T.C.

ISTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN AFRICAN DIASPORIC AND IMMIGRANT IDENTITIES IN YAA GYASI'S *HOMEGOING* AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

Master of Arts Thesis by

Özge Nur KASAP

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Department: English Language and Literature

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PLAGIARISM

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Özge Nur KASAP

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ABSTRACT

CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN AFRICAN DIASPORIC AND IMMIGRANT IDENTITIES IN YAA GYASI'S *HOMEGOING* AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

Özge Nur KASAP

This thesis analyzes the variation of cultural identity and its flexible nature in relation to the experiences of African Americans, African natives and African immigrants, emphasizing the evolved historical and cultural distinction between them over time such as their perceptions of racism and the significance it holds for each group. In addition to acknowledging and addressing these differences, the thesis aims to examine the ideological movement of the 2000s, Afropolitanism, which encourages the embrace of culturally hybrid identities by introducing a fresh perspective to a globalized world where cultural identity is in constant flux. In this context, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* embody these arguments within their respective narratives. Yaa Gyasi's exploration of the interconnected histories of African and African American identities, formed by the impacts of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, provides the historical background that supports the arguments presented. *Homegoing* follows the pattern of these transformations in the span of seven generations through the narrative of two half-sisters: Effia, who experiences life under Western colonization in Ghana, and Esi, who suffers the brutality of slavery and its legacy in America. Framed through an Afropolitanist perspective, the novel highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of these identities across future generations, culminating in

a globalized context by the novel's end. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* is the second key source for this thesis, offering an exploration of the lives of Nigerian immigrants and their efforts to balance the blending of cultures within the African diaspora, particularly in the USA. The novel examines the experiences of characters like Ifemelu, Uju, and Dike, highlighting their struggles to reconcile the traditional values of their African heritage with the contemporary influences of their new environment. Additionally, Adichie addresses the discord between African Americans and African immigrants, rooted in cultural differences that are often neglected by white American society. This thesis aims to analyze Adichie's illustration of fluid cultural identity, paralleling Gyasi's themes in *Homegoing*, and its connection to a wider discussion of cultural hybridity and global interrelation in *Americanah*.

Key Words: Postcolonial, African American, African Immigration, Cultural Hybridity, Afropolitanism, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*, Yaa Gyasi, *Homegoing*

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ÖZET

YAA GYASI'NİN *EVE DÖNÜŞ* (*HOMEGOING*) VE CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'NİN *AMERIKANA* (*AMERICANAH*) ROMANLARINDA AFRİKA DİASPORASI VE GÖÇMEN KİMLİKLERİNDE KÜLTÜREL MELEZLİK

Özge Nur KASAP

Bu tez, Afrika kökenli Amerikalılar, yerli Afrikalı ve göçmen Afrikalı kültürel gruplar arasında ırkçılığın farklı görüşlere sahip olması ve her grup için farklı önem taşıması gibi farklılıkları incelemektedir. Bu grupların tarihsel ve kültürel evrimleşmesi vurgulanarak, kültürel kimliğin çeşitliliği ve değişken doğası bahsedilen kültürel gruplar bağlamında analiz edilmektedir. Farklılıkları kabul edip sorunları ele almanın yanı sıra, 2000'lerin ideolojik bir akımı olan Afropolitanizm'in incelenmesi de amaçlanmaktadır. Afropolitanizm'in kültürel kimliğin sürekli geliştiği küresel dünyaya yeni bir bakış açısı kazandırarak, melez kültürel kimliğin benimsenmesini teşvik ettiği vurgulanmaktadır. Tezin bölümlerinde kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz edildiği üzere Yaa Gyasi'nin *Eve Dönüş*'ü ve Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie'nin *Amerikana*'sı, bu çerçevedeki argümanları kendi anlatılarında somutlaştırmaktadır. Yaa Gyasi'nin sömürgeciliğin ve transatlantik köle ticaretinin etkileriyle oluşan Afrika ve Afrika kökenli Amerikalı kimliklerinin birbirine bağlı tarihlerini araştırması, sunulan argümanları destekleyen tarihsel arka planı sağlamaktadır. *Eve Dönüş*, yedi nesil boyunca devam eden bu dönüşümlerin örüntüsünü iki üvey kız kardeşin öyküsü üzerinden ele almaktadır: Gana'da Batı sömürgesi altında

yaşayan Effia ve Amerika'da köleliğin gaddarlığına ve bunun mirasına maruz kalan Esi. Afropolitik bir bakış açısıyla çerçevelenen roman, bu kimliklerin gelecek nesiller boyunca gelişen doğasını vurgulamaktadır ve romanın sonunda küreselleşmiş bir bağlamda doruğa ulaşmaktadır. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie'nin *Amerikana* adlı romanı, tezin ikinci temel kaynağını oluşturmaktadır. Roman, Nijeryalı göçmenlerin yaşamlarını ve özellikle ABD'de Afrika diasporası içinde kültürleri dengeleme çabalarını incelemektedir. Ifemelu, Uju ve Dike gibi karakterlerin deneyimlerini ele alarak, Afrika kökenli geleneksel değerlerle yeni çevrelerinin çağdaş etkilerini uzlaştırma mücadelelerini vurgulamaktadır. Adichie ayrıca, beyaz Amerikalı toplumunun genellikle görmezden geldiği kültürel farklılıkların, Afrikalı Amerikalılar ve Afrikalı göçmenler arasındaki anlaşmazlıklara nasıl yol açtığını da ele almaktadır. Bu tez, Gyasi'nin *Eve Dönüş* romanındaki temalarla bağlantı kurarak, *Amerikana*'daki kültürel kimlik tasvirini, kültürel melezlik ve küresel ilişkiler bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postkolonyal, Afro-Amerikan, Afrika Göçü, Kültürel Melezlik, Afropolitanizm, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Amerikana*, Yaa Gyasi, *Eve Dönüş*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

After the end of World War II, the weakened military and economic capacities of colonial powers, such as Britain, Portugal, and France, marked the onset of a decolonization period in 1945. This process unfolded across various regions, including South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. In the context of Africa, a continent that had endured centuries of colonization, African countries legally declared their autonomy and became independent governments in the late 20th century. However, many African intellectuals perceive decolonization as an indirect and ongoing process as a result of the social, cultural, and economic legacies of Western colonization which has gained more significance in world politics and literature due to the rise of globalization in the 2000s. In relation to this context, Chapter I will focus on the background of this period and how it is reflected on literature accordingly in the globalized world. As one of the most major authors of this period, Yaa Gyasi illustrates the intertwined histories of African and African American identities shaped by the legacies of colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade, tracing these themes across seven generations in *Homegoing*, which will be the focus of Chapter II. The novel follows the diverging paths of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, one living under the influence of Western colonization in Ghana, and the other enduring the trauma of slavery and its aftermath in America. Through their stories and those of their descendants, Gyasi examines the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural evolution, ultimately highlighting the fluidity of these identities in a globalized world through an Afropolitanist lens.

On the other hand, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's exploration of the lives of Nigerian immigrants and how they adapt to the merging of cultures in the African diaspora, particularly the USA, will be examined in Chapter III. In *Americanah*, she highlights how these immigrants such as Ifemelu, Uju and Dike struggle with balancing the traditional values of their African roots with the modern influences of their new surroundings. Besides this challenge, Adichie also demonstrates the tension between African Americans and African immigrants, stemming from cultural differences, and how these distinctions are often overlooked by white society. Through *Americanah*, Adichie

demonstrates the fluidity of cultural identity, connecting it to broader discussions of cultural hybridity and global interconnectedness. Based on the context of these two novels, Chapter I will introduce the foundational themes of Gyasi's and Adichie's work, situating it within the broader discussions of cultural hybridity, diasporic identity, and historical interconnectedness. Before moving on to the permanent impacts of colonization and its critical analysis in contemporary literature as a starting point, it is crucial to understand the cultural and philosophical background of the decolonization period that paved the way for modern African literature and history, influenced by critical theories in postcolonial studies.

During the colonization period, one of the most important deals between the colonizers and the African natives was the slave trade, which left a lasting mark on all African people. In addition to Africa being a significant colony of Europe, following the exploration of undiscovered lands in the 15th and 16th centuries, the American continent became another substantial colony of European countries. European colonizers utilized the "triangular route" between African coasts, America, and European countries. This involved transporting manufactured goods to Africa, filling up the ships with enslaved African blacks, and transporting them to work in plantations overseas. However, this journey was executed in the most dreadful and vicious ways, carrying as many slaves as possible while disregarding the humanity of the enslaved people. This resulted in serious injuries and deaths before they arrived in America. Even if they survived the trip, they were compelled to work in sugarcane, cotton, and tobacco plantations all across America for their entire lives.

Even though the law banning the slave trade was passed with the efforts of the North American states after the American Revolution at the beginning of the 1800s, the illegal slave trade across the Atlantic continued for at least 80 more years. As Ira Berlin asserts in his article:

> The power of the slave-owning class, represented by the predominance of slaveholders in the nation's leadership, gave it a large hand in shaping American culture and the values central to American society. It is no accident that a

> slaveholder penned the founding statement of American nationality and that freedom became central to the ideology of American nationhood. (Berlin 1257)

The Atlantic slave trade had profound socio-cultural impacts, as highlighted in Berlin's research, leading to the creation of a global African Black Diaspora. This phenomenon significantly contributed to the development of hybrid cultures among African blacks, who were forcibly detached from their native land. After years of struggle and adoption of foreign culture, this group is now known as African Americans, possessing mixed cultural traits that have evolved into a distinct culture from their original roots.

1.1 Theoretical Context

Until the second half of the 20th century, major socio-cultural consequences of colonialism, the Atlantic slave trade, and its effects as a subject matter were mostly represented from the perspective of the colonizers with a limited point of view. As a result of the substantial outcomes of the World Wars, such as the end of colonialism, the decrease in world population, and the increase of poverty, some revolutionary philosophical perspectives that profoundly reshaped the world emerged in Europe. Structuralism and Post-structuralism, based on linguist Ferdinand Saussure's ideas in the 1950s, proposed that every form of ideology, culture, and language are rigid structures, and the functioning of the world and human relationships is established on these structures. As a critique of Structuralism, Jacques Derrida introduced Post-Structuralism with his essay in 1966, exposing the underlying biases of these ideologically "naturalized" structures, such as racism, patriarchy, and capitalism, which are considered fixed and universal. As Derrida defines Post-structuralism in his essay, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences":

> …Structure -or rather the structurality of structure- although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure -one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure- but above all to make sure that the

> organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure. (Derrida 89)

According to this argument, colonialism is one of these structures that is questioned and deconstructed to free it from a singular perspective belonging to the Western colonizers, giving rise to postcolonialism. Derrida illuminates the inherent biases within structures that claim to be universal, making it particularly relevant to the critique of colonialism. Derrida's notion of the "structurality of structure" emphasizes how structures, though seemingly natural, are in fact constructed around a central principle that serves to maintain their authority (89). In the context of colonialism, this center represents the Eurocentric worldview imposed by Western colonizers, which positioned Western culture, values, and knowledge systems as the standard against all the others. Therefore, Derrida's critique provides a theoretical foundation for postcolonialism by challenging the fixed and universal claims of colonial ideologies. Postcolonial theory applies this framework to reinterpret history and culture from the perspectives of those who were subjugated, thus liberating the discourse from the restrictions of a singular Western narrative.

Postcolonialism is an intellectual academic study that emerged in the 1980s, exploring the impact of colonialism on societies and cultures both during and after the colonial period. Regarding the complex definition of "postcolonialism", Stuart Hall defines this theory as:

> "[s]o postcolonial is not the end of the colonization. It is after a certain kind of colonialism, after a certain moment of high imperialism and colonial occupation- in the wake of it, in the shadow of it, inflected by it- it is what it is because something else has happened before, but it is also something new". (qtd. in Mishra and Hodge 377)

According to this definition, the aim of postcolonialism is to analyze how colonial histories have shaped social, political, economic, and cultural structures, often critiquing the legacies of imperialism. As well as the diverse ways of oppression colonized people endured, postcolonialism emphasizes the experiences and silenced voices of formerly colonized people, as many of them lacked the opportunity to express themselves due to a

lack of education or education in *civilized* British schools, which trained them in the Western mindset and values. Consequently, their culture and history were portrayed as exotic and inferior notions through the lens of the white colonizer during the colonial period. In response to this, postcolonialism challenges Eurocentric perspectives and advocates for a more inclusive understanding of colonialism and global history by rejecting the supremacy of white representation and acknowledging these representations as a fact.

As one of the most important theories developed in this field, Frantz Fanon's revolutionary ideas on the sociopolitical and psychological effects of colonialism had a major impact on postcolonial studies. In his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) as well as *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon analyzes the psychological effects of colonialism from both the perspectives of the colonized and the colonizers. Fanon discusses the internalization of racial stereotypes regarding African blacks and the psychological burden of being subjected to a system that devalues one's identity, indicating the basis of racism. In her article, Shehla Burney highlights the inferiority complex that black individuals develop based on their skin color by referring to Fanon's theory:

> Fanon argued that imperialism and colonial domination initiated a process of internalization, which created a feeling of negativity, self-hatred, and sense of inferiority in the subjugated or oppressed subaltern or native. This feeling of inferiority was enforced by economic and social conditions, which affected the formation of cultural identity. Material inferiority also created racial and cultural inferiority creating disjunctured identities, as one's sense of identity is deeply tied up with socioeconomics, politics, pride, and power relations. (Burney 50)

Considering Fanon's argument on the psychological background of the perception of the black race as "inferior", Burney refers to Fanon's perspective which reveals the ideological mechanism behind racism by suggesting that being black is not the actual problem; rather, the necessity of imposing a value on skin color stems from acknowledging the difference between black and white. Concerning this argument, Fanon asserts: "Every colonized people-in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority

complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country" in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (18). In the quotation, Fanon states that colonized individuals are made to feel inadequate or inferior as their native cultural identities are suppressed and labeled as primitive compared to the allegedly superior culture of the colonizer. Through the imposition of the colonizer's language and cultural norms, colonized people are led to internalize the notion that their value depends on complying with the colonizer's world. Fanon suggests that rather than being only a personal struggle, it is a collective condition that influences black communities, shaping their connection to their own heritage. By shedding light on this process, Fanon draws attention to the recovery of cultural identity and self-worth among colonized people.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) was also one of the pioneering critical theories in the framework of postcolonial studies. Even though the term "Orient" doesn't specifically refer to the African region today, the objective of Orientalism aligns with the criticism of Africa's colonization. As Shehla Burney refers to the significance of Said's theory in the field of postcolonial studies in her article:

> Above all, Edward Said's monumental work has changed the focus of academic attention from the dominant, logocentric, and mainstream Western narrative to the emerging intercultural discourse of the Other, helping to build what I have called a pedagogy of the Other, wherein postcolonial theory and praxis can bring Eastern cultures, literatures, geopolitics, and the vast scholarship of the other half of the globe from the margins to the centers of learning and teaching. (Burney 41)

Accordingly, Orientalism proposes the existence of a construction based on a binary opposition between the "civilized" West (the Occident) and the "exotic", "inferior", and "undeveloped" East (the Orient). Said highlights that this construction served political and imperialistic purposes, justifying Western dominance over Eastern societies for centuries. According to Said, the Western portrayal of the East sustains power imbalances and reinforces stereotypes that position the Orient as "the other" and as an "uncivilized" society, in need of Western intervention as their "savior". Therefore, Said criticizes the

academic perspectives that have historically shaped the understanding of the "Orient" and encourages academics to break away from Western attitudes and stereotypes.

In the context of all these critical theories that focus on the constructiveness of the binary opposition between superior and inferior identity, black identity becomes "the other" in Said's terms. Regarding the white representation of African countries and how this representation is a norm for the whole world, the structurality of this norm raised questions about cultural identity in postcolonial studies. Homi K. Bhabha contributed to this argument with his theory of hybridity in the 1980s, highly influenced by post-structuralism. Bhabha emphasizes the varied cultural identity of the colonized natives in the postcolonial period and explores the complexities of this identity formation in this context. Homi Bhabha's framework challenges traditional notions of identity as fixed, stable, and singular, and instead emphasizes the hybrid and fluid nature of identity.

According to Bhabha, hybridity emerges from the negotiation between different cultures and identities, which refers to the variation of African people's cultural identity over the years in the context of this thesis. The process of forming a hybrid cultural identity is conducted with Bhabha's "mimicry" concept, which explains how colonized people imitate the dominant colonial culture, creating a nuanced form of resistance and negotiation in the process. Bhabha defines "mimicry" in his article, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse":

> Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers. (Bhabha 126)

Thus, Bhabha suggests that "Mimicry" challenges established power structures through imitation and subversion by turning "the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" as Bhabha asserts in "Signs Taken for Wonders" (Bhabha 154). Bhabha characterizes mimicry as a strategy used by colonial systems to control the colonized by encouraging them to adopt the language and cultural practices of the colonizer. This

strategy is intended to sustain the colonizer's dominance by producing subjects who are "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 126). However, Bhabha argues that the imitation by the colonized is imperfect, revealing the constructed nature and contradictions of colonial authority. The partial adoption of the colonizer's identity by the colonized signifies both compliance and resistance, embodying duality of acceptance and subversion of imposed norms. As a result, the act of imitation becomes a threat to the colonizer's power because by mirroring the colonizer's practices back to them, the colonized reveal the flaws in the colonial system's claims of superiority.

Concerning hybridity, Bhabha introduces the concept of the "third space" as a site of cultural transformation, a dynamic and fluid space where different cultures interact and create new meanings in his *The Location of Culture:*

> It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity…It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (Bhabha 37)

In this quotation, Bhabha rejects the idea of the originality of cultures, asserting that there is no fixed culture resistant to change. Accordingly, Bhabha invites individuals to question why hierarchical powers advocate for a fixed cultural origin, suggesting that cultural systems are constructed in ways that serve their own interests. He argues for an "ambivalent space" in which cultures mix and transform into new ones, resulting in the fusion of cultures (Bhabha 37). As Michaela Wolf refers to Bhabha's the "third space" concept in her article, explaining his theory:

> Under Bhabha's concept of hybridity, cultural dimensions, such as space and time, can no longer be understood as being homogeneous or selfcontained. Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic as in the relation *selflother*

(1994,36), rather there is a *Third Space*, which can neither be reduced to the *self* nor the *other*, neither to the First nor to the Third World, neither to the master nor to the slave. Meaning is produced beyond cultural borders and is principally located in the Third Space, a sort of "in-between space" located between existing referential systems and antagonisms. (Wolf 135)

In light of Bhabha's description, Wolf suggests that hybrid identities are characterized by their in-betweenness, ambiguity, and ability to disrupt fixed notions of cultural authenticity, creating a fresh perspective in postcolonial and cultural studies. Depending on Bhabha's ideas, this fluid identity overlaps with the mixed cultural identity of African Americans, colonized African natives, and African immigrants all across the world, underlining the fixed cultural identity categorization that no longer exists. African Americans embody a blend of African and American influences, creating distinct traditions like jazz and communication practices such as Ebonics dialect that challenge fixed cultural notions. Colonized African natives negotiated between indigenous and imposed European cultures, adapting colonial languages and literary forms to express African perspectives, as seen in works like Chinua Achebe's. African immigrants navigate transnational spaces, merging native traditions with host cultures, reflecting the fluidity of diasporic identities.

1.2 Historical Background

In the context of this theoretical perspective, the cultural identity of African immigrants, especially after the decolonization of African colonies following World War II, has been a topic of interest in the field of postcolonial studies. After the decolonization of many African countries, there were frequent social and political movements of citizens seeking a better life quality. However, African countries were weakened due to the legacies of colonialism and being newly self-governed. Starting from the 1940s, there has been a rapid increase in the number of African immigrants worldwide, particularly in Western countries, also known as colonial centers. As Emmanuel Akyeampong touches upon this issue in his article by referring to Ghanaian immigration, one of the colonized African countries:

> Estimates of Ghanaians living in the United States by the mid-1990s range between 200,000 and 400,000. Peil points out that academics, professionals, footballers, and musicians have been the most successful in the Ghanaian diaspora. Several of the most accomplished academics and professionals are based in the US where they have secured a remarkable degree of social and professional acceptance. (Akyeampong 211)

As a result of the political and economic instability of African countries, most natives left their country such as Ghanaians as Akyeampong suggests and migrated to Western countries in search of employment opportunities and high-quality education, fleeing political conflicts and oppression. This resulted in the cultural identity hybridization of many Ghanaian immigrants, creating distinct variations in the "Third Space", which will be examined in Chapter II and III via Adichie and Gyasi's novels.

