore, knowledge is never innocent since it expresses the interests of its producers so it is like any other commodity which is exported from the *west* to the third world for any type of gain. (Arkwe)

However, it should be noted that for post-colonial societies, the pre-colonial languages and cultures continue to provide the effective framework for their daily lives. So, the colonial discourse not only repudiates the colonized subjects the right to participate in defining the prerequisites of the relationship with the colonizers, nonetheless it dehumanizes them by putting words of savagery in their mouths. (Ashcroft, Griffiths et Helen 128)

Imperial powers were frequently the sole producers of the first literary texts in the colonies in the new language. However, they claim to be objective which serves as a guise to conceal the imperial discourse. The imperial powers real intentions surface when it comes to the fact of being the sole institution to license the acceptable form and allow the publication of the work of literature in the colony. The outcome of all these infringements is the stereotyping of the image of the *Other*. Chinua Achebe was a central advocate who insisted on the fallacy of the colonial literature picturing pre-colonial Africa as a land that requires civilizing. In *Things Fall Apart*, he considers the cultural damages that ensued

British rule by demonizing the *whites* so called 'civilizing mission' and the picture they drew of Africa in their literary texts and *Heart of Darkness* in particular. (Newell 6)

Achebe, among many other African writers, highlighted the plurality of African 'literatures', and revoke its singularity. They draw our attention to Africa's postcolonial identity and the heterogeneous nature of its cultures and literatures, which leads us to account for the diversity of literary currents within African countries, along with their shared history of slavery and colonialism. Conrad's work *Heart of Darkness* is a mirror image of Western biased ideology when it comes to the representation of the natives as "niggers" and "savages". Notwithstanding, Stuart Hall highlighted the depictions of Africa by Africans in a constant existence of Europe as a prevailing fabricator of images, ideas and thus identities and uncovered an elusive but revealing grammatical alteration which disrupts the binary opposition between silence and speech. Hall uses the past tense to describe Africa's silence but the present tense to designate Europe's speech, emphasizing an 'eternal-present' tense for an Africa that has found the speech but not the language to prevent Europe from 'endlessly speaking us.' (Newell 86)

In his novella, Conrad appropriated an Africa for European colonial imagination through the character of Marlow whose duality of function served as being both the narrator of a textual reality, and being the colonial European official in Africa. Therefore, *Heart of Darkness* is the pure product of a western ideology that constructs a misrepresentation of an unknown world under the guise of civilization. (Ashcroft, Griffiths et Helen 449)

The dichotomy of place and dislocation is also a constant feature of post-colonial theory and practice whether as a result of settlement, intrusion, or a combination of both. The most widely shared discursive practice within which this alienation can be identified is the construction of 'place'. Post-colonial theory has proceeded from the need to address this different practice. Indigenous theories have developed to accommodate the differences

within the various cultural traditions as well as the desire to describe in a comparative way the features shared across those traditions. The Western perspective, then, is crucially superior to that of the subaltern: those with the power to speak for those who cannot. Yet Mukherjee identifies this as a problem in her novel *Untouchable*: 'this caste and class distance between the writer and the people he represents results in the erasure in the novel of the voice of the untouchable community' (Mukherjee 36)

In this matter, Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* emphasized the subaltern state of the colonized to the colonizer's language and culture by stating that all colonized people whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave tend to position themselves in relation to the civilizing language (the metropolitan culture). He adds that the more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. In other words, the more he rejects his blackness the whiter he will become. (Fanon 18)

The harsh confrontation with new cultures of the metropolis and the disrupt with one's inherited traditional culture as well as the threat of impenetrable foreign moral and ideological norms and values will eventually lead to the so-called *culture shock*. Enculturation then in this sense can be defined as familiarity with the *Other*, the alien who goes through a variety of processes only to dissolve into the *norm* culture, a process that hardly comes to an end. In the eyes Indian writer and post-colonial theorist Bharati Mukherjee, the whole process is a gradual substantiation of a new multiple identity, also known as pluralization of identity. (Benedikter et Hilber 4)

## **1.2. Jurisprudence of *Otherness* and the creation of the *Other*:**

Defining the word migrant proves to be a challenging task because different definitions bear significant consequences when it comes to the data, both in terms of number of migrants and for the analysis of the impacts of migration. who counts as an

immigrant is fundamental yet there is no consensus on a single definition.

We can define migration as the process of moving across an international or a national border including any type of movement of people, whatsoever its length, composition and causes. Migration encompasses economic migrants, displaced persons, uprooted people, and refugees.” Migration is certainly not a recent phenomenon; on the contrary, it has been part of the human history since its very beginning. People have migrated from one continent to the other, from country to country or internally, inside the same country. Currently, IOM states that there are about one billion migrants around the world.

Merriam Webster defines a *migrant* and an *immigrant* differently. A *migrant* is defined as “a person who moves regularly in order to find work especially in harvesting crops” thus highlighting the temporary criteria of migration; whereas an *immigrant* is defined as “a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence”. (Merriam-Webster)

We can define migrants based on their foreign place of birth or their foreign citizenship. In analyzing the impact of migration, we might even analyze the impact second generation migrants have on society and their location in the societal hierarchy. US-born children whose parents are foreign-born or foreign-nationals, none of these definitions are equivalent, and none fit precisely with ‘migrant’ defined as an individual who is subject to immigration controls. Moreover, in the UK ‘immigrant’ and ‘migrant’ (as well as ‘foreigner’) are commonly used interchangeably in public debate and even among research specialists, although dictionary definitions distinguish ‘immigrants’ - people who are or intend to be settled in their new country - from ‘migrants’ who are temporarily resident. (In addition, in some scholarly and everyday usage, people who move internally within national boundaries are called migrants. (IFRC)

Having said that, it is worth noting that society and the legal system have their share in redefining migration and labeling immigrants. The U.S. Supreme Court, for instance,

has employed rich metaphoric language portraying immigrants as aliens flooding communities and attacking nations' economy. William Hubbs Rehnquist (American attorney and jurist who served on the U.S. Supreme Court) depicted the war against illegal immigration as a form of national self-protection these aliens are entering the country like an avalanche dangerous, overpowering, and unstoppable. In describing these waves of immigrants coming to the US, American novelist and poet Russel Banks depicted these cycles of migration as a *Continental Drift* emphasizing the colossal number of migrants coming to the US looking for a better life. US Supreme Court's repeated use of metaphors to describe migrants led to an anti-immigration sentiment amongst American people since repeating and circulating certain metaphors results in conceptual domain limited to a set of associations. (Cunningham-Parmeter 1569)

### **1.2.1. Immigrants as Aliens :**

One of the most main metaphors in immigration law is the word, *alien*. The etymology of the word derives from the Old French word *allien*, which means "strange, foreign," and the Latin words *alienus* and *alius*, which mean "of or belonging to another person or place," "hostile," "strange," and "other." (Online Etymology Dictionary). The present-day definition of "alien," reflects the origins of the word accordingly, based on early definitions, aliens are described as dangerous *others* who are marked by their strangeness. US Supreme Court dehumanizing association of immigrants even stresses the nonhuman character of immigrants in its laws: "The Government may continue to *detain* an *alien* who still remains here or *release* that alien under supervision". Based on the latter law, the Supreme Court utilizes degrading descriptions to designate *aliens* as animals that are caught and released. Dehumanization arises likewise when describing aliens as creatures from outer space. Extraterrestrials are the ultimate nonhumans. Recognizing the ability of "alien" to convey foreignness. (Cunningham-Parmeter 1571)

Lawyers and judges use this metaphor recurrently when designating immigrants that it becomes a label stuck to them in immigration discourse. In his book *Immigrants Out!: The New Nativism and Anti-Immigrant impulse in the USA* Juan F. Perea interpreted this as “an elaborate ritual of purification designed to ease internal insecurities by creating enemies, internal and external, to whom we assign blame for the problems of our own making”. (Perea 4) Politicians and even governors used this anti-immigrant propaganda to enjoy political success by attributing any economic failure to undocumented persons. This obvious targeting of ‘illegal aliens’ is because they are deprived from any substantial legitimate political power and easy targets to exploitation. Asserting any rights publicly will definitely result in deportation. (Perea 5) Home Land Security defines an ‘alien’ as: “a person who is not a citizen or national of the United States” this definition serves as a cultural mapping embedded references onto the legal identity of immigrants. The word “alien” thus carries three different qualities: otherness, illegality, and ethnicity.

Immigration metaphors have figurative representations embedded in them to designate people. The Supreme Court, for instance, describes immigrants using metaphors such as: *illegal alien* and *silent invasion*. the immigrant therefore, turns out to be the *alien*, the *alien* becomes the *illegal*, and the *illegal* turn into the *criminal*.

Statements such as the one Superintendent James Plyler stated claiming that “the serious national problems caused by the influx of *uncountable millions* of illegal aliens across our borders,” will only reinforce an already negative image the American public opinion draw about immigrants; having said that, and according to statistics, by the end of 2022, 15.5 million illegal immigrants were residing in the USA according to estimations by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). In addition to the aforementioned laws that incorporate a multilayered and embedded anti-immigration sentiment, other immigration stories comprise a rich figurative language bound to

American's embodied perception of the immigration world. Court laws also include many *water* metaphors that trigger readers' fear of drowning and also other metaphors of crime and attack that generate self-defense instincts.

The illegal alien metaphor alters the severity of an immigrant's offense besides ignoring the meticulous status of immigrants, for instance, entering the country crossing the borders illegally is a misconduct which is rarely indicted by federal officials. Furthermore, approximately 45 percent of individuals labeled as "illegal aliens" fell into illegality by overstaying their legal visas which is a civil felony which comprises no criminal demeanor. Notwithstanding, applying the dichotomy *illegal alien* with *criminal stranger*, only turns immigrants into being more than simple border-crossers but more like murderers, burglars, and drug dealers who menace the social order. (Legomsky 144)

Having said that, and as we shall see in the coming section, immigrants obtain little compassion from a society adapted to condemn its offenders and always works hard to isolate the "good" from the "evil" counting on the categorization administered by the legal institutions. (Ortony 226) *Illegal alien* metaphor that many domains summon in describing immigrants, only fueled a increasing public resentment of authorized and unauthorized immigrants which results in an over fifty percent of Americans calling for a reduced number of both legal and illegal immigration. (Sohoni 229)

### **1.2.2. Nativism and the Unwelcoming Stranger**

People in California talk about the "illegals," But there was always an illegality to immigration. It was a rude act, the leaving of home...Immigrants must always be illegal. Immigrants are always criminals. They trespass borders and horrify their grandmothers. But they are also our civilization's prophets. They, long before the rest of us ... they saw the hemisphere whole.

**Richard Rodriguez** (Rodriguez 224)

Despite the fact that after 9/11 anti-immigration sentiment reached highest levels, its roots go way back. As we also in the previous part, public and court rhetoric aimed at discrediting the alleged *invasion* and *flood* of immigrants has been accumulating support for decades and even triggering progressively a new limited policy from federal immigration policy. The USA is going through a challenging time marked by a drooping economy, unemployment, financial failure, and wage inequality, circumstances that only intensified an already antagonistic environment for immigrants. In this part of our research, we will try to reveal the social, political, and economic conditions which led to the increase surge of xenophobia and a change of a hospitable attitude that marked the U.S. society for decades.

The aforementioned metaphorical associations have huge impact on the perception of immigration. These strangers across borders come to the USA culturally loaded with their own languages, beliefs, and cultural practices in a distinctly American way of life, which is their own way of negotiating between their culture and native's. American institutions regulate communications with these *aliens* by generating social, psychological, and spatial mechanisms that confine their access to resources and even social status. Therefore, immigrants construct identities based on how they perceive and respond to these social boundaries.

Among those social boundaries is the rise of anti-immigrant groups who promote for more restraining immigration policies and even organize initiatives to legislate the use of English as an official language. More recent polls indicated that thirty nine percent of white Americans believed that there should be more restrictive measures on immigration flow. Accordingly, and in a 2007 poll done by Wall Street Journal, fifty two percent of Americans supposed that immigration damages the United States' economy more than it benefits from it.

Consequently, political elites' comparison of immigrants with a natural catastrophe is their way of dehumanizing them. By associating immigrants to insects, disasters, or disease, these elites repudiate individuals or groups their humanity, which paves the way for Americans to endorse any severe and retaliatory actions against these *aliens*. This fear of the *other* is embedded in American immigration history and is a projection of Americans' xenophobia. Merriam-Webster online Dictionary defines xenophobia as "the fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign" (Merriam-Webster) which emphasizes the fear of the outsiders and anything that is different.

Other definitions of the word stressed this deeply rooted hatred towards *aliens*. Reynolds and Vine defined it as a "psychological state of hostility or fear towards outsiders" (Vine et Reynolds 35) The United National reports on xenophobia provided a more holistic view on xenophobia in which the United Nations Refugee Agency scrutinized the word suggesting that it means:

Attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are *outsiders* or *foreigners* to the community, society or national identity...which translates into a broad spectrum of behaviors including discriminatory, stereotyping and dehumanizing remarks; discriminatory policies and practices by government and private officials such as exclusion from public services to which target groups are entitled; selective enforcement of by-laws by local authorities; assault and harassment by state agents particularly the police and immigration officials; as well as public threats and violence commonly known as xenophobic violence that often results in massive loss of lives and livelihoods. (Misago , Freemantle et B. L)

Based on the previous definition, we can stress the outcome of such inaccurate

behavior towards immigrants that it is not limited to feelings but extends to prejudices against them making them subject to discrimination and may exclude them from rights they are entitled to. This behavior may even draw an overgeneralized picture of immigrants as criminals making them target to provocation by government officials and even a mass anti-immigrant' public hatred that results in deaths.

With respect to xenophobia, other concepts arise such as: nativism, ethnocentrism and nationalism. Nativism, for instance, is the concentration on segregating people who are native-born from individuals who were native to places external to the national borders, a classification that suggest an explicit new system of acceptable social structure in modern America with an overwhelming emphasis on the social and cultural unity of the American society considering any person who is different from the very fabric of American way of life as an enemy of the acceptable social order.

Ethnocentrism on the other hand, emphasizes the assessment of the *other* cultures using one's own culture as the norm, designated by a downgrading of outside group's cultural practices including customs behaviors, religion, and language. Kam & Kinder provided a thorough definition of the word stating that it "is a general outlook on groups and group relations, one that partitions the social world into *Us* and *Them*, into friend and foe," (Kam, D et Donald R) this definition's use of the dichotomy *Us* and *Them* stresses the antagonistic attitude towards foreigners and immigrants in general. U.S. administration when it comes to immigration endorses a racialized division which influences public policy and decision-making between the privileged group (whites) and the disadvantaged group who are subjected to an augmented menace (immigrants) through penal measures. These measures are only a pretext for ensuring, through a set of laws the victimization of white majority. (Valdez 642) In this context, Governor Pete Wilson claimed that "it is unfair to law-abiding taxpayers that criminals, welfare

dependents, illegal migrants...are draining resources from government and jeopardizing the state's viability" thus reenforcing the white victim discourse and associating social and economic problems with immigrants such as: crowded schools and job competition etc....

In his 1991 book *The Disuniting of America*, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr stated that "The cult of ethnicity exaggerates differences, intensifies resentments and antagonisms, drives ever deeper the awful wedges between races and nationalities". He asserted that recent ethnicities of black, brown, red, yellow, white, that once thrived to be part of the happy melting-pot America was in fact "a society fragmented into ethnic groups."

(NIELI et M. SWAIN 3)

The Melting Pot portrayal of the United States's social structure and its national identity being formed of ethnically diverse immigrants was always into questioning. Actually, U.S. nationality test has been based very much on race unlike what most people believe to be a racially diversified society as the basis of U.S. nationality. Congress decision on citizenship was given to "free white persons." Although, many people in the USA were ultimately not white and were regarded as permanent outsiders coming from a foreign nation.

### **1.2.3. The role of Media in shaping public perception about Immigration:**

Media portrayals have a tremendous impact on the public perceptions and it is interrelated with political agendas of migration policy and therefore public opinion is split and generally uninformed or misinformed. Investigating the active relationship between Media portrayals of the American immigrant situation with the legislative and societal reactions is crucial in order to better understand the policies have been put in place by the American government to displace and resettle illegal immigrants all over the States, an action that caused more resentment toward migrants and their alleged

damaging impact on economy, society and the American way of life in general.

In this respect, Gamson and Modigliani highlighted the importance of the print media as “an excellent source of data for the examination of the construction of refugees and asylum seekers”. Its strong impact lies in the power it exercises “over the selection, extent, frequency, and nature of their reporting...the reciprocity of influence between readers and newspapers.” (A. Gamson et Modigliani 15)

The media exploit their dominion over public opinion and policy making to interpret ‘the reality’. Our interpretation of news depends on the media makers who, in one way or another, make conscious or unconscious judgments when determining what to say, highlighting some particular settings which help them gain control even over our personal interpretive. (d’Haenens et Joris 12)

Concerning the language used by the media when dealing with migrants’ stories, they emphasize the already prevailing description of migrants as *the other*. The British press, in this respect, demonstrated a vibrant articulation of anti-immigration sentiment. Victoria Danilova examined 43 million words occurring in content dealing with migration in 20 famed British newspapers, and in a 2013 report by the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, she realized that “illegal” is the most frequently used word in describing “migrants”. According to the report, the most predominant signifier of “immigrants” is the word “Failed”, however, when depicting the public security anxieties in relation to immigrants’ status, “terrorist”, “sham” for instance, were most frequently employed thus criminalizing all migrants with no respect to whatever factor pushed them to risk it all and embark on a hazardous journey into the unknown.

Via the chosen language by the media, a more subjective attitude surfaces making it clear that when it comes to migration the media would rather take a stance instead of

keeping an objective demeanor. Consequently, the situation is disturbing since the mainstream media is the prime headwater of data for people and the messages it communicates to the readers, will definitely have a perpetual effect on their perception of the diverse societies where they live. (Danilova)

Reading the papers or listening to the radio are good study material for how angry and distressed people are about immigration. They are convenient scapegoats who are held responsible for all social problems an act that only fuel public hatred therefore, dispossess them any rights that U.S. citizens have, making them target to marginalization and discrimination with little repercussion. In her book, *They take our jobs!": and 20 other myths about immigration*, Aviva Chomsky stated the “myths” that the media is imbedding in their discourse to shape public opinion.

Some of the most extensive myths she highlighted in her book about immigration are the ones about its implications on the economy. Economic problems including joblessness, low wages and the underfunding of services are all blamed on immigrants. “Immigrants take American jobs” is a common pretense to justify the call for a more restraining immigration policy. According to Aviva, this is a fallacy since “deregulation and deindustrialization” are the two markers of US job market nowadays, in other words, the very essence of occupations in the United States endured a remarkable shift where high-paying government jobs vanished giving way to new low-paying jobs in the service sector. (Chomsky 4)

Another myth about immigration is the question of taxes. The Georgia Budget and Policy Institute prepared a report stating that legal immigrants contribute more in state taxes than they receive in benefits. Nevertheless, the offspring of the first-generation immigrants provide more in taxes than they enjoy in services. Each generation continuously take part in the increasing taxes as a result of improved incomes, language

skills, and education. (Chomsky 40)

### **1.3. Mimicry and Ambivalence: Exploring the Intricacies of Identity:**

Genuine and thorough comprehension of *Otherness* is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture... however, this entails in practice the virtually impossible task of negating one's very being, precisely because one's culture is what formed that being. (JanMohamed)

Culture and the society have a tremendous impact on our identity to the extent that we fail to define or relate to one culture or another. However, whenever two or more cultures interact, there is a huge possibility they will blend, adapt or form a mixture which falls perfectly into the melting pot canon. As a result, human beings emulate other cultures winding up suppressing their own or become a product of hybridity keeping contact with their roots which is an experience that immigrants witness in their daily life.

The above-mentioned experience creates an abyss between immigrants and the natives' social structures which results in a transformation of culture, race and knowledge which were racialized accordingly their formation reinforced the deeply rooted cultural difference which is an outcome of colonialism. In that sense, the colonizers were given the supremacy to govern discourse and representation in addition to military and economic control. Bill Ashcroft in his book discussed the 'anonymous nature of cultural formations' which has a very complicated interrelationship between culture and political ideology. According to Edward Said, 'culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates "us" from "them", almost always with some degree of xenophobia' (Ashcroft et Ahluwalia 97)

In Edward Said's words about the Orient, colonial powers hold the right of dealing

with the Orient, the native and thus the sub-altern by constructing statements about it, approving sights of it, delineating it, by teaching it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.

In that sense, Homi Bhabha emphasized that signification from the periphery of a colonial power cannot succeed based on the persistence of tradition and culture, instead it “is resourced by power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are ‘in the minority’”. (Bhabha 2). Therefore, colonial powers owned the power of domination which makes the indigenous subjects to the systems created by the master. Colonial powers contributed in the creation of images and depictions of ethnic groups in Africa, South America and Asia that were consumed by both colonial races in Europe in addition to the natives themselves. Education system, religion and law made it possible for the native type of assimilation that resulted in a belief in the prejudiced thus the false representation of him/herself by the European. (Nayar 154)

The above discussed colonial discourse resulted in introducing terminologies akin to this field of study such as: mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity and othering which will be discussed in detail in this part. the word *mimicry* was first used in 1637, it originates from the Greek term *mimetikos*, which means "imitative", and in turn from *mimētos*, the verbal adjective of *mimēsthai*, that means "to imitate". It was originally used to describe people in which *mimetic* was used in zoology from 1851 while *mimicry's* usage started from 1861. (Merriam-Webster).

Lacan Jacques provided us with an exhaustive account of *mimicry* both in the natural and he cultural habitat. According to him, some phenomena of *mimicry*, are adaptive or adapted coloration...which is simply a way of defending oneself against light. This environmental defense mechanism is described as an incident when the color green

predominates; the Bryozoa (aquatic invertebrate animals) turn into the green color so as to imitate the light, consequently shielding itself, via adaptation. Lacan went on describing this effect of *mimicry* through *camouflage* by stating that:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of *mimicry* is camouflage... it is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled- exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. The being gives of himself, or receives from the other, something that is like a mask, a double, an envelope, a thrown-off skin, thrown off in order to cover the frame of a shield. (Lacan 97-99)

Mimicry is therefore the desire for a reformed, recognizable *Other*, in Bhabha's words as "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 126). the immigrant in this sense is in perpetual endeavor to fit in and be accepted in an estranged society where race and origin play a fundamental role in curving a niche and thus appropriating the *Other* to almost be the same but not quite.

The predicament of the depersonalization of the colonial subject led many actors of the society and even natives to pose questions about identity and in particular that familiar division of colonial subjects as *Black/White, Self/Other*. In that sense, the French psychiatrist Frantz Fanon while working in the psychiatric hospital at Blida-Joinville, revealed the impossibility of his mission as a colonial psychiatrist:

If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in the state of absolute depersonalization the social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged. (Bhabha 40)

In his famous documentary *I am not your Negro*, James Baldwin emphasized this fact when he stated:

What this does to the subjugated is destroy his sense of reality this means in the moment you are born every stick and stone and every face is white and since you have not seen a mirror you suppose that you are too, it comes as a great shock around the age of six or seven that Gary Cooper killing off the Indians when you are rooting for him that the Indians were you. It comes as a great shock that the country that is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and identity has not in its system of reality evolved any place for you. (Peck)

The colonial subject in search of representation would resort to Mimicry which develops as the depiction of a transformation which is a process of renunciation. Mimicry is, therefore, of binary articulation, on one hand it is a multifaceted strategy of redemption, discipline, and regulation that acts as an appropriation of the Other. The outcome of mimicry on the dominion of colonial discourse will normalize the colonial subject, alienating its language of liberty and enlightenment which exposes its ulterior motive. (Bhabha 84)

What started as a religious mission to enlighten the so called ‘dark places’ was later changed into a mission of indoctrination. Charles Grant in his text about India in 1792, “Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain” whose shallow mission was an evangelical one, was in fact a political reform along Christian lines which encompassed a reform of manners. The latter reform was intended to validate the colonial identity and at the same time it provides a partial transformation and an empty form of *imitation* of English manners which in turns would tempt the colonial subject to remain under the British protection and mimicry would destroy any attempt for rebellion which in Naipaul’s words in *The Mimic Men*,

would mean “we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new”. (Bhabha 127)

One key concept rises up in this regard and in relation to *mimicry* which is *otherness*. In understanding the immigrant struggle to fit in, we need to understand the significance of *being* and *self* in relation to *otherness*. For Fanon, “the effort to recapture the *self* and to scrutinize the *self*, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world’ (Fanon 231). Cultural critic and author Mustapha Marrouchi has claimed that identity is founded on the binary opposition of inside and outside a view which is opposed by Edward Said. Said rejects equating the pairs us/them, or inside/ out however, he finds it challenging to identify identity which is devised on the process of *othering*. For him in order to construct identity, societies need ‘a dialectic of *self* and *other*, the subject “I” who is native, authentic, at home, and the object “it” or “you”, who is native, authentic, at home, and the object “it” or “you”, who is foreign, perhaps threatening, different, out there’ and therefore, *other*. (Said 40).

The immigrant in this case endeavors at his itinerary and developed an infection with the *migrancy syndrome* a virus that forces people who embark on a journey and leave their home to live half a life elsewhere and over there, they will at no time be fully the *other*: American or Canadian or Australia and thus fail at finding their dwelling in the world. This effect of rootlessness is a double-edged sword: an American citizen but certainly not American, a Canadian citizen but surely not Canadian. (Marrouchi)

The above discussed concepts are closely related to another one which is cultural hybridity. According to Jan Nederveen Pieterse: “Hybridity is to culture what deconstruction is to discourse: transcending binary categories.” (Pieterse 238).

Hybridity's initial use in Latin was to designate the offspring of "a tame sow and a wild boar" nonetheless nowadays it refers to culture but retains some meanings related to the three interconnected realms of race, language, and ethnicity. Both botanists and geneticists indicate that in nature, the literal hybrid is at a disadvantage because of its dual heritage: "Hybrid zones give rise to maladapted individuals that survive poorly in both parental environments"

#### **1.4. Diaspora and the Dynamics of Displacement:**

One of the most significant aspects in relation to the concept of *home* is the fact that post-colonial writers themselves are in a perpetual endeavor for a home for their texts. these writers in exile are communicating in a language that is not theirs producing texts that enunciates the areas of conflict between the world and the self. These texts portray their power and significance in presenting the conflict between writers being *the other* and the dominant culture. Writers in exile highlight the cultural forces that generate a linguistic abyss between their homeland and the host country which they try to turn into a home. In this context, emigrants undergo a challenging journey departing their homeland in search for a successful integration in a foreign land but they keep their yearning for their homeland alive.

This infinite search for their own identity in a hostile land is excruciating because of the diffidence and vulnerability they face in the process. Having said that, it is worth noting that a new genre discussed these concepts in relation to the migrant experience which is *Diaspora*. Literary critics have studied the literary texts of writers in exile highlighting the concept of *home*. Andrew Gurr his book *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature*, investigated the growing trend amongst writers in exile of a search for of home as a foundation and even a refuge of identity. Furthermore, he remarks that in modern literature, the longing for a home is the aspiration of all the journeys of

self-discovery he defined this journey as "a search for identity, the quest for a home, through self-discovery or self-realization". (Ezzaher 110)

Looking upon writings of diasporic authors, one might realize that home is abundant and nowhere all together which is the reason why writers describe their yearning for home employing linguistic techniques and language to convey such sentiments. Hence, these texts can be considered as an intertextual pursuit for a primordial home. (Prince 6) Before we continue talking about the concept of home for writers, we need to get a better understanding of the etymology and usages of the key word in this context which is diaspora. According to Merriam Webster on line dictionary, *diaspora* is defined as "the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland" however, the term 'Diaspora' goes way back to the ancient Greek and was at first used to describe the dispersed populations of Jews who were thought to be obliged into exile from their home. Notwithstanding, and as a result of peoples' perpetual movement and migration, the term started to lose its original everlasting expulsion connotation and took a related more voluntary meaning referring to persons who leave their homeland and culture to reside in a distant land.

Diaspora therefore, might encourage the forming of an identity, or else it might incite uncertainties of abandoning it. Diaspora, on the other hand, engages discourse of combination of cultures, languages, places and times. Therefore, the old meaning of the word as a concept of forced dispersion seems to lose its significance giving way to a new one that connotes the assembly of people coming from a variety of places and forming new communities. As a result, new communities arise not only to substitute old ones but creating a blend of liberties and a hybrid society that form a culture and a conciseness is add to the old one, home, therefore, turns out to be a feeling vital for both those who want to form a homeland and those excepted from their homeland, travelling abroad but

yearning to come back.

According to Steven Vertovec there are three levels of meanings of Diaspora. These are ‘Diaspora as a social form’, ‘Diaspora as a type of consciousness’ and ‘Diaspora as a mode of cultural production’. The three previously mentioned levels of meanings are the central ones of the overall conception of Diaspora. According to him, diaspora is a social form since people deliberately preserve their collective identity and thus a kind of bond to their geographic place. By preserving explicit and implicit ties with their native land, immigrants might fail to be entirely recognized by the host society thus furthering sentiments of alienation or exclusion. Diaspora as a type of consciousness, on the other hand, as James Clifford suggests “Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension” which is a kind of double consciousness in which the immigrant has a lack of attachment to both places, therefore being at the same time home away from home or *here* and *there*, thus immigrants face the challenging endeavor of bridging the gap between these identifications. The final meaning associated with diaspora is describing it as a mode of cultural production. In this way ‘diaspora’ is defined as including the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena. Stuart Hall described this type by stating that:

The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.  
(Vertovec 20)

This interaction with the dominant culture leads to a displacement of both the language and the culture of the *other* speaking in the dominant language. The

West's intervention in Third World societies dislocates writers pushing them to exist in two cultural worlds nonetheless belonging to neither. Feeling at home in this sense, led to the creation of a new public category in which immigrants are obliged to choose the *other* identity and surrender old allegiances to be accepted in the new world.

Post-colonial nations such Pakistanis, Indian diaspora and the West Indians all partake a history of subjugation being postcolonial subjects for whom *home* turns out to be fake and a fantasy; their identities also still burdened with enduring racist discriminations leading to a disturbing national identification. Indian American writer, Sujata Bhatt demonstrated this disturbing internal suffering and feeling of loss that diasporic people feel especially when it comes to the blend of a language and culture in his poem "Search for My Tongue" by saying:

And if you lived in a place you had to  
 speak a foreign tongue,  
 your mother tongue would rot,  
 rot and die in your mouth  
 until you had to spit it out.  
 I thought I spit it out  
 but overnight while I dream,  
 it grows back, a stump of a shoot  
 grows longer, grows moist, grows strong veins,  
 it ties the other tongue in knots,  
 the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,  
 it pushes the other tongue aside. (Bhatt 17)

The concept of diaspora therefore offers a framework through which we

evaluate the exile, isolation and alienation. We also get to realize the shared diaspora features that peoples go through including the presence of a homeland that people endeavor to create in new lands due to separation and loss. In addition to this, this new life in a distant location and the associated alienation comprises of a constant endeavor for acknowledgement and a demand for cultural identification. The last feature of diaspora is the establishment of a diasporic communion that shares cultural and linguistic identities, united by a shared memory, solidarity and kinship. (Benesch et Fabre 6)

### **1.5. The Myth of a Color-Blind America:**

“I am white and I am black, and know that there is no difference. Each one casts a shadow, and all shadows are dark.”

—Walter White, "Why I Remain a Negro" (1947)

In 1986 US celebration of Statue of Liberty centennial, America was known as “mother of exiles” even the sphere of inclusion appeared to be broadening each time by including a wide variety of non-white immigrants, therefore, America was undeniably a land of prospect and wealth, for those willing to carve a niche and prove themselves as personally responsible. Nevertheless, once immigrants started to diverge from the dominant tolerable system, especially with September 11, 2001 events, which brought *terror* to the debate of immigration politics, they were considered as threats to American culture and economy creating, as we saw earlier, an anti-immigrant sentiment and turning them into aliens contemptible from social services, a *home* in the United States and even depriving them of empathy itself.

Nationalist organizations such as FAIR (the Federation for American Immigration Reform) considered “Hispanic” immigrants’ family reunification, as a threat to American family standards therefore, race, gender and other components of culture were

intersecting. The introduction of racial proliferation words such as: black, white, Hispanic started to mark US immigration discourse and policy. Racial category definitions of the word “Hispanic” was based in terms of their differences from “black” and “white”, in other words, what is black and white is not Hispanic and what is Hispanic is not black or white. “Hispanic” therefore was employed to “persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish cultural origin. (Perry 8)

The above-mentioned labels for immigrants are no surprise, since even in the political arena, advocates changed their discourse from a moderate to a more radical one. To a large degree, Donald Trump was the model candidate for maintaining a racialized narrative in both his debates and public speeches of white antipathy creating an alliance of racial radicals under the Trump league of non-white resentment directed to, Latinx immigrants, and Muslims ad even native African Americans.

The change in Trump’s attitude into a recurrently straightforward demand for non-white resentment in his speeches was to both strengthen and call for white racial awareness. The abnormal new attitude that surmounted the American political arena is in fact new to the voters who used to repel racist candidates trying to gain traction. In fact, candidates who explicitly call for white supremacy used to be rejected by voters. For the white extremists and nativists, Trump was a blessing who was a candidate for the highest office in the USA declaring publicly vile ideas they were thinking of secretly for time immemorial. Trump was taking these extremists’ venomous ideas and inserting them as the basis of his campaign when the other white extremists’ candidates were trying to make presidential campaign gratifying to the white audience. (C. FORDING et F. SCHRAM 109)

The objectification of Blacks through the white gaze turned people of color into an entity to be feared and marginalized constraining them from distressing the peacefulness

of white and comfort. This objectification of blacks, Muslims and immigrants highlights their invisibility and hypervisibility. Black Americans, though in the twenty first century, are still declaring through resistance, pain and suffering in all debates that Black lives matter thus blacks are ought to validate their humanity and even to advocate for it seeking whites' acknowledgment which was highlighted by the American philosopher and social critic Cornel West who stated that "the notion that black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern West." (Yancy 1)

Notwithstanding, many social and political actors have always wanted that research in all fields of study would change the public's way of thinking and provide an opportunity for a society void of discrimination ethnic intolerance racial. Unfortunately, race is politicized bringing to the forefront its three axes: race, public opinion, and society therefore, constructs and outcomes as reflecting either racism or racial prejudice. The Americans always proclaim that America has changed into a post-racial society particularly when Barack Obama was chosen to be the first nonwhite president. However, nowadays this belief is challenged and racism will always be a key factor in American political and social debate. Recent polls suggest that what is over in fact is the explicit outdated Jim Crow racial hierarchy of whites on top nevertheless, some whites still show racial preconception considering African Americans as a threat to them. (C. Fording et F. Schram 1)

This fear of the *other* based on race, is clearly exhibited in the American authority's way of dealing with African Americans. Some even believed that the Great Migration facilitated the movement of many freed men to the North but police officers adopted a Southern mind. This was seen clearly in 2014 with Eric Garner then with George Floyd in 2020 as if history is repeating itself. Their helpless cry of "I can't breathe" is quite symbolic of the suffocation races other than Whites are suffering from socially and

economically. The medical examiner ruled both men's death a murder as a result of the compression on the neck and chest. The Kerner Commission Report on the causes, events, and aftermaths of the civil disorders of 1967 is quite indicative in describing the situation that still persists nowadays by stating that "What white Americans have never fully understood, but which the Negro can never forget, is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it" (Temin)

At the intersection of race and immigration things are no better. U.S immigration law functions to thwart many poor immigrants of color from travelling to the United States. These political institutions reflect a national identity relegates underprivileged immigrants of color and repudiating any attempt of full integration into American society. Immigrants of color from Third World countries are confronted by a harsh impenetrable U.S. immigration regulation which even hinders any attempt for assimilation and impede future people of color, who dominate the stream of immigrants to the US, from coming to the US. Immigration laws set the standards based on which authorities decide on who can be welcomed to the United States and even who can be fully assimilated and thus accepted U.S. society.

Indeed, this fear of the other be it a black, an immigrant or an alien, is deeply rooted in the American psyche. Whites strongly believe that rigorous preventive constrains should be taken by the government to stop a possible continental drift of underprivileged immigrants flooding the United States draining the already deficient public welfare 'should' be retained for U.S. citizens.

Unfortunately, this fear is not all the time a Whites' product. Additionally, the immigration of new black people has affected the conceptions of American black natives' demeanor toward black immigrants. The influx of blacks both from Africa and the

Caribbean considerably impacted the way native-born blacks view themselves and their emotional state toward other ethnically similar immigrants, and they are even anxious about their economic future, social relevance, and political access to power.

Therefore, African Americans opinions revolve around two stances, one of camaraderie with their fellow black immigrants and their fear of their competition with foreign-born black immigrants over occupations, funds, and political progress in America. (Greer 83) Segregation and social stratification exist even amongst people of color themselves; native-born and foreign-born blacks cannot avoid being labeled “blacks” to exist as since it is essential in order to realize their position in the American society. This doctrine not only creates a gulf between whites and blacks, but it even pushes black immigrants to strive to be dissimilar to their native-born counterparts. In other words, black immigrants evade racism in the United States by preserving their accents, for instance and even motivate their kids to do so thus dissociating from mainstream blacks to maintain their identity. (Greer 29)

In response to the above-mentioned racial practices, intellectual and social movements such as Critical Race Theory launched their fight for equal rights working on the principle that race is socially and culturally constructed not a natural, biological feature of physically different subclasses of human beings, for them race is a type of classification employed to subjugate people of color. (Delgado et Stefancic 25) Black Lives Matter (BLM) is another movement that started social activities in 2013 in the United States fighting racism and violence against people of color. These movements’ main objective is to depict the bad conditions of people of color and how they are treated unfairly by their society in addition to the ways organizations, regulations play a role in perpetuating this injustice. (M. Killian, H. Turner et J. Smelser)

### **1.6. Deconstructing the Myth of the American Dream:**

“The collapse of walls to let people out has given rise to new

walls to keep people out”

### LEOPOLDO ZEA

The American Dream persist to be a vibrant notion that resist any type of definition therefore Americans grasp and describe it, as a concept, in several ways in relevance to their life and experiences. The United States of America for centuries has been a symbol and a ‘cradle’ of hope, religious freedom, social and economic prosperity. For hundreds of years, people immigrated to the United States, abandoning their home lands in search of their personal *American Dream*. This idea that shaped a nation is deeply rooted in all immigration cycles and is as old as the country itself, going back to the founding fathers. This vision of America as a *dream land* dates way back to the Declaration of Independence of 1776, where the founding fathers stated clearly the self-evident truth that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” (Schmieder)

The first immigrants who lived in America before Europeans were Asians. Everything started in 1492 when Christopher Columbus accidentally discovered an unknown continent which was later named “America” after the explorer Amerigo Vespucci. This attracted people terrible and dangerous life situations, daily suffered by men and women during the “Protestant Reformation”, forced victims of “religious persecution” to flee the countries. Searching for protection, they moved from the “Old World” to the “New World” (Hein 4) Political scientist Jennifer Hochschild, in her study of the difference in economic opportunity between blacks and whites, defines the *American dream* as a set of "tenets about achieving success...the dream is best stated in President Bill Clinton's words that "if you work hard and play the rules you should be given a chance to go as far as your God- given ability will take you”” (Schudson 566) On the other hand, David Trask summarizes the *American Dream* as follows:

The American Dream consisted of the belief (sometimes thought of as a promise) that people of talent in this land of opportunity and plenty could reasonably aspire to material success if they had adhered to a fairly well-defined set of behavioral rules set forth in a relatively comprehensive form as long ago as the eighteenth century by Benjamin Franklin. (Kaplan 200)

Both theorists emphasized the idea of *rules* which even obscures their understanding and puts the attainability of the *dream* into question. As we shall see later in this chapter, even when they follow the *rules* scrupulously, immigrants are always deprived of their share of the milk and honey America has to offer. The journey immigrants embark on is for the sole purpose of achieving their *dream* though this dream is far from reach, immigrants in general and African ones in particular strongly believe in America as a place given by God, “a paradise on earth” and an *El Dorado*. African Dreamers celebrate the American Dream by embracing the prejudices and the myths of a society where economic achievements whose chief virtue seems to lie in the economic rewards which it offers to those with the energy and ruthlessness to claim them.

In spite of the aforementioned aspiration of the American Dream, unfortunately it is not any more accessible to ordinary men. The struggle to accomplish the *dream* proves to be challenging if not impossible and even selective as for the African immigrant Dreamer, because of their origin or race or status, are confronted by infinite hurdles that thwart their *Dream*. James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* (1931) stated clearly his apprehension about the struggle to attain the dream:

Possibly the greatest of these struggles lies just ahead of us at this present time not a struggle of revolutionists against the established order, but of the ordinary man to hold fast to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ which were vouchsafed to us in the past in vision and on parchment.” (Cullen 4)

Indeed, the struggle for ordinary men and women to achieve their “American Dream” has moved in the same way relatively ancient domain of print culture into the shimmering mass media, which glorified the concept as a national maxim. Society actors from all sorts of life use the concept of the *dream* as a national motto: athletes declare it after championship games; ambitious politicians induce it as the foundation of their candidacies; even businessmen claim accomplishing being the ultimate goal of their organizations. The concept is becoming one of the fundamental constituents of the American identity and even a legacy which is more persuasive than ‘slogans’ such as democracy and even the United States. (Cullen 6)

Although Jim Cullen used the singular form of the word *dream* in his book, but inside his famous book he underscores the existence of *dreams* instead. The puritans’ faith in reform being the first one in addition to *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness* which were embodied in the Declaration of Independence. According to Cullen the third being that of upward economic and social mobility granted for people of plebeian origins. The fourth *dream* would be that of *social equality* and in particular what Martin Luther King advocated for which is “home ownership”. (Schudson 567)

Notwithstanding, Americans were not the only believers in the American Dream, the economic growth of the West stimulated emigration from the four corners of Earth. Migrants in millions were pulled by the media and advertisement to pursue economic opportunities. On the other hand, economic underdevelopment in non-Western societies has stirred emigration so that it becomes self-supporting. Political scientist Myron Weiner stated about migration flow that:

Once it begun, it induces its own flow. Migrants enable their friends and relatives back home to migrate by providing them with information about how to migrate, resources to facilitate movement, and assistance in finding jobs and housing...

which results in global migration crisis. (Huntington 199)

In spite of the optimistic connotation the American Dream might refer to, there is still the other side of the story. In his famous book *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, Barack Obama highlighted the untold truth about America by stating that:

The average black wage is 75 percent of the average white wage; the average Latino wage is 71 percent of the average white wage. Black median net worth is about \$6,000, and Latino median net worth is about \$8,000, compared to \$88,000 for whites. When laid off from their job or confronted with a family emergency, blacks and Latinos have less savings to draw on, and parents are less able to lend their children a helping hand. Even middle-class blacks and Latinos pay more for insurance, are less likely to own their own homes, and suffer poorer health than Americans as a whole. More minorities may be living the American Dream, but their hold on that dream remains tenuous. (Obama 143)

### **1.7. Immigrants' Quest for Home in a Shifting Landscape**

“Oh, the poor bird. that felt free now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more freedom-and there is no longer any "land".

**Nietzsche**

In his book, *The Politics of Home*, Dutch sociologist Jan Willem Duyvendak said, “Feeling at home is not only a familiar sentiment to us all; familiarity itself is one of *home*’s key defining aspects”. Home is, therefore, the place in which our habitus grows and feeling at home, however, based on this interaction between the self and the dwelling, we recognize how attached home is to our identity. Immigrants’ sense of familiarity and

home goes through a perpetual redefinition for both the immigrant and the natives.

(Lockford 4)

As we saw earlier, the intolerance towards people of color and its ensuing limited inclusion of black immigrants resulted in a “racism as displacement” in other words, a mere pretense for repudiating foreigners and outsiders in the US attributing the lack of housing, rise in illnesses, crimes, in addition to other problems which were in fact justifications used to relocate the hidden reason such as prejudice towards strangers. This idea of “displacement” is quintessential in defining what a home is for immigrants. Home can be defined as a “familiar space or usual setting: congenial environment” but the question that we should ask here is where is home? Is it ‘here’? or ‘over there’?

Familiarity and belonging were considered as key elements to feel at *home*, but due to the continuing movement of people and its ensuing transformation of societies, the notion of familiarity seems to lose its significance therefore natives believe that their *home* had gone through massive changes of structure which seems to alter their definition of home based on familiarity reinforcing their estrangement. At the present time, ‘feeling at home’ depends not only on the natives but on the *others* who leave their countries and relocate into the natives’ circle of familiarity therefore, not feeling at *home* is more and more the consequence of interactions with the *other*. (Duyvendak 30)

Another related concept to the notion of familiarity is *unheimlich*. In his book *Being and Time*, German philosopher Martin Heidegger employed the term which was initially discussed by Freud in *The Uncanny*. Heidegger defined the term by stating that we all experience familiarity as vital to one’s existence; *Unheimlich* is the crucial groundlessness of one’s being, it is the esoteric sense of not-being-at-home, wherever one would be. However, the absence of a legitimate association to the place might be a predominant feeling. When deciding on leaving one’s country to join another, immigrants make a

pivotal choice that provoke profound emotions of uneasiness vis-à-vis *home*. This decision to leave one's country emphasizes the both the futility of the belief in a dwelling and the groundlessness of human life a world where with each passing day familiarity collapses. (Heidegger 44)

Heidegger introduced another concept relevant to *Unheimlich*, this concept is *curiosity*. According to this concept, the immigrant has this curious attitude of uprooting himself from the familiar in search for freshness and new worlds in other words, a yearning to leave home. The existential migrant not only considers stepping away from the *familiar*, but also wants to navigate further potentials which may result in a never dwelling anywhere. (Madison 63) Familiarity remains at the core of all dilemmas related to *home* for people always tackle 'belonging' and 'feeling at home'. Engaging in discussions related to *home* does not guarantee a clear understanding of what 'feeling at home' is however, while we all do assent that we recognize what feeling at home is, describing what it means to us proves to be challenging. Therefore, this feeling is an emotion that evades any attempt of definition.

Speaking of home and familiarity will eventually lead us to discuss what Edward Said called 'a generalized condition of homelessness'. Some researchers have associated homelessness to nostalgia, in a time of spreading homelessness, the homeless mind or the nostalgic one is too heavy to tolerate, and a longing for being "at home" in a society, with the migrant and his universe a longing for a past which used to be socially homogeneous, safe and secure and peaceful. This latter disconnection to the place is the product of mobility in a time when people seized all feelings of attachments to places replacing this feeling with detachment therefore, losing all value of a definite place thus, homes ultimately turn out to be substitutable a feeling created and reinforced by globalization. (Duyvendak 9)

Moreover, Nietzsche stressed the notion of homelessness by stating that “we who are homeless, among Europeans today there is no lack of those who are entitled to call themselves *homeless* in a distinctive and honorable sense...we children of the future, how could we be at home in this today - We feel disfavor for all ideals that might lead one to feel at *home* even in this fragile, broken time of transition; as for "realities," we do not believe that they will last.” (Metzger 2) this notion also stresses the double consciousness of the immigrant as a black subject and the confusion and doubt in the soul of the black immigrant in his attempt to satisfy two unreconciled self and Other. This also involves an alteration in the politics of identity, the depictions of *home*, and the interpretation of belonging and affiliation, through the figurative and physical journeying, in time and across space. Here, many issues arise such as: self and identity, issues of belonging, a need for space, freedom and choice, extensive life perspectives, openness to experiences of difference and foreignness, significance of family relations and *home* circumstances, in addition to issues related of home and returning home. Therefore, one might say that traveling and residing in a foreign country is not always motivated by material or economic reasons, but instead by intellectual and identity quests. (Buchoul)

The demand for roots and rootedness is another more obvious characteristic of the above-mentioned cultural systems that needs to be highlighted in the context of home. Sam Selvon in his novel *An Island is a World*, emphasized this concept of rootedness and belonging by claiming that no historical specificity or locality. All human beings need to belong, no person can belong to the whole world or belong to none. He stated that:

when you leave the country of your birth, it isn't like that at all. Other people belong. They are not human beings, they are Englishmen and Frenchmen and Americans, and you've got to have something to fall back on too, you can't just go up and say, “Hello fellow being, I'm new here, and I'm looking for a job.” (Selvon

38)

**Conclusion**

In this first chapter, we tried to project the fallacies of the one-side representations of immigration being the dominant discourse for so long. We have seen how legal discourse produced a binary of *us* versus *them*, powering the sense of nativism of Americans and the exclusion of strangers. The role of media in determining these accounts has been substantial, through the preservation of stereotypes and prejudices that deter integration. Hitherto, within these contests, we have also discussed the persistence of immigrants who succeed in redefining their identity and that of America. Through the exploration of the experiences of diaspora, we examined the permanent networks individuals preserve with their tradition even after displacement.

Additionally, we have analyzed the myth of a color-blind America and exposed the restrictions of the unrealistic American Dream narrative. We have also examined immigrants' quest for home and belonging through a navigation of the continuous redefinition of the concept. in a shifting landscape. However, this journey of decolonizing the narrative is not merely about critiquing the past. It is a call for action. By dismantling these oppressive structures, we can create a society that celebrates the richness of immigrant experiences. Recognizing the valuable contributions of immigrants economic, cultural, and social is not just a matter of human decency, but a strategic necessity for a nation that thrives on diversity.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Immigrants' Journey of Self-discovery and the Identity Trauma**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, we will scrutinize the multifaceted identities explored in Adichie's novel, *Americanah* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. We start with an examination of Jasmine's inclination to adjust and blend in, by questioning her dissociation and multiplicity of *selves*. We then explore Ifemelu's traumatic experience and her struggle with her racial identity in America in comparison with Jasmine's experience.

We will also dig deeper into the complex nature of identity within the novel by exploring how Jasmine's mimicry transcends the typical adaptation strive and becomes a way of constructing and redefining her *self*. We will also dig deeper into *Americanah's* in their quest for a successful integration through mimesis to cover up for their blackness and navigating hybrid identities in a world preoccupied with binaries.

Later in this chapter, we shift our focus to the hurdles challenging immigrants in their journey where we examine the angsts and perils faced by immigrant characters who exist outside the legal framework. We will then focus on the most defining push factor for immigrants in the selected novels: the American Dream. In this part of this practical chapter, we will examine the characters' dashed expectations and the harsh realities of life in America.

Finally, we will investigate the price of assimilation and the composite sentiments surrounding probable deportation. In this part we highlight the complex task of defining home for immigrants and the everlasting lost roots along the journey. The chapter concludes with a renunciation of race in *Americanah*, where we explore the possibility of escaping the limitations of racial cataloguing in a society obsessed with it.

### **2.1. *Jasmine's* Shell of Other Selves and the Chameleon Effect:**

Because you have many people all living in one body, things can get a bit crowded and confusing at times. . . Basically, your body is a container for many others and each of these beings has their own desires, interests, and ways of being. Whenever you have to share such limited supplies (the body) with so many people (the alters), you're bound to have confusion and other organizational difficulties. You and your body are limited supply, yet the interests and commitments of your alters could keep you busy twenty-four hours a day (Alderman et Marshall 81-82)

Through literary works, one of writers' purpose is to illuminate life and highlight the relationship between personal experience and the justifying instinct behind the novel thus stressing its contextualizing side. Therefore, the novel has to locate its characters, their actions and associations, in a set of interwoven contexts. Bharati Mukherjee is no exception since through her novel *Jasmine* we will try to decipher Jasmine's transformation in light of the theory of Multiple Personality. Throughout the novel, Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel, went through radical transformations which quite understandable in the case of an immigrant coming to America and coming to face this "fluidity of American character and the American landscape" (Jasmine 88) however, Jasmine kept on changing *selves* which is uncommon for immigrants but Jasmine stated it clearly that "once upon a time, like me, he was someone else. We've been many selves. We've survived hideous times" (Jasmine 136) so in this part of the research we shall delve into a psychological journey of self-discovery and self-creation concentrating on Jasmine's perpetual change of *selves* by approaching this theme from a psychoanalytical perspective. the first thing we need is to conceptualize and define the terminologies related to multiple personality and identity. Multiple personality studies the endeavor individuals go through

internally to resolve the inconsistent demands of opposing principles.

Literary texts are no exception in exposing how social divisions and may be trauma shaped a more disturbing picture of individuals who are divided on the inside. This view is predominantly accurate especially with female characters, which is the case with *Jasmine*, since women suffer from multiple personality more than men which highlight the fact that women are under more pressure than men to correlate divergent and opposing understandings of themselves. This experience of being somehow controlled by an *alien* personality is characterized by a clash for domination of the body between two or more personalities where each personality has its own recognizable features therefore each is identifiable but all of them are different.

In order to comprehend this effect of disintegration of the ultimate entity into dissimilar selves, we need to is to elucidate it and relate it to a perpetual struggle of a person endeavor to discover who she is manifesting the inner struggle and battle among the selves seeking to recognize who the real self is. The aspiration of it all is to dispose of social identity and the self, therefore the character can break loose from all the shackles of society and get the freedom to redefine oneself. Jasmine's fights or switch of identities represents her dramatic struggle between social identity and her own independent chosen one. Consequently, *Jasmine*, as we shall see, revolves around the multifaceted reflections on *the self* and its probable disintegrations.

In this context, Jasmine's behavior can be associated with the concept of *fugue* which is defined as a disconnection in which the character escaped his internal and external conflicts by seeking refuge in a new environment. Just like the defining characteristics of the latter concept, Jasmine behaved in a different way from her typical accepted Indian behavior particularly in a new environment outside of the village of Hasnapur, she even stated it clearly that her "life before Prakash, the girl I had been, the village, were like a

dream from another life” (Jasmine 58). Her transformation started way before she set a foot on American soil especially after she was taken away from her village to Punjab by her husband Prakash who kept sure she holds on to her new identity and new self since she is no more Jyoti “he told me to stop regressing into the feudal Jyoti. ‘you are Jasmine now” (Jasmine 59) which is, as we saw in the previous paragraph, a struggle to fit in the social expectation and chosen self.

Right after Prakash was murdered in an explosion, Jasmine rejected all prospects of becoming the Jyoti she used to be “don’t crawl back to Hasnapur and feudalism. That Jyoti is dead” (Jasmine 62) since according to Hindu tradition as a widow she must have sinned a big sin to be a widow but she refused anything that might bring her back to who she used to be that she “wanted to scream, Feudalism! I am a widow in the war of feudalism” realizing that her “highest mission...is to create life...we had created life. Prakash had taken Jyoti and created Jasmine, and Jasmine would complete the mission of Prakash” the so called ‘real life’ both were seeking in American was a mission interrupted by the death of her husband so she rebelled against all traditions and wanted to carry on with the life they created, the identity they built the one suitable for America. (Hilgard 24)

According to Hawthorn, traumatic experiences give those who experienced them good motives for a desire to resort to multiplicity of personalities in other words, to be someone else this form of dissociation is a way of resolving problems where being one self is not enough so the person resorts to becoming two alters or even more. The sexual element is also important for an understanding of the continuation of the double-bind into adulthood and the childhood solution to unbearable problems resulting from other people’s sexuality has been that of dissociation. Jasmine’s trauma came right after setting a foot on American soil by the boat captain Half-face who smuggled them to America. He took advantage of her vulnerability and raped her in a nearby motel. He started by threatening her “Just you

keep it coming and I'm your meal ticket outta here. Give me any grief and you're dead meat." (Jasmine 72) despite the fact that she was only 13 "Prakash had always been so concerned for me. He was afraid of youthful pregnancy, of children bearing children" to Jasmine Half-Face was from an 'underworld of evil'. Despite her attempts to escape his grab but she was too young and too exhausted to defend herself and realized that it is "only delaying the inevitable, making it worse perhaps, more forced, more violent" (Jasmine 74).

Based on the above paragraph, it is worth noting that in psychological diagnosis, psychologists consider dissociative identity disorder to be a valid outcome of childhood trauma especially sexual abuse which is exactly what happened to Jasmine who endured a tremendous ordeal on her first night in America which symbolically suggest the loss of innocence she came with from India. According to S.I. Franz, the transformation that characters go through is always preceded by a period when characters were under 'emotional strain'. Jasmine in fact was a victim of many 'strains' starting with her husband's murder "My husband was killed," I said...He died in my arms" (Jasmine 73) so this trauma of witnessing the murder of her husband by a bomb in addition to her rape by Half-face were tremendous 'emotional strains' that resulted in her shift between selves creating new ones and killing old ones since she has been "many selves" because she "survived hideous times". (Franz 188)

Jasmine's way of resolving to multiplicity can be described by using a more accurate term such as *disintegrated* personality since not only she creates other personas, but each secondary personality is a normal whole self which highlights a more complex question of ownership of the 'real self'. Jasmine continuous shift between personalities is in part a result of personal relationships since these relationships, especially in her case, encompass assumptions and tensions. Accordingly, we mark a shift in Jasmine's identity whenever

she is in a new social milieu so that in Hasnapur she is Jyoti, while in Jullundar she is Jasmine, however in America she is Jane and she is Jazzy according to the transformation and the social relationships she is having. This is quite evident in her use of the plural object pronoun 'us' to indicate the *selves* she is carrying within:

Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff's day mummy and Taylor and Wylie's *au pair* in Manhattan; that Jasmine isn't this Jane Ripplemeyer having lunch with Marry Webb...and which of us is the undetected murderer of a half-faced monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms (Jasmine 81)

Notwithstanding, we must consider the fact that Jasmine, like all men and women was in fact adopting diverse masks for diverse occasions which are occasionally inconsistent when it comes to their feelings and thoughts. This cultural marker of the concept *personal identity* is always on the move however, it does not negate the existence of the self. Religious belief plays a considerable role in the dissociation of Jasmine. Right after she was raped, she sought the consolation of religion which highlights the repression and taboo linked to her Hindu belief.

In page 75 she described a religious Hindu ceremony she planned to go through trying to get rid of the guilt and the shame caused by rape through fire in order to be reincarnated into a new personality "I had planned it all so perfectly. To lay out the suit, to fill it with twigs and papers. To light it, then to lie upon it in the white cotton sari I had brought from home" (Jasmine 75) This rite, which is known as *The Flames of Rebirth*, is done by those who worship the Phoenix to assure them rebirth after their death. Since afterlife for them is inexistent and instead those who die will come back to the world reincarnated into a new life. In ancient Greece, the Phoenix has the ability of rebirth from its own ashes therefore it symbolizes renewal and rebirth so believers in it

will be granted a fresh start so that their souls will start a new experience. (Kamp)

Based on the ritual she planned before, rebirth by fire, now Jasmine seems changing form into a deity, she embodied death now which is in part her way of resorting to dissociation to repress her shame and dishonor “Just me and the man who had raped me, the man I had murdered...what a monstrous thing, what an infinitesimal thing, is the taking of human life...I was walking death. Death incarnate.” (Jasmine 75). Jasmine’s resort to religion is almost everywhere in the novel, since whenever hurdles tend to come on her way, she mentions a Hindu god. Right after the above-mentioned scene, she stuffed the suitcase she brought with her from India with her ‘dishonored’ clothes and then burned it down while reading prayers for the dead. She then prayed to the Hindu god Yama “Lord Yama, who had wanted me, who had courted me, and whom I’d flirted with on the long trip over, had now deserted me” (Jasmine 76) in Hindu religion and teaching, Yama is the god of death and justice, responsible for punishing sinners in his residence, based on their deeds, he allocates souls to the kingdom of the Pitris, Naraka, or be reborn on the earth. (Licolin et Adams) Jasmine confesses that she survived many times death and now she knows that now death deserted her. The act of burning her “dishonored clothes” is clear sign of murdering who she used to be: Jyoti the innocent village girl, and giving way to a new identity a new persona since she admitted this herself stating that her “body was merely a shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for” (Jasmine 76).