In the post-World War II period, the Western countries encouraged immigration by implementing advantageous foreign immigration policies to accept workers from their former colonies, including Africa, aiming to cover labor shortages and contribute to economic development. Apart from Europe, the United States of America also had certain regulations, such as "The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965", "The Immigration Act of 1990" and "The U.S.A Diversity Visa Program" to promote working or studying in the USA with better conditions, encouraging more Africans to migrate as Kevin J.A Thomas presents one of the motives of immigration flow in his article (Thomas 7-8). These reformations led to significant migration flows and contributed to the emergence of the African diasporic communities in the USA. In addition to African Americans, African immigrants have formed new communities over time, where members gradually developed hybrid cultural identities. This process reflects the blending of their native traditions with those of Western countries, creating a unique cultural synthesis. As these hybrid identities emerge, they challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions about African cultures that were perpetuated by colonial powers before the decolonization era. This highlights the fluid and evolving nature of cultural identity, rather than the rigid categorizations imposed in the past.

The contact between the West and colonial countries due to the immigration waves in the 20th century has affected African immigrants in diverse ways, and it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges this sudden change has caused for immigrants, specifically the first and second generations, as they find themselves trying to adapt to a foreign society. The first generation African immigrants refer to individuals who were born in African countries and have subsequently moved to another country. Focusing particularly on the USA, while immigrants have contributed to the cultural diversity of the USA, they have also faced challenges related to the adaptation process, identity, and discrimination. Throughout this process, they have formed a culturally "hybrid" identity over the years because they have no choice but to fit into the new society to survive, allowing them to partially blend into a predominantly white society. Even though this process of adaptation can cause cultural memory loss, the collective memory of native African culture and the shared experience of colonization remains a significant component of their identity.

This cultural adaptation process is also known as "acculturation", which is a psychological theory developed by W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki for the first time in 1918, based on immigrants' different cultural backgrounds and individual experiences (Floyd W. Rudmin 13). Closely related to the cultural identity formation of immigrants, which I will be analyzing in this thesis, "Acculturation" is the process by which individuals adopt the cultural traits of another culture, usually as a result of prolonged contact or exposure. It involves the modification of an individual's cultural practices, beliefs, values, and behaviors to align with those of the foreign culture. During the process of acculturation, individuals may acquire new languages, adopt different cultural habits, and social norms, or incorporate new beliefs and values into their cultural framework. Acculturation can have both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, it can stimulate cultural diversity, enhance intercultural understanding, and promote social integration. On the negative side, it can result in the loss of cultural traditions, identity conflicts, discrimination, or marginalization.

Considering the various approaches regarding this theory such as Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* and Redfield, Linton & Herskovits's "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation", one of the most significant approaches is developed by

psychologist John W. Berry in the late 1970s. As Berry suggests in his article, his model of acculturation argues that this process varies among individuals, and their level of adaptation to this process also differs significantly:

> Acculturating individuals and groups bring cultural and psychological qualities with them to the new society, and the new society also has a variety of such qualities. The compatibility (or incompatibility) in cultural values, norms, attitudes, and personality between the two cultural communities in contact needs to be examined as a basis for understanding the acculturation process that is set in motion. (Sam and Berry 473)

Based on this ambiguous process of acculturation, echoing Bhabha's "hybridity" theory, Berry categorizes different types of acculturation into four terms: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Sam and Berry 472). Assimilation involves individuals who completely give up on their cultural origin and embrace foreign culture. The separation type refers to individuals who refuse to adopt the new culture by preserving their original culture. Integration involves individuals who actively engage with both cultures and form a multicultural identity. In marginalization, individuals reject both cultures and experience a loss of cultural identity. Keeping in mind that this process is affected by the age, cultural roots, and social context that immigrants are exposed to, the first and second generation African immigrants experience different levels of adaptation throughout this process.

In contrast to the first and second generation, the second generation African immigrants, typically described as the children of immigrants, are individuals born in a country outside Africa to parents who were born in an African country and immigrated to their current country. The experiences of the second generation immigrants differ from those of their parents, as they are raised in a socio-cultural context different from that of their ancestral homeland. Regarding this difference, Min Zhou indicates the impact of different cultural, financial and racial backgrounds of the first and second generation immigrants on their "acculturation" and formation of hybrid cultural identity:

> For immigrant children and children of immigrants, growing up American can be a matter of smooth acceptance or of traumatic confrontation. Immigrant children

> are generally eager to embrace American culture and to acquire an American identity by becoming indistinguishable from their American peers. In some cases, however, they may be perceived as "unassimilated" even when they try hard to abandon their own ethnic identities. In other cases, they may be accepted as well-adjusted precisely because they retain strong ethnic identities. (Zhou 90)

As Zhou suggests, compared to their parents, it can be easier for the second generation to both adopt the foreign culture into which they were born and still maintain ties with their original African culture, thanks to their parents. Nevertheless, it is common for the second generation immigrants to have an indirect and weaker connection to their homeland depending on the socio-cultural context of their upbringing, which distinguishes them from the first generation. Since they have hybrid cultural identities, African immigrants can use this in-betweenness as a free pass ticket to navigate both their native culture and Western culture. However, the downside is that, while they can adopt white culture alongside their native culture, they are often perceived as not "white enough" by whites due to their skin color and not "culturally black enough" by natives of their homeland because of the Western practices they have adopted. Ultimately, this tension may leave them torn between these identities, potentially leading to a cultural identity crisis.

Referring back to Frantz Fanon's argument about how being "black" is equivalent to being "different" for white society, African immigrants face the problem of being reduced to their skin color and the continent they come from. Even though each African country colonized by different European countries in various parts of the continent, such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Senegal, has diverse cultural backgrounds, and this affects the experience of African immigrants in forming a hybrid identity, their individual experiences are not usually recognized by Western societies. Their cultural identity is not only oversimplified among themselves but is also often confused with African Americans, who are distinct from them. Considering the Transatlantic slave trade between the 16th and 18th centuries, leading to the African Diaspora by separating Africans from their homeland centuries ago, African Americans experienced major events such as American slavery, the Civil War, the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. These

traumatic historical and social elements significantly influenced the formation of African American cultural identity over the years, forming the foundation of this thesis, which explores how this identity differs from that of African immigrants who arrived in the USA in the late 20th century. As researchers such as Mark P. Orbe, Tina M. Harris, Katja M. Guenther and Asante Godfried assert in their works focusing on the cultural difference between African Americans and African immigrants:

> African-born immigrants and African Americans self-identify differently because of their different lived histories (Jackson, 2006; Orbe & Harris, 2018). Simply, unlike African Americans born in the U.S., African-born immigrants come to the U.S. from nations where Black people represent the majority. As Asante et al. (2016) explain: "they have no reason to believe they are inferior" (p. 369). Further, life in the U.S. cultural context includes understanding and navigating the oppressive, systemic racial structures that render Blacks as inferior to Whites (Guenther et al., 2011; Orbe & Harris, 2018). (qtd. in Whittington, Bell & Otusanya 73)

In light of this argument, even though African Americans and African immigrants share common roots, as both groups are descendants of native African culture, their identity should not be diminished solely to their skin color. This reduction confines them to their ethnic origin, overlooking the fluidity of cultural identity which is a variable concept and an ongoing process.

Regarding the separation between African natives and individuals of African descent who have been living in African diasporas, there have been debates based on certain philosophical views and political movements since the 1900s. Originating from these discussions related to the enslavement of Africans, colonization, and the consequences of the African diaspora, Pan-Africanism emerged as a socio-political and cultural movement, promoting the recognition of a common history, shared identity, and interconnected destinies among people of African descent, both on the African continent and in the global African diaspora in the late 19th century. Henry Sylvester Williams, who is a "barrister from Trinidad, West Indies, the first black intellectual to use the term or to have visions of Pan- Africanism", laid the groundwork for Pan-African thought with the

foundation of the African Association in 1897, highlighting the interconnected histories and common struggles of people of African descent (Middleton 58). As Charles F. Andrain defines Pan-Africanism in his article:

> Pan-Africanists stress the community of interests and experiences of Africans and thereby call attention to the political and social issues which transcend the various territorial nationalist movements. If independent African states are to achieve economic and political viability, their leaders must cooperate to form organizations strong enough to mobilize resources and to implement common goals. This task of organization-building necessitates that the mass of African peoples attain a sense of community solidarity so as to further peaceful, cooperative political action. Hence, the Pan-African leaders seek to synthesize the demands of community and organization. (Andrain 5)

Andrain highlights how Pan-Africanism transcends individual nationalist actions and emphasizes a collective stance of African people against racist discrimination in the world. He suggests that Pan-Africanism encourages African states to form a strong collaboration among themselves to achieve shared goals. In this context, later on, Williams organized the first Pan-African Conference in 1900, which was a significant turning point, bringing together African and diasporic thinkers to address issues of racial discrimination and colonial oppression.

However, despite its shared "unifying" aspect, the perspective of Pan-Africanist thinkers varies according to their cultural backgrounds, altering throughout the 20th century such as the ideological conflict between Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican Pan-Africanist, and W.E.B Du Bois, an African American sociologist. Even though they shared common goals of advancing the rights and dignity of Black individuals, Marcus Garvey had notably different philosophical approaches in contrast to Du Bois. Marcus Garvey, particularly through the "Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)" and "Black Star Line Corporation", added a dimension of cultural pride, a sense of "regaining a lost paradise for Africans everywhere" as a result of Africans' "industrial and commercial progress", influencing the movement's direction in the early 20th century (Ijere 197-200). As Martin O. Ijere explains Garvey's perspective:

> Garvey was determined to make the black man an important person in his immediate environment. All followers were called "Fellow-men of the Negro Race". Women were organized into the Black Cross Nurses with resplendent white uniforms; men could join the Great African Army or the Universal Motor Corps. Though an African empire might not emerge, Garvey felt his proposals were more realistic than those insisting on "theoretical" rights. When Garvey extolled the greatness of the African peoples, Blacks could shove back the shame of discrimination and the horrors of lynching. (Ijere 198)

Based on this perspective, one of Garvey's most distinctive contributions was promoting the "Back to Africa" movement. In contrast to Du Bois' intellectual tendency in racial integration on a global scale through organizing Congresses, Garvey, being an African-born man whose priority is specifically "Africans", was inclined toward racial separatism and advocated for the repatriation of African descendants to the African continent, emphasizing the importance of Africa as the ancestral homeland.

As opposed to Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois argued for the equality of all the minority races with a focus on humanism, aiming to establish an "African co-operation" (Ijere 191) without alienating the black race from the rest of the world by drawing a discriminating line between whites and blacks. During this period, Du Bois became a central figure in advancing Pan-Africanism through a series of Pan-African Congresses beginning in 1919, which was very significant in terms of sharing and spreading his perspective. While Garvey's approach is more based on the economic growth and institutionalization of Africans, Du Bois emphasized African Americans' rights to education and civil rights in the USA to achieve "social change" against racial discrimination by raising awareness in the world (Ijere 194). As Martin O. Ijere explains Du Bois' ideological difference from Garvey in his article:

> According to Du Bois, Negroes had to rid themselves of their "self-centered provincialism" in order to grasp the plight of the African. They should learn of Indian nationalism, of public ownership of utilities and other socialist ideas, and they should learn foreign languages such as French or Spanish in order to exchange

culture. Travel abroad would heighten awareness of developments concerning Pan-Africans. (Ijere 190)

According to this quotation, Ijere indicates Du Bois' global scope of achieving equality, and his emphasis on the importance of unity among Africans, including those of African descent, to fight imperialism and colonialism in several congresses throughout the 20th century. Considering his American national identity and his "inclusive" ideology as opposed to Marcus Garvey, Du Bois' work extended beyond the conferences as he used platforms such as the "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People", established in 1909, to fight for the civil rights of colored people in the United States, including his contribution to *The Crisis*, which is the newspaper of NAACP (Contee 14-15). Regarding Du Bois' efforts to draw people's attention to Pan-Africanism and the struggle of colored people, Clarence G. Contee argues, "Du Bois felt that conferences and discussions were legitimate vehicles as a part of his ideology to effect social, economic and political changes in the oppressive conditions of the African and the Afro-American", indicating the significance of conferences that Bois held during this period (Contee 14). Despite these different perspectives, scholars and historical developments have continued to shape Pan-Africanism, with figures like Frantz Fanon and events like the Sixth Pan-African Congress in 1974, reflecting the movement's ongoing relevance in confronting contemporary issues of justice, equality, and empowerment for people of African descent.

Building on these developments focused on the "blacks" of the world, Pan-Africanism gained momentum as African nations gradually started to win their freedom and sought independence due to the weak economic and political force of the Western countries in the post-World War II period. As the Pan-Africanism movement proceeded to develop in this context, the political presence of African leaders became more explicit, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, and the desire for independence from the colonial powers reached its peak. Highly influenced by his education in the USA and the revival of Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" teachings, Kwame Nkrumah decided to make Ghana an independent government, free from the oppression and control of Western countries. Nkrumah was inspired by the rising African consciousness, the nationalism in northern urban Black communities, and the formation of "the first nationwide black

student unions", which shaped his perspective and motivated him to achieve independence (Clarke 142).

After Nkrumah finished his studies and returned to Ghana in 1947, he started to spread the principles of Pan-Africanism and evoked a sense of nationalism among African people. Following World War II, he established the Convention People's Party by promoting a "Self-Government Now" (Clarke 145) against British rule in the country, eventually leading to Ghana's independence on March 6, 1957 (Clarke 146). Nkrumah hosted the Conference of Independent African States in 1958, contributing to the formation of the "Organization of African Unity (OAU)" in 1963. As Clarke summarizes the significant role of Nkrumah for Ghana's independence at the end of his article:

> Kwame Nkrumah's greatest achievement was in the area of Pan-Africanism. He made his country the rallying point and the inspiration for African countries which still had to win their freedom. He was the first universal African hero of this century. He more than any other person, figuratively, took Africa and its people for their "walk in the sun". He extended his aspiration beyond Pan-Africanism and introduced the possibility of an African World Union. (Clarke 146)

Clarke emphasizes Nkrumah's impact on Ghanaian citizens' ideological transformation and administrative detachment from the colonial powers as a result of Nkrumah's aim to encourage unity among African nations, addressing political, economic, and social challenges by suppressing the remnants of colonialism.

Compared to Ghana's independence, promoting Pan-Africanist ideas in Nigeria was far more challenging due to the country's division into numerous ethnic groups, each with distinct cultural attributes and religious beliefs. As Thomas J. Davis and Azubike Kalu-Nwiwu refer to this diversity in their article, "Nigeria has a multitude of distinct ethnic and linguistic groups. The ethnic contentions among the largest of those groups- the Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa-Fulani- have littered the pages of the new nation's history", underlining the prevalent disunity in Nigeria (Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu 1). The Northern and Southern states of Nigeria were in socio-cultural and political conflict during the early 20th century due to the different dynamics between the colonial countries and ethnic groups in Nigeria. While colonial enforcements such as British education were not

embraced in the Muslim North, where there was not a contact with Europe until the 20th century, the direct contact with the colonizers in the South "induced people there to acquire European education as a matter of choice, not as a consequence of conquest" (Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu 4). Even after the independence of Nigeria in 1960, Nigeria "…existed as a political and legal entity, not as an effective and emotive identity. It was not a nation in the sense of community and common character. It was a state encompassing many ethnic nations, each claiming their own separate heritage, language, and culture" due to the persistent indirect colonization of colonial powers, aiming to keep the ethnic groups separate from each other (Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu 1).

As a result, even though Nigeria was legally independent, this separation hindered the formation of a spirit of nationalism in Nigeria because as Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu assert, "With the larger ethnic groups dominating the separate political regions, the colonial experience provided little basis for fusing ethnic groups in any common sense of nationalism", leading to a political crisis, coups, and the Biafran War, namely the Nigerian Civil War between different states, after the independence (Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu 2). Leaders of various regions, such as Obafemi Awolowo, the Yoruba leader, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Hausa leader who became Nigeria's first Prime Minister in 1957, emphasized the lack of nationalism in Nigeria necessary for embracing Pan-Africanist ideas (Davis and Kalu-Nwiwu 5-6). Numerous military coups, the establishment and overthrow of many governments maintained the chaotic atmosphere in the country until Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency which brought democracy to Nigeria in 1999.

In the context of this socio-cultural and political context, globalization has accelerated the flow of people, ideas, and capital across borders, reshaping notions of identity and belonging in the 21st century. The emergence of digital technologies, increased mobility, and transnational networks has facilitated new forms of cultural exchange and hybridity. Afropolitanism, articulated by scholars such as Taiye Selasi, Achille Mbembe, and subsequently Simon Gikandi, reflects this contemporary reality, emphasizing the fluidity, complexity, and interconnectedness of African identities in a globalized world (Kasanda 381). Even though their focus points and style differ based on their socio-cultural background, Selasi and Mbembe, the most influential figures in this

field, argue for the same ideals of Afropolitanism such as the celebration of a fluid, cosmopolitan African identity that embraces global mobility, cultural hybridity, and a rejection of fixed, territorial definitions of African identity. However, while Taiye Selasi approaches Afropolitanism with a focus on the individual and emotional experiences of Africans in the globalized world by reflecting on her own experience as an immigrant of Nigerian-Ghanaian origin, Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian political theorist, discusses Afropolitanism by utilizing the context of historical factors such as slavery and post-colonialism in a more academic sense than Selasi. Nevertheless, Mbembe is against "reducing" the African identity to only historical context, pointing out the "African reality" in the globalized world (Kasanda 387). Besides their influence in academics, both of them and their view of Afropolitanism are criticized by scholars such as Emma Dabiri concerning the exclusion of the rest of the poor African society by only focusing on "elites" who can travel and interact with other cultures (Kasanda 385). In "Why I Am (Still) Not an Afropolitan", Dabiri argues that the problem lies not in Afropolitans having advantages, but in the fact that, while millions still face deep poverty, the optimistic accounts of a small, fortunate group may overshadow the struggles of the many who continue to be excluded from fundamental opportunities and resources (Dabiri 106). In contrast to Selasi and Mbembe, Dabiri points out that Afropolitanism tends to focus on a narrow group of elite individuals who possess the financial means, education, and passports to thrive in a globalized world. This focus, she argues, excludes the voices and experiences of millions of Africans who lack these privileges and are constrained by poverty, limited access to education, and restricted mobility.

Taiye Selasi's exploration of Afropolitanism has sparked important conversations about identity, culture, and globalization in the 21st century. Her work has contributed to a broader understanding of the complex nature of African identity and how individuals negotiate their sense of belonging in an increasingly interconnected world. In 2005, Selasi describes the idea of having a global African identity in her essay:

> You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent,

> European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic language or two, we understand some indigenous language(s) and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on the Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie's kitchen. Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the institutions (corporate/ academic) that know us for our famed work ethic. We are Afropolitans—not citizens, but Africans, of the world. (Selasi 528)

Reflecting on her personal experiences, Selasi indicates the transcended geographical and cultural boundaries of Africa in the globalized world and the fluid cultural identity as a contemporary concept as opposed to the former doctrines of Pan-Africanism promoting African Nationalism. Rather than seeking to preserve an African identity confined within specific cultural and territorial boundaries, Afropolitanism embraces change and a multicultural identity, allowing for constant evolution. In the contemporary world, Afropolitans are represented as African immigrants living in Western countries who adopt the local culture while remaining connected to their native culture. Since cultural identity is fluid and not bound to a fixed essence, these African immigrants can become "Africans of the world" without adhering to any singular or fixed cultural identity (Selasi 528).

On the other hand, Achille Mbembe's idea of "the circulation of the worlds", which contributes to the development of Afropolitanism, defines "the world as an open space for the mobility of peoples and cultures", relating this mobility to the contemporary function of African identity by referring to the socio-historical and geopolitical context of African societies (Kasanda 382). In his *Out Of The Dark Night,* a collection of essays originally written in French*,* Mbembe explains his perspective of Afropolitanism regarding its mobility:

> The goal of artistic creation is no longer to describe a situation in which one has become a walking spectator of one's own life because one has been reduced to impotence as a consequence of historical accidents. To the contrary, it is a matter

> of bearing witness to the broken man who slowly gets up again and frees himself of his origins. (Mbembe 212)

As reflected in this quotation, Mbembe emphasizes flexibility and agency in response to the historical disempowerment of Africans. He challenges the idea of reducing one's life to merely being a victim of historical circumstances, instead encouraging artistic creation as a transformative act that testifies to the recovery and liberation of Africans in the world. According to Mbembe, this vision of Afropolitanism celebrates mobility and the transcendence of origins, embracing an interconnected identity that should also be represented in African literature. In this context, Albert Kasanda refers to Mbembe's philosophy to demonstrate various perspectives on Afropolitanism: "Mbembe thinks that this mobility characterized African precolonial communities, as they were organized around a nomadic mode. In these communities, people kept moving in pursuit of their diverse interests, and without hindrance or borders" (Kasanda 382). As Kasanda explains in this quotation, Mbembe relates the historical background of African societies to the current movement of Africans all around the world. Nonetheless, even though Mbembe acknowledges the historical background of African societies as a part of their cultural roots, he claims that his idea of "the circulation of the worlds" frees Africans from their racial and cultural tie to Africa, underlining the reality of "cultural pluralism" against "the idea of cultural purity and homogeneity" (Kasanda 383). Kasanda further discusses Mbembe's point of view:

> He emphasizes the contribution of African migrations to shaping African identity. This identity cannot be confined to concordance between skin color (blackness) and the view of Africa as a geographic area. In addition, for Mbembe, this identity stands in opposition to the prejudices and stereotypes often used in talking about Africa and Africans. It is my feeling that he is right to consider African identity impossible to profile through the evocation of the dramatic episodes in African history such as slavery and colonization. African identity concerns peoples and cultures perpetually on the move, coming from (and going towards) different horizons. It is a permanent process. (Kasanda 392)

Kasanda remarks on Mbembe's point on the modern African cultural identity that is in a continuous move throughout the world, rejecting the accordance between the black skin color and the African continent because African identity exceeded its cultural and geographical origins in the globalized world.