Just like Flora Rheta Schreiber’s *Sybil* which is a book about the treatment of Sybil Dorsett, Jasmine can be considered as the archetypal case of MPD since through her story, Mukherjee approached the themes of childhood sexual abuse, women’s rights movement and an acknowledgement of trauma as a condition providing the

traumatized a voice to be heard.

Another crucial element in Jasmine's MPD is her movement from a life of countryside where all her experiences are direct and sensory to a life where these experiences become more or less a set of social relations. Another important element when it comes to Jasmine's movement is her learning process. She started learning basic things in her journey to be American adopting a new walk so that we witness a child trying to understand the world and fit in. she was taught by an American lady who advised her to "walk American she exhorted me, and she showed me how. I worked hard on the walk and deportment. Within a week she said I'd lost my shy sidle" (Jasmine 84)

Jasmine cannot even pronounce English words accurately and cannot walk American so that riding an escalator was a huge achievement in her Americanization "time to try out my American talk and walk. Lillian called me Jazzy...she had me try out my first escalator...they pick up *dark* people like you who're afraid to get on or off" (Jasmine 85). These implicit tensions that Jasmine's gone through are quite important in understanding her division of characters since the monumental opposition between Jullundar where she used to live and America thus between countryside and country has a crucial impact on her change of character. All along her journey she kept impersonating new identities just to fit in and cover up for her foreignness, she broke her Jyoti "shell" and embodied a new one "I checked myself in the mirror, shocked at the transformation. Jazzy in a T-shirt, tight cords, and running shoes. I couldn't tell if the Hasnapuri sidle I'd also abandoned my Hasnapur modesty" (Jasmine 84). This fundamental change of shell is taking place because of her transformation, now she has a different name 'Jazzy' who is modern and who look more 'American' so we are witnessing another murder of older selves and reborn of a new one letting go of

anything that is Indian: clothes, identity and even modesty so all her Indian cultural markers are starting to fade away giving way to a new identity: Jazzy.

These tensions, as we called them earlier, have a tremendous impact in Jasmine's dissociation and on many other immigrants whose otherness is reinforced throughout their journey to America. To better understand what Jasmine went through in her journey to her promised land, Bharati Mukherjee in her essay "A Four-Hundred-Year-Old Woman," which appears in the anthology *The Writer on Her Work* (1991 by Janet Sternburg) highlighted this identity dissociation and killing of older selves by stating that "there are parts of me that remain Indian, parts that slide against the masks of newer selves. The form that my stories and novels take, inevitably the resources of Indian mythology—shape changing, miracles, godly perspectives." She also emphasized the process of *self-change* by stating that these new immigrants are Americans in the making ready for "transforming themselves" thus deserting any cultural markers along the way. (Mukherjee 34)

Jasmine's immigration is in part an endeavor for happiness and 'real life'. She comes to America alone and with no significant mental preparation which resulted in a set of psychological strains. Her shock at the fast fluidity of her own transformation is quite telling in this quotation:

It is now only a passing wave of nausea, this response to the speed of transformation, fluidity of American character and the American landscape. I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I'm on. Down and down I go, where I'll stop, God only knows. (Jasmine 88)

American cultural codes and their representations are estranged to her and, as we have seen earlier, her first American night was not a welcoming one as she expected.

This abrupt effect of uprooting and dislocation led Jasmine, like any other immigrant, to ‘shed old identities, taken new ones and learned to hide the scars’. (Mukherjee). Indeed, Jasmine’s dissociation can be approached from a cultural perspective since being an immigrant from a collective society and coming to an individualistic society will have a tremendous impact on the psychological acculturation and the subsequent behavior deviations. The origin country’s sociocultural and political features and the immigration social policy of the host country have a significant role in the assimilation process of newly arrived immigrants.

The previous quotation from the novel shed light on Jasmine’s response to “the fluidity of American character and American landscapes” with “a passing wave of nausea. Studies have shown that when foreign immigrants become acculturated to the culture of the host country, there is a higher risk of a psychological disorder thus dissociation or unhealthy behavior which in Jasmine’s case gotten to murder. (Sher et Vilens 116). Among the other possible consequences of exposure to two different cultures are rejection and deculturation. In the case of Jasmine, we mark a sense of loss of identity as an attempt to make it up for her alienation and acculturation stress. She abandoned her cultural markers one by one trying to curve a niche on the American hostile land. In the essay, Mukherjee highlighted this effect on immigrants trying to make it to America then trying to *be Americans* but ignoring the fact that physical borders are not as easy to cross as cultural ones "Wherever I travel in the (very) Old World, I find 'Americans' in the making, whether or not they ever make it to these shores.....dreamers and conquerors, not afraid of transforming themselves, not afraid of abandoning some of their principles along the way” (Mukherjee 35)

However, despite the fact that some immigrants strive to cope with discrimination, poverty, racism, exposure to different beliefs and cultural norms they fail to integrate

into the American very fabric and thus their mental health will be affected. Jasmine is no exception, since she tried her best to have a successful assimilation by even cutting all ties with who she used to be but she realizes that it was all futile “in America, nothing lasts. I can say now and it doesn’t shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever” (Jasmine 114).

## **2.2. Ifemelu’s Identity Trauma and the Search for the Black Self:**

As we saw earlier, despite the fact that both Mukherjee’s Jasmine and Adiche’s Ifemelu share a great deal of characteristics being both female post-colonial immigrant characters traveling from a Third World country to America in search of a better life but they differ significantly in their psychological response to displacement and uprooting. As seen in the previous title, Jasmine’s psychological response can be described as radical and traumatic because she went through a personality split moving from incarnation to another. For Ifemelu, she was dreaming about going to America to finish her studies since strikes in Nigeria are growing ceaselessly “And so she began to dream. She saw herself in a house from *The Cosby Show*, in a school with students holding notebooks miraculously free of wear and crease...from time to time, she dreamed of America.” (Americanah 57) after she got her American visa and on the afternoon she collected her passport “she organized that triumphant ritual that signaled the start of a new life overseas: the division of personal property among friends...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.” (57) this farewell party for Nigerian immigrants is very symbolism since it portrays some kind of ritual, denoting the magnitude and irrevocability of the journey. In the usual course of things, this journey was considered as ultimate with a slight possibility of return. This ‘triumphant

ritual' is quite significant as it both demonstrates the overhyped view of Africans towards an American visa and it allows immigrants to say goodbye to friends and community members and apparently facilitated to preserve ensuing social and cultural networks.

(King, Connell et White 23)

After she got to America, she first went through severe psychological, social and economic transformation. Facing the reality of unemployment in America she was running out of money to support herself and pay for her tuitions "It terrified her, to be unable to visualize tomorrow...to be here, living abroad, not knowing when she could go home again" she was "at war with the world, and woke up each day feeling bruised, imagining a horde of faceless people who were all against her" (Americanah 87) Adiche is highlighting the frustration immigrants have to go through to make ends meet because of their insecurity. However, in her struggle as a female immigrant in America, she went through tremendous psychological trauma as a result of her desperate need for money she fell prey to exploitation "what would happen with the tennis coach? He had said "massage," but his manner, his tone, had dripped suggestion...just come here and lie down," he said. "Keep me warm. I'll touch you a little bit" (87) we witness Ifemelu's deep fall into the abyss of exploitation since she can't pay her rent nor her groceries which might lead to an emotional breakdown which is the case with most immigrants who venture to come to America full of hopes and dreams of a better tomorrow just to come face to face with being exploited by white men especially for female immigrants' vulnerability.

Eventually, she started to distance herself from the world which intensified her isolation and alienation "her mind choked with mud, and, seated by the window, she began to cry. She felt like a small ball, adrift and alone. The world was a big, big place and she was so tiny, so insignificant, rattling around empty" her loneliness and smallness is due to her vulnerability since she neither can defend herself nor ask for help, this state of

loneliness female immigrants face abroad emphasized their hopeless and helpless status so they are apt to whatever it takes to survive the hostility of this new world they are living in. This scene is quite similar to Jasmine's rape scene, where she endured sexual exploitation, herself being female and alone "the hundred-dollar bill on the table, her body rising with loathing. She should never have gone there. She should have walked away...She curled on her bed and cried, wishing she could reach into herself and yank out the memory of what had just happened" (95) The aftermath of it all is devastating for Ifemelu since she believes she should have never gone to the tennis coach but still she could not stop herself because she was desperate and in need of money to pay the rent and cover her expenses but this feeling of shame is telling of how hard it is to be a female immigrant. She even thought of packing her bag and going back to Lagos but she couldn't do it because of the shame she felt of both what happened with the tennis coach and the shame of going back empty handed which is for her a failure.

Ifemelu shares other experiences with Jasmine since she also planned to kill the tennis coach "She began to think about killing the tennis coach. She would hit him on the head over and over with an axe" (89) the feeling of shame and being exploited for the sake of 100 Dollar bill did not only raise feelings of shame for Ifemelu, she even considered committing a crime believing that by killing the tennis coach her shame will go away which reminds us of Jasmine who endured the same amount of pain when she was raped by Half-Face. Just like Jasmine, Ifemelu's feeling of shame and disgrace made her wash her body with hot water to somehow get out of her *shameful skin* which resonates with Jasmine's shower with hot water right after the rape event:

She washed her hands with water so hot that it scalded her fingers, and a small soft welt flowered on her thumb. She took off all her clothes, and squashed them into a rumpled ball that she threw at a corner...she wanted to shower, to scrub herself, but

she could not bear the thought of touching her own body, and so she put on her nightdress, gingerly, to touch as little of herself as possible. (95)

Ifemelu's depression and isolation did not only stop at the thought of killing the tennis coach, instead she thought about killing herself to be purged of the guilt and shame that disgraced her body "Sometimes she woke up flailing and helpless, and she saw, in front of her and behind her and all around her, an utter hopelessness. She knew there was no point in being here, in being alive" this image of hopelessness is what we discussed previously which can even push immigrants like Jasmine and Ifemelu to think about "how she could kill herself" which is the extreme measure both female protagonists considered in their attempt to find a way out of this immigrant life that they thought "there is no reason" living it. The Dream that brought these immigrants long distances is in due course falling apart since for them there is a gap between "she woke up torpid each morning, slowed by sadness, frightened by the endless stretch of day that lay ahead. Everything had thickened. She was swallowed, lost in a viscous haze, shrouded in a soup of nothingness. Between her and what she should feel, there was a gap." (89) What she should feel is the happy life she envisioned for herself in America where dreams do come true but she realized the gap between reality and myth.

As a result, immigrants turn to isolation as an extreme measure due to their shock of 'the gap' between what they expected and the reality they face. Isolation for Ifemelu is a self-conscious procedure towards her trauma. In her case, she cut herself off the world and felt abandoned midst the presence of strangers, this ineptitude and diffidence of immigrants who feel stranded on a hostile land bring about a set of behaviors to pick from. They can try the potential selves with those they feel isolated from. In Ifemelu's case, and as a result of the inconsistency between the American Dream that brought her in the first place and the reality she faced, she resorted to isolation and self-loathing "Often, in the

middle of eating or reading, she would feel a crushing urge to cry and the tears would come, the sobs hurting her throat. She had turned off the ringer of her phone. She no longer went to class. Her days were stilled by silence and snow.” Ifemelu, like other immigrants in her case, turn to isolation and depression as last step in her life since she failed considerably in fitting in the American society. Her friend Ginika told her “I think you’re suffering from depression.” (97) Which is in her own words “an illnesses whose names they refuse to know”. Unlike Jasmine, Ifemelu turned to isolation which results in a division of the self, because in isolation she certainly began considering the several *selves* she possibly will be. She turns into a perceiver rather than perceived. Jeremy Hawthorn in his celebrated book *Multiple Personality and the Disintegration of the Literary Character*, examined the various modes of the self and in particular in isolation where the immigrant is aware of being perceived rather than perceiving. Immigrants endure this as foreigners abroad when presented the alternative identity they crave to portray to other people. As a result of this isolation, immigrants identify two self-modes; the one innate that they are unaware of, and the other self they present to other people to analyze. Immigrants are in a perpetual switching between the possible selves they have the potentiality to become thus dismissing the other selves from being possible. (Hawthorn 87) “Ifemelu forgot that she was someone else” (74)

However, Ifemelu in *Americanah* is presented as a character who face the challenges of cultural and racial formation of her identity underscoring the interchange of the immigrant’s one’s race and one’s self. (Pfeiffer 93) the novel also explores themes of the ways immigrants form diasporic identity and become part of the diaspora group through their everlasting relocation being accustomed to transitions. In America, Ifemelu, right after her isolation, formed a black identity through the diaspora, through pan-African “They looked at Ifemelu for her agreement, her approval. They expected it, in this shared

space of their Africanness” (Americanah 58) which underscores the mutual cultural traits they share despite the juxtaposition with the new geographical location being America in this case.

In *Americanah*, Nigerian identity and black subjectivity are closely related to notion of mobility through the presentation of a variety of topographies. The novel marks a persistent movement both in different locations, emphasizing the various types of identifications Ifemelu and other immigrants in the novel portray thus a variety of *selves*. In the first page, Ifemelu confessed to this fact “she liked, most of all, that in this place of affluent ease, she could pretend to be someone else, someone specially admitted into a hallowed American club, someone adorned with certainty.” (1) which intensifies the idea of identifications through various selves switching between an American identity (self) and a Nigerian one, an idea that only help us understand the perpetual quest for integration and assimilation into the American society these immigrants endure even if this necessitates pretending to be someone else.

Indeed, just like Jasmine, Ifemelu started to change layers and selves, she is becoming more American than she used to be especially in the presence of white Americans such as Curt “all things she would never have imagined herself doing before. She was lighter and leaner; she was Curt’s Girlfriend, a role she slipped into as into a favorite, flattering dress.” (Americanah 113) she developed this idea further when she described herself as changing skins displaying the radical transformation, she endures considering it as changing skins. Curt here can be used as a symbol of what America does to immigrants especially since he is a white wealthy American, because of him she changed the way she talks and the way she walks even her preferences for food and clothes. “She had slipped out of her old skin. She almost liked winter, the glittering coat of frosted ice on the tops of cars, the lush warmth of the cashmere sweaters Curt bought her” (115). She is in her words

“somehow irrevocably altered by America” which in effect shows the deep impression America had on her identity which is depicted in her dislocation across several locations, underscoring her typical and individualistic features of *self* along with her interactions with people. After realizing the futility of her endeavor through her failure to identify with America, she decided to return to Nigeria at the end of the novel, therefore returning home despite the fact that her ability to cope is questionable. (Bragg 130) additionally, and due to her illegal status, she used someone else’s ID in order to find a job, an identification she exerted herself literally to accept so she is now Ngozi but at the same time figuratively she is someone else after all the cultural shock she’s been through “She repeated “I’m Ngozi Okonkwo” in front of the mirror before her next interview” the same thing happened with Obinze who due to illegality and alienation tried various self-identifications moving from Obinze to Vincent trying to evade deportation by using fake identities just to stay in London and never go back home no matter what “That evening, as dusk fell, the sky muting to a pale violet, Obinze became Vincent” (Americanah 151) immigrants take on different identities whether by choice or by necessity Obinze here became someone else literally and even the name is no more a Nigerian one ‘Obinze’ now it is an English name ‘Vincent’ which can be seen as a new identity that might cover up for his foreignness and thus open up a variety of possibilities and prospects. Obinze played that role perfectly “How easy it was to lie to strangers, to create with strangers the versions of our lives that we have imagined” (8)

However, it should be noted that the severe transformation which arises from migration will definitely have an effect on the psychological stability of the self. The deep displacement may bring about degradation and the activation of psychological defenses for instance splitting, disintegration and depression, leading to deterioration of the integrity of the self. Accordingly, the consequence of an authentic integration in the new home is an

innovative and mature cultural self that develops with sensitive dimensions ready for inconsistency between the new and the old location. The ensuing cultural self can be described by its better flexibility, complexity of feelings, and insight. Alternatively, this self can be deprived if several features and constituents are accessible just in the old home. (Roland)

### **2.3. The Art of Imitation: When Mimicry Becomes Identity in *Jasmine*:**

In his definition of mimicry, Jacques Lacan stated that: “The effect of mimicry is camouflage. . .It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled-exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare”. Mimicry comes as a result of a craving to be adopted and absorbed in the very fabric of a Western society leading immigrants from the periphery to be submersed in the mainstream culture, repudiating whatever cultural markers they used to have in their endeavor to be ‘more English than the English’. (Ashcroft, Griffiths et Tiffin 4)

Charles Grant in his "Observations State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain" (1792) provided an extensive interpretation of Indian manners explaining that for a successful expansion of British rule in India an improvement of demeanors is needed to provide Indians with "a sense of personal identity as we know it". (Bhabha 127) This hollow mimicry of English manners is a way of keeping “the colonial subject under our protection” and thus, in Naipaul’s words, immigrants “pretend to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life” but they end up mimicking men of the New World. (Ashcroft, Griffiths et Tiffin 89) In *Jasmine*, and on their way to carve a niche in America, immigrants start to let go of whatever cultural markers they used to have and start *mimicking* Americans for the sake of a successful assimilation so that for “an identity as we know it” they embody American culture by:

“start letting go-let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes, or a turban or not wearing tika on the forehead, the rest goes on its own down the sinkhole.”

(Jasmine 17). Jasmine, just like all immigrants, knows that for a smooth and successful assimilation mimicry comes in fruitful by letting go of who she used to be knowing that “once you let one tradition go, all the other traditions crumble” (Jasmine 48)

Even before embarking on her journey to America, Jasmine was struck by a picture on a brochure she received from the States with photos of Indian people smiling “for the first time in my life I was looking at familiar Indian faces and seeing them as strange” (Jasmine 59) seeing people on the cover page of the brochure gives Jasmine a sense of estrangement realizing the deformation both physically, psychologically and even culturally of immigrants who immigrate to America and embark on a journey of ‘murdering identities’ just to fit in which richly evoke images of dependence and *Otherness*.

From another perspective, immigrants being the representatives of the periphery seem to forget that controlling the means of communication is at the core of the connection between language and power. Language is authority because words construct reality and the truth exists somewhere else so language can only mimic the representation of the truth. This truth was clearly stated by Jasmine who realized the importance of English not only as a means of communication but a superior language that opens up possibilities to another dimension “I couldn’t marry a man who doesn’t speak English, or at least who didn’t want to speak English. To want English was to want more than you had been given at birth, it was to want the world” (Jasmine 43) therefore, learning the language of the destination country of immigration is not only for the mere purpose of tearing down the walls of misunderstanding and miscommunication, but it encompasses the urge for an extension of identity. (Ashcroft,

Griffiths et Tiffin 97)

As an Indian, Jasmine went through many processes of cultural adaptation right from birth. She was well equipped to conform to another culture, since she endured the atrocities of being an *'other'* even back at home. She undergone displacement in India as a woman. Through, this displacement has never been voluntary since, as a woman, her path is predetermined at an early age by elders in the family accordingly her grandmother Dida announced that “she had finally located a passable groom willing to take me off their hands. I wasn’t thirteen then...who did I think I was to turn down a once-in-a-lifetime bridegroom?” (Jasmine 29) all these processes that Jasmine went through, only intensified *mimicry* for her and set the ground right from birth for a life subordination since Indian village girls are “brought up to be caring and have no minds of their own. Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go” (Jasmine 28).

As a result of expatriation and immigration, Jasmine is split between the social traditional role of a subservient Indian woman and the new role of an adventurous independent Jase mimicking American modes and values and eventually a new female role “I bloomed from a different alien with forged documents into adventurous Jase” (Jasmine 117)

To adjust with the metropolitan culture, the exile or migrant most often has to go through a postcolonial displacement which demands a process of acculturation and hybridity to adapt to the main stream culture and thus the migrant adopts a *camouflage* mimicking the *other* in order for the migration experience to work out perfectly. Lilian Gordon, the first American citizen Jasmine met, gave Jasmine a couple of advices for a successful integration in America highlighting the mimic effect for migrants to look *American*. In page 84, Lilian advised Jasmine that in order for her to look American,

she must mimic American style “my daughter calls them Third World heels...walk American she exhorted me, and she showed me how. I worked hard on the walk and deportment. Within a week she said I’d lost my shy side” we witness the beginning of physical transformation which highlights to what extent Jasmine is ready for adaptation wearing blouses, T-shirts sweaters and cords instead of her sari and salwar kameez, changing the way she walks. Jasmine’s transformation and mimicry is in fact an escape from an oppressive and to use Jasmine’s words: *feudal* society, where women are deprived of individuation, independence and self-assertion. As we saw earlier, migration increases the effect of mass consumption culture. Since newcomers, Jasmine in this case, are mostly persuaded to duplicate the receiving culture. (Benedikter et Hilber 69)

In order for her to become American, Jasmine had to pass the assimilation tests: new walk, new talk, a new identity: Jazzy as a cover up for her foreignness “time to try out my American talk and walk. Lillian called me Jazzy...she had me try out my first escalator...they pick up dark people like you who’re afraid to get on or off...Lillian said you pass, Jazzy” (Jasmine 85). Mimicry for migrants becomes a fundamental element for a successful assimilation a fact that is strongly highlighted by Lillian when teaching Jasmine the basics of survival in America “now remember, if you walk and talk American, they’ll think you were born here. Most Americans can’t imagine anything else” (Jasmine 85) which evokes Charles Grant’s ‘reform of manners’ that would provide the colonial with “a sense of personal identity as we know it”. (Bhabha 27)

In addition to this, we witness the radical shift of character in Jasmine in America. Back in India, her role as a woman was predetermined by a society that prepared her to be a wife and a mother. When her teacher Masterji came to her father trying to

convince him against wifhood and that modern ladies go to school and find themselves positions, her father was fiercely against the idea of women working for men and not being wives and mothers demanding “what do you mean, precisely? A lady working for strange men? Money changing hands?” (Jasmine 31) although Jasmine stated it clearly that she wants “to be a doctor and set up my own clinic in a big town” her father just gasped and said that “the girl is mad” which is another cultural marker for Indian girl being brought into wifhood at a young age instead of letting them finish their studies and find “positions” for themselves. The juxtaposition that Mukherjee portrayed is quite evident when Jasmine started working for the Hayes family as an *au-pair* performing exactly all the opposite expected roles “Wylie called me her ‘caregiver’ ...the word sang off my tongue. I was a professional, like a schoolteacher or a nurse...Wylie made me feel her younger sister. I was family” (Jasmine 110)

Mukherjee’s description of other characters in their endeavor of carving a niche in America is quite evocative. When Jasmine got to New York to stay with the Vadhera’s, she highlighted the change he went through which suggests that he also was not exempted from mimicry “he was at least forty, thickening and having to color his hair. He had a new name in New York. Here he was “Dave” not Devinder...when he answered the phone, ‘Dave Vadhera here,’ even the Vadhera sounded English. It sounded like “David O’Hara” (Jasmine 91) Professorji is the teacher of Jasmine’s dead husband, Prakash and he is one of the reasons she decided to immigrate to America after all the beautiful pictures he drew for him about it. Jasmine is struck by how different he seems trying to look and sound American: he changed his name to Dave and even in pronouncing his name sounded ‘English’ which is another case of acculturation and identity loss. Some immigrants are ashamed of their Indianness so

they incline to alteration it to look and sound more American Jyoti becomes Jazzy while Devinder becomes Dave trying to be ‘more English than the English’. (Ashcroft, Griffiths et Tiffin)

Furthermore, the formerly colonized subject in this case Mukherjee’s protagonist Jasmine, mimics as a result of an internalized belief that their culture is by all means inferior to that of the colonizer. As we saw earlier, Jasmine mimicked all of American culture including the way she talks, the way she walks, her traditional Indian clothes without questioning the transformation “this response to the speed of transformation, fluidity of American character...I feel at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow myself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride I’m on” (Jasmine 88) so, Jasmine in this case, being a colonized subject, is mimicking the attitudes of Americans as an attempt to be as like the *other* as possible, in this respect, Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Outline of a Theory of Practice* examined this experience of the colonized subject suggesting that the colonized with time will take for granted the colonizer’s ideology as natural and indisputable. (Bourdieu 65)

However, Jasmine seems to forget that her foreignness is both internal and external “Bud calls me Jane...but plain Jane is all I want to be. Plain Jane is a role, like any other. My genuine foreignness frightens him...it frightens me, too. In Baden, I am Jane, almost” (Jasmine 16) Jasmine admits her change of identity from Jyoti to Jane, she considers this change as a role of an actor, because of her foreignness people get to take part in recreating her identity so that they accept her and shaping her in order to be fully integrated as an American: Jyoti the Indian frightens them so they want her to be Jane instead because their “mouth wasn’t destined to make those sounds”. Jasmine’s endeavor for a successful assimilation through mimicry seems like an illusion, since the more she tries to be part of the very fabric of the American society, the more her

foreignness becomes obvious. Jasmine is one good example of this because despite her tireless efforts to look American by changing identities and cultural markers, her foreignness seems to stick with her as a hurdle to a successful integration into the American society.

However, it is worth noting that immigrants like Jasmine contribute not only towards their individual redefinition, but also that of America as a hybrid space which is constantly transformed, with a promise to some and disappointment to others. This transformation is taking over the entire continent with the arrival of immigrants of Asian origin, any attempt from these characters for an orthodox simplified and unidirectional Americanization proves to be complicated. In Mukherjee's words this is a "two-way traffic" where immigrants are "transforming America" as much as they are being transformed by it. Susan Koshy also noted that "exotic beauty becomes the passport to immigration to the United States...the process of Americanization...is for these characters also a process of recreating their 'Indianness'". Jasmine is called "Jazzy" by Lillian Gordon, her white American fairy godmother; "Jase" by Taylor; and "Jane" by Bud. Indeed, "she defers to others the responsibility of recreating herself...thus allowing them to construct the person they wish to possess". (Maxey 54)

Unlike Jasmine, The Vadheras, Professorji's family, portrayed a different type of immigrants who fail considerably in their assimilation process. Community plays a crucial role for illegal immigrants like Jasmine, as a family-like provider of safety and also helping each other to find a job and accommodating newly come immigrants. However, their isolation in Flushing and the metaphors employed by the writer in describing their way of life is quite telling of their fear of the *other* "The Vadheras...had retired behind ghetto walls" these walls are used as a metaphor for the unbreachable Indian community that displayed, in Jasmines words, an 'artificial Indianness. Jasmine herself and after all

the transformations she has been through was shocked of the Indian community in Flushing whose members tried to change her back to who she used to be “I felt my English was deserting me...Nirmala brought plain saris and salwar-kameez outfits for me from the shop so I wouldn't have to embarrass myself or offend the people in cast-off American T-shirts” Flushing is in the ghettos a place where Indian immigrants stick together trying to preserve their traditions and customs so they made Jasmine wear her old clothes, the ones Jyoti would wear so that she won't embarrass herself; clothes here are considered ‘a disguise’ and a shell that protects Jasmine from going back to Jyoti “I had accustomed myself to American clothes. American clothes disguised my widowhood...in this apartment of artificially maintained Indianness. I wanted to distance myself from everything Indian, everything Jyoti like” (Jasmine 92)

The coming passage in describing how smaller immigrant communities shutting down any contact with America and even feared Americans which is quite revealing about the fear of the *other* “Flushing, with all its immigrants' services at hand, frightened me. I, who had every reason to fear America, was intrigued by the city and the land beyond the rivers” unlike Jasmine who mimicked everything American just as a ‘shield’ for her Indianness and thus her foreignness, Indian immigrants here shield themselves behind ghetto walls eating Indian food, wearing Indian clothes and watching Indian movies and even speaking Hindi which is after all an “artificial Indianness” even American channels speaking English weren't allowed in the household claiming that “there's so much English out there, why do we have it in here?”. These prohibitions will only hinder any chance of successful assimilation and thus breaking that wall of isolation.

In order to avoid any contacts with Americans “professorji and Nirmala did not go out at night. ‘Why waste the money when we have everything here...they had Indian-food stores in the block, Punjabi newspapers and Hindi film magazines” (Jasmine 93)

Mukherjee is trying through these lines to highlight the cross-cultural predicament by portraying these Indian immigrants' deformed identity struggling to balance between their traditional Indian values and the American way of life which resulted in an identity conflict. Flushing Indian immigrants were forming communities of first- and second-generation immigrants living in one area of New York and believed that they "did not need to fraternize with anyone but the educated Punjabi-speaking Hindu Jats" (Jasmine 93)

In her book *Beyond the Immigrant Enclave Network Change and Assimilation*, Susan Wierzbicki provided a clear picture of Mukherjee's Flushing characters. According to her, research over the last 40 years has proven that immigrant communities are closely interwoven and that immigrants have closer and stronger social ties than natives and that interrelationship between immigrants conserves those ties. Indeed, socializing only with other Indian immigrants and eating and speaking Hindi will only complicate the process of integration and assimilation building cultural walls that will definitely increase the fear of the *other* and intensify isolation and alienation. Jasmine herself felt this isolation since she already adopted American way of life and accepted to be part of the Melting Pot however, the time she spent in Flushing made her feel like she never left India:

Flushing was a neighborhood in Jullundhar...I would find myself in the bathroom...sobbing from unnamed, unfulfilled wants. In Flushing I felt immured. An imaginary brick wall topped with barbed wire cut me off from the past and kept me from breaking into the future. I was a prisoner doing unreal time. (Jasmine 94)

This metaphor of the 'brick wall with barbed wire' highlights Susan Wierzbicki's three criteria that define immigrants' experiences at their destination. Social capital (immigrants' networks), human capital (their achieved characteristics) and the spatial context are among the many networks that define the cycle of immigration. investigations of the suburbs in America have shown that ethnic minorities, Indians in particular, succeed

in their spatial assimilation however, they fail in assimilation by staying socially alienated in their new neighborhoods and depend on first and second generations. These findings only confirm Jasmine's isolation who did not expect the existence of a place like Flushing where immigrants try to hold on to a 'fake Indianness' and at the same time trying to enjoy the freedom and liberty America can offer "Flushing was not the downtown of dreams I'd conjured from the aerogram back in Jullundhar" (Jasmine 96).