1.3 Reflection on Literature

As a result of the socio-cultural and political transitions during the independence, post-independence, and contemporary periods in the context of African societies, these transitions reflect on African literature as well. Accordingly, this thesis will examine the demonstration of the contemporary period in Ghanaian and Nigerian literature, with a particular focus on diasporic and migration experiences in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. While illustrating the historical background of African diasporic identities and migration flows up to the contemporary period in these novels, each author promotes the ideals of Afropolitanism and the adoption of a fluid cultural identity for "Africans of the world", unbound by national borders (Selasi 528). In line with the objective of this thesis, it is essential to examine the literary history and the influence of this period on *Homegoing* by Gyasi and *Americanah* by Adichie. Nigerian literature has been shaped by the country's political and ideological transformations across distinct periods, including the post-independence era, the Nigerian Civil War, and the contemporary period, portraying the prevailing perspectives and movements of each era. Regarding these transition periods, according to Heather Hewett, "As younger writers began to publish, many of them talked about feeling a sense of renewed energy and commitment, and of identifying within themselves a collective identity that set them apart from older writers", emphasizing the impact of Pan-Africanism and the upcoming ideological wave of Afropolitanism in the contemporary Nigerian literature (Hewett 74). Older writers, exemplified by figures like Chinua Achebe, emerged during the post-independence era, focusing on themes such as colonialism, decolonization, and the articulation of a cohesive national identity. Their works were connected to the political and historical realities of their time, emphasizing a more traditional understanding of African identity. In contrast, younger writers, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Yaa Gyasi, focus on a more globalized context, reflecting the interconnectedness of

African identities. This shift aligns with the ideals of Afropolitanism, which emphasizes the fluidity of cultural identities and the notion of being "Africans of the world," unbound by rigid national or geographical borders.

During the first stage in which the Nigerian authors aimed to represent and criticize the colonial rule in their country, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* emerged as one of the most significant literary representatives of the canon of African literature, portraying the impact of British colonialism on Igbo society and the resistance efforts of the protagonist, Okonkwo, against the colonial powers. Later on, *Half of a Yellow Sun* written in 2006 by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, represents the conflicts caused by the Biafran Civil War and promotes Pan-Africanist themes such as questioning the national and cultural identity, stimulating solidarity among African nations. In the contemporary period in which the African identity has become a fluid and global identity after the African immigration flows to Europe and the USA, Adichie emphasizes the prevalent Afropolitanist perspective in the 2000s by underlining the flexibility of cultural identity in the global world through many characters such as Ifemelu and Dike in *Americanah*. As Heather Hewett specifically refers to Adichie and her influence in Nigerian literature:

> While her fiction reveals various influences on Nigerian writers, particularly from the first generation, it also resounds with a wide range of texts, from Nigeria, other African nations, and throughout the black Atlantic. This transnational intertextuality suggests the presence of a heterogeneous, diasporic dimension within contemporary Nigerian literature - a dimension present within many national literatures of the postmodern, globalized world. (Hewett 75)

According to Hewett, Adichie reflects the impacts of the globalized world in Nigerian literature by indicating the diversity of African nations and their distinct cultural identity in the African Diaspora. In most of her novels, especially in *Americanah* which I will be analyzing, Adichie refers to the principles of Pan-Africanism that promote solidarity among all people of African descent including African Americans, demonstrated through the relationship between Ifemelu and her African American boyfriend, Blaine. Moreover, Adichie also celebrates the fluid identity of "Africans of the world" by asserting that the world should recognize the individual and contemporary experience of Africans

in the Diaspora with an Afropolitanist perspective (Selasi 528). As V. Shoba Jini argues with respect to *Americanah*:

> Exposed to the new cultures, Africans adapt with them and it results in cultural hybridity, an important aspect of Afropolitanism. The characters of the novel expose blend of both African and American culture. The Africans portrayed in the novel are willing to adopt the American culture; they see it as a promised land. They experience hybridity in the use of language, choice of career, their ideas, their dress sense, food habits and life-style. They follow the cosmopolitan life style and food habits, but at the same time they have the ethics of Africans. Most of the Afropolitans are multilingual; they know English, their native language and other vernacular languages. (Jini 26)

Jini analyzes Adichie's style by demonstrating her representation of the flexibility of African cultural identity in *Americanah*, indicating the strong connection between the ideals of Afropolitanism and the development of the characters in the novel. Adichie portrays the complex experiences of her characters, illustrating how African immigrants in diaspora adapt to the blending of cultures. As Adichie represents in *Americanah*, African immigrants combine the traditional values of their African heritage with the modern influences of their new environments and this fusion of cultures is reflected in their language, lifestyles, career paths, and relationships. Through these stories, Adichie challenges stereotypes about African identity, instead highlighting its flexibility and diversity which aligns with the ideals of Afropolitanism.

Regarding the effects of the political and ideological transformation in Ghanaian literature due to Pan-Africanism and independence, one of the most significant works that reflects this impact is *Africa Must Unite* written in 1963 by Kwame Nkrumah. Considering Nkrumah's influence in the spread of Pan-Africanism in Ghana, *Africa Must Unite* promoted African unity as a means to achieve political and economic independence from colonial powers, mirroring the socio-cultural and political atmosphere of the period. Even after the independence, just like Nigeria, Ghanaian society and politics went through a phase of corruption in which the remnants of colonialism were still present, as represented in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah in 1968. Armah portrays the

widespread corruption and the challenges faced by individuals striving to maintain their integrity in a society plagued by greed and moral deterioration, revealing the reality behind the politically self-governing Ghana. In the period of global African literature after the 2000s, Yaa Gyasi, a Ghanaian first generation immigrant author, demonstrates how she is influenced by Afropolitanism in her novel, *Homegoing*. As Yogita Goyal asserts in his interview with Gyasi, she differentiates her style from that of other authors of this period:

> Gyasi writes not about fashion, romance, or Afro-modernity, but about the history of Atlantic slavery across two continents over three centuries. Eschewing the Afropolitan in favor of historical fiction, Gyasi joins the company of African diaspora writers of the genre known as neo-slave narratives. (Goyal 471-472)

By illustrating colonialism and the traumatic past of the Atlantic slave trade, leading to the African diaspora throughout 7 generations, Gyasi indicates the interconnectedness of diasporic African and African American experiences and highlights the complexities of identity, belonging across continents and generations in the novel. Gyasi portrays the lives and future generations of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, who are separated from each other in the 18th century in *Homegoing*. While the outcomes of African slavery and the origins of the African Diaspora are illustrated through Esi's experiences, Gyasi, on the other hand, portrays the impacts of Western colonization in Ghana through Effia's story in the novel. Gyasi emphasizes the variability of cultural identities through the children of the last separate generations, Marjorie and Marcus, in the global world from an Afropolitanist perspective towards the end of the novel. Gyasi also acknowledges the influence of colonialism and slavery on shaping these identities in *Homegoing*.

In light of the historical, theoretical, and literary contextual information provided regarding discussions of native African, African immigrant, and African American cultural identities, Yaa Gyasi's interpretation of these distinct cultural identities in *Homegoing*, shaped by unique factors, will be analyzed in reference to Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha in Chapter II. Primarily focusing on the effects of Western colonization in Ghana and African slavery conducted by white Americans, Gyasi illustrates how these two major historical events have shaped the cultural identity of Africans over time. While

emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between these identities, Gyasi also underlines the significance of embracing a fluid cultural identity through an Afropolitanist perspective in her novel. In Chapter III, I will examine the Nigerian immigrant experience within the socio-cultural context of the USA and how Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybrid identity is reflected in the formation of culturally hybrid identities by immigrant characters in *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. As well as Gyasi, Adichie indicates the cultural difference between African American and African immigrant identities. At the same time, she emphasizes their similarities and the shared experience of racism, which unites them in opposition to the dominance of the white race, in alignment with the ideals of Afropolitanism.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORING RACE AS AN ISSUE: AMERICA VS. AFRICA'S HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS IN *HOMEGOING* BY YAA GYASI

What factors contribute to the prevalence of race as an issue in America compared to Africa considering historical and socio-cultural dynamics? The answer to this question depends on the constructed nature of both the white and black races, as well as the evolving relationships developed between these socially fabricated categories over the years. Although the perceived racial difference between black individuals and white individuals is a socially constructed concept rooted in historical and ideological processes, it remains a pervasive issue affecting all black people of African descent. However, the distinct dynamics of interaction between these two racial groups in different cultural contexts separate their understanding of racism as a significant issue. In this chapter, I will be analyzing how Yaa Gyasi reflects the differences resulting from the African Diaspora through numerous characters in *Homegoing*, emphasizing the distinct African American identity as separate from native African culture due to different socio-cultural contexts. Throughout the chapter, this analysis of *Homegoing* will primarily draw on the philosophical arguments of Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha. In order to fully comprehend the basis of this difference, it is crucial to highlight the various important events that occurred throughout the years, shaping the long process of this cultural separation rather than trying to pinpoint a single factor as Gyasi demonstrates in the novel.

During this process, racism has been an essential issue for African Americans since the 16th century with the beginning of the Atlantic Slave trade. However, it is a difficult subject to grasp for African natives and immigrants because their relationship with white Europeans is established on different terms. As a result of the Atlantic slave trade, thousands of black Africans were disconnected from their homeland and its people by the European colonizers between the 16th and 19th centuries. These African people were transported to the American continent by ships, which is a land that is unfamiliar to Africans, leading to the phenomenon of African Diaspora in the USA. While African natives who kept their own people as war prisoners and sold them to white people for profit, maintaining trading deals with colonial powers, African slaves started to live as

subordinates to white slave owners under harsh conditions, surrounded by people of their opposite skin color.

The effect of these distinct cultural contexts is based on their interaction with white culture, which can be analyzed with Frantz Fanon's race theory in terms of the psychological and social impacts of colonization on African slaves and African natives. According to Frantz Fanon, racism and the inferiority of the black race stem from the contact between the white and black race as he puts forward in his *Black Skin, White Masks*. In relation to this, Fanon asserts:

> Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose himself on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, it is this other who remains the focus of his actions. His human worth and reality depend on this other and on his recognition by the other. It is in this other that the meaning of his life is condensed. (Fanon 216-17)

In this quotation, Fanon claims that the binary opposition between black inferiority and white superiority cannot exist without the presence of each other such as the binary opposition between "good" and "bad". Considering that the meaning of "good" depends on the meaning of "bad", this opposition parallels the relationship between "white" and "black". In this context, while "black" is associated with "bad", thus "inferiority" due to racism that is based on white superiority, "white" is associated with "good" and being "better" than the other side of the binary opposition. In order to specify the concept of black inferiority or white superiority, the contrast between these concepts must exist so that the balance in the binary opposition can be secured. As Ava Landry suggests in her article:

> The construction of Blackness is a social project with ideological and material implications. African Americans are bound together by not only the presence of outward physical similarities but also a collective history of American slavery and racial subjecthood, convergent life chances, and shared placement in the US racial structure. (Landry 127)

In order to elevate the white race to the highest social, cultural, economic, and political status, white culture requires an "other", referring to any other race than white. By forcing their supremacy on black individuals and placing them in an "inferior" position, white superiority secures their status at the top of all races.

In light of Fanon's theory, the difference between African slaves and the West African natives is the pattern of their physical and mental contact with white culture. As opposed to African natives, African slaves lived in America for hundreds of years in a socio-cultural context that was directly dominated by white supremacy. African slaves were in close contact with white slave owners and worked in a system that was specifically regulated to subject them to the lowest social class, sometimes even depriving them of their basic human traits and downgrading them to the level of being non-human. Considering that African slaves were forced to live and work in this white culture in which being white is the norm, as soon as black slaves entered that culture, they were labeled as the "different" race.

On the other hand, the West African natives were colonized for centuries in their own motherland and gradually became dependent on the economy of colonial powers. In contrast to the African slaves in the diaspora, African tribes were conducting trade deals with white colonizers under the banner of "business" which separates them from slaves, giving them a sense of subjectivity. Even though African natives were in charge of their own businesses by making their own decisions in terms of the exchange of certain goods and the amount of payment, the mechanism of this business was essentially controlled by European colonizers in the broader framework. As the socio-economic relationship between both sides developed over the years, the impact of colonization started to be more visible with the spread of the English language, Christianity as the new religion, and the values of the white culture.

However, the West African countries slowly adapted to the Western culture by internalizing the idea of white culture as the superior and ideal form of culture. In contrast, African slaves in the USA directly confronted the degrading enforcement of being labeled the "abnormal" race in a society culturally governed by white normativity. Regarding this difference, Frantz Fanon argues, "I find myself suddenly in a world in which things do

evil; a world in which I am summoned into battle; a world in which it is always a question of annihilation or triumph", referring to the moment of becoming aware of one's own skin color (Fanon 228). While African slaves acknowledge the color of their skin in a profound way as they come across white people and observe the discrimination between them, African natives experience colonization in their homeland and partially assimilate into the white culture without encountering "race" as a discrimination since the West African society consists of the black population.

In light of this difference between two socio-cultural contexts, *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi demonstrates the process of this cultural division between African Americans and Ghanaian natives and its impacts on their relationship with black skin color from the 18th to 20th century. In *Homegoing*, Gyasi illustrates the Atlantic slave trade as a significant turning point in the history of African cultural identity and how the following process of African diaspora led to the historical and cultural separation between Ghanaian natives and African Americans, shaping their perspective of "black" skin color in different socio-cultural contexts. In this chapter, I will be analyzing the socio-political and cultural reasons and outcomes of the Atlantic Slave trade, which lead to the African diaspora, through the separation of two Ghanaian half-sisters, Effia and Esi in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. By exploring the different course of progress between these two bloodlines that proceeds until the late 1900s, I examine the significant impacts of colonization in the socio-cultural context of Ghana and the strong remnants of African slavery in American context in Chapter II.

2.1 The Journey to African Diaspora and Becoming African American from the 18th to 20th century in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*

Starting with the lives of two Ghanaian half-sisters in the 18th century, Effia and Esi, Yaa Gyasi portrays the future generations of the sisters and how their separation leads them down different paths in life. By depicting the tribal wars between the Fante and Asante, different states in the Akan region in Ghana, Gyasi illuminates the background of captured prisoners from opposing villages and how the presence of European colonizers in West Africa accelerated the conduct of this traditional canon of capturing prisoners. Apart from taking prisoners as personal servants, the Fante and Asante people were also

engaged in the slave trade with European colonizers, including Dutch, Danish, and British generals. In relation to this, Yaw Bredwa-Mensah states in his article:

> The European contact gave rise to the emergence and growth of African settlements and states in West Africa. On the coast where European trading stations were established, African towns of varying size such as Accra, Cape Coast and Elmina grew up under the fort walls. In the interior regions sizeable towns like Kumasi, Savi, Notse and Ife grew up when the powerful kingdoms of Asante, Whydah, Dahomey and Oyo emerged due to their trading activities with the Europeans. (Bredwa-Mensah 28)

According to Mensah's reference to the economic relationship between Ghana and European countries in the quotation, Ghana, especially the Akan states, was actively engaged in trade and it was a substantial business model during the colonization period. The processed European materials that this trade provided to Ghanaian tribes, which helped tribes to develop their communities to a higher prosperity level, were significantly advantageous for these tribes. As for the colonizers, the trade of the captured African slaves was in great demand for their need of manpower. As a result of this mutual exchange that satisfies both sides, these trade deals increased the demand of captured slaves, leading to a persistent rivalry dynamic among Ghanaian tribes since each tribe has separate deals with the Western colonizers.

In this context, Gyasi depicts Esi, an Asante, who is captured by the Fante people during the war and sold to British colonizers as a slave. Esi is the daughter of a "Big Man" in the Asanteland, living as the prettiest girl in the village until she is enslaved by the British colonizers (31). In addition to selling their own people as slaves to the British, Ghanaian tribes also sell and buy slaves for themselves. Through the perspective of Esi, Gyasi describes the tribal relationships between Fante and Asante and the existing tradition of taking slaves from other villages as "spoils" who can be used for any kind of work (36). The house girl, Abronama, is the representation of this complex relationship between Fante and Asante, signifying the never-ending tension and its impact on innocent children in the novel. As Gyasi specifically focuses on the experience of women as slaves in this context, Maama explains to her daughter Esi the wickedness of slavery by saying

“You want to know what weakness is? Weakness is treating someone as though they belong to you. Strength is knowing that everyone belongs to themselves” (39). With this motherly advice, Maama criticizes slavery as a concept after her husband beats up Abronama. In this context, the cycle of war between tribes, escalated by British colonizers, is represented by the destruction of Esi’s comfortable life in the novel.

After Esi is captured and sold to the British, her life completely turns upside down, and she finds herself being tied with several black people from different villages whom she does not recognize. She is forced to walk for days, “The traders slapped their legs with sticks, making them move faster. For almost half of that week, they walked both day and night. The ones who couldn’t keep up were beaten with the sticks until suddenly, like magic, they could”, which indicates the ruthless attitude of the opposite villages against their own race (45). Concerning this, Gyasi refers to the trading system among the villages, which is based on the profit through Chief Abeeku’s suggestion, “Tomorrow, if they pay more, we will work with them too. This is how you build a village. Do you understand?”, indicating the payment as his priority (46). The value of trade with the colonizers and the received European materials improves the welfare of the tribes in terms of food and protection, resulting in the recklessness of the Chiefs who were only interested in the amount of payment regardless of the cultural and emotional connection with their own race. Additionally, they were not keen to establish friendly relationship dynamics with different Western colonizers such as the British and Dutch, as they only focused on who paid more.

Illustrating parts from a slave’s day at the slave dungeons on the Gold Coast of Ghana, Yaa Gyasi provides detailed descriptions of the inhumane conditions that Esi and other captured slaves endure in the basement of Cape Coast Castle. Even though this castle on the coast of Ghana remains unnamed in the novel, it is a settlement established by European colonizers for gold and slave trading, which is a reference to the actual Elmina Castle, built in 1482 by the Portuguese. Although the Castle was built for the gold trade, it became a main location for slave trading as Yaw Bredwa-Mensah explains, “…by the eighteenth century, slaves had become the main trade commodities due to the growth of slave-based agricultural economies of the Caribbean and the Americas. Millions of men

and women either kidnapped or victims of warfare were sold on an increased scale to the various European traders in West Africa" (29). As a result of this switch from the gold trade to slave trade, due to the convenient location of Elmina Castle by the ocean, the Castle became the most popular and utilized place for slave trade. However, Elmina Castle was also used as a home for the British colonizers, concealing the horrors of slave trade and the inhumane conditions that they endure downstairs. In the novel, the fictional castle depicted is inspired by this historical building, reflecting its dual role as both a site of colonial luxury and a place of immense suffering.

In this castle described in *Homegoing*, women slaves are kept in a separate dungeon, exposed to sexual assault by European soldiers, and compelled to live in unhygienic conditions. While slaves suffer downstairs, in the upper part of the castle, white soldiers such as Effia's husband, General James, live an unbothered, regular life upstairs. As opposed to Esi who is captured in tribal wars and brought to the dungeons in the Castle, her half-sister, Effia is given away in marriage and lives as the illegal wife of a white British general in the novel. Gyasi describes the dungeon Esi lives:

> ...the waste on the dungeon floor was up to Esi's ankles. There had never been so many women in the dungeon before. Esi could hardly breathe, but she moved her shoulders this way and that, until she had created some space. The woman beside her had not stopped leaking waste since the last time the soldiers fed them. (47)

According to Gyasi's depiction, Esi and other slaves are fed with a "porridge", insufficient in nutrition, and are deprived of basic human needs of having some personal space and privacy (32). They are not allowed to cry or scream even though they are getting assaulted because white soldiers could punish them all in return. They are stacked on top of one another so that white soldiers can squeeze more bodies into the dungeon, treating them only as pieces of flesh to fulfill their task, which is keeping as many slaves as possible in the dungeon. After Esi gets sexually assaulted by a white soldier when she was at the age of fifteen, even though the soldier is the one who violates Esi's body, "Esi knew that the soldier had done something that even the other soldiers would find fault with. He looked at her like her body was his shame" (48). In this quotation, Gyasi demonstrates how the body of black slaves is perceived as an entity of "disgust" by white soldiers (48).

Regarding this relation between "disgust" and "skin color", in his book *The Anatomy of Disgust*, William Ian Miller asserts:

> Disgust helps define boundaries between us and them and me and you. It helps prevent our way from being subsumed into their way. Disgust, along with desire, locates the bounds of the other, either as something to be avoided, repelled, or attacked, or, in other settings, as something to be emulated, imitated, or married. (Miller 50)

According to this quotation, Miller suggests that feeling of disgust emerged from "the bounds of the other", which in this case, refers to the binary opposition between black and white race in *Homegoing*. When the white soldier who sexually assaults Esi faces with the fact that she is "black" and "something to be avoided", he is immediately filled with the feeling of disgust and regret as a result of his action (Miller 50). Through the sudden change in Esi's life from being a free woman to being a slave in the novel, Gyasi portrays the socio-cultural context of Ghana in the 18th century which enables this switch to occur since tribal wars and slave trade are prevalent. In Esi's part in the novel, Gyasi indicates how easy it is to be a slave in Ghana even though Esi is the daughter of a rich, respected, "Big Man" and a loving mother who love Esi and care about her well-being. By demonstrating this switch through Esi's part in the novel, Gyasi highlights the contrast between the pre-slavery life of a Ghanaian and the harrowing transition to life as a slave. This includes enduring the dungeons' inhumane conditions before becoming part of the Atlantic Slave Trade and being subjected to relentless persecution.

Gyasi illustrates the experience of Esi as a slave in America and how she carries her bloodline to the USA in the 18th century with the birth of Ness through the representation of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the cultural rupture that it caused between African Americans and Ghanian natives. Esi's lineage proceeds through her enslaved daughter, Ness, who is plucked away from Esi and compelled to work on a cotton plantation in the Southern USA. In relation to this slavery system in the USA, David S. Reynolds refers to Sinha's description of American slavery in his article, " 'Modern racial slavery…was a monstrous hybrid that combined the horrors of an archaic labor system with the rapacious efficiencies of capitalism (3)' " (qtd. in Reynolds 108). Gyasi represents

the impact of capitalism in the labor system during this period and how slavery was one of the fundamental factors that contributed to the growth of capitalism since plantation-based economy was prevalent through Ness's experience in *Homegoing*. Throughout Ness' part in the novel, Gyasi points out certain traits of the American slavery that traumatizes the African slaves, which remains as a collective trauma of African Americans based on this period. As Ness is sold from one plantation to another in the Southern states such as Mississippi and Alabama, she simply refers to these places as "Hell" and the master of the plantation as "the Devil", describing the plantations as the little hell on earth for African slaves (71).

In this context, African slaves were deprived of education so that they would not be encouraged to seek for their rights and freedom. Therefore, Ness does not even know her age which signifies how slavery and the living conditions of African slaves was normalized by white culture. Regarding these living conditions of black people in the USA, Fanon suggests in his *Black Skin, White Masks,* "Willy-nilly, the Negro has to wear the livery that the white man has sewed for him" (Fanon 34). Fanon uses "livery" as a metaphor for the social image that white society creates for black people, which is accepted as the correct form of image by the black society since they cannot even think of rejecting this image due to lack of education. As a portrayal of this "normalization" in the novel, Ness expresses, "Thomas Allan Stockham was a good master, if such a thing existed. He gave them five-minute breaks every three hours, and the field slaves were allowed onto the porch to receive one mason jar full of water from the house slaves", assuming the supremacy of white slave owners as the truth (68-69). Deciding what the African slaves deserve was up to the white slave owners, completely disregarding the needs and demands of the slaves because black people were always taught to be the "inferior" ones whose opinions were worthless. Regarding the white master's power and control over the slaves, all the slaves were expected to serve the masters beyond their capabilities such as slave child Pinky in the same plantation. Even though Pinky loses her ability to speak due to her mother's traumatic death, a little white boy, Tom Jr, accuses Pinky of wrongdoing she is not responsible for. He demands her to speak by saying "She'll talk if I tell her to talk" and commands Pinky to apologize by threatening her with a cane and referring to her as "Speak, nigger" in the novel (75). Since the words of a black slave

do not carry the worth to be evaluated, the master puts the blame on Pinky, illustrating the white dominance in the American slavery period.

In Esi's lineage, the loss of contact with the native African land in the next generation is demonstrated through the change of Ness' language in the novel. Even though Esi's native language is Twi, using the native language was prohibited by the white masters to avoid the creation of social space and a foreign communication form that they could not control. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan author and theorist, asserts in his "Decolonising the Mind*",* "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture", Twi language that African slaves use in the novel is a symbol of their native culture and a gateway to their homeland even though they are far away from it (Thiong'o 13). Therefore, the slave owners forced them to learn English, which is deprived of any connection to their native land, so that the slave are detached from their former cultural identities, becoming only a property for the white masters. In the plantations, the African slaves were violently beaten and whipped until they could speak in English as Ness explains in the novel. After Esi is caught speaking in Twi to Ness when she was a child, her master heavily whips Esi until Ness speaks English and screams out "My goodness!"—the words escaping her without thought, no doubt picked up from the cook..." (69). This scene depicts how African slaves were being compelled to fulfill certain demands that they were not capable of meeting (69).

Esi's heavy Twi accent in English that Ness recalls as a reminder of African culture draws a line between Ness and her mother, underlining the first stages of African slaves' estrangement from their native culture. Year safter Esi's death, when Ness tries to remember a song in Twi that Esi used to sing, she does not understand the meaning of the song. As time passes by, whenever Ness pushes her memory to remember Esi's Twi, she tries "...to still her mind until all that was left was the thin, stern line of her mother's lips, lips that used to usher out words of love in a tongue that Ness could no longer quite grasp. Phrases and words would come to her, mismatched or lopsided, wrong" (71). As a result of Ness' frequent exposure to English while she was growing up as a slave child in an environment which Twi was prohibited, her English subdues her blurry memory of Twi (72).

Gyasi portrays how the individual relationships among African slaves are controlled by the white masters such as choosing a wife for a male slave and a husband for a female slave without their consent. The slave owners used the bodies of slaves against their free will as an instrument of reproduction to secure the continuation of labor in the plantations. Concerning this, Angela Davis describes the brutal conditions of American slavery as such:

> The American brand of slavery strove toward a rigidified disorganization in family life, just as it had to proscribe all potential social structures within which black people might forge a collective and conscious existence. Mothers and fathers were brutally separated; children, when they became of age, were branded and frequently severed from their mothers. That the mother was "the only legitimate parent of her child" did not therefore mean that she was even permitted to guide it to maturity. (82-83)

The embodiment of the white master in this context, "The master of Hell", gives away Ness to Sam, a man "...who comes straight from the Continent and speaks no English" because the master "prefers his slaves married "for reasons of insurance" (77). Considering that Ness is new to Hell, the master justifies his actions by claiming that "no one has claimed her...", disregarding their humanity and reducing their worth into an "object" (77). Sam is described as a violent, "African beast" who is difficult to "tame" as he refuses to learn English and comply with the rules of the plantation, representing the white societies view of the native Africans as "animals" (77). Frantz Fanon refers to this human-animal dynamic between the white and black race in *Black Skin, White Masks* as "The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation", underlining the psychological basis of this relationship (Fanon 12). Since the white colonizers grew up in a socio-cultural context in which it is deemed to believe that the black race is inferior and the African slaves lack human characteristics, the white masters assume the right to treat them like "animals" by "mating" them among themselves against their will.

As a significant stage that contributes to the collective trauma of African Americans that shapes their cultural identity, Gyasi depicts the process of African slaves

plotting escape plans from the plantations and moving to the Northern States where free "negroes" live in better conditions (104). After Kojo's birth, Ness contemplates her son's possible future in slavery and she does not want him to be "damaged" as her because "Ness's skin was no longer skin really, more like the ghost of her past made seeable, physical", which remains as a reminder of her past that she cannot forget (71). Gyasi's portrayal in this part is similar to Toni Morrison's aim of remarking the forgotten traumatic past of slavery in *Beloved* as Missy Dehn Kubitschek refers to in her book, *Toni Morrison: A Critical Companion,* "Morrison's critically acclaimed novel Beloved probes the most painful part of the African American heritage, slavery, by way of what she has called "rememory"" (Kubitschek 115). In this context, the experiences of Morrison's Sethe, a former slave, are in parallel to the experiences of Gyasi's Ness since both of them are traumatized by slavery and both of them want to give their children a better life than themselves. Throughout Ness' part, Gyasi highlights the significance of freedom for African slaves and the sacrifices made by these slaves who wanted a better future for their next generation.

In order to protect her son, Kojo, from this traumatic memory, Ness tries to escape to the North with the help of Aku, an old Asante woman, who is known as "Nyame nsa, hand of God, of help", symbolizing the solidarity among African slaves and the leading figures who left a mark in the history of American slavery such as Harriet Tubman (81). However, when they are caught by Thomas Allan, Ness sacrifices the freedom of herself and Sam, surrendering to "the Devil" so that Kojo can have his freedom. Gyasi portrays the brutality of slavery by indicating the opposition between "Hell" and "freedom" when Ness announces her baby as "dead" after she is caught, referring to the slave mothers such as "Margeret Garner", who "killed their children to set them free" (82). Margaret Garner, an African slave in the 19th century, killed one of her children after she was caught as a fugitive slave because, as Gyasi implies in *Homegoing*, even death is better than going back to "Hell". After Ness is brought back to the plantation, she keeps enduring the harsh conditions of American slavery and marks the historical onset of the African Diaspora in the USA.

Through illustrating Kojo's life in Baltimore, Gyasi demonstrates the changing dynamics between white society and African slaves as they move to the North and the results of this change in the novel. No matter if they are "runaways" with forged "free papers" or "free born" slaves, Gyasi points out the invalidity of these legal forms against the power of racism in the 19th century USA. As a ship worker for white people who builds the "evil" that "had brought them to America in the first place" (104), Kojo tries to survive as an "ex-slave" to provide for the needs of his family (105). Gyasi indicates the ongoing white dominance in workspaces even though Kojo and other black ex-slaves are free, thus, they are neither treated as equals to white workers nor paid equally. As a result of the persistent white norms of the American society, any kind of crime was associated with black workers. As Kojo suggests in the novel, "...whenever a boat was robbed, all the black dockworkers were rounded up and questioned", stigmatizing the black race as the "untrustworthy" compared to the "noble" white race (104). As Frantz Fanon explains the psychological mechanism of this stigmatization in *Black Skin, White Masks*, he suggests that "It is the racist who creates the inferiorized", pointing out the need of the white race to find an "inferior" to their "superior" (Fanon 93). Fanon argues that this construction of inferiority serves the psychological needs of the dominant group, particularly the white race in colonial contexts, by reinforcing their sense of superiority and justifying their oppressive actions such as labeling them as "criminals" as Gyasi indicates throughout Kojo's part in *Homegoing*. Concerning this racist attitude, approaching a "white" woman was enough for black men to be accused of "bothering" them (118). When Kojo's wife is kidnapped and he asks people on the street if they have seen her, without listening to what he is asking, the woman assumes that Kojo is going to hurt her due to the stigma of black people as criminals.

One of the characteristics that free blacks had to sacrifice for freedom was their "name" as illustrated in the novel. The first time when Kojo's free paper was forged by Mr. Mathison, his Asante name was turned into "Jo", a white name, "taking away" his native name as "the first step" of being a free "negro" in America (110). In light of this practice, Gyasi represents the white societies' intent to disconnect Africans from their cultural roots, thus, altering their cultural identity by means of giving them "American" names so that they can be easily controlled. Therefore, Kojo's new name, "Jo" refers to

the loss of his African cultural identity and foreshadows the weak bond to the native land in the next generations, which leads to the diasporic identity of African Americans. Additionally, Yaa Gyasi refers to the common usage of the same surname among black people by giving Kojo the "Freeman" surname, reflecting their attempt to be set free from the assigned racist categorizations (105). Kojo has to embrace the American name and surname just like his parents, Ness and Sam so that he can step forward towards his freedom at the cost of disconnecting from his native culture.

Signaling the beginning of the resistance against American slavery that led to the Civil War later, Gyasi illustrates the effort of the white abolitionists to save as many slaves as possible by helping them to escape to the Northern states and protecting them against the white slave owners. The Mathison house, which used to be "a stop on the Underground Railroad", symbolizes the hidden paths that runaway slaves used which were controlled and protected by the white abolitionists (106). In this house, the abolitionists were holding meetings and discussions about the emancipation of the slaves and the possible events supported by racists that would endanger the freedom of African slaves. In the novel, the conflict between the Northern abolitionists and the Southern slave owners who were trying to justify slavery was demonstrated by the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. As Stephen Middleton explains in his article:

> The federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 enacted the clause when it approved the rendition of escaped slaves, and made it a crime to harbor or conceal alleged runaways. The Fugitive Slave Law (FSL) went almost without notice for four decades. When the antislavery movement accelerated during the 1830s, its leaders condemned the law, claiming that it went beyond the scope intended by the framers. (20)

As a representation of this period in the novel, Mr. Mathison, one of these antislavery pioneers, warns Kojo about this new law enforcement because as a runaway ex-slave, Kojo can be arrested and sent back to the former master's plantation "no matter how long ago they escaped", jeopardizing his freedom and his right to live with his family in Maryland (110). However, even though Anna is legally freed by her master, she is kidnapped by white people and sold to the South while she is pregnant with Kojo's child.

By demonstrating the destruction of an ex-slave family in the novel, Gyasi points out the persistent racist system, the Fugitive Slave Law, which continues to enslave African people in the USA and how African families suffered due to losing members of their family to the Fugitive Slave Act such as Kojo's child. While Kojo tries to rationalize the aim of this act which abolitionists called "Bloodhound Law", he questions the hatred in white society by asking, "They'd heard about the dogs, the kidnappings, the trials. They'd heard it all, but hadn't they earned their freedom? The days of running through forests and living under floorboards. Wasn't that the price they had paid?" (117). Anna being only one of these black people who were snatched from their family during this period, Gyasi portrays the process by which the fear as a collective cultural attribute of African slaves becomes deeply inked in their cultural identity.

As one of the most momentous events of American history, Gyasi illustrates the post-Civil War period in the USA and the socio-economic impacts of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century through H, Kojo's son. The discord between Southern America in which the plantation-based economy was heavily dependent on the labor of African slaves and the Northern States, moving to a more of an industrial-based economy, led to the American Civil War from 1861 to 1865. Given that the ban on the Atlantic Slave trade did not end slavery itself in America and there were still illegally enslaved blacks besides the free ones, the consequences of the Civil War paved the way for the economic and socio-cultural reconstruction of the Southern states in the 19th century. As a result of the Emancipation Proclamation, issued by the President of the United States Abraham Lincoln in 1865, African slavery was abolished, marking the end of the American Civil War.

The hardship of building a life as an ex-slave is depicted through H's life, who is represented as one of these legally "free" slaves in *Homegoing*. Gyasi portrays this difficult process throughout which the white supremacy rejects free slaves and how the persistent injustices of the criminal justice system against the black society in the USA complicate this process. As soon as H. leaves his old master's plantation in Georgia and walks towards his freedom after the end of the Civil War, he is caught by the state of Alabama and sent to jail for days. Even though slavery was abolished when H. was 13

years old, he is still exposed to the same racist attitudes as his father, Kojo, experienced years ago, emphasizing the sustained racism in the white society that wears the mask of a "free" America after the Civil War. While H is walking on the street and minding his own business as a free black individual, police arrests and puts him in chains for "studyin' a white woman" (144). H. is demanded to pay "ten-dollar fine" by the guard, an amount he cannot afford as an ex-slave (145). Since H. does not have a family who can cover the fee, he is sent to work in the coal mines as a "convict" in Birmingham until his debt is paid. Regarding this, Lawrence D. Bobo and Victor Thompson underlines the white superiority based criminal justice system in their article by referring to A. Leon Higginbotham, a legal expert (Bobo and Thompson 448). As Bobo and Thompson underline in their article, Higginbotham asserts that American law formerly endorsed a belief in the inferiority of black people, which he believes still influences the American society today (Bobo and Thompson 448). Gyasi represents this "black inferiority" through a dialogue between H. and a white man. When H. tries to defend himself by saying "I'm a free man!", the boss of the coal mine claims, "No such thing as a free nigger", indicating the white societies' newly found ways of enslaving black people and the partial impotency of the Emancipation Proclamation in the American society after the Civil War (147). In light of the lasting racism in the criminal justice system of the USA, Gyasi demonstrates the vulnerable state of the freed black people who do not know how to stay alive in the white man's world and how their weakness was taken advantage of by white domination.

During this period in the 19th century, coal mining became a substantial industry that fueled the economic development of the USA as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Based on this context, Ronald L. Lewis emphasizes the role of ex-slaves by suggesting that the world literature overlooks the significant number of black individuals whose migration to the north was halted by an extended stay in the central Appalachian coalfields starting from the 1880s and peaking in the early 1920s, mainly in southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky (Lewis 78-80). As Lewis suggests, the contribution of black people and their unfairly used labor during this period in the Appalachian coal fields is overlooked, as demonstrated by Gyasi in the novel. The underground world in the business entirely consisted of black "criminals" who used to be "...once slave, once free, now slave again" just like H. himself (148-49). These so-called "criminals" were working, chained

to each other, under harsh conditions that pushed the boundaries of humanity. As described by H:

> Sometimes H thought that burning pain would set the coal on fire, and they would all die there, from the pain of it. But, he knew, it wasn't just pain that could kill a man in the mine. More than once, a prison warden had whipped a miner for not reaching the ten-ton quota... And when the pit boss had seen the missing 171 pounds, he'd made the man put his hands up against the cave wall, and then he'd whipped him until he died, and the white wardens did not move him that night or the rest of the next day, leaving the dust to blanket his body, a warning to the other convicts. Other times, mine stopes had collapsed, burying the prisoners alive. (148)

Illustrating the tough conditions of working as a "black" coal mine worker who has a criminal record, Gyasi refers to the unjust Criminal Justice System that takes advantage of black labor in the context of the prevalent coal mining industry in the 19th century, which unfairly "imprisons" innocent black people just because they are the descendants of slaves. In H's part, including children under 12 years old, over fifty miner convicts were sharing the same small room filled with coal, leaving permanent damage in their lungs due to long working hours. Even though H. makes some black friends who share the same destiny with him during this time, most of the workers are either transferred to another mine or die all of a sudden because "It was easy to make friends but impossible to keep them" as a result of the beatings of white people and the dirty air that sticks to their lungs (152). In response to the detrimental effects of these working conditions on the health of the black coal miners, Gyasi emphasizes the damage that the biased Criminal Justice System causes in the life quality of black people as opposed to white people who are "superior" and protected in this system.

Furthermore, black people were considered equal to white criminals who were charged with major crimes such as murder and they were working as a payment for the crimes that they did not commit. As Gyasi represents in the novel, even though it was not that often, sometimes "third-class" white men were sent to work in the mines next to black workers (149). Although the level of crime should have an equal penalty for both white

and black races, the white man, Thomas, claims that he is better than "niggers" by begging his "white brothers" to "spare" him, highlighting the continuing inequality based on race in the system of law even after the end of slavery in the USA (149).

After H. finished his time as a convict in the mines and moves to Pratt City where both black and white ex-convicts live, he joins the "Union" (155), established by coal mine workers, to fight for better working conditions such as "better pay, better care for the sick, and fewer hours" (158). At the church where the meetings are held, the Union members suggest making a "strike" for the demands of the mine workers. As a response to this, H. asserts that the strike is meaningless by asking "When a white man ever listened to a black man?", indicating racism as an obstacle to expressing opinions and demanding equal working conditions with white people (157). Even though the "Union" also includes white people, while these people are murder ex-convicts, black miners such as H's best friend Joecy spends 9 years as a convict for not crossing "the street when a white woman walk by", which represents the social class equality between the innocent black people and white murder convicts in the novel (158).

As a crucial socio-political mass movement in the history of the United States, Gyasi portrays the course of the Great Migration in the 1900s by depicting its impacts on Willie's life in Harlem at the beginning of the 20th century. Following her father H's death, Willie and her husband Robert decide to move to the North, specifically New York, partaking in the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South to urban centers in the North, Midwest, and West in the 20th century. As a result of the enforcement of the Jim Crow Laws, a set of laws that legitimized the racial segregation in the Southern states, thousands of African Americans were motivated by a desire to escape the prevalent racial discrimination and economic challenges. Accordingly, due to the demand of employees in the industrial cities after World War I, Willie and Robert migrate to New York with the hopes of earning higher salaries and building a better life for their child, Carson.