As we have seen in previous quotations, homophily of immigrants' strong relationships suggest that new immigrants, like Jasmine, suffer from deficiency in the savoir-faire and the money which are prerequisites to be actively involved in the mutual social interactions that preserve such relationships. (Wierzbicki 112) so all in all, these Indians are exhibiting an American identity outside of their 'immigrant enclaves' and balancing between an Indian identity and an American one, so that the characters in *Jasmine* exhibit an Americanness and a redefined "Indianness" which illuminates their hybrid character. Jasmine's loathing of her life in Flushing portrays young Indians' denunciation of the traditional unidimensional cultural identity favored by their parents choosing a more contemporary and prosperous "Indo-Western" metropolitan subjectivity thus mimicking the American character. (Lavigilante et Mukherjee 178)

In an interview with Mukherjee, she stated that immigrants from the Third World go through the process of uprooting and rerooting, which is what her husband Clark Blaise coined *unhousement and rehousement*. In America, immigrants in her stories endure thorough transformations nevertheless they simultaneously change the country's facade and psychology. (B. Carb et Bharati 651)

#### **2.4. Mimicry, hybridity and the third space in *Americanah*:**

After reading and analyzing *Jasmine*, we come to realize that in her creation and redefinition of home, the protagonist employed cultural techniques through which she set

the ground for a well burnished American cultural self to facilitate the process of assimilation and a successful integration. It should be noted then, that the cultural *self* is a clear exhibition of the individuality of the human nature. So, in order for immigrants to be entirely assimilated an understanding and acceptance of the authentic psychic home should be developed thus, highlighting the universal dimension of individual human beings and exploring hybridity and the obscurities of selfhood and its ability of alteration therefore, acknowledging that immigration is a process of becoming. (King, Connell et White 67)

Adichie's immigrants, just like Mukherjee's, are in a constant search for an 'acceptable' identity that helps them to infiltrate the very fabric of the American society. To succeed in doing so they create a new *self* that uses mimeses as a technique of camouflage to cover up for their foreignness. In *Americanah* for instance, Nigerian immigrants exhibit a variety of facets of mimicry starting with an American accent "Aunty Uju's cell phone rang. "Yes, this is Uju." She pronounced it you-joo instead of oo-joo...it's what they call me...well, that isn't your name." (Americanah 59) Ifemelu started noticing the alteration in Uju's behavior that even her name's African pronunciation is replaced by an American one seeking acceptance and trying to fit in perfectly using a sort of chameleon effect. Immigrants like Aunty Uju and Ifemelu, are in a constant strive with their identity creation and alteration which is so demanding so that it activates mental breakdown. However, for some immigrants, it can lead to the creation of a redefined identity with a rectified self-perception.

This view is reinforced by Adichie in her description of Aunty Uju's altered self in the presence of white Americans which only intensifies her sense of inferiority being a black immigrant and coming from Nigeria "Dike, put it back," Aunty Uju said, with the nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. 'Pooh-reet-back'. And with the accent

emerged *a new persona*, apologetic and self-abasing” (61) This *new persona* was well defined by Francisco González “It is precisely in America that the dream of leaving your working-class roots and reinventing yourself takes on mythological proportion. America is the iconic place where repudiation of your origins becomes the catapult to success” (González 20). Therefore, immigrants’ identity in America is becoming flexible where an identity is defined according to the principles and norms suitable for precise conditions.

At the beginning of the novel, and right after Ifemelu arrived to America, she provided us with a vivid description of her fellow Nigerians mimicry and radical transformation thus, we were informed from an outsider’s perspective since Ifemelu was still new to the atrocities of immigration and the constant redefinition of self/other. But, as we shall see later, she will herself be a mimic as she realizes the importance of doing so for her survival. Ifemelu’s first perception is closely related to the so-called *Identity diffusion* being the second step of the four-processes of the identity-challenges model to migration. It implies the deficiency of exploration and a failure to have a commitment with the new country. Simply put, the newly arrived immigrant refuses adaptation which is considered as infidelity to their home. Which is quite apparent through Ifemelu’s shock of all her fellow immigrants’ radical transformation that she considered them betrayals to their origins. Indeed, Ifemelu in this quote is blaming America for subduing Auntie Uju “And she thought...how the old Auntie Uju would never have worn her hair in such scruffy braids...America had subdued her” (Americanah 62) indeed this radical change in Auntie Uju’s behavior is quite novel to Ifemelu realizing what America can do to immigrants coming full of a false hope in the American Dream and the better future they aspire for transpires into thin air giving way to a new persona submissive and dependent on Americans’ perception of social acceptance for the helpless immigrants. However, it comes as a shock to us to learn that later in the novel, Ifemelu herself changes her hair “I

have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair...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” (67) hair plays a significant role in Americanah and Auntie Uju seems to let go of the last Nigerian and Igbo cultural marker she had left justifying her choice by stating and even reinforcing her submissive state just to be accepted into the American culture. This “strange naïveté” that she uses to “cover herself like a blanket” seems to Ifemelu as an indication of something Auntie Uju’s left ‘herself’ she left “in a distant and forgotten place.” Explained by Obinze as an “exaggerated gratitude that came with immigrant insecurity” (67)

After realizing the necessity to adopt some American cultural markers in order to adapt to the new place, Ifemelu decided to change her hair cut for a job interview which highlights her movement to the next step in the processes of the identity model discussed above which is *identity moratorium* described as the exploration of the possibilities of commitment to the new land. In one of the Pan-African meetings, a fellow Nigerian told her that “very soon you will start to adopt an American accent, because you don’t want customer service people on the phone to keep asking you ‘What? What?’ You will start to admire Africans who have perfect American accents, like our brother here, Kofi” which stresses the importance of adopting an accent not to feel foreign which is exactly what Ifemelu did “as autumn’s coolness descended, she began to practice an American accent” (83) After describing Auntie Uju as being ‘subdued by America’ because she changed her hair cut, Ifemelu herself straightened her hair “relaxing your hair is like being in prison. You’re caged in. Your hair rules you...you’re always battling to make your hair do what it wasn’t meant to do” so we come to realize that a white American advised her to straighten her hair to get accepted in interview while a Nigerian immigrant advised her otherwise by telling her not to be a slave of Americans’ expectations so Ifemelu is in constant alteration

of self-modes leaving her dangling between identities. “I look so ugly I’m scared of myself.” After changing her hair cut, Ifemelu was scared of herself because she was used to looking exactly like what Americans expect her to be which was scary to her that couldn’t even recognize who she really is even her friend confirmed this by saying “You’re just not used to seeing yourself like this. You’ll get used to it” (Americanah 120 )

In her process of integration, Ifemelu opted for the last step in the process of identity formation which is *identity achievement* which is described as a phase where identity formation for immigrants is effective in the new land achieving a duality of sense of self. (Jensen 119) in this process, Ifemelu was open for change by expressing her readiness for a *dual* identity and character:

She hungered to understand everything about America, *to wear a new, knowing skin* right away: to support a team at the Super Bowl, understand what a Twinkie was and what sports “lockouts” meant, measure in ounces and square feet, order a “muffin” without thinking that it really was a cake, and say “I ‘scored’ a deal” without feeling silly. (Americanah 77)

This skin she has to wear is a reference to previously mentioned concept of layers of self we talked about so she eventually realized that it is of crucial importance to immerse herself into everything American, baseball and other sports, types of food, measuring units. She even started reading about “America’s mythologies...America’s tribalism - race, ideology, and region - became clear. And she was consoled by her new knowledge” (78) so Ifemelu realized that she has to learn about her new culture in order for her to ease the pain of foreignness and to have a cultural understanding and compromise between her Nigerian culture and the American one. Notwithstanding, Ifemelu’s journey can also be described as a Bildungsroman which can be defined as “a special type of development in its stress on the hero’s conscious effort and on the manifold aspects of human endeavor; it

is distinguished from education in its stress on the hero's interior motivation and goal" (Tilbe, Khalil et M 19). Ifemelu, like the rest of immigrants in the novel, exhibited a cognizant determination towards growth using her individual psychological evolution and cultural assimilation to help her fulfill a successful integration in her migration experience.

However, Adichie succeeded in juxtaposing the two types of immigrants in terms of successful and failed integration. Just like Jasmine's Indian community of Flushing, African community's members who were not really emersed into the very fabric of the American society. In her description of Aunty Uju adopting an American accent, she also compared it to the way African braiders spoke English to customers

It was broken, curious, as though they had not quite *eased into the language itself* before taking on a slangy Americanism. Words came out half-completed. Once a Guinean braider in Philadelphia had told Ifemelu, "Amma like, Oh Gad, Az someh." It took many repetitions for Ifemelu to understand that the woman was saying, "I'm like, Oh God, I was so mad. (Americanah 4)

Immigrants first barrier to a full successful assimilation is language but because as Ifemelu said that they lived in a place with "dank buildings, and no white people" these Immigrants live in communities that behold to old cultural ties and linguistic origins so that the English language to them will seem as foreign as they are to the country. Ifemelu is providing us with a vivid description of what America does to immigrants trying their best to be accepted and fully integrated into American society. Adiche again is juxtaposing two types of characters that represent immigrants themselves, Halima and Meriama on the one hand represent those who live in communities with whom they share their 'Africanness' which means that they don't need to speak English perfectly let alone being fully immersed into American culture, Aunty Uju on the other hand, is a perfect portrayal for those immigrants who even change their accent and adopt 'new persona' in the

presence of Americans as a mask they put on whenever necessary to hide whatever Africanness and thus foreignness they still have. Auntie Uju even rejected the idea of using Igbo with her son “Dike, I mechago?” Ifemelu asked “Please don’t speak Igbo to him,” Auntie Uju said. “Two languages will confuse him.” “What are you talking about, Auntie? We spoke two languages growing up.” This is America. It’s different.” Auntie Uju’s restlessness and insecurity is all over the place trying to hide whatever Igbo cultural markers are left giving silly excuses that this will confuse her son while research has proved quite the opposite proving how smart and creative the brain will be when speaking two languages.

The mental construction of *self* comes into being via the combination of various impersonations, images, and beliefs reflected back to immigrants by the new environment, therefore, their sense of self develops in conjunction with the *other*. This point is further developed on the other side of the globe in London. Obinze also was going through these same shocks about the identity his fellow Nigerians exhibited in their endeavor for successful integration into the host land. When Obinze first met his high school friend back in Nigeria, Emenike, where he provided us with an elaborate and well developed description of what he turns out to being, he “wondered if Emenike had so completely absorbed his own disguise that even when they were alone, he could talk about “good furniture,” as though the idea of “good furniture” was not alien in their Nigerian world” (162) the shadow of *otherness* casts itself on immigrants who, in Obinze’s words, are absorbed in their disguise which highlights the layers of selves they put on only to look acceptable and merge in the English or the American society. This idea of *false self* is quite plausible in the analysis of Emenike’s behavior especially that he was married to an English old woman. For immigrants who have a cohesive inner sense of *self*, there is an internal unconscious transformation taking place to help them go beyond the hurdles of

immigration. In this regard, D. W. Winnicott framed his concept of the *true* and *false self*, he declared that the emergence of a false self is in fact a defense mechanism intended for protecting the true *self*'s core and creating a home within. (Conroy 26) Undeniably, Emenike used, in Obinze's words, a disguise thus a false self which is his own defense mechanism from any failed integration and the psychological traumas that might ensue, so, Obinze "was not sure whether Emenike had become a person who believed that something was beautiful because it was handmade by poor people in a foreign country, or whether he had simply learned to pretend so" (Americanah 156)

Emenike is deeply immersed in his disguise which was a surprise to Obinze who knew that he was putting a mask that conceals his foreignness and exhibits his success as an English resident "When Phillip complained about the French couple building a house next to his in Cornwall, Emenike asked, "Are they between you and the sunset?" Are they between you and the sunset? It would never occur to Obinze, or to anybody he had grown up with, to ask a question like that" (163) likewise, Ifemelu herself gave us her own version of descriptions of both Bartholomew and her friend Ginika. This latter's *false self* is quite radical in the sense that she was delusional believing in her disguise "Ifemelu watched Ginika at her friend Stephanie's apartment, a bottle of beer poised at her lips, her American-accented words sailing out of her mouth, and was struck by how like her American friends Ginika had become." (70) Ginika's pretense is even intensified when Ifemelu observed her make-believe American *self* "There were codes Ginika knew, ways of being that she had mastered...Ginika had come to America with the flexibility and fluidness of youth, the cultural cues had seeped into her skin, and now she went bowling, and knew what Tobey Maguire was about, and found double-dipping gross" Ginika mimicry and sense of camouflage is portrayed by Adichie to provide us by a thorough understanding of it takes to curve a niche in America and fitting perfectly into the very

fabric of the American society. When she first met Ifemelu she pretended to still have some Nigerian ties by speaking broken English but with her other hyphenated friends she exhibited a mastery of all American cultural markers and codes “Watching Ginika preen in front of the mirror, Ifemelu wondered whether she, too, would come to share Ginika’s taste for shapeless dresses, whether this was what America did to you” (71) which is true, this is exactly what happens to immigrants who try so hard to assimilate into the American society but it comes with a price in order for them to put on layers and layers hiding their foreignness they wind up losing it all and even forget who they really are trying to hide their Otherness underneath a cloak of change.

This sense of being lost is portrayed by Auntie Uju’s boyfriend Bartholomew who “was one of those people who, in his village back home, would be called “lost.” He went to America and got lost, his people would say. He went to America and refused to come back” (66) he portrays the type of immigrant who tries their best to fit in but put on a character of someone who still has strong ties with home so that after a long time they will be lost belonging to neither his ‘home’ nor fully integrated into America. We understand “from his demeanor, a deprived rural upbringing that he tried to compensate for with his American affectation, his *gonnas* and *wannas*.” (65) this hybrid self-immigrants try to embody, can in fact be justified based on race and ethnicity. Native American blacks endure mal treatment worse than non-native blacks so they pretend “to be Anglophone when she goes shopping in Paris, because the shop attendants are nicer to black people who don’t speak French. Just like American Blacks get a lot of respect in African countries.” Even traveling when black turns out to be an excruciating experience because of the prejudice people have about blacks especially African Americans or of African origins whom they correlate right away with negative notions such as: illegal immigrant, murderer and criminal because after all “whiteness is the thing to aspire to...many

minorities have a conflicted longing for WASP whiteness” (*Americanah* 118)

### **2.5. Navigating the Perils of Illegal Immigration in *Jasmine*:**

Because we still can and will wander, we imagine  
that we can live more or less anywhere. (Adzei et Sakyi )

The migration journey in general is described as a robust yearning to leave. This longing arises from the immigrants realize the gap between one’s wishes and the lack of possibilities of attaining them back at home. Therefore, immigrants’ will not consider any allegiance to their home especially when dreaming about the ‘over there’ and their decision to leave will be the result of socio-economic causes. In Jasmine’s case, her push factors differ considerably from those of Ifemelu in *Americanah*, for Jasmine the situation back home in India was deterioration in all directions. Immigrants embark on their perilous journey due to a variety of reasons, and for Jasmine when asked about her reasons, she stated that “I could tell her about water famines in Hasnapur, how the dried-out well docile women turned savage for the last muddy bucketful...she wonders, I know, why I left. I tell her, Education, which is true enough...I want to protect her from too much reality” (Jasmine 9) before we go any further in analyzing the illegal transit and the causes of the journey, we need first to understand what pushed Jasmine, the village naïve girl, to risk it all and put herself in very dangerous situations based on an aerogram she received from America describing it as an Eden on earth. For her, reflecting on and craving migration arises after hearing of America from others’ travels, the Ohara family in this case, and for others the media, books, and the internet play a significant role in their refined description of America as a land of abundance where even fates will be cancelled “If we could just get away from India, then all fates would be canceled. We’d start with new fates, new stars. We would say or be anything we wanted. We’d be on the other side of the earth” (Jasmine 54 ) again immigrants are delusional about America believing that

even fates would be canceled.

Jasmine's description of Hasnapur is quite telling especially in her portrayal of India as 'the edge of the world' and as 'darkness' "out there...on the edge of the world, in flaming deserts, mangled jungles, squelchy swamps, missionaries save the needy. Out there, the *darkness*. but for me, for Du, in Here, safety" Jasmine's darkness correlates directly with Kurtz's darkness in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Jasmine is referring to herself and Du, her Vietnamese adopted son, as strangers who came long distances from the 'the edge of the world' to find salvation and safety. That place, America, that both Jasmine and Du called *home* is for natives and she is already looking at her India from an outsider's perspective describing it as a *jungle* "the out There, the darkness"

Unlike Americans, for the majority of people all over the world the choice to travel is a distant dream. Just like Jasmine, the luxury of presenting a passport to a customs officer then boarding a plane is not for everyone. Being deprived and people of color citizens from Africa, Latin America or Asia, these immigrants can't leave the country of their birth by crossing borders legally and traveling their 'borderless' world due to the fact that they are US passport holders. This 'apartheid' system was established by rich First World countries to prevent Third World people from entering their borders while granting access to all countries for their citizens. (Chomsky 45) despite the fact that Jasmine's circumstances hinder all possibilities for a successful migration, but her personality qualities, such as risk-taking, effectiveness and flexibility played a crucial role in her journey. Despite the fact that she is too young and even naïve in planning her Illegal journey to America she exhibited all the required characteristics needed for the journey "I turned everything over to my brothers, along with my plan. They were stupefied. A village girl, going alone to America, without a job, husband, or papers! I must be mad! Certainly, I was... Hari-prar arranged my illegal documents. Passport name; officially, was Jyoti Vijnh"

(63)

In this respect, Mukherjee provided a detailed description of the journey all illegal immigrants go through and Jasmine in particular:

there is a shadow world of aircraft...portaging people who coexist with tourists and businessmen. But we are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers. You see us...taking out...an aerogram for the hundredth time promising a job or a space to sleep, a newspaper in our language, a photo of happier times, a passport, a visa, a laissez-passer. We are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines...we ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue. We sneak a look at the big departure board...our cities are there, too, our destinations are so close! But not yet, no so directly. We must sneak in, land by night in little used strips...what country? what continent? We pass through wars, through plagues...on the first leg of my odyssey, I sit between a Filipina nurse and a Tamil auto mechanic both on their way to Bahrain (Jasmine 64)

These long lines include the best detailed description of what it really means to be an illegal immigrant embarking on an 'odyssey' to those 'outlandish shrines' where happiness is possible and where real life exists. Jasmine tried one of many illegal ways to cross frontiers such as 'a forged passport' she went on a long journey crossing continents and countries to end up on trawler that "cargoes contraband into Paramaribo, then outward to the States". So, Jasmine circumnavigated both the globe and all possible illegal ways of entering the US. Forging a passport, then crossing borders then ending up on a trawler sneaking through the ocean and heading towards America's backdoor. Even the description of the journey bears a resemblance to a first-hand experiencing of the illegal passage of immigrants, here the captain of the ferry transporting aliens, Half-face is lecturing them about the drill in case they get caught "listen up. Here's the drill. Three

blasts of the whistle and you hit the water...if the Border Patrol picks you up and hauls your ass off to the detention center, you don't know us. You never sailed the Gulf Shuttle. You fucking walked on water, okay?" in order to get to their destination illegal immigrants go through hell, humiliation and near-death experiences and their fate is in the hands of the very people who smuggled them into America. But all this for what reason "no work, dead parents, bad marriage, and you end up on a shrimper in the Gulf, under a tarp. You end up bait-fish" (67) Indeed, the International Organization for Migration estimates a net worth of \$30 billion annual profits from the business of illegal immigration. These revenues are so great that drug smuggling operations are becoming involved in the trafficking of immigrants as a profitable nonetheless less perilous alternative. It should be noted, however, that there are corrupt smugglers, like Half-Face, who only wants to exploit the smuggled immigrants and women in particular. (Ciment et Radzilowski 55) The jeopardy of exploitation by smugglers is immense due to the clandestine nature of human smuggling. Half-Face took advantage of the vulnerable state of Jasmine so that right after they reached US soil, he raped her which only intensified the perilous journey these immigrants undertake just to get to their Promised Land.

However, in order to get that 'over there' immigrants must go through a set of transitions in their endeavor for the ideal images they had of America so, as we saw earlier, they are driven by their desire for better socio-economic conditions. Notwithstanding, immigrants known as *backdoor migrants*, illegal immigrants and aliens, are incapable of crossing borders with papers, like Jasmine, so they spend loads of dollars just to secure a passage on board of an overcrowded treacherous vessel risking it all in their endeavor for what they believe to be an *Eldorado*. Unfortunately, these immigrants seem to overlook the fact that the US they visualized as the land of opportunities, adventure and hope is in fact, as we saw previously, source of hostile dissatisfaction

humiliation and exile. As a result, undocumented migration has always been associated with the desecration country's frontiers which is considered as a transgression punished by exclusion and extradition.

For American immigration law, illegal immigrants are always excluded from the American society failing in their Americanization process. Therefore, these wanderers across borders are excluded due to their illegality and foreignness described by anti-immigration activists as unwelcome guests on U.S. soil. However, Mukherjee has a totally different viewpoint in this case claiming that being American is about the strong belief in American social and public morals more willingly than blood and soil which is the case in Eastern countries. She believes that being American is not all about a document that guarantee a free movement across borders but she has advocated for the idea that being "American" is all about, just like her character Jasmine, "an intensity of spirit and a quality of desire." (Steinberg et Mukherjee 36)

Mukherjee's major preoccupation with the borders in *Jasmine* is an adaptation of the creed of westward expansion. Throughout the novel, we witness Jasmine's urge to travel further west starting from her treacherous journey from India then she ends up on a ferry heading towards America. However, we sense her yearning to travel as far from her native country as possible; and it constitutes. Jasmine's craving for discovery both of the self and the land is underscored by her inner strength of determination to travel west is demonstrated by Mukherjee's depiction of the frontiers as a living entity stating that "every night...it creeps a little closer" (Jasmine 11)

Throughout her novel, Mukherjee contrasts between the United States and India, therefore validating Indian immigrants' entitlement to America. Mark Busby commented on the notion of frontier stating that it does not necessarily "refer to a specific place but to a cluster of images and values that grew out of the confrontation between the uncivilized

and civilized world” (Maxey 70)

In this regard, Jasmine’s connection to frontiers is a celebration of Mukherjee’s work and the tradition of Asian immigrants in America. Therefore, she narrates in the first-person an extensive account of a current mass migration portraying invisible people embarking on treacherous journeys and circumnavigating the globe escaping a past and chasing an ambiguous future. This interpretation is a response to Emma Lazarus’s 1866 poem, *The New Colossus* whose words were carved in the Statue of Liberty “Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”, in Jasmine’s version “I, a dropout from a village school. America, America!” (Jasmine 18)

Jasmine’s first *coups d’oeil* from the sea on the America she spent days and days dreaming about, she landed illegally in Florida, where her first meeting with the New World is quite a shock in which “the first thing I saw were the two cones of a nuclear plant...I waded through Eden’s waste...white men with sneering faces waited in panel trucks” (Jasmine 68). According to her description of this entry, Mukherjee highlighted the dystopian image of a post-war landscape suggested through the use of the “two cones of a nuclear plant”, this image is only confirmed through “Eden’s waste”. The overvalorization of America as an *Eldorado* is questioned through this thorough description that only devaluate the significance of the utopian portrayal of America by both the media and immigrants themselves. (Maxey 72)

Through *Jasmine*, Mukherjee exposed the other face of American society especially after the fundamental amendments in migration regulations. Simultaneously, the country is criticized for the prevailed racism, segregation, hate crimes and police brutality. They depicted a brutal and preventive attitude by representing these clandestine immigrants as *aliens* living on the welfare of the hardworking Americans which intensified their otherness and fostered hostility and stereotypes about immigrants being an enemy of the

state, and even those who opposed this viewpoint were sent to prison which is the case with Lilian Gordon who helped Jasmine with her assimilation and adaptation into the American way of life only to end up in jail “she went to jail for refusing to name...the so-called army of illegal aliens she helped “dump” on the welfare rolls of America” (Jasmine 87) which is one of the stereotypes about immigrants just living on the welfare rolls ignoring the fact that these immigrants take part in the American economy and even paying taxes. The use of ‘dump on welfare rolls’ is suggestive of the prejudice and anti-immigrant sentiments Americans feel against immigrants because of the exaggerated statistics of the American government and the hate discourse. This prejudice about immigrants, deepened the gap between fact and fiction leading people to get “a little scared of immigrants and positively hostile to illegals” (87)

Jasmine was subjected to these prejudices right after she reached American soil which highlights the fact that immigrants are the most effortlessly recognizable national scapegoat (Rosello 1) Jasmine described an encounter with an American lady who showed a great degree of inhospitality towards her knowing from how she looks that she is an immigrant “you have nice hips’ she gave the ‘you’ a generic sweep. You teeming millions with wide hips breeding like roaches on wide-hipped continents ‘wide. nature meant you carry babies” (21) another stereotype about immigrants breeding both in their home countries and in America just to bring as many *aliens* as possible. The American government’s propaganda about illegal immigrants to make natives fear them only formed new cultural, psychological thus intangible borders that immigrants will never surmount even the well-educated and highly skilled among them. Based on the statistics done by government officials, they shown that the number of South Asian migrants raised, which, as we saw from the previous quote, aroused mostly hatred and distress which made them subjects of debasement. (King, Connell et White 185) even the statistics about the number

of illegal entries and the governments' description and terminologies used to denote illegal immigrants are biased "the officer in charge said 'the border's like Swiss cheese and all the mice are squirming through the holes'" "Du and me, we're the ones who didn't get caught. The only mystery is who'll get caught and who will escape" (Jasmine 17) this metaphor is significant when it comes to border control, despite the fact that the borders are getting harder to cross but legal discourse still uses metaphors that compare illegal immigrants to mice who always succeed in finding a way out. for Jasmine and Du they are among those 'mice' who made it and didn't get caught. However, some narratives are trying to locate migrants into an inferior and demoted class described as the *other*, nevertheless, South Asian writers, like Mukherjee, are trying to portray migrants in their stories using the power of the word to confirm their diversity and uniqueness, and criticize *otherness*. (King, Connell et White 165)

## **2.6. Becoming Alien on a Hostile Land: *Americanah's* Illegal immigrants:**

As we have seen earlier, immigrants tend to endure hostilities all along the way for the sole purpose of making it to America, their dream land. To get to their destination, immigrants follow two ways: the legal way or the illegal one. In Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, the protagonist young age and low level of education made her choose the illegal path leading her to America. Whereas for Ifemelu and Obinze, they embarked on a legal immigration but unfortunately winding up clandestine themselves. For Ifemelu, her journey to America started on a scholarship basis thus on legal basis, but to earn a living she decided to use someone else's Social Security card to apply for jobs "I begged her and she agreed to let you work with her Social Security card." "How? I'll use her name?" Ifemelu asked. "Of course, you'll use her name" (*Americanah* 60) starting from his instant, we are following not only a journey of self-discovery but a beginning of a journey towards legal status in America portraying one of the layers of self that Ifemelu will adopt, after all she realized

that she has to be someone else to fit in America “she was looking again at the Social Security card and driver’s license that belonged to Ngozi Okonkwo...I don’t even look like her at all,’ Ifemelu had said “All of us look alike to white people,” Aunty Uju said” (68).

Her insecurity as an illegal immigrant was highlighted through the time she spent unemployed “It terrified her, to be unable to visualize tomorrow” stressing the hindrance immigrants have to go through to make ends meet because they are always “at war with the world, and woke up each day feeling bruised, imagining a horde of faceless people who were all against her” (87) however, after she met Curt, her white American boyfriend, he helped her to legalize her status “So I know folks in this other bigger place, but the good thing about this one is they’ll get you a work visa and start your green card process.” (123) a privilege not anyone since her friend “Wambui was working three jobs under the table to raise the five thousand dollars she would need to pay an African-American man for a green-card marriage” the first problem facing immigrants is the hurdle of legal status since they will have “to descend into the dark tunnel of immigration paperwork” (116) a hurdle that will build solid high walls in front of them making things worse than before since they will have to find a job then legalize their status which is not an easy procedure especially for Africans so they resort to sham marriage which is both time and financially consuming.

Obinze’s journey, on the other hand, was full of invisibility and illegality. He first got to the UK legally by obtaining a visa authorizing his entry into the UK, but it does not permit him to work “If you come to England with a visa that does not allow you to work,” Nicholas told him, “The first thing to look for is not food or water, it is an NI number so you can work. Take all the jobs you can. Spend nothing. Marry an EU citizen and get your papers. Then your life can begin.” (137) So, he started considering the possibility of

finding an EU resident to help him ‘cover-up’ his illegal status by using his NI number but the life of insecurity and invisibility is stuck with Obinze despite the fact that he found an English man named Vincent who has the power of setting the terms of the agreement “This is business, innit, but I’m helping you. You can use my NI number and pay me forty percent of what you make,” Vincent said. “It’s business, innit. If I don’t get what we agree on, I will report you.” (144)

Unfortunately for Obinze, and after raising his share of the agreement, Vincent indeed reported him to the authorities “Somebody called yesterday. Said you’re not who you say you are, that you’re illegal and working with a Brit’s name.” (151) which highlights the life of insecurity illegal immigrants endure in a Western country where living the moment being the last seemed the norm, here Obinze was filling safe from whatever the other illegal immigrants were living but one phone call turned his life upside down bringing him back to the abyss of illegality and thus invisibility. Therefore, Obinze like many other migrants, decided to enter the tunnels of illegal immigration laws and decided to look for a sham marriage which is defined in section 24 of the 1999 Act of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 as:

A marriage (whether or not void) – (a) entered into between a person who is neither a British citizen nor a national of an EEA State other than the United Kingdom and another person (whether or not such a citizen or such a national); and entered into for the purpose of avoiding the effect of one or more provisions of United Kingdom immigration law or the immigration rules. (Tackling Sham Marriage)

Getting married to legalize one’s status is spreading approach ranging from legal to illegal. Like Obinze’s case, this type of marriage is agreed upon for the sole purpose of financial profits between an EU resident and an illegal immigrant just in expectation of getting papers. This pattern is illegitimate as governments are taking heavy measures

against immigrants who acquire lawful status via an arranged marriage which is considered as an act of fraudulence. (Chomsky 97) Obinze's sham marriage was arranged by "the Angolans who would arrange his marriage, exactly two years and three days after he arrived in England; he kept count" After that long period of time without a job prospect, Obinze decided to enter the tunnel of sham marriage to try to cheat the system and find a way out of his illegal status. Due to his illegal status, Obinze kept stressing the fact that he was *invisible* because he is both black and illegal in a predominant white society "he...watch the people brushing past him. They walked so quickly, these people, as though they had an urgent destination, His eyes would follow them, with a lost longing, and he would think: You can work, you are legal, you are visible, and you don't even know how fortunate you are" (131) despite the fact that the setting has changed to London, immigrants live through the same hurdles and the same agonies as those who went to America. Seeking a hideout in the presence of authorities so that they will be 'invisible' because of their illegal status they can't even work thus they can't make a living.

Obinze's invisibility is in fact illegal immigrants' sole technique to evade being captured by the authorities by keeping a low profile and not attracting attention. This invisibility that characterizes illegal immigrants is overwhelming since they are living in a constant fear of deportation thus failing in attaining their dream. However, it is quite a shame that because of African's obsession with the *over there*, young intellectual people like Obinze who came from well-respected families from "a background similar to his, a childhood cushioned by family, by regular meals, by dreams in which there was no conception of cleaning toilets in London" (136) he ended up cleaning toilets abroad only not to go back home empty handed and looked upon as a failure. This life of constant fear is portrayed by Adichie's use of a strong simile by comparing Obinze's invisibility and his existence in London to 'an erased pencil sketch' which emphasized the vague existence of

illegal immigrants living in fear and even fighting the ‘urge to run’ in the presence of authorities. The atrocities illegal immigrants go through by keeping a low profile which suggests invisibility is indeed a nerve-wracking experience. This sense of insecurity of not knowing when is the end of all this hiding will it be succeeding in legalizing the status or unfortunately deportation.

However, illegal immigrants fail to see the bigger picture that crossing physical borders and obtaining a legal status does not necessarily mean they succeed in surmounting the cultural borders. Due to government’s overstatements of statistics and their use of degrading metaphors to portray immigrants, there is a growing resentment and anti-immigration sentiment towards both legal and illegal immigrants “The wind blowing across the British Isles was odorous with fear of asylum seekers, infecting everybody with the panic of impending doom, and so articles were written and read, simply and stridently...She had...suspicious eyes. He wondered what she was thinking. Was she wondering whether he was one of those illegal immigrants who were overcrowding an already crowded island?” (149) Obinze was among those wretched of the earth, one of ‘the hordes further crowding a crowded island’.

Designating immigrants as illegal and thus threatening is among the many metaphors progressively employed to describe immigrants as unfriendly invaders and aliens intimidating to swarm the frontiers and overthrow Western countries. Adichie’s use of metaphors used to describe immigrants both legal and illegal is pertinent since right after the events of September 11, 2001, immigration discourse aggravated the already swerved public view of immigrants. This portrayal of immigrants by nationalists as convicts and alien invaders made them look as perilous as extremists. This rise of anti-immigrant propaganda generates public hostility towards migrants who were used by government officials as scape goats responsible for damaging economy in order to draw an anti-

immigration cultural border which is too challenging for immigrants to overcome.

In this regard, Obinze provided us with a comparison between Europe and America in terms of immigration law in which he highlights the cultural resemblance of EU countries as compared to America “European countries are surrounded by countries that are similar to one another, while America has Mexico, which is really a developing country, and so it creates a different psychology about immigration and borders” (158) This ideology towards immigrants elevated the distrust, prejudice, and xenophobia that were already escalating. Notwithstanding, metaphors used by the media developed into being the norm when depicting immigrants as ‘illegal aliens. (S. Massey et Sánchez R 70) This science of racial betterment functioned mostly by indorsing the survival of the allegedly dominant native people while guaranteeing the eradication of the strangers, whether directly through violence and aggravated treatment or by means of strategies of exclusion. (Yakushko 38)

However, it should be noted that Obinze’s kind of immigrants did not escape starving, rape or burned villages but they are conditioned from birth to look towards that somewhere else to run away from choice lessness. Adichie’s immigrants were raised well fed and watered but live in discontent, believing that actual lives happened in that somewhere else. These immigrants were determined to do risky and illegal things because they are simply hungry for choice. Nevertheless, they seem to neglect the fact that after getting caught in their illegality by immigration officers “it was over...your visa is expired and you are not allowed to be present in the UK” these harsh words to an illegal immigrant like Obinze only clarified the futility of illegality and thus invisibility which eventually end up in deportation centers where they even understand that invisibility is not after all the worse that could happen to them but they “will eventually be removed from the UK...Removed.” That word made Obinze feel inanimate. A thing to be removed. A thing without breath and mind. A thing” (Americanah 161)

**Conclusion:**

This chapter has embarked on a complex investigation of identity and belonging in *Americanah* and *Jasmine*. We highlighted the conflicting experiences of the female protagonists, Ifemelu and Jasmine, by emphasizing on the exceptional challenges confronted by immigrants in their constant struggle with racial identity in a new land. Through Jasmine's experience, we discovered the uniqueness of her journey where she resorted to dissociation as a reaction to the dramatic experience she endured. We have also analyzed Ifemelu's varied version of adaptation, from mimicry to a more conscious quest for a self that surpasses forced classifications.

We further dug deeper into the concept of mimicry and its implications by raising questions about the line marking the boundaries between integration and a possibly disturbing loss of *self*. We also explored the possibility of creating a hybrid identity that transcends the confines of binary categorization denoted as a "third space". In addition to this, we have highlighted the persistent insecurity and vulnerability faced by illegal immigrants in their journey surrounded by perils and subject to accountability.

## CHAPTER THREE: Curving a Niche on a Hostile Land and the Pursuit of Happiness

### Introduction:

In this chapter we will deconstruct a primordial idea that shaped a nation which is the American Dream. This concept has captivated and inspired countless individuals across the globe, often evokes images of opportunity, prosperity, and social mobility. It is a vision of a land where anyone, regardless of their background, can achieve success and happiness through hard work and determination. However, we will scrutinize the challenges, disillusionment, and the realization that the dream may not be as attainable as it once seemed. This chapter delves into the complexities of the American Dream as portrayed in the novels *Jasmine* and *Americanah* by examining the experiences of the protagonists, Jasmine and Ifemelu, we will explore the allure and the pitfalls of the American Dream, the costs of belonging, and the complexities of identity and race in the United States.

We will highlight *Jasmine*'s journey to the United States in search of a fresh start chasing the American Dream's promise of opportunity and self-reinvention. We will also examine Adichie's portrayal of Ifemelu who comes to the United States to pursue her education and career embodying the American Dream's allure. She is also captivated by the idea of a society where meritocracy reigns and individuals can achieve success based on their talents and hard work. However, both characters discover that the American Dream is not always as inclusive as it seems, and she faces discrimination and prejudice based on her race and cultural background. Furthermore, we will explore the futility of the characters' determination to create and redefine home in America realizing only that it is elusive and proves to be as mythical as the American Dream itself.

### 3.1. Chasing Shadows: The American Dream or Mirage in *Jasmine*:

In his extensive first-hand description of America, William Boelhower described America as ‘an idea before it became a geographical reality.’ As we have seen in the first chapter, the myth of the American Dream is deeply rooted in all cycles of immigration having its foundation built upon the supposition that it is a land of equality where there is no need to work hard since it is the land of boundless possibilities in order to become rich. In media or in literature, America was portrayed as the land that welcomed everyone who was willing to take a chance, the streets were paved with gold and the prospects were everywhere. Writers, journalists and researchers alike started long ago to question the validity of America being an *Eldorado* or an *Eden* or merely a devastating mirage that not only destroy the souls of wanderers across borders, but keep them poor forever. (King, Connell et White 163)

For Jasmine, the whole journey and the belief in the well burnished mirage of America being an *Eden* started with a letter her husband received from his former teacher who is living in America. The aerogram he received read “CELEBRATE AMERICA. TRAVEL THE PERFECT FREEDOM” which portrays the well decorated picture the Midea and even immigrants themselves draw about America the land of freedom. In his description of America, Professorji exhibited a delusion deeply rooted in all immigrants’ psyche:

day by day our Jullundhar graduates are rushing to these country and minting lakhs and lakh of rupees. They stay in nice houses with 24-hour electricity and no-load shedding. They have running hot and cold water...they enjoy all manners of comfort and amenities...when will I see my truly best student blooming in the healthy soil of this country. (Jasmine 53)

The Media and immigrants already in America play a crucial role in portraying an

America where everything is perfect and even the soil is fertile where immigrants can bloom. We notice that even the pull factors Prakash's teacher highlighted aren't that big of deal for someone to leave country of origin just to enjoy 24-hour electricity and cold and hot water which highlights the illusion and mirage they believe in. The worse the sending country's harsh conditions are, the more the immigrants were eager to fulfill their dreams on an ideal New World.

Movies and the media play a significant role in burnishing an already well decorated image of life in America which may lead immigrants like Jasmine to indulge in an imaginary world that later becomes their reality thus they end up living an idealistic deception. Based on the above quotation, the American dream for immigrants from the Third World is therefore a dream of the commodity, and the disguised foundation is that one's welfare and spiritual value can be related to the value of the possessions one owns. (Tyson 5) however, immigrants' belief in the American Dream blurs the real image of America where unemployment is on the rise and more and more people are homeless now but the question that we should ask is "what is this real life? I have a real life" immigrant are on a perpetual process of redefining concepts such as: home, real life, happiness believing that this 'over there' land of wonders where gold flows on the roads is where real life is which is apparent when Prakash described the America he sees "Jasmine what do you think of America...listen to me, Jasmine. I want for us to go away and have a real life. I've had it up to here with backward, corrupt, mediocre fools" (Jasmine 51).

Furthermore, Jasmine is depicted as marriage commodity ready to trade herself trying to advance into the American socioeconomic ladder. (17) in her meeting with the Hayes family she expressed her fascination and infatuation with Taylor "I fell in love with what he represented to me...it seemed entirely American. I was curious about his life, not repulsed. I wanted to know the way such a man lives in this country. I wanted to watch, be

part of it” (Jasmine 105) Jasmine’s eagerness in this passage is telling; Taylor, the American white university professor, represents what brought Jasmine all the way from Hasnapur to America, he represents the American Dream. She wanted to be part of this American life not only she is curious about his life but eager to be part of it which suggests her craving to be American.

This belief in the American mythology is based on the celebrated slogan ‘rags to riches’ which designates social mobility in parallel to geographical mobility in the discourse of westward expansion. However, in comparison to European societies known by their strict social stratum, upward mobility in the US is unrestricted notwithstanding of economic status which eventually is an advocate for the advanced standard of living in America. Consequently, the legend of the self-made man based on individual achievement becomes a unique American national product. Immigrants became delusional by these mottos of America being the land of equal opportunities for everyone is a fundamental drive for both legal and illegal immigrants risking it all just to have their share of the milk and honey America has to offer. (Wyllie 368)

Mukherjee’s use of movies, TV shows and magazines as a source of knowledge about America is fundamental in all her novels. *Jasmine* is no exception since throughout the story we learn that she used ready-made newspaper expressions that only reinforce the mirage of America being a dream land “I sat with old copies of newspapers and practiced English phrases. ‘The time has come for this great nation to be a greater nation by eschewing indiscriminate use of foreign expertise and technology...I felt ready to leave for Germany, the States” Jyoti here tried her best to be ready for the American society’s hard assimilation process by even copying ready-made English phrases. Jasmine’s “eschewing indiscriminate use of foreign expertise” is a metaphorical expression denoting the welcoming nature of America to immigrants to fulfil their dreams which is quite

flawed.

However, once they arrive to America, immigrants are struck by the inconsistency between the preconceived ideas they already had about America and reality. Jasmine is no exception, since she built an idealized picture about America relying on the aerogram and a brochure sent from an American university to her husband portraying two Indian people smiling and exhibiting happiness, so her journey was to check the validity of this brochure thus checking the well decorated picture the media draw about America “I would land, find Tampah...find the college grounds and check it against the brochure photo. Under the very tree where two Indian boys and two Chinese girls were picture, smiling” (Jasmine 76) Jasmine, like all immigrants relied heavily on how Midea portrayed America and how even immigrants portrayed it which is the symbol in the brochure and she wanted to verify and validate this Dream of foreigners traveling long distances and risking it all to get to America so Jasmine is a messenger for all immigrants to come to America in order to “check it against the brochure photo”.

These young Indians are endeavoring new horizons and new prospects in modern India. They want to quest wealth and achievements in addition to individual happiness and they end up creating a myth of an *Indian Dream*. (Lavigilante et Mukherjee 178) furthermore, the female immigrant in particular is given a new role and a new attitude that we see Jasmine the village girl “going alone to America, without a job, husband, or papers! I must be mad! Certainly, I was” this reinvention of female immigrants’ identity and the self-empowerment of female migrant characters is prevalent all over the novel.

In this respect, in an interview with Mukherjee she justified that America is an idea, and should not be mistook with the United States, because "American" is a symbol for a belief in the predominance of freedom of character and approval of individual ability which play an integral part in Jasmine, young immigrants are induced into coming to

America in quest of a perfect prosperous personal happiness, for upward social mobility and in general for new prospects.

Unfortunately, once they lay foot on American soil, immigrants start to unfold a bitter reality about America. An America where millions of people are buried in cities struggling for their survival. This *other face* of America is transmitted to be exposed by immigrants who travel long distances dreaming of an Eden and a promised land. As we saw earlier, Jasmine journey to verify the happy faces on the brochure is in fact journey of discovery and unveiling of a myth. During her first night in America, she was raped by an American which is metaphorical for the innocent mindset and perfectioned picture she already drew about America only to be raped and lose whatever belief she had in the Dream. Later in the novel she questioned the America that Americans and immigrants alike see “I wonder if Bud ever sees the America I do...my first night in America was spent in a motel with plywood over its windows, its pool bottomed with garbage sacks” (Jasmine 69) Jasmine speculated whether Bud, her American boyfriend would see the America she does which is a confirmation of the shock immigrants endeavor after all the dreaming about the America they see in movies and the America they witness first hand. The sign in front of the motel which reads “NO VACANCY” is symbolic since it is a clear message to Jasmine there is no place for you in this country.

For these later immigrants like Jasmine, the myth of America died almost the moment they set foot on foreign soil “so much trash in America...can this torture all be a dream? Where have I come to?...i had been in America nearly a day and had yet to see an American face” (Jasmine 82) facing a hideous reality, scarcity of jobs, low pay, risky work, anti-immigrants sentiment, homesickness, alienation, linguistic and religious barriers, the legend of America disappears into thin air.

Mukherjee’s representation of America through the female immigrant perspective is

accusatory in nature. The American Dream that pulled Jasmine to go through the hurdles to come to America is falling apart piece by piece and setbacks keep coming highlighting the delusion that brought immigrants to America believing it will be paradise on earth only to find out that “there’s too much garbage in America” and “beggars in New York! I felt I’d come to America too late. I felt cheated” (Jasmine 88) immigrants believe passionately in the mirage of the Dream perceiving disregarding the cultural hurdles that thwart any type of improvement. Pulled by their aspiration for a better life, these immigrants are in Jasmine’s words full of ‘greed’ that they may even leave a good social or economic situation back home chasing a mirage they may never attain.

When she got to New York for the first time, Jasmine was shocked of the discrepancy between her expectations and the reality “on the streets I saw only more greed, more people like myself. New York was an archipelago of ghettos seething with aliens” (Jasmine 89) the use of the word “greed” resonates with the drive of all those immigrants with good economic status back home coming to the US out of ‘greed’ only to end up being “aliens” looking a better life but ending up in ghettos. Even a taxi driver who drove her to Flushing, gave us an agonizing but real image of America “He was from my part of the world, given to bitterness and suspicion...the driver said ‘in Kabul I was a doctor. We have to be here living like dogs because they’ve taken everything from us” (89) again the American Dream is pulling all types of people even the well-educated who leave their countries hoping for a better life only to end up “cabdrivers”.

Even their expectations for acceptance and a smooth assimilation into the Melting Pot seems to fall apart since for Jasmine, her first contact with an American family only intensified the sense of alienation and estrangement that immigrants fail even to understand humor being part of American culture “I didn’t have the slightest understanding of anything they said, and they didn’t bother explaining” being amongst

Americans for the first time seems confusing for Jasmine. She doesn't understand their jokes saying that "humor's the hardest thing to translate" (107) and she doesn't even understand anything they said which is quite significant that she can't understand the American society.

In 2005, George Carlin criticized the Dream as the American system's embodiment of failure to negotiate the requirements of underprivileged people. He also underscored how captivating the Dream is, but also how defective and unachievable it is: "the owners of this country know the truth: it's called the American Dream, because you have to be asleep to believe it" (Archer 16) in this regard, Mukherjee used metaphors and symbols to intensify the fragility of the Dream by using the principle of *weak gravity*. Taylor, who hired Jasmine as a caregiver for his adopted daughter, explained it as "weak gravity is what keeps your dreams inside your head so they don't go flying out" (Jasmine 112) the author's use of this theory by Taylor the white American is suggestive since it only intensifies how fragile the Dream is even for Americans who are supposedly endowed to the Dream more than all immigrants. Mukherjee stated this theory just to refer to how easily the American Dream can 'fly away'. In page 113, Jase (another incarnation of Jasmine) said "America may be fluid and built on flimsy, invisible lines of weak gravity, but I was a dense object, I had landed and was getting rooted" the deception she was living in made her delusional believing that weak gravity and flimsy America wasn't meant for her, she felt 'rooted' which only intensifies her delusion and conviction of her status forgetting that she is alien and foreign after all and her foreignness will stick with her which evoke November, 2011 issue of *Time* use of a ladder featuring a hand clenching on one of its shattered stairs which is suggestive of the fragility of the American ladder of prospect where believers eventually tumbling off it. (11)

In another quotation, Jasmine expressed an awakening from her delusion realizing that

the American dream will never be a certainty remaining only in the minds of immigrants like Jasmine who will eventually be destroyed in their unyielding quest for it. Jasmine's realization of the futility of her Dream is quite telling when she said

In America, nothing lasts. I can say now and it doesn't shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible, or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate. (Jasmine 114)

Immigrants like Jasmine travel long distances believing in America and the Dream trying their best to learn, adjust and participate which are ways to a successful assimilation only to realize that nothing lasts and all dreams are subject to disintegration. Even Americans in the novel, as we saw before, are not in accord about the Declaration of Independence's motto "pursuit of happiness" really mean. Taylor's wife, Wylie, expressed this Jasmine only to complicate an already complex issue "this is my chance at real happiness...America had thrown me again...no one I could consult, to understand what Wylie was saying...She wasn't happy? She looked happy, sounded happy, acted happy. Then what did happy mean?" (114) happiness and a happy life are among the things immigrants crave for by coming to the US and this passage condemns the delusion of immigrants believing in 'happiness' in America when Americans themselves don't really know what real happiness is, a lesson Jase learnt about America that everything is on the move and nothing stays the same.

The Dream of a happy life seems vague because of dimensionless nature of the word "I felt my own helplessness and stupidity...what was it that Taylor had explained about weak gravity? Bat winged nightmares flapped frantically; I didn't want them flying out of my skull" (115) Jasmine's delusion is significant even after realizing the fragility of the

American Dream and that nothing lasts forever that we tackled previously, the mirage she was living in led her into indulging into the unattainable, this dream of a 'perfect happy family' and living like the movies is what pulls immigrants risking it all to come to the US especially when she guiltily admitted that now she needs to take care of her family of the Hayese since Wylie left for another man "we—Duff, Taylor, and me, became a small, self-sufficient family, and I told myself, guiltily, that everything might really work out all right" (Jasmine 116) Jasmine herself admitted the guilt and delusion she is living by first wishing that Wylie and her new lover Stuart would stay together and second believing that because she plays the wife in this family made life happier and made her full in attaining the dream she longed for of a happy American family which is again an illusion since her foreignness obscures everything. However, right after her confession, Mukherjee stated a symbolic representation that foresees Jasmine's destiny by using the expression 'RETURN TO SENDER' which denotes the delusion and fragility of the Dream and that "If something gets too frightening, just pull an imaginary shade that says RETURN on it and you can make it go away" the connotation here with the fragile status of illegal aliens and the easiness of the process of deportation of immigrants is quite telling. Taylor the American white man said if something gets too frightening, foreignness is one of these, since Jasmine stated the Americans' fear of her foreignness previously stating that "My genuine foreignness frightens him...it frightens me" (16) so, whatever frightens you just return it the sender and it will go away. But we come to realize that Jane, the new incarnation of Jasmine, confessed that getting too much attachment and wanting something so much can lead to disillusion. She believed she could attain many things in America and strongly believed in the achievability of the Dream but unfortunately, she came to realize that nothing in America lasts forever and that too much attachment is too much disillusion. "Jane, he like to say...to want anything so much, I wanted to tell him

then, was unwise. Too much attachment, too much disillusion” (127) this quote reminds us of the final scene in *The Great Gatsby* when Nick Caraway described Gatsby’s belief in the Dream by saying “he stood before us concealing an incorruptible Dream...he had come such a long way and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it but he did not know it was already behind him...Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us it eluded us then but that is no matter tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther and one fine morning so we beat on, boats against the current borne back ceaselessly into the past” (Luhmann)

### **3.2.The Disillusionment with the American Dream in *Americanah*:**

Despite the fact that both Jasmine and Ifemelu are strong believers in the American Dream, Jasmine relied in building her preconceived idealistic view about America from the novels she read, particularly *Jane Eyre*, since where she came from there was not even electricity. However, for Ifemelu her delusion and belief in the mirage of the Dream was built upon the TV shows she watched in Nigeria adding to her well burnished picture she drew about America. In her dreams about America, Ifemelu depended on TV shows in her judgement of America “she began to dream. She saw herself in a house from *The Cosby Show*, in a school with students holding notebooks miraculously free of wear and crease...from time to time, she dreamed of America.” (*Americanah* 57) her delusion becomes clear in her choice of *The Cosby Show* which was streaming back in the 80's portraying a black family living a prosperous life in which both parents were wealthy and successful, the husband, Cliff, was a doctor Clair, the wife was a lawyer. Adichie’s choice of this particular show as a reference for Ifemelu’s portrayal of America is quite telling since even black Americans back in the time criticized it for drawing an idealistic and utopian picture about blacks in America which only adds to Ifemelu’s delusion.

Indeed, Adiche stressed this delusion of both the protagonist and all Third World

immigrants when portraying this ‘over there’ s a place where everything is different and better than where they are living “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” (*Americanah* 59) so instead of asking friends and relatives about the weather, Ifemelu relied heavily in her judgement of America on ‘illusion’ rather than ‘reason’. Therefore, Adichie is portraying aspiring immigrant’s craving to be part of the American Dream and live a firsthand experience following a promise of a phantasmagorical America neglecting the risks of alienation and the need for creating imaginary homelands. (Boyagoda 25)

The fundamental facade of this myth originates from the ‘Myth of Edenic Possibilities’, which echoes the anticipation of reproducing a second paradise, not in the afterlife but in the American continent. In this regard, former visions relocated it in Eden or in Utopia, nevertheless it had its origins in an existing country and through the discovery of America the Dream began to be materialized. (GUERIN, LABOR et LEE 212) This religious view of the Dream is exhibited in *Americanah* especially when Ifemelu received her American visa she decided to organize a ‘triumphant ritual that signaled the start of a new life overseas: the division of personal property among friends...Ifem, you know you’ll have any kind of dress you want in America.” (57) Granting access to the Dream land was integrated into the church as “Sister Ibinabo started the Student Visa Miracle Vigil on Fridays, a gathering of young people, each one holding out an envelope with a visa application form, on which Sister Ibinabo laid a hand of blessing” (56) In a religious context, a Miracle Vigil is a special night of prayer or worship held in anticipation of a miracle but in this quote we witness to what extent Nigerians and immigrants are delusional by America, we see the helplessness of young educated

Nigerians who are pushed to try their luck and apply for a visa and even go to the extreme of having a Sister in the church blessing their applications to be granted a visa. Another related concept to the Dream that pulled dreamers to endeavor into the American Dream is the myth of a self-made man or in other words, the idea of the American Adam and the epic American hero. The hero in the Dreamland is a character who personified the self-made man who can attain anything he wants through determination and pure luck climbing the economic ladder from being the wretched of the earth to richness. (GUERIN, LABOR et LEE 213)

Immigrants themselves helped in adding to their delusion and that of their families so that they do not disturb the well decorated picture of America and because of the shame of failure. When Ifemelu's father made a falsified statement about America "Her father made a sound, of admiring respect. "America is an organized place, and job opportunities are rife there" (116) Ifemelu never clarified this delusional expectation despite the fact that she was unemployed herself and running out of money but she assured her father only deepening the misconception of the Dream because she was ashamed of admitting her failure and because "it was what her father expected to hear".

However, and most strikingly, right after she arrived to America, Ifemelu started noticing the contradiction between expectation and reality, she was disappointed by how 'matte' buildings, cars and signboards are in America since based on the well decorated image she had about America, everything, even the lame things, should be "covered in a high-shine gloss". Moreover, she was astonished by the sight of a teenage boy 'peeing outside' which was a kind of crash to her expectation "I didn't know people do things like this in America" where we witness the beginning of the American Dream to fall apart. Immigrants draw their illusional America in their imagination where even the ordinary things should be bright and shiny but hit by how unexceptional America is.

Notwithstanding, Ifemelu's reliance in her judgment of America on *The Cosby Show* is juxtaposed by her firsthand experience of America which only added to her shock standing by the window watching the streets being "poorly lit, bordered not by leafy trees but by closely parked cars" (60) Adiche's description of how Ifemelu felt at the moment that "her body unsure of itself, overwhelmed by a sense of newness" this newness is not in fact a positive one but a contradictory one to the preconceived ideas she had about her Eden. This figurative Paradise Lost is in fact an innocence being lost giving way to the painful consciousness of the evil constituting the Dream. (GUERIN, LABOR et LEE 214)

It should be argued however, that despite the fact that these immigrants are confronted by the harsh truth of the other face of America, their creed in the American is hardly altered which is portrayed in Ifemelu's statement right after her shock of the America she witnessed firsthand "That first summer was Ifemelu's summer of waiting; the real America, she felt, was just around the next corner she would turn" (Americanah 63) Ifemelu's expectation of an America she has imagined wasn't altered by the change she witnessed with Aunty Uju so, illusion does not fade away easily for immigrants who keep aspiring for the better day just around the corner but unfortunately that day may never come. This view is even intensified in Ifemelu's description of commercials fascinating and appealing to her imagination making her authenticating their validity "She ached for the lives they showed, lives full of bliss, where all problems had sparkling solutions in shampoos and cars and packaged foods, and in her mind, they became the real America" (64). The picture drawn by the media about the perfectness of America where simple things like shampoos and packaged foods can turn life into a heaven, emphasize the ideology that shape immigrants' beliefs that can ever be reformed even after coming to America which highlights the delusion immigrants like Ifemelu live in before and after coming to America. In describing the effect of ideology on the human psyche, Louis

Althusser in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," claimed that for the purpose of helping a social system to thrive, its circumstances of construction need to be imitated in the individual psyche. Thus, Ideology has the objective of embodying existing individuals into social subjects. (Tyson 1)

Ifemelu's impressions about America justify the concept of ideology being incorporated into the human psyche, she equivocates without being definite in her perspective about the Dream. Sometimes she is even shocked because she had to sleep on the floor when she first came to America living with her aunt Auntie Uju "this was America at last, glorious America at last, and she had not expected to bed on the floor" while other times she is infatuated by white peoples' lives counting on in her judgement on the way they smile in their photos "they reminded Ifemelu of television commercials, of people whose lives were lived always in flattering light, whose messes were still aesthetically pleasing." (85) This is one of the preconceived 'ideologies' about America where the American Dream is attainable to anyone but when the truth unveils, they realize that the Dream is monopolized by White Americans only.

Additionally, Obinze, Ifemelu's ex-boyfriend, who made it to England, was also obsessed by America, making it his ultimate destination despite the fact that he was an immigrant in Western society where dreams of a better life can be attained but his belief, like that of many immigrants, cannot be altered easily. While in London, he kept reading magazines, books and films about America "where he was destined to be. He saw himself walking the streets of Harlem, discussing the merits of Mark Twain with his American friends, gazing at Mount Rushmore" (134). Through readings, Obinze wanted his belief in the Dream to survive and thrive, even though he is in London himself, his mind has always been in America where he longed to be part of it. He wanted to know everything about America "what people ate and what consumed them, what shamed them and what

attracted them” (148). Although he is already an immigrant in London, Obinze’s fascination and belief in the American Dream can’t be concealed. America became immigrants’ major preoccupation planning for a long time to get there. Obinze’s fascination with America and not England is may be a result of the heavy measures he found against migrants which is not the case in America where, according to him, all are equal.

The American Dream made people obsessed about an America where all dreams can be easily fulfilled despite the fact that “It’s the terrorism fears,” his mother said. “The Americans are now averse to foreign young men.” So African dreams about America are met with hostility and adversity. This adversity is even stronger against blacks. Obinze, just like Ifemelu, is obsessed by America ignoring the fact that even if they succeed in climbing the ladder of wealth and fulfill the legend of the self-made man, their foreignness is an obstacle they will never surmount; since in America, race is class and for an American witnessing the thriving of a black immigrant “It didn’t matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned, I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked...Blacks as a whole are often lumped with “Poor Whites.” Not Poor Blacks and Poor Whites. But Blacks and Poor Whites.” (95) Ifemelu is starting to discover the structure of the American society being built upon race instead of social class since it doesn’t matter that you have money or not but first you need to fit in the ‘acceptable’ supreme white race. This experience justifies the fragility of the dream, that even if you make it and create a life in America, foreignness will never let you integrate due to the predetermined idea Americans have about immigrants both legal and illegal.

The situation in America for both immigrants and Americans is getting worse every day. Nigerians are living in miserable houses in America, working three jobs to make ends meet, they wake up every day worrying about money and savings carefully all over the year just to be able to visit home in December for a week. However, they seek the look in

their relatives' eyes of "brightly burnished images of themselves" (89).