However, despite being treated equally regardless of their different skin tones in Pratt City among African Americans, their lives in Harlem, the heart of African American society which is considered "inferior" by the rest of the white New Yorkers during this

period, positions Willie and Robert in opposite social statuses depending on their skin color, leading them to have separate lives in the novel. When Willie first meets Robert, she is amazed by his colored eyes and his "cream" (184) skin color, referring to the lightness of his skin despite having black parents, and she asserts that Robert Clifton is "the whitest black boy she had ever seen" who carries both black and white in him (183). After they settle in Harlem with great expectations of future, they acknowledge their skin tone difference and how this uplifts Robert to a higher social status than Willie, based on the norms of white society. Even though they are surrounded by "nothing but black folks, nearly all of them newly arrived from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas", the employers in Harlem are mostly whites who do not welcome black people from the South such as Willie (188). Referring to the socio-cultural context of New York, Stewart E. Tolnay asserts:

> Regional cultural differences aggravated the numerical concerns of native northerners, as the migrants' southern ways were often interpreted as signs of laziness, ignorance, and dangerousness. Partially on the basis of these stereotypes, southern migrants were blamed for a variety of social problems that afflicted urban communities, including crime, alcoholism, venereal disease, and illegitimacy. (Tolnay 218)

As a representation of this perspective of the white natives, Gyasi illustrates an instance between the couple and a white shop owner in the novel. When Willie and Robert stop by an ice-cream shop to apply for a position on their first day in Harlem, as soon as the white employer sees the intimacy between them, he asks Robert, "You married to a black woman?" by looking down on him for marrying to an "inferior" race who used to be slaves before he refuses Robert's application (188). After being exposed to the realization of their difference, Willie has this "forward memory... of loneliness. She could feel it approaching, a condition she would have to learn to live with", signifying the upcoming struggles for African Americans in the white society after the Great Migration (189). As I referred to Fanon's argument on the binary opposition between black and white race at the beginning of the chapter, this dynamic between the couple reflects deeply entrenched societal biases rooted in colonialism, slavery, and Eurocentric beauty standards through Robert's lighter skin color privilege in comparison to Willie and how black people

internalizes the idea of white skin color as a superiority, resulting in the rise of hierarchy among the black society.

Since Robert is easily mistaken for being "white" with his light skin, the couple decides to walk separately on the streets to increase Robert's chance of finding a decent job. In Robert's terms, they learn "to be in Harlem" which means:

> they no longer walked together on the sidewalk. Robert always walked a little ahead of her, and they never touched. She never called his name anymore. Even if she was falling into the street or a man was robbing her or a car was coming at her, she knew not to call his name. She'd done it once, and Robert had turned, and everyone had stared. (190)

With this portrayal of 1900s Harlem in the novel, Gyasi signifies the sharp distinction between the power of having a light skin color that can be confused with the white race and being simply "black", thus being inferior in the American society. In this context, Gyasi indicates Robert's desire to be "white" due to the socio-economic advantages of being a part of the white society at the expense of losing his family because Robert realizes that "whiteness" is the only way to have a comfortable life. In light of this argument, Fanon asserts, "The Negro is comparison. There is the first truth. He is comparison: that is, he is constantly preoccupied with self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal. Whenever he comes into contact with someone else, the question of value, of merit, arises" (Fanon 211). According to this quotation, Gyasi does not only represent black individuals' socio-cultural difference from the white society, but she also emphasizes their difference from their fellow Africans who possess lighter skin color because the black race, represented as Willie, always questions their own worth in "comparison" to the others such as Robert in *Homegoing*. As a result of the couple's estrangement from one another while Robert finds a job with a high salary, Willie is rejected to be a singer in the "Jazzing" due to her "too dark" skin color compared to the "light" colored girls (191). Thus, Willie is left with lower class job alternatives such as working as a cleaning lady in rich people's houses and shops. During her time as a cleaner in the Jazzing, Willie faces the representation of African Americans as "savages", portrayed by the light-skinned actors in the shows filled with white audience. As described by Willie:

> In one of the shows, an actor had pretended to be lost in an African jungle. He was wearing a grass skirt and had marks painted on his head and arms. Instead of speaking, he would grunt. Periodically, he would flex his pecs and pound his chest. He picked up one of the tall, tan, and terrific girls and draped her over his shoulder like she was a rag doll. The audience had laughed and laughed. (193)

Through Willie's perspective, Gyasi demonstrates the representation of the African continent as "uncivilized" in the American society. The actor on the stage refers to the white society's perception of the African natives who are the bygone ancestors of Willie and the jungle is the representation of the "uncivilized" environment in which African tribes live as opposed to the "civilized" white society who live in buildings and wear civilized clothes. Gyasi demonstrates the white audience's perspective of African dialects as meaningless words and sounds even though African dialects are also languages that enables communication just like English. However, since their dialects are not "English", the civilized language of the American society, the white audience considers these dialects as "gibberish" which hold no significance, instead of respecting Africans' cultural diversity. Furthermore, Willie describes the next scene as "They started singing a song that Willie had never heard before, one about how grateful they should all be to have such kind masters to take care of them" (194), which emphasizes the false depiction of the Southern plantations as a peaceful place where slaves worked under comfortable conditions, taken care by "kind masters". Accordingly, Edward Said's statement concerning the representation of the South in his *Orientalism* reflects Gyasi's portrayal of these scenes in *Homegoing*:

> With disenchantment and a generalized-not to say schizophrenic-view of the Orient, there is usually another peculiarity. Because it is made into a general object, the whole Orient can be made to serve as an illustration of a particular fonn of eccentricity. Although the individual Oriental cannot shake or disturb the general categories that make sense of his oddness, his oddness can nevertheless be enjoyed for its own sake. (Said 102)

In light of Said's criticism of the "generalization" of the Orient as an "eccentric" place, Gyasi reflects this generalization on American society's perspective of the Africans

as “uncivilized” who are “saved” by the white master in *Homegoing*. According to Said’s argument, by representing the Orient as “eccentric”, the West establishes power control over the Orient so that the South can stay fixed in their “uncivilized” position. The root of this “eccentricity” is based on the binary opposition between the values of the civilized West and the uncivilized South. Therefore, every kind of social value, language and cultural attributes that do not apply to the Western culture is considered to be “abnormal” as Gyasi portrays in *Homegoing* through Willie’s perspective.

Regarding the evolving relationship between Robert and Willie, Robert gradually starts to claim a “white” identity to fit into the white society’s work environment by ignoring his black wife in front of his white co-workers. Similar to the moment when Willie loses track of Robert and thinks that Robert “...looked so white now, it only took a few seconds for her to lose him completely, just one white face among the many...”, Robert grows distant from his black identity symbolized by Willie, ultimately leading to their divorce (190). Robert becomes just like a member of “the Morrises”, “the family had not yet resigned themselves to their own blackness, so they crept as close to the white folks as the city would allow”, indicating the superiority complex not only between the white and black people but also among black people with different skin tones as well (191). Regarding this issue, Margaret L. Hunter goes back to the root of this difference between dark and light skin color among Africans and explains the historical background as:

> The creation of skin color hierarchies for African Americans dates back to the American system of chattel slavery. Slave owners used skin color as a basis to divide enslaved Africans for work chores and to create distrust and animosity among them, minimizing chances for revolt. This early skin color hierarchy has persisted in the African American community. (Hunter 177)

As a result of this classification conflict, while Robert can “pass” beyond Harlem owing to his light skin by marrying a white woman, Willie is confined within the borders of Harlem with Carson. Whenever “the colors” start to change at the border of Harlem, Willie has “...to keep her body small, squaring her shoulders in, keeping her head down”, representing the psychological impacts of racial discrimination on African Americans (201). In relation to Robert’s choice of skin color in the novel, Frantz Fanon asserts that

“However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white”, underlining the white skin color as the fixed feature of being at the top of the social order as opposed to the black people who are naturally deprived of this position (Fanon 12). Robert being aware of this bitter truth, he gives up on his life as a “black” man and he chooses to be “white” because it is the only destination for him to have a superior social class in the American society.

By illustrating Sonny’s life, Willie’s son, in the second half of the 20th century Harlem. Gyasi indicates the prevailing racial discrimination under the banner of the “separate but equal” legal principle and the organized riots against the government by African Americans who are actively fighting for their equal rights. As a result of the Plessy v. Ferguson case in 1896, the American government approved the “separate but equal” doctrine in United States constitutional law, claiming to provide equal services to both races in education, healthcare, business, and transportation as long as the accommodation is separate. However, in fact, the reality was quite different as Douglas J. Flecker suggests in his article about “separate but equal” doctrine:

> ...some African-Americans became concerned over the fact that the separate schools were not being used for their original purpose and they feared that the black schools were no longer beneficial to African-American children. They believed the segregation tended to strengthen, rather than weaken, racial prejudice. They wanted integrated schools in order to provide African-American children with a better education and to end the inferiority implied by segregation. (Flecker 302)

In the context of Harlem during this period, Gyasi represents Sonny’s life, Willie’s son, who is a member of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), a civil rights organization in the USA that works towards promoting the equal rights for African Americans and other marginalized communities. Through representing Sonny’s experience in the poor houses of African Americans in Harlem owing to his job in the “housing team” of the organization, Gyasi highlights the low socio-economic status of the area in the novel (223). While Sonny talks to his people who live with “roaches and rats” and keep “the toothbrushes in the fridge”, he can instantly identify

with them since he lived with forty people in the same apartment and had to stay in one of the houses Willie used to clean when he was a child (223). This poor life quality in Harlem signifies the invalidity of the "separate but equal" doctrine because while other neighborhoods in New York which are mostly white populated are provided with economic aid when there is need, black population in Harlem is excluded in these cases, keeping the two societies separated but "not" equal. Regarding the "separate" education, Sonny criticizes the inequality between the public schools in Harlem and the "fancy white schools in Manhattan" by highlighting the quality difference (227). Sonny argues that while Harlem schools, "had the ceiling falling in", and lacked sufficient school materials for children, the schools in Manhattan, predominantly occupied by the white population, were "clean and shiny, with smartly dressed white children entering and exiting as calmly as can be" (227). According to the persistent racial discrimination in the USA, Sonny claims that the segregation did not provide equality as it promised because African Americans were still dominated by white superiority, and "The practice of segregation meant that he had to feel his separateness as inequality", betraying their hopes of a "different" United States of America (223). Through demonstrating the unfulfilled expectations of the black society in Sonny's part, Gyasi emphasizes the persistence of the racial discrimination despite the "separate but equal" doctrine in the American society and how the lives of black people in the socio-cultural context of Harlem are unfavorably affected by this discrimination in the novel.

In view of the socio-economic background of Harlem in the mid-20th century, drug sales and Heroin addiction, a prevalent issue due to the economic poverty in Harlem, was one of the major problems of African American society during this period. The neglectful administration of public security in the area and the low incomes of African American individuals led many to turn to drug selling for a better income. Taking advantage of this situation, the U.S government made use of Harlem's socio-economic context and unfairly sentenced African American drug users to harsher punishments than white citizens as Deborah Small asserts:

> In at least 15 states, Black men are sent to prison for drug offenses at rates that are from 20 to 57 times greater than for White men. The disproportionate arrests - and

> media coverage - feed the mistaken assumption that Blacks use drugs at higher rates than Whites and serve as justification for continued racial profiling. (Small 897)

As a result of this representation of African Americans as "junkies" in the American society, "Harlem and heroin" become one, portraying a Harlem where "The junkies and the jazz had gone together, fed each other" (234). The combination of these two concepts is symbolized by Amani Zulema who is Sonny's love interest in the novel. Following three failed relationships and ending up with three children to feed, Sonny falls victim to heroin addiction after meeting Amani, a depressed woman who sings at the Jazz Club. Concerning Gyasi's representation of the dreary lives of African Americans based on racial inferiority during this period, Fanon claims, "A feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of not existence. Sin is Negro as virtue is white. All those white men in a group, guns in their hands, cannot be wrong. I am guilty. I do not bow of what, but I know that I am no good", arguing that black individuals are not even considered as "inferior" because they do not "exist" as a person of "value" in the white society (Fanon 139). As Sonny asserts, "in America the worst thing you could be was a black man. Worse than dead, you were a dead man walking", Gyasi indicates the indifference of the USA concerning the death of black people due to heroin addiction in Harlem (237). Referring back to Fanon's quotation above concerning the non-existence of black people in the white society, Gyasi reflects Fanon's argument in the novel by portraying the black community in Harlem that is abandoned to heroin addiction. Gyasi demonstrates how black individuals such as Sonny are left to their own fate in fighting with this addiction instead of receiving help from the USA government, making the black society "invisible", thus "worthless" in the American society.

As a reaction to these unequal segregations, politically active African Americans like Sonny were initiating riots and "marching" for an end to racial discrimination which demonstrates the frequent socio-political movements of the 20th century, leading to the pass of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Nevertheless, the process from the pre-Civil Rights Act to the post-Civil Rights Act was sabotaged many times by American society, resulting in the death of many African Americans as represented through some instances by Gyasi

in the novel such as “Reverend George Lee of Mississippi” who was “fatally shot while trying to register to vote ”and “Rosa Jordan”, a pregnant black woman, “was shot while riding a newly desegregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama” (225). As opposed to the white aggression towards the black people, Sonny criticizes the American news that “...made it sound like the fault lay with the blacks of Harlem. The violent, the crazy, the monstrous black people” because African Americans are always guilty in the white society (237). Sonny being one of these participants, is often exposed to police violence as he is arrested by the white police officers and threatened to be killed if he misbehaves in the cell. Facing the unchanged system after all the marches he attended, Sonny questions:

> How many times could he pick himself up off the dirty floor of a jail cell? How many hours could he spend marching? How many bruises could he collect from the police? How many letters to the mayor, governor, president could he send? How many more days would it take to get something to change? And when it changed, would it change? Would America be any different, or would it be mostly the same? (222-23)

In light of this quotation, Gyasi reflects the efforts of the black people who aim to challenge the persistent racism despite the Civil Rights Act such as Sonny and points out the hardship of achieving this change in the white society due to the existence of black inferiority, which creates the foundation of the social class ladder in the USA. After the constant failures that he experience, Sonny, influenced by Marcus Garvey’s perspective of Pan-Africanism while being engaged in NAACP’s projects, believes that the right place where all black people truly belong is not the USA, but Africa, since the “white folks owned just about everything an eye could see or a hand could touch” in America (223). Even though the West African countries were indirectly colonized and they were not completely “free” of being dependent on the Western economy in the 20th century, Sonny supports Marcus Garvey’s promise of an independent African Union in which black inferiority does not exist since the West African countries is mostly black populated as opposed to the USA. Accordingly, Simon A. Clarke defines Pan-Africanism as:

> It is a consciousness of Africa as our ancestral home and an understanding of the need for all Africans, at home and abroad, to become involved in the redemption

of this vast continent. It is also a search for the knowledge of who we are as a people, where we are now, why we are here, and in what direction we now need to advance. (Clarke 102)

Reflecting Sonny's consciousness of the Pan-Africanist ideals that Marcus Garvey promotes for African people all around the world, Clarke suggests that Pan-Africanism is acknowledging African's cultural roots and their current socio-cultural status, encouraging them to embrace their roots and "save" their ancestral homeland from the remnants of the colonial powers. Depending on these ideals, as Sonny sinks into depression and loses his hope for changing the US legal system since the only solution to racism is going back to Africa, he accepts Amani's opinion of how it is too late to "Go back to Africa" (232). According to Amani Africa has never belonged to African Americans because the moment they left Africa and carried their culture to the American socio-cultural context, their cultural identity started to evolve into a hybrid cultural identity. When Amani responds to Sonny's wish to go back to Africa, she asserts, "We can't go back to something we ain't never been to in the first place. It ain't ours anymore. This is", acknowledging her presence which is disconnected from Africa in the contemporary USA (233). Through this dialogue between Amani and Sonny, Gyasi underlines the outcomes of the African Diaspora by indicating the unique African American identity that is different from the native African culture.

2.2 Western Colonization in Ghana from the 18th to 20th Century in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*

While Esi carries her bloodline to America in the 18th century which signifies the beginning of the African Diaspora, Effia remains in Ghana by marrying the white governor of the Cape Coast Castle, James Collins, shaping the future of her bloodline in the colonized Ghana for hundreds of years. Through illustrating Effia's bloodline, Gyasi represents the cultural roots of people of African descent before they were detached from their native land and how the socio-cultural, political, and economic structure of Ghana changed during the colonization period. In this context, Gyasi portrays the colonization period and its impact on the Fante and Asante culture in which marriage is a very significant concept because "...the joining of a man and a woman was also the joining of

two families. Ancestors, whole histories, came with the act, but so did sins and curses", building a relationship between the subjects that extends beyond their individuality (24). According to Gyasi's representation of Fante culture in the novel, marital relationships are based on preserving the economic gain and profit of the village, disregarding the individuals' personal desires. Throughout Effia's bloodline, Gyasi emphasizes the significance of marriage and how it is used to strengthen the villages' bond with the white colonizers and the other villages, developing the economy of their community.

Being one of these individuals, "Effia the Beauty"(14), a Fante in her teen years, is represented as a source of money and gifts for her family due to the "bride price" tradition of Fanteland and the expected gifts such as wine, food and animals from the groom based on this tradition (12). Considering the economic influence of marriage in Ghana, the parents tended to marry off their daughters to white soldiers in exchange for expensive gifts such as "fabric, millet, gold, and iron" so that they could build solid trading relationships with white colonizers (12). Effia is one of these girls who are sent to live in the Castle with James, away from her village, after her parents accepted "thirty pounds up front and twenty-five shillings a month in tradable goods" as a "bride gift" (19).

Gyasi illustrates this connection between the villagers and the white colonizers and how both sides were influenced by each other's cultural traits during this process. On the one hand, the British soldiers like Adwoa Aidoo's groom were using "translators" to communicate in Fante with the villagers and they were introduced to traditional principles such as polygamy (11). On the other hand,, the native wives of the colonizers were exposed to the English language and British culture in the Castles just as how Effia had to "repeat words she didn't mean in a language she didn't understand" to a "clergyman" when she was marrying James (20). Eccoah, one of the wives on the Gold Coast, asserts that her British husband wants to call her "Emily" instead of her real name because he cannot pronounce her name properly, symbolizing the impacts of British colonization on the cultural identity of native African people in the novel (27). Through this example, Gyasi indicates the significance of language and its power of dominating one culture over another by isolating the natives from their cultural roots. In the novel, the British soldier's

control over the natives' cultural identity and how they shape it as they wish by renaming them with "white" names represent the process of colonization as emphasized by Gyasi.

However, the marriage "deals" were not the only trade relationship between the white man and the villagers because Effia's village is engaged in slave trading with both white colonizers from the Cape Coast Castle and the Asante village, aiding them to "sell their slaves to the British" (17). Regarding this, Herbert J. Foster refers to John Donnelly Fage's argument, a British historian, as "West African rulers and merchants reacted to the demand with economic reasoning, and used it to strengthen streams of economic and political development that were already current before the Atlantic slave trade began", explaining the relationship between the Europeans and West African natives based on the slave trade and how the base of this relationship existed long before the Atlantic slave trade (423). In the novel, Effia's white husband, James Collins, administrates these slave trade deals with the villages, keeping them under the Cape Coast Castle until they were shipped to America. Considering that Effia's half-sister, Esi, is one of these slaves who were sold to the British, James calls the slaves "cargo" when Effia asks about the prisoners, equating them with an object (21). This equation represents the colonizer's view of the Africans as "worthless objects" which places them to an "inferior" position than humans, validating the humiliating treatment of the colonizers against the African slaves. As Fanon refers to this inferiority issue in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, "The Negro is a toy in the white man's hands", pointing out the white man's mindset concerning the value of African people which is equal to a "toy", thus an inanimate object as opposed to the white people (Fanon 140). By this opposition between the surface of the castle and the dungeons, Gyasi demonstrates the difference between Effia's life as the wife of a white colonizer and Esi's life as a slave. As Abeeku, the Chief of the Fanteland, asserts, "We work *with* the British, Effia, not for them", the status of the village as a free community in comparison to the slaves elevates them to a higher social level than slaves (13).

Despite the difference between the slaves and the villagers, when the black race and culture are compared to the white people, the black race is always viewed as the inferior one from the perspective of the white race as Gyasi illustrates through various examples in the novel. Concerning this binary opposition, Foster suggests that "It became

easy to imagine that black people were innately inferior to whites, although when Africans and Europeans met in the fifteenth century, they were in a state of cultural equality, except for the technological superiority of the latter", underlining the moment of interaction and how it lead to the establishment of a relationship based on the binary opposition between black inferiority and white superiority (422). Regarding this, even though James and Effia are married, and she is a free woman, Effia is labeled as the "wench" since James has a "white" wife called Anna back in England because " 'wife' was a word reserved for the white women across the Atlantic", debasing black women in the African colonies (23). Therefore, James and Effia's marriage is only valid in Africa in the absence of the European white women, so that the colonizers can maintain economic relationships with the villages. As opposed to Anna's superior social status as a white woman in England, Effia is considered as a "tool", who does not deserve to be a legal "wife", to serve the needs of James during his time in Ghana.