According to statistics, more than 653000 are homeless in America with an increase of more than 12% from last year. In the sunny state of California, many people are using their cars as a house, many among them are working two jobs seven days a week just to make ends meet and make a living. Many middle-class Americans had fallen into poverty, despite the fact that Donald Trump affirms that America now is living the American Dream, unfortunately, it is far from being achieved since 40 million people are living below poverty line which makes paying the rent too challenging. In many states, people who are being late in paying the rent will be evicted on gun point by the police. The situation for them is even harder so that they cannot eat and take medicines so they do one or the other while many of them resort to solidarity in open field hospitals where treatment is free of charge. (ENDEVVR)

### **3.3. The Cost of Belonging: Jasmine's Quest for Home:**

After reaching their destinations, immigrants become caught between two cultures and two worlds which make them feel like they don't fully conform anywhere. Therefore, their identity becomes a blend of their original culture and the new one, which intensifies their sense of being 'unmoored' or Bhabha's words *unhomeliness* which can be the result of new cultural norms, traditions, and even language. While some migrants return to their native land, those who stay in new lands come to terms with the predicaments of building a new life, a new identity and state of belonging. Nevertheless, when the journey comes about, immigrants might feel lost about their cultural compass not knowing where home is, nevermore which results in a perpetual motion both of the mind and the body. (King, Connell et White)

Through the narrative of their journey, we get to know what it is like to be an outsider and nevertheless at home, also it describes the state of being always fleeing, to consider

going back but learning that it is impossible, because past attachment is not only to another place but to a different time. (16) Therefore, movement across borders is not what it is all about, additionally, it is a constant state of renovation of the *self* and home. the implication of home, however, is not only to be considered as the dwelling from which one originates but also as one's home in a new territory where the immigrant is supposed to create not only a new home but also new identities. In this respect, Mukherjee described Jasmine's dislocation and relocation as a process of 'moving the frontiers' which signifies that "it is not the frontier that is moving" but Jasmine, a fugitive from justice, who "is carrying the frontier with her," (Maxey 73)

Consolidating the idea of roots/routes, Carl Jung speaks of migration metaphorically as the loss of roots:

It is the body, the feeling, the instincts, which connect us with the soil. If you give up the past you naturally detach from the past; you lose your roots in the soil, your connection with the totem ancestors that dwell in your soil. You turn outward and drift away, and try to conquer other land because you are exiled from your own soil. That is inevitable. The feet will walk away and the head cannot retain them because it is always wandering over the surface of the earth. Always looking for something...well, there is too much head and so there is too much will, too much walking about, and nothing rooted" (Ajzen)

In her description of home, Jasmine rarely mentions her home town or birth place by name but only attributing negative or vague images of her roots. In page 13, she mentioned home vaguely which only deepens her sense of loss "out there...on the edge of the world, in flaming deserts, mangled jungles, squelchy swamps...out there, the darkness. but for me, for Du, in Here, safety" so she considers India as a place of darkness and 'on the edge of the world' since while in America, she never mentions her family, she could

not even stand staying with Indians in Flushing “Flushing, with all its immigrants’ services at hand, frightened me. I, who had every reason to fear America, was intrigued by the city and the land beyond the rivers” (Jasmine 92) so instead of being afraid of the Other being America and Americans, she was frightened by her own people and intrigued by America. She could not wait to recreate her Indianness through successful assimilation to deepen her Americanization as Susan Koshy has stated that for Jasmine “exotic beauty becomes the passport to assimilation...the process of Americanization” which is for her a process of reinventing her Indianness and therefore of herself. (Maxey 60)

Throughout her process of redefinition of her identity, Jasmine’s constant mobility is in fact a renunciation of her origins and what Susheila Nasta calls “homing desire” which can be described as Jasmine’s craving to recreate home through her constant mobility through physical and cultural frontiers. Therefore, the notion of a static home seems unacceptable to Jasmine who, through mobility and incarnation, is redefining the concept of home for herself and for immigrants to come portraying a more fluid way of describing home across various locations. (Kuortti et Nyman 192)

In this case, Bhabha used Freud’s term of the *uncanny*, *das Unheimliche*, or the ‘unhomely,’ which proposes that the hybrid identity is the product the displacement of the home and the world: the unhomeliness. Jasmine hybrid identity came as result of her immigration so, instead of the traditional Jyoti she used to be in India, in America we witness her reincarnations by moving through *selves* as a result of displacement. She even declared the impossibility of going back home since for her that ‘Jyoti is dead’ she questions her old cultural ties by stating “I looked into his beady little eyes, his ugly wattled face. Sam, I thought, we’re both a long way from home, aren’t’ we? What’ll we do?...there’s no going back, is there?” (Jasmine 103) in comparison to *Americannah*, Jasmine reminisces about home but never speaks about going back because she can never

recognize herself as an Indian village girl so “there’s no going back”. However, she recognizes America as her home in many quotes in the novel “I became an American in an apartment on Claremont Avenue...on a perfect spring Sunday” (104) In her first job as an *au-pair* for an American family, she expressed her fascination and yearning to create an American identity and to be recognized as one “I fell in love with what he represented to me...it seemed entirely American. I was curious about his life, not repulsed. I wanted to know the way such a man lives in this country. I wanted to watch, be part of it” (105)

Therefore, *Jasmine* portrays the promising narrative of those immigrants who came to America willing to discard the old-fashioned traditions they come with but willing to adopt the principles and behaviors of America which is regarded as a typical story of displacement, integration, and anticipation. (Rubin 36) so departure and dislocation, for Jasmine and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure:

### **3.4. From Routes to Roots: Creating Home and the Shame of Return in *Americanah*:**

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries. The travelling *self* is here both the self that moves physically from one place to another, following ‘public routes and beaten tracks’ within a mapped movement, and the self that embarks on an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a *here*, a *there*, and an elsewhere. (Robertson, Mash et Tickner)

In her portrayal of the Jasmine’s journey to America, Mukherjee highlighted the

eagerness of Jasmine to create a home and a sense of belonging in America. Throughout what she has been through in her endeavor to integrate into the very essence of the American Dream, Jasmine, as discussed earlier, never nursed the possibility of going back home and all her challenges were just for the mere sake of curving a niche in America and accepting all types of incarnations and mimicry imposed by Americans. However, when comparing both novels, we come to realize the difference between both texts in terms of considering the possibility of returning to one's home. Ifemelu from the very beginning of the novel, exhibited the prospects and even an acceptance of going home. Therefore, it should be noted that Adichie's way of ordering the events in such a way is a sort of prophecy that her heroine's journey will wind up returning to Nigeria despite the fact that she got an American passport.

Adichie, among other authors, formed characters in her novel whose major preoccupation was to travel to America however, unpredictably and against all odds they decide to travel back home. Through texts like *Americanah* we get to delve into a less discovered literature which permits us to probe a soul of these migrants thus studying a less studied and even a less understood concept that of coming back migration. In this part of this research, we will delve into Ifemelu's journey who fluctuated between the excitement and atrocities of the journey with its unpredicted turns, and the sense of estrangement she faced both in America and back in Nigeria. It should be noted that, the migrants are in a constant adventure from *here* to *there* and vice-versa after which he grows into a stranger in a strange place. The vision of a home where one can ultimately come back is wrecked on re-entry because once left, home can be lost, living only in one's imagination creating a psychological home within, because returnees are after all coming back with a hybrid identity and thus, they belong nowhere. (Robertson, Mash et Tickner 3)

The question therefore, is how to harmonize in America's exclusion, y creating a home

where the *other* should be understood and helped not considered an rival to terminate.

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu is in a constant search for a home, believing first in America as being her home but later on she discovered the futility of calling America her home:

Ifemelu imagined the writers, Nigerians in bleak houses in America, their lives deadened by work, nursing their careful savings throughout the year so that they could visit home in December for a week...afterwards they would return to America to fight on the Internet over their mythologies of home, because home was now a blurred place between here and there. (*Americanah* 66)

Ifemelu provided us with immigrants' vague definition of home as a place they go back to just to reassure themselves of the "brightly burnished images of themselves" that they get from their relatives and friends back home. Home for them becomes vague which is neither *here* nor *there* because they cannot belong to neither and 'home' turn out to be a myth that they seem to never grasp due to their hybrid sense of identity. For Ifemelu, home connotes with the expression: Home is where the heart is; because from the very beginning of the novel, she keeps reminiscing and nursing the possibility of going back to her roots "each click brought yet another story of a young person who had recently moved back home...Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil" (3) Ifemelu mentioned the word 'roots' and that she buried them after coming to America trying to fit in and carve a niche in a hostile land but she craves these roots that play a role in reminding her of her origins. Ifemelu, like most immigrants, was attempting to acquire something of her culture before going back.

She earned for a revived identity of her *roots*. In this regard, psychoanalyst Melanie Klein claimed that "if the good object is deeply *rooted*, temporary disturbances can be withstood and the foundation laid for mental health, character formation and a successful

ego development” (Robertson, Mash et Tickner 92) which is proven by Ifemelu’s constant urge for an unnamed longing “there was cement in her soul. It had been there for a while, an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness.” (Americanah 3) It is quite obvious that Ifemelu like all immigrants after years in America they realize that there is something missing in their lives another *self* they need to live because they realize that, like Ifemelu, all the layers they put on their old *selves* fail to conceal their real *self* which is later translated to a homesickness to the older real *self*.

Ifemelu was always terrified of not being able to envision tomorrow, which is the state of immigrants who keep searching for a habitable home abroad only to realize that living abroad, and being in a constant search for a place may result in disillusion that this may never happen and they may never know when they could go home again. The outcome is therefore, that they are *uprooted* from America and from Nigeria and not at home in any intensifying the fact that the immigrant’s sense of foreignness makes him universal as a result of not possessing a home or roots. A point developed more in Jawaharlal Nehru’s memoirs in which he stated ‘I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. I am a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile’s feeling’ (Bowles)

This sense of estrangement is shared by both Ifemelu and Obinze, since in his journey of routes leading up to roots, and upon arrival he felt “a disorienting strangeness, because his mind had not changed at the same pace as his life, and he felt a hollow space between himself and the person he was supposed to be.” (Americanah 14) this *hollow space* is the result of immigrant’s Third Space (borrowing from Bhabha’s) which is neither *here* nor *there*. Nevertheless, re-entry into one’s home country is more challenging than anticipated

by Ifemelu as a result of the greater divergences between her anticipation and the reality she had to face “She was no longer sure what was new in Lagos and what was new in herself” (221) this sense of loss of self is quite prevalent in expatriates’ discourse since the *self* they form in America overcomes their Nigerian *self*-leaving them in a total loss when they go back home. Their identification with *home* and the American culture became regarded as offsetting (Ward, Bochner et Furnham 102) as for Ifemelu when was back home to Nigeria “she ached with an almost unbearable emotion that she could not name. It was nostalgic and melancholy, a beautiful sadness for the things she had missed and the things she would never know” (Americanah 221)

Sociologist James Jasper described the allegiance to a home as a collective urge; however, it differs between men and women. Women are known for missing home more than men and they even attempt to maintain a connection as often as possible. After coming back home they restore their social networks with friends and neighbors which is their way of maintaining links with their former lives thus regenerating their former selves. (Jasper 237) Ifemelu herself followed the same pattern by reading stories on Facebook of Nigerian returnees who after a long period of time decided that it is time to go back which was reassuring for her because “she wanted to give herself time to be sure. But as the weeks passed, she knew she would never be sure. So she told him that she was moving back home, and she added, “I have to,” (Americanah 3) Ifemelu’s urge to dig up her buried roots is an indication of going back to her origins and here although she spent more than 13 years in America she still fails to call it her *home* because she realizes that she was pretending all these years to have succeeded in building a home in America but later on she realizes that her ‘home’ is where her ‘roots’ are which is Nigeria.

Despite the fact that she doubted her decision of going back home but she recognized of correctness of her decision that other immigrants could not grasp so, she decided that

“she would think of herself as standing valiantly alone, as almost heroic, so as to squash her uncertainty” (3) Ifemelu’s uncertainty to go back home to her “roots” is associated with the American Dream because in her case, the Dream is attained by attaining the American passport and owning a condo and a business nevertheless she decided that it is time to go back home nonetheless she feels ashamed of her decision since no one would accept that after getting her papers she suddenly decides to go back as if this is against all gravity laws. Notwithstanding, returning to one’s home being the physical place where she grew up, is not ultimately a true homecoming since it proves to be a challenging endeavor that only exists in the imagination. (Duyvendak 24) her friend’s reassurance about her decision that “Lagos is now full of American returnees, so you better come back and join them” “This was what she had become, a seeker of signs. Nigerian films were good, therefore her move back home would be good.” (Americanah 6) was not shared by anyone in the novel because her decision to move back to Nigeria was considered as a foolishness and a bad decision which only emphasizes the delusion both immigrants and their social circles believing that, in Ifemelu’s situation, it is like a *Paradise Lost*. Everyone was questioning not only her decision but even state of mind “everyone she had told she was moving back seemed surprised, expecting an explanation, and when she said she was doing it because she wanted to, puzzled lines would appear on foreheads.” (14) This shame of return is in all cycles of immigration since succeeding in making it to America is a monumental accomplishment and deciding to let go of it and move back home is a sterile and unwise decision.

Aunty Uju was the first to oppose Ifemelue’s decision to sell her condo, close her blog and move back to Lagos to work for a magazine that does not pay well even “repeated herself, as though to make Ifemelu see the gravity of her own foolishness.” (6) Other Nigerian immigrants themselves are shocked of Ifemelu’s decision to go back home “You

stay in America fifteen years and you just go back to work?” even her American boyfriend was astonished asking for a reason “he was asking her for a single reason, the cause. But she had not had a bold epiphany and there was no cause; it was simply that layer after layer of discontent had settled in her, and formed a mass that now propelled her” her parents too were questioning her decision “will you be able to cope?” which highlights the concept of ‘home’ for immigrants as if they’ve successfully created a home in America and can safely say they are Americans now which is too perfect to be true because “the suggestion, that she was somehow irrevocably altered by America, had grown thorns on her skin” immigrants only put on layers after layers trying to cover their foreignness which doesn’t necessarily mean they are Americans. “Her parents, too, seemed to think that she might not be able to “cope” with Nigeria”. This inability to cope with Nigeria is quite abnormal since this is here homeland whereas America is a faraway land from home.

This is closely related with the American Dream and the definition of happiness. Since for immigrants America and the Green Card are synonymous with the *Eldorado* and triumphing over poverty and the choice lessness they live in their countries “her mother said there had been no light for two weeks, it seemed suddenly foreign to her, and home itself a distant place. She could no longer remember what it felt like to spend an evening in candlelight” (91) despite these feelings of estrangement with her home, Ifemelu made a heroic decision to go back to Nigeria and start a life there. Adichie is discussing the possibility of returnees’ success in Nigeria by using the financial resources they collected over the years to build a successful life back home. Immigration for her is not necessarily about creating a home in America but to be able to come back triumphant to one’s country. She juxtaposed all immigrants’ perception of home in the novel with that of Ifemelu and Obinze. This latter too succeeded in Nigeria but not abroad “Gabriel was pressing the horn in front of the high black gates of his home. Mohammed, the gateman, wiry in his dirty

white caftan, flung open the gates, and raised a hand in greeting. Obinze looked at the tan colonnaded house. Inside was his furniture imported from Italy” (10) even though he was an immigrant himself believing in the “over there” where money and gold run in the streets but he failed in making a life for himself in England but ironically made it in Lagos and has his own chauffeur and big villa with a gateman. “He had begun, in the past months, to feel bloated from all he had acquired - the family, the houses, the cars, the bank accounts”

Jasmine, too was stunned by Americans’ definition of happiness just like Ifemelu who realized that the well nurtured and well decorated picture immigrants draw about Americans living a dream life is in fact a fallacy and they themselves are unhappy of what they have/haven’t especially in her description of the American family she worked for “Ifemelu watched them, so alike in their looks, and both unhappy people” however, immigrants refusal of the idea of going back can also be traced back to the feelings of shame and guilt because people feel guilty because they are ashamed to have dishonorably fallen short of what they might have hoped for themselves. (Bloom 121) it is the shame of failure along with deficiency and inferiority that pushed Obinze into doing all illegal things just to prove to himself and to others such as his mother and his friends, his relentless effort to conceal his feelings of disappointment which reveal his inadequacy. Obinze and Ifemelu did not escape war zones or were starving in fact they were well fed and well-educated people who had a life back in Nigeria but they were convinced that the real life happens in that land ‘elsewhere’ where the choices are many and where freedom of choosing ones present and future is affordable to anyone supposedly but they seem to ignore the fact that the chances for natives and whites in particular are wider while for immigrants and blacks unfortunately it is not the case:

they would not understand why people like him, who were raised well fed and

watered but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else, eternally convinced that real lives happened in that somewhere else, were now resolved to do dangerous things, illegal things, so as to leave, none of them starving, or raped, or from burned villages, but merely hungry for choice and certainty. (Americanah 166)

Nevertheless, as discussed before, Adichie as well distinguishes between two different types of immigrants, those who stayed and those who went back home. However, Ifemelu's choice to return home is a result of her recognition of her identity within the socio-economic milieu of both Nigeria and America. Although, her decision to return home raised eyebrows and questions by every other character in the novel especially after all the years she spent in America "you stay in America fifteen years and you just go back to work?" and all the success she got by owning her own condo and her success as a Blogger she decides that "her move back home would be good" (6). However, returnees in the novel are portrayed as lost and face considerable challenges coping in their homeland which highlights the reversed assimilation. Since, in the same way they did when they first got to America, they need to find their place in a swiftly growing Nigeria "At first, Lagos assaulted her...and so, she had the dizzying sensation of falling, falling into the new person she had become, falling into the strange familiar. Had it always been like this or had it changed so much in her absence?" this feeling of 'strange familiar' that immigrants have when going back home is quite telling since after all the transformations she went through in America, now Ifemelu is a new person in a supposedly old new home where everything seems strange to her "When she left home, only the wealthy had cell phones...Now, her hair braider had a cell phone, the plantain seller tending a blackened grill had a cell phone" (220) so, the foreignness and the newness of things she felt the first time she went to America are reproduced in her hometown now since when she went to

America, she was evaluating things from a Nigerian perspective and after 13 years in America now she is looking at Nigeria with an American eye. Indeed, Adichie's use of redefined English word by adding *h* at the end of the word *Americanah* highlights not a hyphenated Nigerian-American identity, but a redefined hybrid one that is neither Nigerian nor American "*Americanah!*" Ranyinudo teased her often. "You are looking at things with American eyes. But the problem is that you are not even a real *Americanah*" So, Ifemelu's foreignness is stuck with her wherever she goes only raising questions that we fail to untangle: is Nigeria really her home? And if not where is home for Ifemelu?

### **3.5. Renunciation of Race in *Americanah*:**

Adichie's *Americanah* can be described as an encyclopedia of racism where she unveiled the atrocities and social injustice African-Americans and black immigrants endure in a modern so-called Color-Blind *America*. Through Ifemelu's blog, we got an overview of what is it like to live through the triple struggle of being immigrant, black and female in a white supremacist male dominant xenophobic modern America. Adichie's novel designates the perception of migration and the subsequent endeavors of migrant women, marginalized due to their gender, their race and their foreignness. We sense an increasing self-confidence of women in *Americanah* and the portrayal of their psychological evolution amongst the migrant black community where they take leading roles. The progress of female immigrant fiction questions the flexibility of international and cross-cultural encounters that create and negotiate the new identity for African women. Written from a migrant standpoint, *Americanah* highlights the complex themes of racial identity construction in America along with intra-racial dynamics. (Sackeyfio 8)

Ifemelu, projecting Adichie's own life, proclaimed that in Nigeria, she was not recognized by her skin color and she states frankly "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” (Americanah 152) in this regard, it is quite unusual for a human being made to validate their humanity to white gazes, to be recognized they have to declare and even fight for it. Throughout the novel, Ifemelu tried to undermine this kind of prerequisite of recognition by blacks in America asserting that “Our lives matter!”. This proclamation evokes Cornel West’s remark that “the notion that black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern West” (Brannigan 17)

Through her blog, called *Raceteenth or Curious Observations by a Non-American Black on the Subject of Blackness in America*, Ifemelu even provided black immigrants with a clear description of the race ladder in America urging them to accept the blackness since it is a ready-made attribution for anyone who is not white protestant:

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...and admit it - you say “I’m not black” only because you know black is at the bottom of America’s race ladder...so you’re black, baby. (Americanah 127)

This shame and rejection of being labeled black in America is in fact a predetermined ideology which brings back William Drayton 1836 anti-abolitionist pamphlet where he wrote that ‘personal observation must convince every candid white man, that the negro is constitutionally indolent, voluptuous, and prone to vice” (Flori 80) James Baldwin too, provided us with an extensive yet unfortunate picture of what is it like to be black in America highlighting the disastrous psychological effects of blackness and the aspiration for *whiteness* or the so called “Mongrel complex”:

This means in the case of the American Negro, born in that glittering republic...and in the moment you are born, since you don’t know any better, every stick and stone and every face are white, and since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose that

you are, too. It comes as a great shock around the age of five, or six, or seven to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity has not in its whole system of reality evolved any place for you. (Peck 35)

Baldwin's observations are exhibited clearly in *Americanah* particularly when Ifemelu's cousin Dike went through his first experience of racism at the hands of his white school teacher Haley on a school trip "She gave sunscreen to everyone but she wouldn't give me any. She said I didn't need it... You wanted her to give you the sunscreen, too, right... I just want to be regular" (*Americanah* 105) for a child Dike's age being black in a white community is quite demanding as after realizing his difference of color he stressed the fact that he just wanted to be 'regular' which suggests his eagerness to look like the norm which is 'white' to be like the norm color. Right after this and using her blog as reference, Ifemelu started describing the American society by saying "In America, tribalism is alive and well. There are four kinds—class, ideology, region, and race" in her definition of race, she offered a structure of the American society based on hierarchy "There's a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and American Black is always on the bottom which stresses the concept of race as a defining criterion in America. Baldwin's description of racism in America along with Ifemelu's display how the American society incline into racism without considering the consequences. Because it was left unrestrained, racism takes on a momentum of its own, which only conquer any attempts to a more inclusive comprehensive America. (Charles E. Wilson 1) the American culture favors to categorize based on physical features and culture. The black-white paradigm permits individuals to figure out the complex reality of race in America. Thus, setting the codes for the interaction between blacks and whites. However, the menace is that other marginal

groups such as African, Asians and even immigrants turn out to be disregarded, foreign and invisible because they do not appropriate themselves with this idea of race in America. (Delgado et Stefancic 77)

Despite the fact that white Americans claim that “Race is totally overhyped these days, black people need to get over themselves, it’s all about class now, the haves and the have-nots” this is another statement of the viewpoint of white Americans about race claiming that it is no longer existing since now it is all about class however, in the novel Ifemelu kept providing us with a vivid description of what she endured as a black woman in America especially due to the whites’ claim that race is no longer in their dictionary nor in their lives but when Ifemelu went to a shop to buy a dress, she was helped by a black girl in the shop.

However, the white owner’s questions about who helped her to get the commission was full of indirectness towards the obvious label associated with the lady’s skin color ‘black’ “Why didn’t she just ask ‘Was it the black girl or the white girl?’ Ginika laughed. “Because this is America. You’re supposed to pretend that you don’t notice certain things.” (Americanah 72) Race in America is a controversial issue that Americans are too worried to sound racist and this is a good example where this cashier avoids stating the obvious by coming forward and asking whether it was the black or the white girl pretending no to notice but in fact she is hiding behind her cultural perception of race thus, proclaiming the myth of the color blind America.

Notwithstanding, Ifemelu stated the inferiority that only intensified their *otherness* and that of the black immigrant as well. Ifemelu stressed the fact that pale skin or light skin is a privilege emphasizing the psychological effect this may have on blacks and minorities in general in America “So light skin is valued in the community of American blacks. But everyone pretends this is no longer so. They say the days of the paper-bag test

are gone and let's move forward" (123)" Adiche used Ifemelu's blog to unveil some really intense and ugly truths about racism in America. She even mentioned the paper bag test which is a racist prejudiced pattern inside the African-Americans in the 20th century, where the skin color of a person is equated to a brown paper bag. This type of examination was introduced to govern the rights an individual may have so that pale or light skin people as compared to the paper-bag were granted affiliation rights. The test was related to ideas of beauty, in which some people believed that lighter skin and more European features, in general, were more attractive. So, again people get to define beauty in whatever way they think is suitable so to be beautiful you need a light color and even to get privileges but the darker the skin is, the uglier the person and the less advantages they will get.

In this regard, Frantz Fanon in his book *Black skin, White Masks* provided an extensive psychological account of this point where he stated that black people or people in whom an inferiority complex was deeply rooted define their identity in relation to the metropolitan culture. His civility is closely related to how much cultural principles of the metropolis he has and even defines his level of whiteness. He even attributed the black individual's wearing of white's clothes or speaking their elaborate more civilized language as an exhibition of their inferiority. (Fanon 23) endorsing this view, Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, stated that "advanced, as a suspicion only, that blacks whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time, are inferior to whites in the endowments of body and mind" (Mason 114)

Ifemelu's confusion over the issue of race in America, being a black immigrant, was highlighted by Adichie to portray the forced image of whiteness privilege everywhere ranging from magazines to newspapers and the media in general "it was absurd how women's magazines forced images of small-boned, small-breasted white women on the

rest of the multi-boned, multi-ethnic world of women to emulate” (Americanah 102) the result of such somehow imposed view of privilege of white over black only exaggerates the psychological inferiority of the black female and thus her perception of the definition of beauty being correlated with light skin. Even makeup advices are not available for the dark-skinned woman like Ifemelu which is obvious in her examination of many magazines that give beauty advices to women:

She spread the magazines on the table “Look, all of them are white women. This one is supposed to be Hispanic; we know this because they wrote two Spanish words here, but she looks exactly like this white woman, no difference in her skin tone and hair and features...so three black women in maybe two thousand pages of women’s magazines, and all of them are biracial or racially ambiguous...Not one of them is dark. Not one of them looks like me. (170)

This view evokes Clarks’ doll studies set to study the racial stances and preferences of black children who preferred the white dolls when playing which stresses the damaged psyche and the feelings of inferiority. In other words, these young black children realized the hidden signification linked to color, an innate rule they inherited which states that the color white is appreciated and the color black is debased. (Mason 69) additionally, author Vanessa D. Dickerson, testified to Ifemelu’s above quotation by describing the causes of such an absence of the black female from the ‘catalogue’ of beauty she states that: “the black female body has been constructed as the ugly end of a wearisome Western dialectic: not sacred but profane, not angelic but demonic, not fair lady but ugly darky” (Yancy 169)

Adichie herself acknowledged her unfamiliarity prior to traveling to America stating that “Race doesn’t occur to me”, she even rendered the fact that she had to learn to be black in America. She also admitted to the fact that she recognizes that being black is not a virtuous thing in America to the extent that she repudiated the fact that she is black.

(Sackeyfio 55) so, Ifemelu's experience with race in America ranging between blacks claiming that the color line exists and racism prevails and on the other hand, whites claiming that racism is no more present in American discourse where everyone is the same and that segregation is over but it seems that they live an America different from that of blacks, an uglier and harsher America. Therefore, Ifemelu suggested that "Somebody needs to get the job of deciding who is racist and who isn't. Or maybe it's time to just scrap the word "racist." Find something new. Like Racial Disorder Syndrome. And we could have different categories for sufferers of this syndrome: mild, medium, and acute" (Americanah 186).

Ifemelu's journey and discovery of the truths about America is a bildungsroman portraying the quest for *self* in a turmoiled experiences of otherness. In this regard, Adichie stated that: "for the diaspora as a whole, our common identity isn't based solely on our skin color" (Adichie 2005). In *Americanah* Adichie recognizes the commonality with people of African origins irrespective of their locality, history or cultural particularity. Adichie emphasized this identification in an interview with Hope Reese where she stated that:

I Became Black, looking back, especially my first year in U.S., my insistence on being Nigerian, or even African, was, in many ways, my way of avoiding blackness. It's also my acknowledgement of American racism, which is to say that if blackness were benign, I would not have been running away from it. (Sackeyfio 60)

This Pan-African identification is stated by Ifemelu when in the company of the African braiders "Halima smiled at Ifemelu a smile that, in its warm knowingness, said welcome to a fellow African; she would not smile at an American in the same way." In this saloon Ifemelu enjoyed the true sense of Pan-Africanism with her fellow Africans where they share not only blackness but also their Africanness as an attribution of community

and commonality “They looked at Ifemelu for her agreement, her approval. They expected it, in this shared space of their Africanness” (Americanah 58)

**Conclusion:**

In *Jasmine* and *Americanah*, the American Dream emerges as a tantalizing yet elusive concept. While it offers the promise of a better life, it also exposes the underlying inequalities, disillusionment, and the challenges of belonging. Jasmine's quest for home and identity is intertwined with her pursuit of the American Dream, but ultimately, she finds solace and belonging in unexpected places. Ifemelu's journey, marked by both the allure and the disillusionment of the American Dream, highlights the complexities of race, identity, and the cost of belonging.

We investigated both novels' reflections on the American Dream, which may inspire hope and aspirations, however, it can also be fraught with challenges and contradictions. We followed both protagonists journey into the promise of opportunity and self-reinvention of the American Dream which is also a source of disillusionment and disappointment. These novels provide valuable insights into the enduring allure and the enduring challenges of this idealized vision. We then delved into the psychological implications of Jasmine and Ifemelu's belief in the American Dream prior to the journey and witnessing their discovered mirage falling apart unveiling an uglier and harsher reality that awaited characters who had clung to the anticipation of a better life in America.