In addition to this contrast between white and black women, the religion of the two different cultures is also based on the binary opposition between black and white race in the novel. When Effia uses some herbal "roots" to conceive a child for James, which is a prevalent traditional practice among women in Fanteland, James condemns this practice by saying "I don't want any voodoo or black magic in this place. My men can't hear that I let my wench place strange roots under the bed. It's not Christian" (26). Concerning the represented binary opposition between "Christianity" and "black magic", Gyasi asserts that while Christian practices symbolizes the white superiority and the "goodness", "black magic" refers to the "evil" in the world (26). Depending on this perspective, Thomas J. Csordas refers to Meyer's argument on the conflict between indigenous religions and Christianity in Ghana:

> Meyer (1999) presents an account of religion among the Ewe people in contemporary Ghana in which the domain of evil spirits and that of witchcraft are both in play in everyday life, and in which missionary Christianity is in lively conflict with indigenous religion... The situation is vastly complicated by dual processes of missionary "vernacularization" of Christian ideas and "diabolization" of Ewe deities into evil spirits and their rituals into demonic practices. Conversion

> became more of an escape from the Devil than a turning toward God, and among converts witchcraft above all remained a central, feared, and secretive issue within the domain of demonic evil. (Csordas 528)

In this quotation, Meyer suggests that the Western colonization led to a religious clash between the white people and Ghanaian natives as a result of how the Western colonizers imposed Christianity on the African cultures. During this period, the white people, especially the missionaries, displayed their religion as the only truthful religion and their God as the only highest being by disregarding the African deities and labeling them as the "evil spirit", which is represented by Gyasi through James' viewpoint of voodoo in *Homegoing* (Csordas 528). Reflecting Fanon's argument regarding the binary opposition between the white and black society, Effia states that "The need to call this thing "good" and this thing "bad," this thing "white" and this thing "black," was an impulse that Effia did not understand. In her village, everything was everything", indicating the constructiveness of the binary opposition between the black and white (26). This example from the novel reflects Derrida's argument on "Differance", which he discusses with Jean Wahl in one of his meetings, and he suggests:

> What displaces the *a* of *différance* in the sense of "activity," of "movement," and "productivity" is this static and statistical structuralism. *Differance* is the "productive" movement of differences, the "history," if that can still be said, of constituted differences, of constituted *langue*, of (al)ready made *langue*. There is thus a "history"—although I have reservations about this word—of the differences which organize the classificatory system and which did not fall straight from the sky. (85 Wood, Bernasconi)

According to Derrida's argument in the quotation, the meaning of the opposite words is born out of the difference between them, making them interdependent on each other in order to gain a meaning such as the binary opposition between black and white as represented by Gyasi in *Homegoing*.

Quey, the son of Effia and James, is represented as the embodiment of the British colonization in the native lands and culture of Ghana, leading to Quey's cultural identity crisis in the novel. Quey is one of the "castle" children who are born to be the "half-caste"

child of white colonizers on the Gold Coast. He spends his whole childhood within the borders of the Gold Coast as opposed to other children like Cudjo whose village only had black people. Therefore, Quey grows up among white soldiers and guards except for his mother in the Cape Coast Castle and as a result, he adopts British and local culture owing to his parents. As Effia teaches him to speak and write both in Fante and English while also studying the Bible at the Castle's Church during his childhood, later on, Quey is sent to England by his father to study with the British curriculum, becoming immersed in British ideals and language.

However, Quey's hybrid cultural identity causes him to grow up as a lonely child who does not feel belong to any of the cultures that he owns. In light of Quey's cultural identity, Homi K. Bhabha's theory of "hybridity" and the "separate space" in which hybridity exists, reflects the formation of Quey's cultural identity, which is defined as:

> It is a "separate" space, a space of *separation*- less than one and double-which has been systematically denied by both colonialists and nationalists who have sought authority in the authenticity of "origins." It is precisely as a separation from origins and essences that this colonial space is constructed. (Bhabha 162)

According to this quotation, Quey's cultural identity becomes a hybrid one in the "separate" space that Bhabha refers to, enabling him to adapt to both British and Fante culture in the novel (154). Nevertheless, Quey feels displaced in his native country when his childhood friend Codjo asks if Quey is "white" due to his light skin tone, showing the difference between them. Quey feels embarrassed by his dissimilarity with the native children because "he could not fully claim either half of himself, neither his father's whiteness nor his mother's blackness. Neither England nor the Gold Coast", referring to the cultural identity crisis that "half-caste" children experience in the novel (55). While they are playing on the coast, Codjo names the slow, "stupid" snail "Robert" because "it's a British name and he was bad like the British are bad" which represents the native Ghanaian children's perspective of the British in the novel. Forgetting the white blood in his veins, Quey agrees with him because as opposed to living with the white men in the castle, he feels like "he belonged, fully and completely" to "somewhere" when he is with Codjo (56). Since Quey is raised among the whites and his Ghanaian mother, which

creates a complex cultural identity for him as opposed to Codjo who is raised in his native village, Quey finds Codjo's solid origins fascinating because Codjo "fully" belongs to Ghana unlike Quey who is "in-between". Through representing this difference between them, Gyasi emphasizes the struggles that Quey experiences as a child who has a hybrid cultural identity, thus confined to be "different" than both native Ghanaian culture and his British father's culture.

Even though Quey's father is a white man, his friendship with Codjo suppresses his "whiteness", liberating his "blackness" that was trapped in the Castle during their childhood. In contrast to Quey's relationship with Codjo, Quey's household is ruled by white superiority, exposing him to racist and "orientalist" perspectives during his time in the castle. Concerning this, the white soldiers in the castle refer to the villagers as "Negroes" and their tradition of fighting with each other to prove their strength to the villagers as being "savages" (58). As it parallels Edward Said's theory of the West's projecting the Orient as the "inferior" and "savages", James tries to stop the white soldiers from joining the fight by saying that it is "uncivilized" (58). Based on this perspective, when James realizes his loss of control over Quey regarding his intimacy with Codjo and fears that his son will be dominated by his Ghanaian cultural identity, he uses "the same measured control he used when he spoke to servants", sending Quey to England and disconnecting him from Codjo, the symbol of Fanteland (59). After Quey returns to Ghana, he feels "displaced" owing to the British school's influence and his distance from his native village for years. As a result of taking the place of his father, Quey feels as if he is not "made for this", referring to the slave trade business (50). Quey's longing for the "safe" England represents his colonized "mind" that labels Africa as a dangerous place, demonstrating how the British "keep their hands clean" while the natives "tramp through bushland finding slaves" (60). By representing the change in Quey's perspective of Ghana after years of living in England, Gyasi indicates the flexibility of cultural identity depending on the socio-cultural context in which an individual lives. Even though the European colonizers considers Africa as dangerous since it is not a "civilized" place as opposed to the superior and educated Western countries, slave trade is essential for the colonizer's economy which conflicts with their Orientalist perspective. Accordingly,

Gyasi emphasizes the hypocrisy of the Western colonizers through representing how the British society impose their viewpoint on Quey in *Homegoing*.

James' job as the governor of the slave trading castle becomes a burden for Quey, making him question his cultural identity since he is responsible for the slave dungeons, "logging numbers that he could pretend didn't represent people bought and sold" (50). Loading his own color of people on a ship and sending them to a foreign land, Quey feels a "...mix of fear and shame and loathing...for his own flesh..." because even though he "hates" James for leaving him with a shameful legacy, Quey still wants to "please him" and sees him as a powerful figure due to his white superiority (61). Reflecting on Frantz Fanon's theory of the psychological effects of colonialism on colonized individuals, his theory provides insight into Quey's internal conflict because despite recognizing James as the source of his suffering, Quey still seeks validation and approval from him due to the power dynamics inherent in the colonial relationship. In *Homegoing*, Gyasi demonstrates the legacy of colonialism and its impact on Quey's sense of inferiority regarding his racial identity, leading to self-rejection and a desire to distance himself from his own heritage. After the new governor learns that Fiifi, Quey's uncle, has connections to other slave trading "companies", he takes advantage of Quey's familiarity with his uncle's village. The new governor uses Quey as a tool to "...say, gently reminding our friends there that they have certain trade obligations..." to their company, indicating the growing impact of Western colonization in Ghana (50). Through this example, Gyasi represents how the colonizers "exploits" an individual with a hybrid cultural identity such as Quey, who can be used as a "negotiator" between the native villages and the colonizers.

As Quey's bloodline continues with James Richard Collins, Gyasi portrays the tension, provoked by the British, between the Fanteland and Asanteland based on the persistent slave trade even after the abolition of the Atlantic Slave trade in 1807. Because the slave trade was no longer legal on the Gold Coast, the British continued to "incite tribal wars for years, knowing that whatever captives were taken from these wars would be sold to them for trade" (84). As a method of stimulating war between the tribes, James accuses the white men of deliberately killing the Asante king to avenge Governor Charles MacCarthy's death, setting the tribes against each other. Even though the Atlantic slave

trade was abolished officially at the beginning of the 19th century, Quey questions, "Did that make the British leave?", implying the prevalent Western colonization in Ghana and continuing Atlantic slave trade until the 1860s (88). Starting as a business partner for the African natives, Gyasi reveals the British's true aim to become the absolute power which aims to possess more than the "Castle", intending to "own the land as well" (89).

In this context, just like his father, James is torn between Quey's business with the Castle and his sense of belonging to his native land in the novel. Whereas James wants to marry an Asante woman named Akosua, he is forced to marry a Fante woman so that he can replace his father's position, maintaining trading relationships with the Castle. James feels overwhelmed by this burden of being an instrument between two opposite sides and questions the practices of colonization and slave trade, trying to define a "guilty" in the opposition. Regarding the ongoing war between the Fanteland and Asanteland, there is an emphasized debate concerning the most "powerful" against the white soldiers in the villages. However, considering that while "The Asante had power from capturing slaves. The Fante had protection from trading them" (91), James realizes that "Everyone is a part of this" (93), indicating the inclusion of both villages in these trading deals even though they try to put the blame on one another. This realization leads James to escape from the same destiny of Quey because "There will always be blood" as longs as the British remain on the Gold Coast (89).

Moreover, Gyasi emphasizes the difference between American slavery and slavery in Ghana by highlighting the inhumane conditions that African slaves endure in the Diaspora all around the world. In the novel, Mampanyin, "the premier apothecary" (96) of the village, reminds James of their "brothers and sisters" who were sent to America "to be treated like animals" by referring to America as "Aburokyire" in the novel, an indigenous term, remarking the cultural separation between African Americans and native Ghanaians (98). As James asserts in the novel, a friend of James' father who heard of the British abolitionists' resistance against American slavery in the 19th century underlines the incomprehensible conditions in which black people live in Diaspora by saying "It is unfathomable. Unfathomable. We do not have slavery like that here. Not like that.", separating American slavery from African slavery. (98). By representing the conditions of

slavery as a slave for the white man and as a slave for the people of your own race, Gyasi draws a distinguishing line between these two different concepts in *Homegoing*. While children of the slaves in the West Africa were born "free" and they had right to gain their freedom, the slavery system in America was designed to keep black people and their children enslaved until they die. As opposed to the American society in which black people are not even considered "human", the African villages provided certain rights for slaves to gain their freedom and take care of their health as a in exchange for their services. Accordingly, Gyasi refers to this difference in the quotation above by underlining how the condition of slavery is different depending on one's native socio-cultural context and a foreign one such as America.

Through the perspective of Abena, James' daughter, Gyasi demonstrates the growing "white threat" in the native African culture and the manipulative effects of Western colonization on the natives, drawing them into a system in which they are dominated by the British. After the "actual" execution of the abolition of the slave trade in "practice", "The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 initiated a shift in the external trade of the Gold Coast. Instead of slaves, the European demand was now for natural products: palm oil, cotton, rubber, gum copal, etc. This was the era of the so-called "legitimate trade"" as Robert Addo-Fening asserts in his article (39). Reflecting on this, even though Ohene Nyarko, Abena's love interest who is a "Big Man" in Asante, blames Fante people for being "sympathizers" for the British, he starts a cocoa plantation in his village so that he can sell the products to the white people and save his village from poverty (131). By letting Abena teach him English and calls her "My Darling", Ohene becomes a part of the system, unaware of his subjection to British colonization (128). As James informs the villagers about the Cape Coast Castle and how both Asante and Fante people are included in the slave trade, he asserts, "Everyone was responsible. We all were…we all are", indicating the meaningless tension between the villages (132). Gyasi demonstrates the impact of colonization in the Ghanaian society and how each village becomes hostile against each other more than before the colonization period. Even though both Fante and Asante people accuse each other of working with "white" colonizers, they are a part of this system, illustrating the effects of years of colonization and the economic dependency of West African people on European colonizers.

Gyasi illustrates the spreading of Christianity as the new religion in Ghana, describing Abena's first acquaintance with a "missionary" in the novel. When Abena visits Kumasi, she sees a white man, a "missionary", for the first time even though she hears about them all the time in her village as "the man who had come to the Gold Coast seeking slaves and gold however he could get them" (130). During her visit to Kumasi, a "dark" man with a "broken Twi" approaches her and invites Abena to engage in a conversation about Christianity which is an unfamiliar religion to her (130). Besides the white missionaries in Ghana, there were also "black" native missionaries who were educated in Christian schools such as "Johannes Elisa Capitein" as David Kofi Amponsah demonstrates his research on Capitein in his article. Capitein who was born to a native Ghanaian mother and a Dutch father,

> ...penned a thesis defending slavery in 1742. When Capitein, the first black ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, wrote his thesis, he was adding his voice to a chorus that was already widely popular in Europe. However, what most have found intriguing about Capitein's pro-slavery Christianity—but by no means unique—is the fact that he was at one time himself a slave. (Amponsah 431-32)

Amponsah's research on Capitein represents the cultural division that an individual experiences as a result of having a hybrid cultural identity since Capitein's father is a white man. Similar to Quey's experiences with his father James, Capitein embraces Christianity and supports slavery due to colonization of his native culture and being the son of a Dutch father who shares the same ideals as him, demonstrating Capitein's internalization of the white cultural attributes which is in conflict with his native culture and race. Gyasi emphasizes the combination of dark skin, broken Twi, and Christianity by referring to the conversion of African natives into Christianity and how they were raised to be used as a means to attract more Africans, spreading the new religion in Kumasi and establishing Churches all along the Asanteland. Through religion and missionaries, the West aimed to establish authority in Ghanaian society as represented by Gyasi in the novel.

As a result of being raised in a missionary school in Kumasi, Akua, Abena's daughter, internalizes Christianity as the "savior" religion of all black people in Ghana, accusing the natives of being a "sinner" in the novel. After her mother's death, Akua is adopted by the missionary school and educated by the white Church people called "Teacher or Reverend or Miss" (164). Akua is convinced that she is a "sinner and a heathen" during her whole childhood until she marries Asamoah and leaves school (168). Concerning the practices of the Church, Frantz Fanon asserts that "The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigners' Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor", indicating the underlying motive of missionary schools in colonized societies (Fanon 7). Accordingly, at the missionary school, the God is represented as the only power to worship and ask for forgiveness as opposed to the multiple Gods in the African native culture such as Nyame, "the all-knowing and all-seeing Akan God", and "Asase Yaa", the goddess of love and fertility, implying that the white man's God is just egoistic as themselves (172). Regarding the oppressive treatment of the missionaries, Akua and other children are thought to obey the rules of the Church and they were lashed as a "punishment" when they fail because as the missionary suggests, "All people on the black continent must give up their heathenism and turn to God. Be thankful that the British are here to show you how to live a good and moral life", representing the Western colonizer's purpose of "owning" the native land and its people through colonizing their religion (168). While rejecting the moral values and the authenticity of African gods and religions, labeling them as "heathenism" which is correlated with "the evil" in Christianity, the white people accept Christianity as the only true religion that can "save" African people. In light of this representation, Gyasi demonstrates the colonization period in which the missionaries force their religion on the West African people, starting as a passive act and turning into a more passive-aggressive attitude.

Gyasi portrays the British military force on the Asanteland as a response to the resistance of natives against colonization by referring to the exile of King Prempeh I in the novel. As the British start to reveal its "real face" behind the mask of a "business partner", Frederick Hodgson, "The British governor", threatens the Kumasi people with not returning their King unless they let him sit on the "Golden Stool" and give it to the

"Queen" (166). This Golden Stool, which "contained the *sunsum*, the soul, of the entire Asante Nation", is believed to be a very sacred object, even more significant than the King for the Asantes, thus being a target for the British (129). Since "the sunsum" symbolizes the core of the Asantes, having control over the Golden Stool directly affects the West's relationship with the Asantes, disabling the power of the King Prempeh I and imposing The Queen's authority in the Ghanaian society. In relation to the colonizers' cultural and political domination in Ghana, Abena's murder by the missionary is a representation of the Christian dominancy in *Homegoing*. When Abena refuses to be "baptized" to get rid of her "sins" for worshiping African Gods and Goddesses, the missionary drowns her in the river by claiming that he "only wanted her to repent", trying to justify his act of murder as for the "love" of God (173).

As a result of this oppression of the Western culture on Ghana, Gyasi demonstrates how colonization had an impact on the native African languages through a conversation between the "fetish man" and Akua in *Homegoing*. As the "fetish" man, a kind villager, describes to Akua in one of their meetings, the Akan word "Obroni" for the white man means the "Wicked Man" which indicates the reflection of the results of Western colonization on their native language (165). Considering that Asante is not the only village in which the white man is known as "Wicked man", "Among the Ewe of the Southeast his name is Cunning Dog, the one who feigns niceness and then bites you", portraying the white hypocrisy in the novel (165). When Akua suggests that "The Missionary is not wicked" because God's man cannot be wicked, the fetish man who still prays to his African ancestors by refusing to be baptized asks, "Am I wicked?", raising questions in her head related to the white man's God (165). In relation to this confrontation, Gyasi indicates Ghana's reaction against the British colonization through the imagery of "the burning of the white man" who was set on fire by the villagers which becomes a traumatic memory for Akua. Reflecting on this, the fetish man reminds Akua that "The white man has earned his name here" as the "Wicked Man", representing the process of colonization and its effects in the African native culture (165).

Through representing Yaw Agyekum's life in 20th century Ghana, Gyasi underlines the socio-cultural and political changes during that period and the precursor of Ghana's

independence as a result of the increasing number of educated Africans. Akua's son, Yaw, is a history teacher at the Roman Catholic School in Takoradi who aspires to reveal the unspoken history of Ghana to the next generation. Yaw deals with children proficient in speaking and writing in English by the age of fifteen and teaches them their original history by means of his job and his book entitled "Let the Africans Own Africa" (203). As opposed to the curriculum of the "white man's book" (205) in which the Britain is glorified as the country that "civilized" and "saved" Ghana, Yaw teaches his students the unreliability of history by suggesting:

> We believe the one who has the power. He is the one who gets to write the story. So when you study history, you must always ask yourself, Whose story am I missing? Whose voice was suppressed so that this voice could come forth? Once you have figured that out, you must find that story too. From there, you begin to get a clearer, yet still imperfect, picture. (207)

In light of this quote, Yaw asserts that "History is Storytelling", open to various interpretations because a historical event that counts as a "fact" in history books relies on other people's words (206). Concerning this point of view, Gyasi demonstrates the impact of postmodernism and the new philosophical ideas of the 20th century on Yaw's perspective of "metanarratives". As Jean-François Lyotard asserts "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives", which is reflected in Yaw's distrust in "history" as a metanarrative of the powerful, the Western countries in this case (Lyotard 25). Gyasi uses Yaw's character to explore the complexities of historical truth and the power dynamics that shape our understanding of the past. Through his journey, readers are invited to question the dominant narratives of history and to consider alternative perspectives that challenge the status quo which is illustrated through Yaw's skepticism in the novel. Instead of accepting history as a linear progression of events, Yaw sees it as subjective, shaped by the biases and agendas of those in power, aligning with Lyotard's notion of postmodernism which leads individuals like Yaw to resist the grand narratives that seek to impose a singular understanding of history.

Since the history books assigned to children at Roman Catholic Schools in Ghana are colored by the narrative of the British curriculum, Yaw indicates the impacts of

Western colonization and the covered facets of Ghana's history. As a result of the low level of education and the difficulty of communicating with other countries in the West, African natives just as Yaw, feel discouraged to make their voices heard globally in the other parts of the World. Depending on the weak political stance of Ghana against Western colonization, Yaw refuses to go to an American school for further studies because he knows that he will be educated in "white" principles and return to Ghana to "...build the country the white man wants" him to build, the "One that continues to serve them" (204). This cycle creates a paradox for colonized people, taking away their freedom and trapping them in the representation of Western history.

Yaw compares Ghanaians with African Americans during the black people's freedom movements in the 20th century and admires their expressed, "academic rage" towards racial segregation in the USA (210). Even though intellectual natives desire to start a revolution, such as Yaw's friend Edward, Yaw lacks the motivation to act against the colonization of their country as opposed to African Americans, losing his hope for gaining independence in the novel. However, after Yaw confronts her mother about the scar on his face which is a symbolic reminder of colonization in his lineage, he feels the burden on his shoulders being lifted. Highlighting the significance of facing the colonial history and educating the new generation about it to "fight for freedom", in *The Wretched of the World*, Frant Fanon asserts:

> Fighting for the freedom of one's people is not the only necessity. As long as the fight goes on you must enlighten not only the people but also, and above all, yourself on the full measure of man. You must retrace the paths of history, the history of man damned by other men, and initiate, bring about, the encounter between your own people and others. (Fanon 219)

According to Fanon's quote above, fighting against the colonization of the African countries is not the only significant move to achieve freedom because before putting this anger into action, the colonized natives must learn about their history in order to fully comprehend what they fight for. In light of this, Gyasi illustrates the enlightenment that Yaw experiences as he learns about his past and the story behind the mark on his face which reflects both his personal relationship with his mother and the effects of Western

colonization in his family. As Akua suggests, "No one forgets that they were once captive, even if they are now free", Yaw learns to own his "freedom" again (221). Yaw's reconnection to his ancestors is represented by his marriage to Esther, a village girl who likes to speak in her native language as opposed to Yaw who teaches English.

Concerning the search for revolution in the 1900s Ghana, Gyasi refers to the "Big Six" in the novel, Kwame Nkrumah, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamptey, Ebenezer Ako-Adjei, William Ofori Atta and Edward Akufo-Addo, known as the political leaders of the "United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)" (209). Gyasi reflects the growing impact of Pan-Africanism in Ghana, a global socio-political and cultural movement, fueled by multiple conferences that brought together various African and African American leaders worldwide, emphasizing these leaders' desire for the independence of Ghana. Gyasi indicates this period's influence on Yaw's political views and his support for Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana in 1957. Since Kwame Nkrumah promoted the socio-economic empowerment, the political liberation of Ghana from the colonial powers, he encouraged native Africans such as Yaw to fight for the political and economic independence of Ghana which is represented as a significant movement that contributed to the independence of African countries. Additionally, through this portrayal, Gyasi demonstrates the newly established connection between Africans in diaspora and native Africans in the 1900s by means of the Pan-Africanist conferences which leads to the questioning of the cultural roots and cultural identity among African Americans and African natives.

2.3 Afropolitanism in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*

As a result of the ideological impact of Pan-Africanism on African natives and African American individuals throughout this period, Gyasi portrays the interaction between these two different cultural groups in continuation of Yaw's and Sonny's bloodlines in *Homegoing*. The ending of the novel focuses on both the differences and similarities between Marjorie, Yaw's second generation immigrant daughter, and Marcus, Sonny's son who is an African American. Yaa Gyasi demonstrates the effects of Ghanian immigration on the cultural identity of the second generation immigrants, Marjorie, in the socio-cultural context of the USA by underlining their difference from African Americans,

Marcus, with an Afropolitanist point of view in *Homegoing*. Nevertheless, these two opposite groups embrace their cultural diversity and accept their cultural differences as Yaa Gyasi represents at the end of the novel by developing W. E. B Du Bois' perspective of Pan-Africanism. In *Homegoing*, Gyasi adjusts Du Bois's perspective to Taiye Selasi's contemporary perspective of Afropolitanism through the experiences of Marjorie and Marcus, characters who recognize and celebrate both their shared cultural heritage and their unique differences, which will be explored further with Adichie's *Americanah* in Chapter III.

In *Homegoing*, Gyasi represents how Marjorie maintains strong connections with her native culture by speaking her parents' dialect, Twi, which is a Southern Ghana dialect, in her private social space even though Marjorie was born in Alabama. While Marjorie grows up closely engaged in American culture, she also visits her grandmother, Ma Akua, who is a symbol of African ancestry in Ghana. During the holidays, Akua always encourages Marjorie to speak in Twi so that American culture cannot absorb her native cultural identity. As a signifier of Marjorie's bond with her native culture, she inherits a necklace from Ma Akua, which "belonged to Old Lady and to Abena before her, and to James, Quey, and Effia the Beauty before that. It had begun with Maame, the woman who had set a great fire", symbolizing the passing of African culture and the remnants of colonization from generation to generation (244).

In this context, Gyasi points out the difference between African Americans and African immigrants by representing how Marjorie is exposed to the American blacks' mocking of her accent and how she feels discluded as an "outsider" from the black society in her school. On her first day of school as an African immigrant student, Marjorie misjudges the skin color of American blacks and tries to join their group thinking that they are "like" her during the lunch break (245). However, Tisha, a black American student, makes fun of Marjorie's accent by asking "Why you talk like that?" and imitating her voice with a "British" accent, indicating Marjorie's British accent that she picked up from her Ghanaian father who grew up in the colonized Ghana (245). Later on, Tisha accuses her to be sounding "like a white girl" which is different from the Black American's dialect, isolating Marjorie from being a part of that group (245).

Concerning this difference, Gyasi illustrates the false generalization of being "black" through Marjorie's experience of writing a poem for "Black History Month" that is based on the celebration and remembrance of significant names and events throughout the African Diaspora history in the USA. Gyasi highlights the overgeneralization of black people's diverse cultures by referring to Marjorie's cultural identity, which is strongly influenced by her Ghanaian roots. Regarding this issue of racial generalization, Ava Landry refers to the socio-cultural context of the USA:

> When African immigrants enter the United States, their bodies are automatically read as "black." Marjorie notes this when she ponders that, while in Ghana, she could "only be what she was" (269). However, in the United States, she feels the expectation to put on the uniform of Blackness because of her skin color, without knowing the social, historical, and cultural forces shaping its construction as a social category. (Landry 133-134)

Although Marjorie is a Ghanaian immigrant, her teacher requests her to write a poem for the event because in America, "it doesn't matter where you came from first to the white people running things. You're here now, and here black is black is black", lecturing Marjorie on the socio-cultural context of the USA (249). Gyasi highlights how Blackness is homogenized in the USA, where the rich diversity of African and diasporic cultures is reduced to a singular identity based solely on skin color. Landry's observation further indicates this point, explaining that African immigrants are automatically read as "Black" upon entering the USA, a label shaped by socio-historical and cultural constructs rather than individual heritage. After referring to the differences between these groups, Yaa Gyasi represents this solidarity between African Americans and African immigrants through the intimate relationship between Marcus, an African American, and Marjorie, a Ghanaian immigrant, who share the same ancestral lineage despite their different cultural identities in the USA.

In addition to Marjorie's connection to her native culture, Gyasi also demonstrates the academic progress in black studies in the 2000s and the significance of acknowledging the historical background of African Americans that shape their cultural identity in the globalized world through Marcus' perspective. Sonny's son, Marcus, is a Ph.D student

majoring in sociology, and his project in the novel focuses on the convict leasing system. However, as he reads more about the subject, he realizes that it is impossible to narrow down the injustices of racial discrimination to just one aspect of the system. Therefore, Marcus asserts that the inequality in the convict leasing system that kept his Grandpa H prisoner for years is just a result of a chain of events that took place since American slavery because:

> How could he talk about Great Grandpa H's story without also talking about his grandma Willie and the millions of other black people who had migrated north, fleeing Jim Crow? And if he mentioned the Great Migration, he'd have to talk about the cities that took that flock in. He'd have to talk about Harlem. And how could he talk about Harlem without mentioning his father's heroin addiction—the stints in prison, the criminal record? And if he was going to talk about heroin in Harlem in the '60s, wouldn't he also have to talk about crack everywhere in the '80s? And if he wrote about crack, he'd inevitably be writing, too, about the "war on drugs". (263)

As a result of these events over the years, according to Marcus, his current African American cultural identity consists of an "accumulation" of the collective events that his ancestors have been through ever since they set foot in America (269). Based on this perspective, Marcus wants to explain with his project: "the feeling of time, of having been a part of something that stretched so far back, was so impossibly large, that it was easy to forget that" Marjorie "and he, and everyone else, existed in it—not apart from it, but inside of it", referring to the collective cultural memory as a concept to indicate the process of events that caused his and Marjorie's existence in the contemporary USA (269). Yaa Gyasi indicates the traumatic remnants of this accumulation by demonstrating the "fears" of Marcus in the novel. As Ron Eyerman defines "cultural trauma" in his article:

> ...the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a group or have been directly experienced by any or all. While it may be necessary to establish some event or occurrence as the significant 'cause', its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process which requires time, as well as mediation and

> representation. A cultural trauma must be understood, explained and made coherent through public reflection and discourse. (Eyerman 160)

Regarding this definition of Eyerman, Marcus displays behaviors that comply with the collective cultural trauma of African Americans in *Homegoing*. When Marcus goes on a school trip and visits a museum in Manhattan with his classmates, he gets lost and loses track of the group. Surrounded by all those tall white people in Manhattan as opposed to Harlem, Marcus starts crying just before he is noticed by a white couple. When the elderly man taps his foot with his "cane", Marcus is overwhelmed by a terrifying feeling that the man might strike his head with it (263). Gyasi uses this moment, portrayed as a flashback, to symbolize the collective traumas of African Americans and highlight the theme of violence throughout the novel. Moreover, Marcus's fear of the ocean and water can be traced back to the collective cultural trauma of the Atlantic Slave Trade, a period during which millions of Africans were forcibly taken from their homeland and subjected to inhumane conditions on slave ships. Many of them perished during these transatlantic journeys, their bodies cast into the ocean, making the sea a graveyard and a haunting symbol of this act of brutality. Marcus's fear, therefore, is not merely a personal phobia but a manifestation of this inherited trauma, reflecting the lingering emotional and psychological scars of a history marked by violence, displacement, and loss. Through Marcus's fear, Gyasi illustrates how the horrors of the past continue to be exhibited through generations, influencing their fears and identities. In *Homegoing*, whenever Marcus is invited to beach or pool parties, he always watches people from far away, as a person who is even scared of drowning in the shower. Even though he cannot explain the root of this fear with tangible proof, he notices that the endlessness of the ocean and the uncertainty of its depths are what scare him the most. In the novel, Gyasi symbolizes this fear as a reflection of the indefiniteness of his lineage that goes back to Ghana and how African Americans are long gone from Africa to call it their "home". Gyasi portrays the ongoing search for belonging and understanding among African Americans who struggle with a heritage that feels both near and impossibly far. Marcus's journey, therefore, becomes a reflection of the collective yearning to reconcile with the past and find a sense of rootedness in a fractured lineage.

At the end of the novel, Gyasi portrays a contemporary image of the interaction between African immigrants and African Americans in the globalized world by depicting the meeting of Marcus and Marjorie, the last children of both generations in the late 1900s USA. This interaction is highlighted by a unique attraction between them that they cannot explain in logical terms. While Marcus is struggling with the questions about his lineage, Marjorie "finds" him as a reminder of his ethnic origin and sheds light on his cultural journey in *Homegoing*. Concerning the relationship between them, Chielozona Eze refers to Achille Mbembe's interpretation of "Afropolitanism as the ability to 'recognise one's face in that of a foreigner' (2007, 28)", demonstrated by the attraction between Marjorie and Marcus despite their different cultural identities in the novel (Eze 243). During this journey, Marjorie encourages and accompanies Marcus on his visit to Pratt City, allowing him to trace how his great-grandpa H spent his entire life as a coal mine worker. Moreover, Gyasi highlights the impacts of African immigrants' adaptation process on their cultural identity by pointing out Marjorie's rusty Twi as a result of her distance from Cape Coast for 14 years since her grandmother's death. In return for Marjorie's help, Marcus joins Marjorie's trip to the Cape Coast and aids her in strengthening her cultural ties to her homeland all over again.

Gyasi's representation of the re-visiting the Cape Coast Castle with Marcus and Marjorie signifies the beginning of the cultural separation between African Americans and African natives which leads to the African Diaspora as the milestone of African history in *Homegoing*. As they explore the castle with a guide, Marcus and Marjorie hear about the inhumane conditions their captured ancestors endured in small dungeons, devoid of fresh air and personal space. In contrast to this representation, Gyasi highlights the duality of these slave castles by illustrating the upper section as the family home of the colonizers and the Church section where their colored children were educated. Confronting the agony of his ancestors, Marcus, overcome with emotions, rushes out through "The Door of No Return", the same door through which slaves were led to the port where they were taken away by the colonizer ships (272). Centuries later, Marcus exits that door, mirroring the journey of his lineage who couldn't "return" to their homeland, thereby shaping Marcus's historical and cultural background in the USA.

By representing the struggles faced by the bloodlines of Esi and Effia throughout the years, Yaa Gyasi draws a distinguishing line between them, emphasizing how different experiences, events, and choices can shape cultural identity irrespective of one's skin color. Chielozona Eze, aligning with Taiye Selasi's perspective on Afropolitanism, emphasizes its celebration of fluid cultural identity:

> Selasi proposes a transgressive attitude that disrupts static and essentialist notions of identity. An Afropolitan, in my understanding, is that human being on the African continent or of African descent who has realized that her identity can no longer be explained in purist, essentialist, and oppositional terms or by reference only to Africa. (Eze 240)

Based on Selasi's claim, Gyasi indicates the importance of recognizing the fluidity of cultural identity by depicting Marcus and Marjorie's distinct fears: Marjorie's fear of fire rooted in the traumatic experiences of Effia's lineage and Marcus's fear of the ocean stemming from the Atlantic slave trade. While expressing this difference from an Afropolitanist perspective, Gyasi also acknowledges the shared challenges of racism faced by both groups due to their skin color.

In order to present this issue as a unifying factor, Gyasi depicts an image of "fire meeting water" on the beach where Marjorie and Marcus hold hands at the end of the novel. Later on, they run into the water and Marjorie "passes" her "black stone necklace" that symbolizes her Ghanaian roots to Marcus, saying "Welcome home" which refers to the return of Marcus as an African American to the native lands of his slave ancestors (273). This image creates a portrayal where both of them, an African immigrant and African American, can respect each other's distinct cultures and collaborate rather than being rivals. Gyasi foreshadows this union in Marjorie's poem which was written for Black History Month years ago, "The waters seem different/ but are same./ Our same. Sister skin. /Who knew? Not me. Not you", implying the common ancestral roots of Marcus and Marjorie despite their distinct cultural identity (257). Concerning this common point between them, while Taiye Selasi accepts and embraces the unifying historical roots of African individuals, she also claims that cultural identity should not be reduced to "the geographical entity":

> Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is this refusal to oversimplify: the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is wonderful, unique. Rather than essentializing the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; to sustain our parents' values. (Selasi 529)

Although Yaa Gyasi demonstrates a supportive stance toward certain ideals of Pan-Africanism, such as the solidarity of people of African descent, as implied at the novel's conclusion, she does not endorse the establishment of a politically united Africa, because, as a result of the African Diaspora, African Americans have become a part of the cosmopolitan and diverse nature of contemporary African identity in a globalized world.

In this chapter, I argue for the difference between African American and native African cultural identity through Gyasi's illustration of two identical bloodlines that shares the same Ghanaian culture and ends up evolving into two distinct cultural identities as African American and native African in *Homegoing*. Throughout the novel, Gyasi focalizes on the development of the cultural identity of Esi and Effia's bloodline through numerous examples depending on the different socio-cultural contexts throughout years, underlining the cultural separation between them as a result of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Yaa Gyasi demonstrates the fluidity of cultural identity and indicates the significance of acknowledging the difference between diasporic Africans such as Sonny, native Africans such as Yaw and African immigrants such as Yaw's daughter, Marjorie in the novel. Similar to Gyasi's perspective on the differences between two cultures, in *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illustrates this distinction through the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the socio-cultural context of the USA, which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION IN THE FACE OF AMERICAN RACISM AND EMBRACING DIVERSITY IN ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

As I analyzed in Chapter II, even though African Americans and West African natives share common roots that date back to the pre-Atlantic Slave trade period before the 16th century, their contemporary socio-cultural values differ due to the centuries of geographical and cultural separation between them. On the one hand, African Americans were enslaved and exposed to racial discrimination for years in the socio-cultural context of the USA, which is dominated by a white population, resulting in the strong supremacy of white people over the black race. On the other hand, African natives were colonized by the West, becoming dependent on the Western economy. As opposed to African Americans who are forced to accept white normativity in a foreign land ruled by white people, African natives indirectly internalize white superiority as the norm over the years surrounded by people of their own skin colour. In this context, I will focus on the experiences of African immigrants within the socio-cultural context of the United States, where they come to recognize their skin color as "black" in a predominantly white society. Accordingly, Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity will be examined through the experiences of Nigerian immigrants such as Ifemelu, Dike, and Uju in Adichie's *Americanah*. While highlighting the racial discrimination these characters face in the novel, I will also explore the significant cultural differences between African Americans and African immigrants. Alongside these differences, I will analyze the common struggles and forms of discrimination shared by both groups and how these shared experiences of being outsiders create a sense of solidarity in this Chapter. This analysis will include references to the ideals of Du Bois' Pan-Africanism, as further developed by Taiye Selasi's perspective on Afropolitanism.

As a result of this separation between African Americans and African natives, both sides have a different sense of insight regarding racism and the significance of skin color in society. Therefore, unlike their home country, African immigrants in the Diaspora acknowledge their skin color as a discriminating feature against black individuals in American society. Even though they try to resist these "colored" perspectives and norms

in the white society, eventually, they feel obliged to adapt to this different socio-cultural context to fit in the white standards. At the end of this adaptation stage, African individuals can "mirror" the American cultural identity by imitating their cultural traits, which Homi K. Bhabha refers to as "mimicry" in his theory. Bhabha defines "mimicry" as "The display of hybridity-its peculiar "replication"- terrorizes authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery", claiming that the imitation of different socio-cultural attributes demonstrates the fluidity of cultural identity by rejecting the existence of a stable essence of cultural identity since it is not a fixed concept (Bhabha 157). Since some African immigrant characters in *Americanah* such as Ifemelu can "mimic" the American cultural identity, Bhabha's theory can be applied to these characters' experiences in the socio-cultural context of the USA. Regarding the flexibility of cultural identity during this process, Africans in the Diaspora gradually form a culturally "hybrid" identity by mixing African and American cultures throughout the years to survive in American society. This new cultural identity is a distinct one that Homi K. Bhabha states as "The Third Space" in his *The Location of Culture*:

> The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the inbetween space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha 38-39)

According to Bhabha, the cultural identity of individuals who are exposed to a different culture other than their native culture such as people who live in Diasporas, African Americans, and African immigrants, transforms into a unique cultural identity that does not solely belong to any of the cultures. As Bhabha suggests, while this "in-between" identity enables Diasporic Africans to blend within American society on a certain level, at the same time, it also causes them to be an "outsider" who cannot fully be a part of that society. Furthermore, possessing a hybrid cultural identity might result in memory loss and "sacrificing" a part of their native cultural identity during the formation process over the years. This "sacrifice" can be displayed through the loss of native language and dialect,

where native tongues fade over generations, or the decay of cultural traditions as they adapt to dominant societal norms of American society. Over time, the pressures to assimilate, combined with generational shifts and the influence of globalized media, contribute to the "sacrificing" of cultural markers, leaving Diasporic and immigrant individuals with a hybrid identity that is both enriched and fragmented.

However, "the Third Space" in which the hybrid identity is formed is disregarded by some Pan-Africanist thinkers, equating all Africans in the Diaspora and native Africans to establish a "united" Africa. Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican Pan-Africanist, was the pioneer of this point of view who founded "The Universal Negro Improvement Association" and argued for the political and economic union of all African states in the first half of the 20th century. Besides Africa, Garvey also initiated the "Back to Africa" movement via the UNIA branch in New York, encouraging African Americans to return to Africa, their ancestral motherland. Considering Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory and the "partial" contribution of African native culture to the cultural identity of Africans in the Diaspora, Marcus Garvey's argument does not align with the hybrid identity of African Americans since they do not possess a fixed native cultural identity, resistant to the different societal norms of the USA. Even though Garvey's intention was to elevate the Black economy in the global context and end the colonial control over Africa by summoning the "lost children" of Africa back home, he overlooked the American cultural influence in "The Third Space". This cultural influence has shaped the identities of African Americans, adopting aspects of American societal norms, values, and traditions into their experiences, creating a hybrid identity that cannot be fully aligned with native African cultures. As a result, Garvey's vision underestimates the transformative power of the "Third Space", where African Americans create new, dynamic identities that resist the essentialist notions of culture he advocated.

Regarding the controversy of Marcus Garvey's argument about the "Back to Africa" movement, the different hybrid identities of African Americans and African immigrants in the USA justify the emergence of cultural polarization among these two groups as they interact with each other. Even though both cultural groups share the same ancestry, their cultural identity is built upon different cultural and historical factors such

as racial discrimination and colonization throughout the years. Therefore, this difference creates a tense opposition between them and hinders them from forming a unified African nation, disproving Garvey's dream based on the reunion of all people of African descent. In this context, Adichie represents the possible issues of Garvey's argument by demonstrating the formation of African immigrants' hybrid cultural identity in *Americanah,* which will be analyzed throughout this Chapter.

As opposed to Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, an American Pan-Africanist activist, emphasized the social inequality between whites and all the minorities such as Asians and Africans in the USA. Du Bois protested the social and economic injustice and argued for the end of colonialism by arranging numerous Pan-African Congresses and bringing together Africans from all around the world. As opposed to Marcus Garvey, Du Bois fought to end racial discrimination in the global context, suggesting the recognition of "racial integration" without a prevalent "superior" race whereas Garvey advocated "racial separation" by refusing to believe in a world where there is no "color". Since Du Bois does not disregard the experiences of African immigrants and African Americans in the increasingly globalized world, his ideology is relevant to the perspective of a modern world Adichie aims to represent in *Americanah*.