Finally, we highlighted Jasmine's personal odyssey where she redefines home as America by juxtaposing her attitude with Ifemelu's who discovered the duality of the concept of home. In this section we explored the costs immigrants pay for their quest for assimilation and the intricate emotions surrounding the possibility of returning *home*, a

place that may no longer feel familiar. The chapter concluded with an investigation of Ifemelu's experience with racism in an America where color defines the complex nature of immigrants and natives through which Adichie compels us to confront the complexities of navigating identity in a globalized world.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Aesthetics of Immigration

### Introduction:

In this last chapter, we will highlight Mukherjee and Adichie's exploration of identity, immigration, through their talent as novelists and story-tellers. In the first part, we examined how both novels reflect the authors' own experiences navigating the world as an Indian or Nigerian woman respectively. We will delve into the potential autobiographical fundamentals intertwined into both novels, examining how both writers' personal journey might enlighten the journey of Jasmine and Ifemelu and the broader themes of the novel. Through a deeper analysis of the cultural insights, and emotional landscapes, we can expose the ways in which the authors used their own experiences to outline the fictional world of *Jasmine* and *Americanah*.

We also investigate the narrative techniques used both writers to decolonize the post-colonial narrative from shackles of the Metropolitan dominant discourse. We also examine the writers' talent of narration by incorporating enriching narratology methods that reflect the immigrant's journey with its unpredictability and turn overs. In addition to this, we will highlight the fact that both writers are committed writers ready to unveil the atrocities and psychological endeavors of their female characters in their search for a better life through their realistic narration of events that make their stories and their characters reliable and plausible.

### 4.1. Reflections of Adichie's Self in *Americanah*:

Adichie's life is mirrored in *Americanah*'s Ifemelu. Adichie herself traveled from Nigeria at age 19 to study in America. Many aspects of Adichie's life were present in her novel *Americanah* through the perspective of her protagonist Ifemelu. This latter's blog which led to her fame receiving invitations to speak in different places in different occasions about the issue of race is perfectly mirrored in Adichie's life who was

considered as an important figure and spokeswoman mid African writers. Just like Ifemelu who migrated to America on a scholarship to carry on her studies “I’m a communications major, so anything in communications, the media.” (Americanah 123), Adichie’s education too started with a grant to study communications at Drexel University and she completed her BA in 2001 and got her diploma from Eastern Connecticut University.

Unlike Mukherjee’s Jasmine, who left primary school and did not carry on her studies, Adichie’s Ifemelu and even Obinze were well educated characters who traveled abroad on a scholarship to finish studies. In this regard, Adichie is considered among the most celebrated Nigerian young novelists for her authentic and original novels. For portraying characters who were not starving or escaping wars and rape, an American professor devalued Adichie’s characters as being "not authentically African," since they "drove cars" and "were not starving." (THE ARTISTS: : THE 100 LEADING GLOBAL THINKERS OF 2013 121) In *Americanah*, her third novel, she portrayed the story of Ifemelu, a Nigerian woman just like herself, who is in a constant definition of her sense of home and identity due to the fact of being black in America. To even validate the autobiographical account of the novel, Adichie gave Ifemelu her second name when she used the social security card of a resident in the US to find a job “she was looking again at the Social Security card and driver’s license that belonged to Ngozi Okonkwo” (Americanah 68) which highlights Adichie’s mirroring of her own life incarnated in the life of the fictional character of Ifemelu. Through Ifemelu’s blog, Adichie investigates immigrants’ remarks and perception of race in America; in this regard, Miriam Pahl remarks that “The blog Adichie creates for Ifemelu inside the novel exhibits a strong political commitment. It negotiates the hierarchization of cultures and criticizes white-centeredness of the US environment depicted in the novel, and chronicles everyday incidents of racism” (Pahl 56)

This commitment is exhibited in Adichie’s constant indictments of the racial prejudice

she came in terms with when she first arrived to the US through the many interviews, she had both in America and elsewhere. Both herself and her protagonist share the same view about their newly discovered identification as being black in America “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” (168) This declaration is frequently articulated in her interviews where she states that the minute she sets a foot in Nigeria or America the black identification is activated or deactivated accordingly “Race doesn’t really work here. I feel like I got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black.” (276 ) even her advices for her fellow blacks are based on her own experience and that of Ifemelu through the blog she created to renunciate and to prepare them to the atrocities of this designation “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” (127) this view was stated literarily in an interview she had with Hope Reese where she stated that “Looking back, especially my first year in U.S., my insistence on being Nigerian, or even African, was, in many ways, my way of avoiding blackness. It’s also my acknowledgement of American racism, which is to say that if blackness were benign, I would not have been running away from it” (Storr 670)

In an interview with Adichie, she explained her choice of the title *Americanah* as her designation of immigrants who go to America then come back to Nigeria full of affectations speaking an American accent and wearing out of the ordinary styles. She states that the word is not pejorative but used to mock these returnees. The word *Americanah* is not a word in the dictionary which means no one will be able to translate it so the title will be the same in all languages. Ifemelu too is a returnee but, in Adichie’s words, is not fully *Americanah* especially that she gave-up faking an accent. America is

for Adichie as for her characters, is an idea because it represents a dream place where magical things happen.

Another important concept for Adichie and Ifemelu is what and where home is and whether when you leave home you can come back. She came to realize that home often means more than one place, for Ifemelu home is Nigeria despite the fact that it changed considerably but she also has changed. For Adichie, she stayed away from Nigeria more than four years however, just like Ifemelu she felt the deep change both in Nigeria and herself since she became a different kind of person. Home for Adichie is where her heart has its roots and this is Nigeria for her. When she got back to Nigeria, Ifemelu was complaining about the heat that she felt unfamiliar to but the fact that she has a blue passport in her bag was comforting for her. Adichie herself admitted to this idea, stating that although she considers Nigeria to be her home however, she likes being able to leave Nigeria toward America from time to time making America another home for her.

In Nigeria, Adichie was identified as Igbo and Christian but in the US, she is someone else. Due to the fact that most novels about immigration were written by Westerners who misrepresented and overgeneralized the immigrant character as being starving, uneducated and unskilled, Adiche herself and her protagonist Ifemelu, represent a less discovered section of African immigrants, those who escape choice lessness, those who are well educated but see real life in that 'over there' where they want to thrive and prosper. In this regard, Adichie stated "I wanted to write the immigration story that I know personally, a story of people who dream more, middle-class people who are not hungry, who have jobs but they want to leave believing in an America where magical things happen". (Adichie)

Another related aspect to race, is Adichie's reaction to jokes. In her interviews, she admitted to the fact that despite watching American TV and reading book and novels about America, she felt that she was not quite ready and even ignorant about certain American

cultural principles. In her novel too, Ifemelu gave an advice to her fellow black immigrants to feel angry when someone says a joke about ‘tar-baby’ or ‘watermelon’ which were vague and absurd to her. Adichie too expressed this lack of acquaintance with America’s concept of race and its relation to culture when she first came to the US. She even thought that all blacks in America live like the Cosby Show but as a shock to her as for Ifemelu to realize the lack of consensus between expectation and reality.

Adichie has as well defied predetermined concepts of gender roles. She emphasized the submissive identities associated with girls therefore she wanted to change some prejudices associated with the male/female gender role by portraying a female protagonist who made it to the US and even succeeded in doing well there and coming back triumphant carrying a blue American passport in her bag. On the other hand, she portrayed Obinze as a man who lived in invisibility in London due to his illegality and winding up deported thus failing as a man to create a life abroad. This idea intensifies Adichie’s portrayal of gender roles and their impact in shaping the identification and classification of the male/female dichotomy. It is also worth noting that Adichie’s use of *hair* in her novel clarifies the assumptions American society attribute to ‘hair’. For her, hair is a race metaphor:

When you do have natural Negro hair, people think you “did” something to your hair. Actually, the folk with the Afros and dreads are the ones who haven’t “done” anything to their hair...I have natural kinky hair. Worn in cornrows, Afros, braids. No, it’s not political. No, I am not an artist or poet or singer. Not an earth mother either. I just don’t want relaxers in my hair (171 )

It is so obvious now that hair in the novel was used as a metaphor and as a cultural marker that define how blacks see themselves and how others think having a natural hair is ‘unprofessional’ when it is just their God given hair so looking for acceptance in the

American society led to the creation of some beliefs that might ruin the blacks' self-perception which pushed many to create a code for what is acceptable and what is not and Ifemelu's remark about having a kinky hair that doesn't look pro and in order to look pro and be accepted in job interviews she had to have straight hair. Adiche/Ifemelu both agree on the fact that if Michelle Obama had her god given hair Obama would never win the elections which correlates with the idea of looking acceptable in Americans' eyes and acceptance code.

#### **4.2. Rooting fact into fiction: Autobiography in *Jasmine*:**

Mukherjee, in one of the many dialogues she had, stated that "Jasmine contains the shape of my life and my desires" declaring the obvious resemblance with her story's protagonist, with whom she shares living amid two opposed lives. Jasmine, the village girl exhibited a strong will and determination in making things work and by trying all means to carve a niche in the American celebrated Melting Pot which is echoed in Mukherjee's life when she stated that she does believe in personal motivation just "like Jasmine I want to reposition the stars. At the same time, I'm aware of a larger design" and she added that like Jasmine, she wants to discover the purpose of both her life and all the events taking place. At the beginning of the novel, Jasmine recounts how she got a star-shaped scar on her forehead believing it to be a third eye of wisdom "A twig sticking out of the bundle of firewood I'd scavenged punched a star-shaped wound into my forehead" (Jasmine 1) which in India's traditions is a flaw hindering the prospects of marriage for her and thus demoting Jasmine's value as a bride "Now your face is scarred for life! How will the family ever find you a husband?" (2) Most strikingly, Mukherjee as well had a scar on her forehead, which she got when she was three as she fell on the door knob and injured her head. Her parents did not stitch the wound, an event she later reminisce about in her biography as she questions the devaluation of woman in India where "physical

imperfection is to be unmarriageable” (Mukherjee 37)

When she first traveled to America to study, Mukherjee declared that due to her ‘enthusiasm and eagerness’ she could not stay in India because, just like Jasmine, her willingness made her “curious about the rest of the world. I knew from the moment I got here that I wanted to stay...I preferred unpredictability to a privileged but predictable life” which is demonstrated in her deliberate delinquency in treating the immigrant journey who never talked about the possibility of going back home to India which is manifested in her statement that “*we*’re both a long way from home, aren’t *we*? What’ll *we* do? there’s no going back, is there?” (103) we can even attribute *we* to Jasmine and Mukherjee which can be justified based on the fact that both women did not to keep *roots* alive but instead wanted to be Americans and identifies as such without the branded hyphenated identity featuring all cycles of immigration to America and even contesting the futility of some Indian beliefs "in Calcutta, we are rarely allowed to escape what our hands reveal us to be" (Blaise et Mukherjee 219) which in corroborated in *Jasmine* when “an astrologer...foretold my widowhood and exile” but just like Mukherjee, Jasmine challenged this idea by stating that ““You’re a crazy old man. You don’t know what my future holds!” (Jasmine 1)

In her immigration narratives, she portrays wanderers endeavoring amongst two worlds identified by their discrepancy but eventually settling in whichever. Jasmine like all Mukherjee’s immigrant characters is in America to stay, she wanted to ‘walk and talk and dress American’ in her attempt to cover for her foreigners and even dating white Americans trying to conceal her Indianness underneath the shadow of their Americanness which is quite obvious in Mukherjee’s life when she decided to go against all her traditions and Brahmin teachings and married herself to a white Canadian-American. In this regard, Mukherjee described the immigrant character in her novels as "wherever I

travel in the very Old World, I find 'Americans' in the making, whether or not they ever make it to these shores...dreamers and conquerors, not afraid of transforming themselves, not afraid of abandoning some of their principles along the way" (Drake 61)

Just like Jasmine, while in the US, Mukherjee's family arranged her marriage with an Indian wealthy man in Calcutta but she broke all Indian traditional laws and married a white young Canadian writer Clark Blaise and announced her marriage via a telegram to her parents to notify them of the leap she had taken. Mukherjee used this event in *Jasmine* when "Dida announced that she had finally located a passable groom willing to take me off their hands...who did I think I was to turn down a once-in-a-lifetime bridegroom?" (Jasmine 29) but she decided to live with a white American man from Iowa and were planning a marriage "I am carrying Bud Ripplemeyer's baby. He wants me to marry him before the baby is born. He wants to be able to say, Bud and Jane Ripplemeyer proudly announce" (Jasmine 6)

Mukherjee, in this regard, declared that her marriage with Carl Blaise facilitated her feelings of 'belonging' in America and even strengthened her *roots*:

Mine is a clear-eyed but definite love of America. I'm aware of the brutalities, the violences here, but in the long run my characters are survivors; they've been helped, as I have, by good strong people of conviction. Like Jasmine, I feel there are people born to be Americans. By American I mean an intensity of spirit and a quality of desire. I feel American in a very fundamental way, whether Americans see me that way or not". (Mukherjee 34-36)

Mukherjee's reference to the help she got from people of conviction, resonates with what happened to Jasmine after the rape event where she met Lillian Gordon, the first white American woman she came across, which is a clear denunciation of the anti-immigration sentiment that Americans hold towards immigrants. Mukherjee here is

suggesting that for a successful integration into the American culture natives play a part as facilitators for a successful transition “she wasn’t a missionary dispensing new visions and stamping out the old; she was a facilitator who made possible the lives of absolute ordinariness that we ached for”

However, it appeared that Mukherjee was not working on safeguarding her cultural ties and even sought eagerly to replace her Indianness with a deeply rooted Americanness. In this regard, she acclaimed cultural dislocation and challenged Indianness for being "a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration." So, the expected reinforcement of her Indian individuality in opposition to the dominant American white culture, is substituted by a sense of rejection. Which is portrayed by Jasmine’s rejection and even abhorrence of her life Flushing describing it as “fake Indianness” while expressing her eagerness for what lies behind the “brick wall topped with barbered wire” representing Americanness. (Drake 65)

Mukherjee narrates events based on her own first-hand immigration familiarity to describe the changing American landscape. In *Jasmine*, as is the case with her other works, she identifies herself and her characters as Americans, opposing the post-colonial hyphenated identity. Mukherjee's novels, explore the intricacies of the journey immigrants embark on, underscoring the hardships to build a new life and to adjust to an alien and even hostile culture. In her novels, characters are in a constant quest for a cultural self in an America where physical borders are being blurred while cultural ones are being fortified creating hurdles facing immigrants’ search for belonging and home. A home where they are in a pursuit of self-discovery in relation to new memberships to their new lives.

Previous immigration novels portrayed men who encounter displacement and alienation. However, Mukherjee brought to light a less discovered area where women are a

dual quest, the search for the female identity and the search for recognition as a traumatized immigrant stranger. Jyoti, the Punjabi village girl, followed her husband's Dream and ambition, who renamed as Jasmine, a dream of heading for America, a journey that evoke happiness and opportunities.

In order to fulfil this dream, Jasmine went against all Indian traditional principles by defying the restraints of social group, gender and household. Just like the author herself, Jasmine proved to be a survivor after many near death situation during her journey to America and when she was raped, and a fighter for recognition as an American but also, she proved to be an adaptor by winning her battles and curving a niche on a hostile land. (Goswami 650)

In *Jasmine*, Mukherjee talked about her belief in incarnations in many instances “theoretically I believe in reincarnation...this can't be new or bizarre to you. Don't you Hindus keep revisiting the world? I tell her that yes, I am sure that I have been reborn several times, and that yes, some lives I can recall vividly” (Jasmine 80) this Hindu belief was even justified in an interview where she admitted that:

I was born into a Hindu Bengali Brahmin family which means that I have a different sense of self, of existence, and of mortality than do writers like Malamud. I believe that our souls can be reborn in another body, so the perspective I have about a single character's life is different from that of an American writer who believes that he only has one life. As a Hindu...I believe in the existence of alternate realities, and this belief makes itself evident in my fiction” (B. Carb et Mukherjee 651)

Mukherjee tried to redesign the melting pot theory of multiculturalism, bringing a new transformed perspective to debate her characters' sense of integration. This intersection where cultural representations crisscross, the multicultural hybrid construction plays a significant role in redefining a coexistence between the immigrants' identity and that of

the dominant culture. (Gabriel 92)

Therefore, Mukherjee was not concerned about integration instead, she intended for a total deconstruction of the existing borders between the immigrants coming from the periphery and the hegemony of America. In her novels, Mukherjee presented to us female immigrants, like herself, who want to break from the clasps of a traditional community. She rejected native cultural allegiance to one's home nevertheless, she invigorated the need for a successful assimilation in the host country thus, and in Jasmine's words, she wants her characters to follow her path "cut off from the past" but at the same time "breaking into the future". (Goswami 653)

#### **4.3. Counter Discourse Strategies in *Americanah* and *Jasmine*:**

It should be noted that the postcolonial subject is in a constant cultural and psychological struggle. This struggle is in fact the outcome of his quest to conform to his native culture inherent from his ancestors and a Western culture transmitted from the colonizer. The language of the postcolonial writer however, can be a terrain of resistance as it be an exhibition of mimicry. Unlike Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, Adichie's novels are a form of writing her nation where she portrays the vividness and richness of a form of writings, that translates an African collective consciousness. Through her literary production, she creates an African voice in English through her constant use of Igbo untranslated expressions. From the beginning of *Americanah*, Adichie tried to highlight her Igbo context by using untranslated expressions which her own way, like her predecessor Achebe, to create an original linguistic form that is unorthodox and does not conform to the norm by introducing Igbo expressions without providing any translation.

Controlling the language is a defining criterion of colonial oppression which establishes it's the metropolitan language as the norm while downgrading all colonized languages as inferior. In response to this practice, the 'subaltern' endorsed different

procedures and one of the is the appropriation and re-formation of the language of the metropolitan by reshaping the language to new conventions which is considered as a counter discourse. In this regard, Homi Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture*, stressed the effect mimicry and mockery, where the remodeling of language is actually a construction of a writing double. This incorporation formed by the inconsistency of mimicry *almost the same but not quite* turns out to be altered into an indecision which marks the colonial subject as a partial presence. (Bhabha 86)

However, using appropriation as counter discourse method is making the language bear the burden of the subaltern's cultural experience, in other words, as Raja Rao stated 'to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own'. Post-colonial writers all face a similar challenge. Their work grapples with a conflict between two forces. One force is rejecting the dominant, "proper" English language imposed by colonialism. The other force is adapting that same English to their own voice, incorporating local languages and ways of speaking. This creates a constant tension in their writing. They struggle between rejecting the colonial voice and using the language to express their own identity and experiences. The most important act of appropriation in post-colonial writing is the act of writing itself. By taking control of the written word, which held power under colonialism, post-colonial writers challenge their marginalized position. They blend (make hybrid) and combine (make syncretic) different elements, creating new literary and cultural identities. This writing comes from a perspective of being "the Other," the different or excluded. These texts argue that experiences come from a complex mix of influences, not just the dominant center. However, claiming this voice involves a struggle. Post-colonial writers need to take charge of the writing process itself, "re-placing" themselves within the literary world. (Ashcroft, Gareth et Tiffin 77)

However, it should be noted that new writing about migration experience doesn't

appear out of thin air. Authors are always influenced by the works that came before them. Literary critic Kenneth Harrow suggests that change in literature relies on existing texts and interpretations. There needs to be a "conversation" between writers and readers of the past to create something new. Following this idea, we can see that contemporary African novels about dislocation relate directly to earlier works of literature. Therefore, reading from an Afropolitan viewpoint allows us to find connections between seemingly different stories of migration, even if they come from very different backgrounds. In this regard, Taiye Selasi defines Afropolitanism through three key elements: language, blending of cultures (cultural hybridity), and belonging to multiple countries. In fact, she considers cultural hybridity as the very foundation of what it means to be Afropolitan. The above discussed point also acknowledges a potential criticism of Afropolitanism - that it might seem elitist. However, Chielozone Eze reinforces Selasi's ideas by arguing that identity is no longer defined solely by where you're from, your ancestry, or a single culture seen in opposition to others. Instead, identity is now about the connections we forge.

To clarify the matter more, Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that language and culture are deeply intertwined. A culture is practically defined by the language it uses to develop, grow, express itself, and pass knowledge down through generations. Ngũgĩ sees the imposition of a colonial language as a traumatic form of cultural alienation. He argues that forcing a community to abandon their language and adopt the colonizer's tongue is a core tactic of colonial control. This "domination of language" aims to control the colonized people's way of thinking (their "mental universe"). The new language can't truly represent the colonized people's experiences or culture. It's a product of a different reality and can never accurately reflect the "real life" of the African community. Ngũgĩ suggests that being forced to think in this "alien idiom" severs the African child from their heritage. Their thoughts become shaped by a foreign language, distancing them from their

own culture.

There's a growing excitement about teaching postcolonial literature. However, some teachers and critics are worried about potential biases. Due to the rapid formation of a postcolonial canon there's a concern that the list of "important" postcolonial works might have been established too quickly, potentially excluding diverse voices. In addition to this, the limited access points relying heavily on specific publishers and anthologies to teach this literature can restrict the range of voices students encounter. This can reinforce the same biases some are trying to challenge. (Innes 198)

The practice of employing native words, helps to emphasize the complexity and transcendence of the native language and culture with reference to its oral tradition of transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. Therefore, Adichie produced a third voice through which she blended the native and the Western verbal and cultural repertoires; which provides us with an English syntax mixed with an African expression. This act of counter discourse is in fact an act of resistance to the long-held belief in the superiority of the English language and the primitivity of the African language and culture which enfeebles the authority of the western narrative. By adopting a western language in writing her novels, Adiche is in fact fashioning a distinct affiliation with language which disrupts the metropolitan domination of discourse and prepare for the emergence of a distinct and rich tradition that was long believed to be inferior.

Adichie, just like Achebe, is among the few post-colonial authors who succeeded in using the power of the word as a counter narrative however, the use of the English language to communicate the fallacies about Africans and immigrants in particular is only for the sole purpose of access to worldwide readership but she dismantled the discourse of power and replaced it with the discourse of the *Other*. Adiche succeeded in fashioning a new form of writing that fills "the silent void of non-communication between the West and

the non-West with voices from the outside proclaiming their presence as other" (Acharya et Buzan 290).

However, Adichie did more than that, since she also granted the African female characters a new position from minor, unimportant personas to main roles by writing about female protagonists who are oppressed, maltreated, and subjugated by the men in their lives. This recurrent depiction of female characters can draw an erroneous picture about the African woman being victimized and oppressed which may suggest an inferior depiction to outsiders about them. This view is also present in the movie industry in Africa representing females in their films through patronizing images. Adichie tried to pinpoint this image in *Americanah* "A small TV mounted on a corner of the wall, the volume a little too loud, was showing a Nigerian film: a man beating his wife, the wife cowering and shouting" (*Americanah* 10) This negative representation is later juxtaposed with Ifemelu's character by highlighting the radical transformation she has been through and her metamorphosis into a grown up lady taking milestone decisions about coming to the US and going back home in addition to the fact that she succeeded in becoming recognized and to owning her own condo despite the harsh economy in America. Therefore, Adichie's novel offers an alternative narrative about African women by displaying their individuality and complexity which is an influential technique to alter the poor societal viewpoint about gender roles and refining females' perception of themselves and their value. (AHUMIBE 51)

Adichie's counter discourse technique is portrayed vastly in *Americanah* where she tried to highlight the individuality and complexity of the Igbo language through the use of simple statements "*O na-eji gi ka akwa,*" Auntie Uju said, her tone charged with admiration." (*Americanah* 126) "But what Auntie Uju was saying was *o nwuchagokwa,* Dike *anwuchagokwa*" (210) she also exhibited the richness of orality and the proverbs

produced by Igbo people to describe a wide array of topics. In page 34, Ifemelu started a proverb competition with Obinze which is Adichie's counter narrative method "*Ama m atu inu. I even know proverbs.*" (34) however she sometimes integrates the English translation to reach out to wider readership especially the American on "*Akota ife ka ubi, e lee oba. If something bigger than the farm is dug up, the barn is sold*" (34) then the dialogue goes on with a variety of topics these proverbs can cover which is somehow her way of commemoration the late Achebe who also in his works, *Things Fall Apart* in particular, tried to integrate the variety of possibilities and repertoires the Igbo language can cover which invoke Ifemelu's proverb "*Acho afu adi ako n'akpa dibia. The medicine man's bag has all kinds of things.*" Which is Adichie's way of using the metaphorical to convey the literal about her native's tongue being like that of the medicine man's bag, full of potential and possibilities. Adichie's novel *Americanah* is a rich and complex story that defies easy translation. It highlights the many languages and cultural codes that influence the love story between Ifemelu and Obinze, as well as their deep connection to their Nigerian homeland. The novel explores the challenges of navigating new cultures and languages during migration. Both Ifemelu and Obinze can achieve a sense of belonging where they don't need to suppress their identities. They can move freely between different social and linguistic environments. For example, Ifemelu gains more security (both physical and in terms of language) once she acquires legal immigration status and we can see this also in Adichie's choice of the title which is a Nigerian word that denotes a person who migrates to the US then came back with different habits, style and even identity. Her choice of an untranslatable title that, in her own words, will be the same in all languages which is a clear denunciation and expresses her wish to break off the linguistic shackles that for so long dominated the African linguistic discourse. In an interview with Adichie, she stressed the peculiarity of the English she speaks and uses in her works:

Sometimes we talk about English in Africa as if Africans have no agency, as if there is not a distinct form of English spoken in Anglophone African countries. I was educated in it; I spoke it at the same time as I spoke Igbo. My English-speaking is rooted in a Nigerian experience and not in a British or American or Australian one. I have taken ownership of English. (Ross 112)

Adichie's counter discourse technique is evident in the novel's ending. After making it to the US and becoming successful there, Ifemelu decided against all odds to go back home and deciding that it is high time she digs up her roots. However, Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is quite the extreme different case when compared to *Americanah*. Mukherjee was criticized in this regard by many scholars, especially those of Indian origins, she was criticized for her alleged political and ideological flaws, particularly in when it comes to postcolonial theory. Unlike Adichie, Mukherjee was born into a class that did not live in its native language. She always stressed the fact that she was born into a city that feared its future training her for emigration. Which intensifies her constant use of the English language as her main discourse. She always states her not only dislocation but deracialization by overlooking her Indian origin "I am an American. I am an American writer, in the American mainstream, trying to extend it. This is a vitally important statement for me. I am not an Indian writer, not an expatriate. I am an immigrant; my investment is in the American reality, not the Indian." (Sternburg 105) This strong denunciation of her Indian heritage is quite obvious in *Jasmine* who obliterated any possibility or potential of going back home to India which was highly illuminated by her oblivious memory of her home and family whereby she never mentions them after migrating to the US.

All in all, we need to illuminate the fact that there are two main views on the goals of post-colonial studies, one perspective of radical decolonization which argues that post-

colonial studies should aim for complete liberation from colonialism, both in how societies function politically and how people think psychologically. It emphasizes reviving and reclaiming pre-colonial cultures. The second view on the other hand, called for a continuing colonial influence arguing that complete decolonization is impossible because of globalization, the "West" still wielding power over the "Rest" of the world, highlighting the ongoing effects of colonialism.

#### **4.4. Beyond the Plot: Exploring the Narrative Craft in *Jasmine* and *Americanah***

The postcolonial immigrant's life is full of inconsistencies which may result from the alternation between America and their homeland culture. The female character in particular is portrayed as struggling through the variety of gender and social roles ascribed to her by her homeland and the host society. Writers like Bharati Mukherjee and Adichie through their novels which are the basis of this study, have sought to capture their journey to America where they have to negotiate their identity and that of America while redefining the concept of *home* along the way. In this part of the dissertation, we will try highlight the uniqueness of their narration of the events the protagonists have to endure where they emphasized the traumatic state of mind and the unexpectedness and the constant plot twists of the events leading up to the end of their journey.

*Jasmine*, for instance, is thought to be an experimental novel since its narration is not reflective, Jasmine being the narrator of the story herself recounts what she has been through in her illegal journey to America using the present which creates her instantaneous perception of the events. Also, Jasmine's narration of the events is quite rich since she recounts through a multicultural perspective from India to America and even the variety of standpoints about the different American states thus the variety of cultural views she endorsed along the way. This emphasis on the journey brings about the brief glimpses of Jasmine's past, which highlights the fact that once the immigration journey begins,

immigrant characters' lives comprise an elaboration of events however, this type of novel seems to have no clear anticipated end in the horizon, particularly for female characters. This open-end technique of narration is in fact Mukherjee's way of putting her readers in her characters shoes thus living through their traumas, anticipations and doubts of both the current time and the future. (Maxey 54)

However, in *Jasmine*, Mukherjee employed cinematic techniques such as: montage, jump-cuts and cross-cutting which only highlight the correlation between cinematography and story-telling invoking the vibrancy and reverberant experiences Jasmine went through in her journey and reliving her past experience through the present. In an interview with Mukherjee, she highlighted this reference to cinema which adorn her novels "I expect the scene to be compelling enough so that even if the specific reference is not accessible to a reader...the intention...will be clear and...if you get it...then it's just more nuanced." (Mukherjee 59) In this regard, Jasmine narrates the events using the first-person which concentrates on her interior monologues thus allows us readers to infiltrate her feelings and views of the world. We are allowed through her imaginative narration to witness her change of perspective and view about gender roles and dislocation traumas.

Mukherjee's shift of time and her irrespective narration of events without following the chronological order, is all over the novel. Starting from the very first pages we live through her present "I am twenty-four now...I know what I don't want to become" (Jasmine 2) after that and in page 11, we are brought back to her memories and life in India "we had no dentist in Hasnapur. For a long time we had no doctors either" (11) then back to the present tense "my third eye glows, a spotlight trained on lives to come" (12) furthermore, and in order to highlight her integration of cinematic techniques, Mukherjee takes us way back to the very far past when Jasmine was born "in a makeshift birthing hut in Hasnapur, Jullundhar District, Punjab, India, I was born the year the harvest was so

good that even my father, the reluctant tiller of thirty acres, had grain to hoard for drought”  
(24)

This technique of flash-backs and also known as *prolepsis* is quite prevalent in *Jasmine*, defined as a technique in which “is a narration of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been mentioned” an *analepsis* on the other hand, “a narration of a story-event at a point in the text after later events have been told. The narration returns, as it were, to a past point in the story” (Rimmon-Kenan 48) Jasmine here being the narrator of her story, takes us in her journey into the future of the story then back moving back and forth in the span of time of the story. Analepses in this context, supply former information either about the character, event, or story-line cited at that particular point in the text. Analepses can also invoke a past experience that happened after the opening point of the narrative but is recounted for the first time at an event in the text ahead of the place where it is supposed to be. This kind of analepses is employed to bridge the gap formed before.  
(49)

However, through these techniques of narration, Mukherjee is trying to illustrate a rather problematic concept of identity formation where Jasmine is portrayed as raising against the predominant male Indian society, thus invoking her conflicting Otherness being a female, illegal immigrant and foreigner in America in her constant redefinition of self and Other. *Jasmine* is, therefore, a novel of feminine identity construction written in the English literary tradition. Mukherjee’s vivid and enriching counter-narrative techniques present *Jasmine* as a story told from the perspective of the outsider within the dominant culture. However, *Jasmine* exposed through her resistance and denunciation of the Anglophone incapacity to comprehend and narrate her story.

Mukherjee portrayed Jasmine’s multifaceted individual and cultural negotiations of Indian women immigrants who endure variety of psychological tensions. Through her

distinctive cinematic narration, she presented these wanderers across borders being trapped amid their reminiscences of India and the promises of the American Dream, they face the ultimate exigence to adjust to their distressing transformation. These adaptation techniques become available to these immigrants as long as possible they detach themselves from their longing and embark on journeys of exploration. (Nelson 12) In Mukherjee's words describing her characters' perspective she claimed "Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world. Though the characters in these stories are or were 'Indian', I see most of these as stories of broken identities and discarded languages and the will to bond oneself to a new community against the ever-present fear of failure and betrayal". (Katrak 5)

Adichie on the other hand, structure her novel *Americanah* on seven-parts and 55 chapters, alternating in her narration between a variety of settings and characters creating an energetic and appealing novel. The story is told in the third-person omniscient point of view thus, providing us with a flexibility of perspective which allows the narrator alternate between characters' perceptions, affording a holistic comprehension of the story's characters and their drives. In her description of characters and events, Adichie moved back and forth between the past and present portraying the story's two protagonists, Ifemelu and Obinze. Ifemelu is the dominant narrator since the events are told regularly through her narrative voice. Her blog too played an important part in bringing her first-person perspective into the narration thus helping the reader to learn about her actions, observations, thoughts, and dialogue; the blog also helps us to witness Ifemelu's psychological and cultural metamorphosis. Over the duration of three decades, the story recounts the journey of two young Nigerian immigrants and took place in three different countries: Nigeria, America, and England. However, only until the last chapters that the paths of Ifemelu and Obinze crisscross while they work on their relationship back in

Africa.

The novel starts in the middle of narration where Ifemelu is already in Princeton providing us with a vivid description of the place while getting ready to go to Trenton where she braids her hair. In this part of the novel, she had already made up her mind and was ready to travel back home to Nigeria. In chapter two however, narration is dislocated just like Ifemelu herself to Nigeria where Adichie introduces Obinze who is now married and living a glamorous wealthy life with his wife and daughter. Then again in chapter 3 we are back in America but in page 41 we are being taken on a long far away past journey to Ifemelu's childhood in Nsukka, Nigeria and from that point on we witness Ifemelu's growing up story in her hometown. This shift of narration and constant traveling back and forth in time is quite similar to Mukherjee's techniques discussed above. However, Adichie's way of narration is more organized and constantly alternating between Ifemelu's and Obinze's story eventually crossing paths at the end an element which is absent in *Jasmine* where we witnessed the events from Jasmine's unilateral first-person perspective.

In her narration of the events, Adichie alternated between two narrative techniques: *telling, showing*. 'Telling' is when the narrator or narrative voice recounts the events by examination or annotation on the characters' statements and actions. An example of this is when Ifemelu was in the saloon "That Nigerian girl, she feels very important because of Princeton. Look at her food bar, she does not eat real food anymore'. *They would laugh with derision, but only a mild derision, because she was still their African sister, even if she had briefly lost her way*" (Americanah 58) Adichie here is using the telling technique where she is commenting on an unsaid statement about Ifemelu's overrated behavior when she refused to eat with the braiders. Furthermore, when describing Ifemelu's disappointment of America, Adichie used 'telling' to inform us of how flabbergasted she was of the fallacy of the American Dream and the Utopian view she had prior to coming to

the US:

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. She was startled, most of all, by the teenage boy in a baseball cap standing near a brick wall, face down, body leaning forward, hands between his legs...I didn't know people do things like this in America. (59)

However, Adichie used the 'showing' technique where the narrator only presents the words and gestures of the characters providing no elucidation on their actions' motivations. Elsewhere in her novel, she used this technique to give enough space to the readers to make their own judgment and comments on what is happening "Dike, I *mechago?*" Ifemelu asked "Please don't speak Igbo to him," Aunty Uju said. "Two languages will confuse him." "What are you talking about, Aunty? We spoke two languages growing up." "This is America. It's different." (62) Thus giving enough space to the reader to judge Aunty Uju's insecurity and mimic character contrasting her with Ifemelu and other characters in the novel. By using *zero focalization* (Dwivedi, Skov Nielsen et Walsh 175) where the storyteller is all-knowing and outside the story Adichie could move unrestrained in time and space, inside and outside her protagonists' minds however, one may raise the question of confidence in the narrator and taking her comments for granted which is the case in *Americanah*, since the writer is narrating the events and commenting from experience because she was an immigrant herself stranded between worlds and identities built upon race, gender or origin.

In her narration, Adichie constructs the evolution of the story by interweaving two stories of immigrant insecurity: the first concerning the psychological and cultural adjustment of Ifemelu in America trying to carve a niche and redefine both her identity and her perception of home, on the other hand, it involves Obinze's life of invisibility

living through the atrocities of illegal immigration and trying to find his blurred space in London through an arranged marriage, which never took place since he got caught shortly before the ceremony and was deported to Nigeria thus provided us with a clearer picture of what is it like to be immigrant, illegal, deported and returnee.

All in all, Mukherjee's narrative techniques highlighted the disjuncture in an immigrant's life living in present but reminiscing about the past in his perpetual process of redefinition of identity. Whereas Adichie provided us with an enriching narrative that portays a holistic perspective about what is it like to be dislocated chasing an unattainable Dream resulting in an everlasting redefinition of identity and gender roles. However, both novels highlight ealy stories of female immigrant pushing the stereotypical limitations of women in male-dominant world. Therefore, this generation of women authors have a considerable role in redefining and renovating the post-colonial literary canon by questioning a vast range of themes including identity, home and gender roles as prerequisites of immigration. (Sackeyfio 1)

#### **4.5. Adichie and Mukherjee as Committed Writers:**

Committed literature, also known as *littérature engagée* in French, is the type of narrative in which writers employ their literary texts to advocate for a cause they believe in. This cause can be ethical, political, social, or religious. Authors can express their views through their writing, but some might also actively campaign for their beliefs. Committed literature is regarded successful if it impacts society or politics in favor of the author's cause. It can also be important if it raises awareness about a relevant issue or sparks ongoing discussion about current events. Some say committed literature raised to popularity with socialist movements in the 1950s, a time of strong political movements. The term itself might have been first used by Taha Hussain in 1947, and later explored by Jean-Paul Sartre and other existentialist writers. The focus here is on how authors,

Mukherjee and Adichie for instance, grapple with the concept of commitment in their work. This part of the dissertation explores the political, ethical, and artistic messages the writers employed to engage with their artistic production a contextual message.

It is a held belief that literature has the capacity of completely changing perspectives and views about their local social, cultural and even psychological nuances, and that writers and intellectuals had a special, almost prophetic, ability to see the truth. Adichie, like many writers, keeps mirroring the untold realities of Africans in general and Nigerians in particular in their constant search for an *over there* where dreams of a Utopian society are achievable and incorporated in the very fabric of all generations. In being the translator of pain, she states “I do not believe in being prescriptive about art. I think African writers should write in whatever language they can. The important thing is to tell African stories”. Africa has long been translated to the world through Western views which are biased and tell the stories of *darkness* they saw in Africa but from an outsider’s view.

Writers like Adichie, bear the responsibility of finding new ways of comprehending African literature with its voices of talented intellectuals who, through fiction, portray the individuality of their culture and the variety of the processes of identification and belonging in Africa, and also depict the diverse methods of resistance to the old portrayals of Africa and its literary production. Discussions about what's considered important African literature are now focusing on both how the aesthetics writing is crafted and the political messages it conveys. This shift comes from writers and critics recognizing that the way a story is told is just as important as the story itself. In this regard, postcolonial theory offers a powerful critique of ideas used to justify colonialism, civilization and progress for instance. These ideas are still used today to promote a one-sided view of the world (neo-liberal globalization). Postcolonial theory also gives us insightful analyses of

the lasting effects of colonialism. However, these analyses often completely dismiss existing theories about humanity and economic materialist systems.

Related to the idea of the committed writer is also the fact that postcolonial studies incorporate an extensive range of disciplines, including diaspora studies, ethnicity studies, migration studies, and even globalization studies. Fueled by research in these related fields, postcolonial studies are being challenged to recognize that effectively understanding and resisting global forces of oppression requires addressing both practical and symbolic aspects through the craftsmanship of African writers' literary texts.

Postcolonial criticism therefore, is re-examining the concept of "engagement," showing it's more than just empty talk. Engagement used to generate research on oppression, economic hardship, and strategies for resistance. While the term itself might be less prominent, the ideas behind it haven't disappeared - they've simply taken on new forms and expressions and resistance. (Cazenave et Célérier 3)

In an interview with the late Ghanaian writer, Ama Ata Aidoo described the role of a writer as: "I wish, of course, that Africa would be free and strong and organized and constructive, etc. That is basic to my commitment as a writer. That is a basic and consistent part of my vision. I keep seeing different dimensions of it, different interpretations coming through my writing." (Aidoo 25) Accordingly, Adichie is one of Nigeria's most talented writers whose novel *Americanah* portrays the traumatic dislocations and redefinition of gender roles of women in the Nigerian contemporary society thus voicing the voiceless in her fiction. Just like Ifemelu, when African women move to Western environments, their sense of who they are becomes more complex and even multidimensional. This forces them to re-examine their African identity while their experiences highlight the interrelation of race, social class, and gender. These experiences

also showcase women's ability to act on their own behalf, their growing awareness of feminism, and their journey of self-discovery.

Indeed, Ifemelu's journey to America marks a possibility and the new potential that African women can attain. She succeeded not only in making it to the US but also in redefining the concept of home and her own identity being American but having deep roots in Nigeria. The fact that Ifemelu succeeded in legalizing her immigration status as a female while Obinze the other immigrant in the story failed and was deported is quite telling about her commitment as a writer to 'reposition the stars' of reconfigure gender roles in Nigeria and in the post-colonial trend in general. In her famous article *We should all be Feminist*, she stated that gender exists all over the world however, it is high time that everyone starts to dream of a different fairer world by raising both sons and daughters differently. She also asserts that African societies are being narrow-minded in their definition of masculinity which is considered like a small cage for boys; these societies convince the boys to always being terrified of softness and susceptibility which is somehow a way of masking their true identities, since society prepares them for the sole role of being "a hard man". (Dawson 673)

Moreover, Adichie depicted a new dream which is parallel to the American Dream, the concept of the African Dream. Through her writings, we witness the emergence and even widespread of a young generation thriving to make it to America and pushed by their belief that real life and happiness happen only there. However, in her portrayal of these dreamers, the old pushing factors of starvation, wars, bloodshed and apartheid are almost non-existent, but these new immigrants are middle class citizens with qualifications and jobs, however they suddenly decide that their dream life of a well burnished and Eden like life happen only *over there*. Furthermore, through commitment to highlight to cultural and psychological traumas of migration, Adichie portrayed Ifemelu as a female immigrant

who is constantly redefining the concept of *home*, because she decided that she has to go back home against all odds and all expectations set by her fellow Africans who questioned not only her decision but also her state of mind. Their judgment of her decision is deeply rooted in their delusion of *The Paradise Lost* believing that if you succeed in having your American passport and buying your own condo are synonymous to triumphing in your exodus so, to even consider the possibility of going back home is an act of foolishness. However, it is through the character of Ifemelu that we realize the existence of an immigrant category whose routes lead to their roots, a category of immigrants long been less represented in fiction who are in a constant struggle to define home being a fluid concept that evades any proper definition.

Adichie has substantiated her preoccupation with Nigeria and the Africa in general by emphasizing the attributed definite religious, political, social and cultural concerns fundamental to her country. However, Adichie's novels display the transcendence of her engagement past her homeland which makes her literary production life changing locally and internationally.

Bharati Mukherjee on the other hand, is considered as an important figure both in India and in the post-colonial tradition in general. Her novel, *Jasmine*, is an exuberant exploration of a multicultural America in which she portrays a variety of new American identities in the making, including those of Afghan, Indian, and Vietnamese immigrants, alongside the established European and Asian American groups. Significantly, she sets her stories across North America, emphasizing how the entire continent is being reshaped by the wave of Asian immigration. Her prose portrays her commitment to Indian diaspora, as she endeavors to transform it and to highlight her own separated and conflicting selves reflected in her protagonist Jasmine. Throughout her career, Mukherjee, herself a migrant, has used literature to discover the hurdles of adapting to new cultures in a globalized

world. Her novels produce imaginary spaces that reflect with the experiences of minority groups struggling to find a sense of belonging in the Metropolitan. Having transitioned from a traditional Indian life to a more fluid existence in America, Mukherjee understands the complexities of navigating a new world. She describes facing discrimination and feeling like an outsider, existing in a "no man's land" between her past and present. Despite these struggles, Mukherjee ultimately found her place, becoming a naturalized citizen and embracing America as her home.

Her redefinition of gender roles is equal to that of Adichie, since she portrayed Jasmine as an Indian village girl devoid of any complexity of character but decides to embark on a journey of self-discovery and redefinition of her identity. Unlike Ifemelu, the journey for Jasmine was full of hurdles and hardships which is Mukherjee's way of portraying the atrocities and of the perilous journey illegal immigrants embark on driven by their creed that happiness exists elsewhere. In Mukherjee's work, the immigrant experience is a central theme that embodies the complexities of globalization and the current state of Western societies which includes the ongoing struggle to reconcile global forces with local identities. Immigrants face a cultural clash as they break away from their traditions, encounter new ways of life, and grapple with unfamiliar cultural norms and values. This can lead to a feeling of culture shock.

Mukherjee's writing reflects the deep impact America has had on her, but her goal goes beyond personal transformation. She aims to show how immigrants like her have also transformed America. Her work challenges editors and readers to recognize the richness of immigrant experiences. The most meaningful praise she receives is "I never knew," meaning readers gain a deeper understanding of seemingly familiar people. This lack of awareness fuels Mukherjee's drive to keep writing - there are countless stories to tell and a mission to bridge cultural divides. Mukherjee strives to create characters that go beyond

simple psychological analysis. She emphasizes the rich history of her characters, shaped by centuries of colonialism, technological advancements, education, wars, and independence struggles. These characters have adapted, shedding old identities and adopting new ones, often hiding the emotional scars. They might be the newspaper vendor you see every day, or the person cleaning your office at night. Unlike some American writers who dismiss the idea of a "literary duty," Mukherjee embraces it. She acknowledges the dangers of overly political writing but rejects a purely entertaining approach. Drawing inspiration from writers from the "Third World," Mukherjee feels a responsibility to not just tell good stories, but to give voice to the experiences of entire continents. Through her writing, she also aims to redefine what it means to be American.

This idea of "double consciousness", feeling like you belong to two cultures at once is a common theme in writing by minority authors from Africa and Asia. These writings explore the challenges of having a divided cultural identity. The struggles of understanding yourself and the internal conflicts that can arise are especially clear in works by pioneering minority authors who wrote stories in English about the experiences of minorities in America, giving a unique insider's perspective. In his description of the author's role, Achebe stressed the exigence of 'commitment' in order for the literary work to transcend both physical and cultural borders:

I'm an Igbo writer because this is my basic culture; Nigerian, African and a writer...no, black first, then a writer. Each of these identities does call for a certain kind of commitment on my part. I must see what it is to be black – and this means being sufficiently intelligent to know how the world is moving and how the black people fare in this world. This is what it means to be black. Or an African – what does Africa mean to the world? When you see an African, what does it mean to a white man? (Appiah 73)

#### **4.6.Exploring the Nuances of Reality in *Americanah* and *Jasmine*:**

Realism came to be viewed as having a crucial importance in fiction to be sought by fiction writers and celebrated by readers. Realist writers favored a technique called the "scenic method" which relies heavily on dialogue to reveal information, events, and character personalities. Unlike a play script, realist fiction doesn't solely depend on dialogue, but it uses it significantly more than earlier American works by authors like Hawthorne and Melville. In realist fiction, conversation isn't just about exchanging ideas; it's a tool to build characters and move the plot forward. Characters speak to plant doubts, spread rumors, form bonds, navigate conflicts (both open and hidden), explore emotions and stances, tell lies, reveal secrets, make threats, propose deals, and most importantly, not only make decisions but also act on them. the philosophical issue of what relationship, if any, exists between realism produced on the page and reality outside the book. (Barrish 4)

In their portrayal of the immigrant journey, Adichie and Mukherjee depicted the vivid image of massive influx of new citizens enriching the nation's cultural diversity, but they also faced xenophobia, hostility, and widespread anxiety about what it meant to be American. This historical tension echoes in today's debates about immigration and its impact on the country. Taking both *Ifemelu* and *Jasmine* as examples, immigrants gradually adapt to their new cultures and become familiar with the "Other", a process that never truly ends, their identities solidify into a new form, like a liquid crystallizing with a new structure. This process, in Mukherjee's view, leads to the gradual formation of a complex, multifaceted identity, often referred to as "pluralization of identity." (Maxey 63)

This also involves the creation of "imaginary spaces" that serve as both a bridge between cultures and a platform for personal and societal transformation. Similar to psychologists, literary realists delved into the inner workings of the human mind and its relationship with the world around us. Like sociologists, they studied how American

society evolves and adapts to change. Notably, literary realism played a specific role in helping the middle class adjust to social upheaval. Realist works aimed to make even dramatic changes more understandable and relatable for readers. (Alcoff 248)

In their vivid description of the immigrant journey with all related themes, Mukherjee and Adichie took a more objective stance by sitting in the background and present characters who embody the real human immigrant's struggle to get to the other side. In *Americanah*, for instance, Adichie tried to use a scenic description of the background living the judgment to the reader "A small TV mounted on a corner of the wall, the volume a little too loud, was showing a Nigerian film: a man beating his wife, the wife cowering and shouting, the poor audio quality jarring." (*Americanah* 4) elsewhere, and through dialogue, she presented Nigerian elites considering the choice of migrating but their realistic effect when stating the causes is quite telling "We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because every day I am organizing strikes" (36)

Mukherjee, on the other hand, depicted Jasmine's traumatic dislocation through vibrancy by drawing a realistic picture of what is it like to be female, immigrant, foreign, unskilled and alone on the American continent. In describing Jasmine's push factors, Mukherjee depicted the naïve, poor and deprived childhood the protagonist lived in India "I remember snaking into my friend Vimla's house and clicking the light switch on-off/off-on when electricity came to the brick houses of the rich traders down the road...the naked light bulb swaying at the end of a braided cord was magic" (*Jasmine* 27) This vivid effect of realistic narration of events is prominent in her description of the illegal crossing she undertook to get to America "the captain, Half-face lectured "listen up. Here's the drill. Three blasts of the whistle and you hit the water...if the Border Patrol picks you up and hauls your ass off to the detention center, you don't know us" (67). However, the goal of

realist novels is not to trick readers into believing they are reading non-fiction like journalism, history, or biography. Even though the surface elements of a late 19th or early 20th century novel (what literary theorists call the "paratext") often make it clear it is still fiction, whose writing style itself can create a sense of real-world authenticity. (Barrish 55)

**Conclusion:**

Both Adichie's *Americanah* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine* transcend the limitations of fiction by competently integrating elements of autobiography and social commentary, these novels provide a rich narration of their own immigration experiences. Through Ifemelu and Jasmine, we encounter the hurdles of immigration, the complexities of identity formation, and the yearning for belonging. This chapter delves into how Adichie and Mukherjee challenge traditional postcolonial narratives dominated by Western perspectives.

We explored their innovative storytelling techniques that capture the unpredictable and often chaotic nature of the immigrant experience. Furthermore, we examined their commitment to portraying the struggles and resilience of their female characters. Through realistic portrayals of events, these authors create believable narratives with characters who feel genuine in their pursuit of a better life.

They root their stories into the lived experiences, fashioning fictional worlds that reverberate with genuineness and explore the nuances of reality in a globalized world. Through both novels, we get a better understanding of the immigrant experience and sharing their concerns and hopes.

## General Conclusion

In the first chapter, we highlighted the socio-historical context of the selected novels, *Americanah* and *Jasmine*, through which we gained an insight into the contextual aspects that helped in enhancing our understanding of the novels and provided a background knowledge about the topic at hand. We started with a history of post-colonial theory and literature which gave us an idea about the nature and content of the literary texts that belong to that canon. We also investigated the fact that the language of the court and government officials in their description of immigrants using labels such as: alien, flood, invasion intensified the anti-immigration sentiment. This type of denotative language has a connotative portrayal by the public considering these immigrants not as human beings but as a threat from which they need protection which increased immigrants' isolation and their sense of otherness. We also analyzed the techniques of mimicry and ambivalence in relation to the post-colonial discourse and the psychological intricacies associated with the relationship colonizer/colonized.

We have also discussed diaspora as one of the outcomes of colonialism causing millions of people and even writers to scatter all over the world in search for their home a concept that undergone perpetual redefinition over the decades. In our analysis of the first chapter, we have also dealt with the American nowadays slogan of a color-blind America where we highlighted the hidden and even racial practices still prevalent in America. We dealt with the racial proliferations exercised by governments as well as white members of the society also known as WASP, which raised the sense of estrangement for both African-Americans and American-Africans who migrated to the US aspiring for their Utopian depiction of America. This depiction is associated with the American Dream that we tried to examine by deconstructing the glittering image immigrants draw about America where they travel long distances legally and illegally in their quest for their Eden. Unfortunately,

these wanderers Across Borders become delusional in their unaltered creed of America's mythic self-made man overlooking the fact that America is selective and that the American Dream is called a dream for a reason. In the last part of this chapter, we investigated the concept of *home*, which is becoming elusive defying all definitions. We tried to highlight the complexity of this concept especially in the context of immigrants' perpetual redefinition of it because of their persistent dislocation and straddling between worlds creating a complicated psychological perception of where home is.

In the second chapter, we tried to dig deeper into the selected novels by providing a thorough literary analysis of the selected themes. In the first part, we investigated Jasmine's consistent incarnation where she changes identities depending on the place and the situation. We opted for a psychoanalysis to highlight the psychological journey with all its complexities associated with the immigrant's displacement. Jasmine undergone tremendous dissociation of identities all along her journey which reflects her navigation of space through the variety of *selves* she embodied adopting a chameleon technique in her quest for integration and to cover up for her foreignness. Despite the fact that Jasmine shares a great deal of post-colonial attributes with Ifemelu but this latter's experience with identity is completely different. We compared Jasmine's experience to Ifemelu's in terms of the psychological atrocities related to the immigration experience. Ifemelu, in this regard, endured a traumatic experience related to her discovery that in America she is actually *black*. This newly discovered attribution led to a traumatic psychological and cultural chock causing her to navigate through America's race system a point that was discussed at the end of the chapter. Being post-colonial subjects, Ifemelu and Jasmine share their resort into mimicry and hybridity an experience that both protagonists endure in their search for a successful integration. We examined both Ifemelu's and Jasmine's imitation of the American way of life in addition to the other immigrants in the novel who

also exhibited their mimesis and their hybrid identity in their journey of self-definition. After that, we have highlighted both writers' metaphorical descriptions of the illegal journey that their immigrants undertake to get to their Dream Land. Jasmine, for instance, followed all possible illegal passages from India just to get to America ending up on a boat loaded with illegal immigrants like herself in their journey into the darkness of the Atlantic Ocean.

*Americanah*, on the other hand, portrayed the insecurity of Ifemelu and the invisibility of Obinze due to their illegal status and their endeavor for a legalized status. This perilous journey that immigrants undertake is for the sole objective of making it to America, this desirability is justified by their strong belief in the American Dream. In this regard and in the third chapter, we tried to investigate and focus on immigrants' perception of America before the journey and after it. We realized that immigrants in both novels are delusional before the journey because erroneous judgement of an America where gold flows on the streets so they crave to get their share of the milk and honey of their America. We also highlighted the role of the media and TV shows in perfecting and enhancing the image of America to Third World immigrants. One good example is Ifemelu's preconceived ideas about blacks' way of life based on *The Cosby Show* believing that all blacks in America are enjoying a great deal of luxury and happiness. Jasmine's expectations about America were also based on an aerogram her late husband received from America depicting an ecstatic picture of Asian and black people happy and enjoying the American Dream. However, it comes as a chock when both Ifemelu and Jasmine realize the fragility of the Dream and that nothing lasts forever, the mirage both female protagonists were living in led them into indulging into the unattainable, this dream of a perfect happy life and living like the movies is what pulls immigrants risking it all to come to the US.

We have also examined another delusion about America that immigrants from Third

World will succeed in creating their own *home* in America which turns out to be a mirage and as unattainable as the American Dream. Both female protagonists experience belonging differently because for Jasmine, home is America whereas for Ifemelu home is where the roots are which is Nigeria. Additionally, we investigated Ifemelu's decision to go back to her roots as a renunciation to the racial prejudice she encountered in America. This new attribution, being black in America, is a role or a mask she discarded once she arrived to Nigeria.

In the fourth chapter, we focused on the novel's writers' style and the aesthetics they adopted in their work to make it compelling to the reader. In the chapter, we examined the autobiographical account of both novels by highlighting the reflections of Adichie's life through Ifemelu and Mukherjee's life through Jasmine. Both writers presented in their novels a female protagonist navigating and challenging society's predetermined gender roles by being their own story's heroines. Just like their protagonists, both authors were immigrants themselves and undergone many facets of their own character's destiny. We have also examined counter discourse techniques employed by Adichie following her predecessor Chinua Achebe by using the English language along with Igbo to highlight the uniqueness of the African culture and literature. Mukherjee, on the other hand, was oblivious to this and adopted English both as a language of narration and as her own celebration of the American culture by refusing to be recognized as a hyphenated American-Indian but purely American. This identity redefinition was portrayed through her protagonist who never considered the possibility of going back home. We have also highlighted the role both writers adopt in being committed writers bearing the responsibility of voicing the unvoiced female character in a male dominant world and being advocates of Third World immigrant depicting the complexities and uneasiness they encounter along the journey in their endeavor for a better life.

However, we might say that Adichie's *Americanah* and Mukherjee's *Jasmine* provided an accurate and multifaceted depiction of what it is like to be an immigrant in modern-day America, because through the experiences of Ifemelu and Jasmine, the authors investigated the challenges, complexities, and conquests of navigating life as a foreigner in a new land. Both Ifemelu and Jasmine are portrayed in their persistent quest for belonging in an inhospitable land. In this new environment, despite the fact that they surmounted America's physical barrier, they totally ignored the fact that cultural walls are built so high that no one could climb them. In their constant struggle to feel accepted and understood they face racial prejudice and anti-immigration sentiments that intensified their *otherness* and magnified any successful attempts towards assimilation. Their journeys highlight the emotional and psychological predicaments of displacement and the yearning for a sense of home. Through their protagonists, both writers demonstrated great talent in their definition of how the concept of *otherness* is constructed by dominant groups highlighting how both Ifemelu and Jasmine endure discrimination and prejudice based on their race, ethnicity, and immigrant status. Their experiences expose the power dynamics at play and the ways in which societal norms and expectations can marginalize individuals.

However, because borderlands exist wherever cultures meet, people of different backgrounds and social classes interact which may lead to a perpetual redefinition of identity and home. This applies to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Bharati Mukherjee, who can be considered *border women* because both authors, and even their female protagonists, grew up between two cultures, American and the colonial cultures of their respective countries, Africa and India. In Adichie's novel *Americanah*, the intertwined themes of immigration and *otherness* take center stage. The protagonist, faces numerous challenges as an immigrant, including navigating the complexities of the American visa system, finding employment, and dealing with the constant microaggressions and

stereotypes she encounters based on her blackness and nationality. The novel also explores how Ifemelu and other immigrants are constantly categorized and labeled as "other" by the dominant American society. This *otherness* is constructed through racial profiling, assumptions about African culture, and the constant need to prove oneself and justify one's presence. As Ifemelu and Jasmine navigate their life in the US, they grapple with the question of identity. They struggle to reconcile their roots with her new American experiences, continuously enquiring about where they truly belong and questioning *home* as fluid and flexible concept. The novels also highlight the intersection of race and class in the immigrant experience. Ifemelu's experiences differ from that of Jasmine based on her socioeconomic upbringing and education level, further indicating the difficulties of the immigration narrative. By delving into these themes, Adichie and Mukherjee provide a discerning examination of the immigrant experience, challenging simplistic narratives and highlighting the complicated realities of navigating life in a new culture.

Despite the aforementioned challenges they face, both Ifemelu and Jasmine demonstrate remarkable resilience. They navigate the intricacies of their new lives, develop tactics for coping with prejudice, and eventually finding their own sense of agency and self-worth. Their stories offer an influential message of struggle against societal norms and a celebration of individual female strength.

These authors challenge the notion of fixed identities because through the characters' evolving perspectives and experiences, they demonstrate the fluidity of identity in a globalized world. Ifemelu and Jasmine's journeys highlight the dynamic nature of self-perception and the constant negotiation of identity in different contexts. Both novels underscore the significance of voice and storytelling because Ifemelu and Jasmine's narratives become robust tools of self-expression and a delegation for Third World immigrants. Through their collective experiences, they contest the dominant narratives and

contribute to more understanding of the immigrant experience.

All in all, *Americanah* and *Jasmine* offer valuable insights into the adversities of immigration and the experiences of the *other* in contemporary America. Mukherjee and Adichie's artistic novels shed light on the challenges faced by immigrants, while also commemorating their perseverance and the power of their voices. These novels can be considered as a significant reminder of the importance of empathy with these *others* and questioning the narratives that marginalize individuals based on their perceived *otherness*.

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