As the African immigration flow to the USA increased following the technological developments and globalization in the 2000s, some contemporary arguments, such as "Afropolitanism", emerged in opposition to certain objectives of Pan-Africanism. First coined by Taiye Selasi, an American writer of Ghanaian and Nigerian origin, in her article titled "Bye-Bye, Babar (Or: What is an Afropolitan?)" in 2005, Afropolitanism draws attention to the globalization of the world and its impact on the African identity. In her article, Selasi claims that "We are Afropolitans—not citizens, but Africans of the world" and they are not bound by their African culture since they can adopt the cultural traits of the foreign culture (Selasi 528). Echoing Homi K. Bhabha's arguments on the hybrid cultural identity, Selasi states that the new African generation does not possess a fixed cultural identity that limits their experience of diverse cultures in the globalized world, criticizing the stereotypical image of African natives as people who cannot speak English. Therefore, Selasi argues against Pan-Africanism's "unifying" purpose, claiming that it is

an out-of-date concept because according to her, Africans can be a part of different cultures.

In this context, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie represents the process of how the first and second generation Nigerian immigrants in the USA experience the concept of race, adapting to the socio-cultural context of American society and forming a "hybrid" cultural identity in response. As Adichie highlights the flexibility of African cultural identity through characters such as Ifemelu, Dike, Aunty Uju, and Ginika, she portrays their experience from an Afropolitanist perspective in the globalized world, exposed to the changing dynamics of technological developments. Regarding the relationship between Nigerian immigrants and African Americans, Adichie indicates their common problem of racism in the USA as a unifying factor but at the same time, differentiates them from each other based on their sociohistorical background in the novel.

In *Americanah*, Adichie depicts Ifemelu as a first generation Nigerian immigrant who moves to the USA to escape the political unrest in 1990s Nigeria, a period marked by coups and strikes. The novel highlights Ifemelu's culture shock upon arrival, particularly her confrontation with "racism" in American society. Considering that Ifemelu does not have to comply with white norms such as white beauty standards and American English accent back home in Nigeria since it consists of a predominantly black population, she is subjected to various kinds of standards that validate white superiority in the predominantly white society of the USA. As Tracey Owens Patton asserts in her article:

> Given the racist past and present of the United States, there are several identity and beauty issues that African American women face. Since 1619, African American women and their beauty have been juxtaposed against White beauty standards, particularly pertaining to their skin color and hair. During slavery, Black women who were lighter-skinned and had features that were associated with mixed progeny (e.g., wavy or straight hair, White/European facial features) tended to be house slaves and those Black women with darker-skin hues, kinky hair, and broader facial features tended to be field slaves. (Patton 26)

Patton's assertion in the passage above illuminates the deeply entrenched racial hierarchies and beauty standards rooted in the history of slavery in the USA. Patton

emphasizes how the historical context of slavery created a lasting legacy of Western beauty standards. Whiteness has been positioned as the ideal for beauty, professionalism, and social acceptance, while Blackness, especially the darkest tone, has been stigmatized for centuries. As a result, African American women are often pressured to modify their natural features in order to conform to the expectations of a society dominated by White ideals. As Adichie portrays in *Americanah*, finding herself in this socio-historical context where white beauty is dictated as the standard, Ifemelu struggles to fit in the American society in which having "straight" hair, light skin color, and being skinny are the "normalized" physical features.

In Ifemelu's early days in Brooklyn, Aunty Uju passed the "United States Medical Licensing Examination" and was accepted as a physician in the USA (123). As Aunty Uju talks about the interview she has to attend with white people for the job, Uju asserts, "I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair. Kemi told me that I shouldn't wear braids to the interview. If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional", representing the imposed white beauty standards of American society in the novel (124). Concerning Aunty Uju's statement about braided African hair, Adichie indicates that African immigrants need to perform extra work to "fix" their appearance so that they can be considered "proper" candidates for jobs as opposed to white Americans. As Aunty Uju says "You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed", referring to the struggle of African immigrants to embrace the norms of the white society to look "professional", adjusting their physical features that make them "African" (124).

After years of this conversation, Ifemelu, like Aunty Uju, finds herself "relaxing" her hair, subdued by white beauty standards in American society, but this time for a job interview arranged by her white boyfriend, Curt. When Ifemelu asks for advice from her friend, Ruth, regarding the job interview, Ruth suggests, "My only advice? Lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters. We want you to get that job", reminding her how the American business functions which is based on the "professional" look of white beauty norms (207-8). Through Ifemelu's experiences in the novel, Adichie demonstrates the persistence of white beauty standards in American society

throughout the years and how American societal expectations are perpetuated as Ifemelu insists on conformity to these standards for success. In relation to this, Brenda A. Randle highlights the persistence of this issue in her paper:

> In 2007, a Black woman in West Virginia was fired from her job at a prison for wearing braids, which was deemed inappropriate. While the argument can be made that Black hair no longer carries the same socio-cultural significance it did in decades and centuries past, the "natural" remains an unwanted politically charged marker in the workplace. (Randle 119)

Based on Randle's claim, Adichie highlights the racist portrayal of hair relaxers in the American market, describing them as products designed to achieve "impossibly straight and shiny hair" while promising "gentleness" (208) in contrast to the perception of Afro hair as a "...thick, kinky, God-given halo of hair..."(210). Even though the hairdresser praises Ifemelu's relaxed hair as she suggests, "But look how pretty it is. Wow, girl, you've got the white-girl swing!", comparing her to a "white girl" whose hair is "pretty", Ifemelu feels "...a sense of loss" because she witnesses "...something organic dying which should not have died" as she smells the "burning" of her hair due to using hair relaxer and "flat-ironing" (208). Ifemelu's sense of loss is deeply symbolic and extends beyond the physical act of relaxing her hair in the novel. Her Afro hair embodies the authenticity of her native African culture and the resistance against oppressive norms of American culture. Ifemelu's comment on her feelings concerning her new, relaxed hair as "something organic dying which should not have died" (208) captures this emotional and cultural detachment from her native culture. Her "sense of loss" is thus not just personal but also collective, representing the struggle of countless women of color who are forced to suppress their identities for the sake of acceptance in the American culture.

As Ifemelu acknowledges the normalized white beauty standards in every possible context of American culture, she demonstrates their existence by revealing the imposition of these norms in mainstream beauty and fashion magazines for women in the novel. After Curt accuses "Essence", a magazine for black women, of being "racially skewed" (297), Ifemelu takes him to a bookstore and presents him with several magazines with hundreds

of pages that only include “4” black women, indicating the white privilege in the white beauty industry (298). Regarding this, Ifemelu criticizes these white privileges as:

> Not one of them looks like me, so I can’t get clues for makeup from these magazines. Look, this article tells you to pinch your cheeks for color because all their readers are supposed to have cheeks you can pinch for color. This tells you about different hair products for everyone—and ‘everyone’ means blonds, brunettes, and redheads. I am none of those. And this tells you about the best conditioners—for straight, wavy, and curly. No kinky. See what they mean by curly? My hair could never do that. (298)

As a result of this argument, Ifemelu discusses these standardized beauty norms in her blog to raise awareness for this racial discrimination by referring to the ugly “before” and beautiful “after” pictures displayed in “makeover shows on the TV” (300). While the “before” picture presents the “coarse, coily, kinky, or curly” as the “ugly” one, the “after” picture presents the “pretty”, straight hair as the norm to the audience (300). Concerning this, Ifelemu illustrates the impact of white beauty norms on African American women in her blog by suggesting, “Some black women, AB and NAB, would rather run naked in the street than come out in public with their natural hair. Because, you see, it’s not professional, sophisticated, whatever, it’s just not damn normal”, representing the prevailing white beauty standards that label the “black” race as the “abnormal” in American society (300).

One of the other white beauty standards is being “skinny” in American society as Ifemelu states that “fat” is a “bad word” in America in contrast to the Nigerian culture’s perception of fat as the beauty qualifier in the novel (11). When Ifemelu meets her friend Ginika from Lagos in the USA, and sees that she has lost weight, Ginika explains to her the white beauty norms by comparing American and Nigerian culture, “You know at home when somebody tells you that you lost weight, it means something bad. But here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you”, referring to the connotation of the word “thin” as a word for “praise” in America (129). Through representing Ginika’s experiences as a first generation Nigerian immigrant in an American high school, Adichie demonstrates the impacts of school bullying on immigrants based on

white beauty standards and how it can even lead immigrant children to develop "anorexia" as a response to these different cultural expectations in *Americanah* (129). The connection between the concepts of "fat" and "beautiful" in Nigerian culture may be rooted in the challenges of low life standards caused by Nigeria's struggling economy, which is influenced by Western control. In many African cultures, being fat is seen as a sign of wealth and prosperity, in contrast to American culture, where such a body type is associated with health risks rather than abundance, as famine is less common in the West. Adichie highlights the contrast between these cultural expectations and underlines the serious health implications this mindset can have on African immigrants.

Besides portraying Ifemelu's cultural experience in the white society as a black immigrant, Adichie also represents the impacts of Western colonization on the Nigerian natives and how these "white standards" which I explored are the indicators of social class in Nigerian society. Even though Nigerian society is not forced to adopt white beauty standards as in the American society since it is an African country, white ideals and physical appearance still signifies a higher social class in Nigeria due to the corruption in the Nigerian government. This corruption developed as a result of the Western colonization separates African natives from African Americans in the socio-cultural, political, and economic context of late 1900s Nigeria in *Americanah*. One of the most significant details of Lagos culture is that being "half-caste" is a quality to be proud of, symbolizing the light skin color as a beauty standard in Nigeria. As a result of the years of colonization in the history of Nigeria, Kosi, Obinze's "fair-skinned" wife, enjoys "being mistaken for mixed-race" and having "white blood" in her lineage, signifying her high social rank in Lagos compared to other "dark" Nigerians (28). Moreover, during Ifemelu's teenage years, her friend Ginika "had caramel skin and wavy hair that, when unbraided, fell down to her neck instead of standing Afro-like", entitling her as "the prettiest girl" in the school because she complies with the white beauty norms in the colonized Lagos culture (59).

As a means to portray the influence of racial discrimination on interracial relationships, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illustrate the romantic relationship between black and white characters, emphasizing the racial and cultural differences that separate

them. After Ifemelu starts working in Kimberley's house as a babysitter, she is introduced to Kimberley's cousin Curt, who is a white man with a rich family. Even though Ifemelu is surprised by his interest in her since black women are "invisible" to white men, she accepts being a part of his life (197). As soon as they start dating, Ifemelu's life in America completely changes owing to the white privilege that Curt provides her. Ifelemu describes these changes as:

> WITH CURT, she became, in her mind, a woman free of knots and cares, a woman running in the rain with the taste of sun-warmed strawberries in her mouth. "A drink" became a part of the architecture of her life, mojitos and martinis, dry whites and fruity reds. She went hiking with him, kayaking, camping near his family's vacation home, 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. She laughed more because he laughed so much. His optimism blinded her. (201)

Ifemelu's portrayal of her life "with" Curt indicates the different perspectives of "living" in America based on the opposition between a poor, black immigrant and a white man. Considering that Curt is a carefree man who can achieve whatever he desires in life with his "American" passport, he always has a new "idea" and "plans" to work with (201). In addition to his white skin color, Adichie portrays Curt as a symbol of upper class privilege in American society, highlighting the intersection of race and social class. This "double" privilege emphasizes the contrast between the experiences of a Nigerian immigrant and a white American citizen. By framing Curt in this way, Adichie draws attention not only to racial differences but also to the ways in which class shapes perspectives and power dynamics. On the other hand, Ifemelu barely survives with her low income and drowns in her thoughts concerning her life as a Nigerian immigrant who struggles to excel in her career in the racially discriminated America.

As Ifemelu spends more time with Curt, she realizes that the simple rights Curt takes for granted as a white man are not easily accessed by Ifemelu. One day, Curt suggests Ifemelu to visit Paris "tomorrow" all of a sudden and Ifemelu replies, "I just can't get up and go to Paris. I have a Nigerian passport. I need to apply for a visa, with bank statements

and health insurance and all sorts of proof that I won't stay and become a burden to Europe", underlining the "inferior" image of an immigrant from the Global South as opposed to an American citizen in the international affairs (201-2). This process highlights the inequality in international travel, where citizens from countries like Nigeria face strict requirements and assumptions of economic struggle, while American citizens enjoy the freedom to travel with few restrictions. Furthermore, Curt gets Ifemelu "a work visa" and starts her "green card process" "with a few calls" which is very difficult to obtain as an African immigrant, causing Ifemelu to feel "a small resentment" towards Curt's "effortless" life since he can "rearrange the world, have things slide into the spaces that he wanted them to" (207). Curt's wealth and social network provide him with the power to overcome the bureaucratic challenges that most immigrants face, a luxury unimaginable for someone like Ifemelu. This contrast highlights the socio-economic inequality between them, as Curt's life is marked by the privileges of both wealth and white skin, while Ifemelu's reality is defined by barriers that demand immense effort to overcome.

In addition to these experiences of African immigrants and the existing racial discrimination in the USA, Ifemelu asserts that besides the discrimination between blacks and whites, the black race is also discriminated against other races such as Asians and Hispanics. Adichie demonstrates that not all races are equally discriminated in the American society because "Sometimes in America, Race Is Class" as Ifemelu writes in her blog (171). As Herbert J. Gans asserts in his article:

> Although a significant number of African Americans have become middle class since the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, they still suffer from far harsher and more pervasive discrimination and segregation than nonwhite immigrants of equivalent class position. This not only keeps whites and blacks apart but prevents blacks from moving toward equality with whites. In their case, race is used both as a marker of class and, by keeping blacks "in their place," an enforcer of class position and a brake on upward mobility. (Gans 20)

In light of this context, during Ifemelu's time in the Turner house, a "red-faced", white carpenter arrives at the house to clean the carpets for the "cocktail party" that Kimberly and Don will be holding (170). When the carpenter sees Ifemelu for the first

time, he is surprised by what he sees, a black girl in a "grand stone house with the white pillars" (171). Later on, he puts on a "hostile" facial expression which suggests his discomfort with serving a "black" individual who "should be" under his social class, indicating the social ladder based on race and the white norms of American society (170). After he realizes that Ifemelu is "like him", a working-class, his "hostility" fades away and he starts speaking casually since she is a "fellow lower class" because "The universe was once again arranged as it should be" (171). As Ifemelu explains this occurrence in her blog:

> 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. In America's public discourse, "Blacks" as a whole are often lumped with "Poor Whites." Not Poor Blacks and Poor Whites. But Blacks and Poor Whites. A curious thing indeed. (171)

Ifemelu highlights how all Black individuals are directly identified with poverty, equating them to "poor whites". Through Ifemelu's experiences, Adichie asserts that within the framework of American social class hierarchies, Black people are consistently placed at the bottom, a position determined by their skin color. Moreover, Ifemelu underlines the conversation between "Professor Hunk", the nickname of Blaine in Ifemelu's blog, and a white poor guy in one of his classes concerning "white privilege". After the white guy declares that he does not accept having the white privilege over blacks because he and his family have always been poor, Professor Hunk explains to him the scheme of white privilege as:

> If both are caught for drug possession, say, the white guy is more likely to be sent to treatment and the black guy is more likely to be sent to jail. Everything else the same except for race. Check the stats. The Appalachian hick guy is fucked up, which is not cool, but if he were black, he'd be fucked up plus. (348)

Through certain anecdotes and remarks, Ifemelu represents how social classes are established upon racial discrimination and how any other race than white ranks below the white privilege. Concerning this, Adichie also points out the different levels of racism in the USA, suggesting that not all different races are equally discriminated against by the

white race in the novel. In one of her blog posts, Ifemelu refers to Lili, "the coffee-skinned, black-haired and Spanish-speaking" cleaning woman who works for Aunty Uju, remarking her disrespectful behaviors towards Uju because "all the others think they're better than blacks because, well, they're not black" (210). Instead of showing respect for her employer, Lili "was disrespectful, cleaned poorly, made demands" since Aunty Uju is "black", different from Lili who belongs to a higher social class with her lighter, "coffee-skin" as Ifemelu interprets Lili's behaviors. According to Lili, Aunty Uju does not deserve to be respected and served well due to the prevalent racial hierarchy based on different levels of racism.(210). Regarding Lili's behavior, Uju accuses Lili of confusing her skin colour with "white" because being "white" would "justify" Lili's rudeness against the "blackness" of Uju since the "whiteness is the thing to aspire to" in the American society (210).

Furthermore, Ifemelu points out what Professor Hunk entitles as "oppression olympics" (210) among different races in a few of her blog posts concerning "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant" privilege which is also "known as WASP" (190). As Ifemelu refers to in the post, Professor Hunk's Jewish colleague claims that Jews suffered more than blacks because "...in America's ladder of races, Jewish is white but also some rungs below white" (190). However, Ifemelu disagrees with his statement based on the fact that even though all "American racial minorities—blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Jews—all get shit from white folks" (210), blacks are still at the bottom of all races since they live in the racially discriminated American society in which "if you're white, you're all right; if you're brown, stick around; if you're black, get back!" because blacks are "darker" than the other races (190). Through illustrating Ifemelu's experiences with the perspectives of other races in the novel, Adichie highlights the prevalent racial hierarchy where all races are positioned beneath "white" with black skin color considered the most inferior in the socio-cultural context of the USA. While Adichie acknowledges the existence of multiple races as a unifying factor in the quotations above, she also emphasizes the distinct position of the black race compared to other skin colors in *Americanah*.

However, even though race is clearly an issue in the USA as Ifemelu exemplifies throughout the novel, some of the white Americans claim that "Race is overhyped" and

"it's all about class now", ignoring the racial discrimination and the traumatic socio-historical background of African Americans in the USA (10). Thabiti Asukile refers to this issue by criticizing the indifference of white Americans regarding racism in her article:

> They say, "If Obama can run for president and be elected, then you should not complain about racism, because this is not the 1950s or 1960s." They are the same ones who will tell you, "You live in the best place in the world, and if you cannot make it in America it is just your fault because you are not trying hard enough. Stop complaining - you are not experiencing racism - it's you." (Asukile 41)

As a demonstration of this problem, Adichie illustrates an encounter Ifemelu has when she is shopping with Ginika in a clothing store. When they are shopping, two saleswomen who look physically different in appearance approach them to help Ginika pick a dress. While one of these women is "chocolate-skinned" and "her long black weave highlighted with auburn", the other one is "white" and also has long black hair (131). After Ginika buys the dress, the cashier asks them if one of the saleswomen helped her but Ginika does not remember the woman's name. To find out that saleswoman, the cashier asks questions such as "Was it the one with long hair?" and "The one with dark hair?", instead of simply indicating their difference, ignoring the skin color of the black saleswoman. Concerning this intentional ignorance of saleswomen, Ginika refers to the black race by asserting, "Because this is America. You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things", so that white people can avoid being accused of supporting racism (132). In this part of the novel, Adichie points out certain white people's false conception of anti-racism which promotes equality for all races in the world. Reflecting on this, Adichie demonstrates the possible issue with this perspective, which is the non-acknowledgment of skin colour, equating all races despite of their differences and ignoring one of the most significant components of their identity in America's socio-cultural context.

Kimberly Turner, Ifemelu's white boss, being one of these Americans, refers to every black individual whom she sees as "beautiful" to emphasize the "supposed" equality between blacks and whites regarding the beauty standards in American society (151). As Ifemelu portrays in the novel, Kimberly feels the need to specify the "beauty" of the black

race by suggesting that Ifemelu's name is "beautiful" without knowing the meaning of her name and pointing out the "beauty" of the ordinary black women in magazines (151). However, even though Kimberley's intention is good, by specifically calling every black individual "beautiful" or "wonderful" while not referring to white people as the same, Kimberly's overly sensitive behavior towards the black race demonstrates the racial discrimination in American society. By focusing on Black women for praise without similar commentary on white women, Kimberly subconsciously reinforces the idea that Blackness is exceptional or unusual, which undermines the true concept of equality. Even though her comments are framed as compliments, such actions reveal the persistent biases in American society where race continues to be a defining factor.

As opposed to the part of American society that assumes "race does not matter" anymore due to the progress made over the years, Ifemelu argues that "race matters" and the only reason "we say that race doesn't matter is because that's what we're supposed to say, to keep our nice liberal friends comfortable" so that they do not feel "guilty" of being "superior" to the black race (294). When a Haiti woman with Afro hair asserts that she has never had a problem with her white boyfriend regarding the racial difference, Ifemelu responds as:

> The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America. When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. (293)

Ifemelu disagrees with the Haitian woman's claim by comparing her experience in Nigeria, where race was not a defining part of her identity, to her experience in America, where she was racialized as "Black". While Ifemelu acknowledges that intimacy in a relationship can transcend racial boundaries, she also emphasizes the uncomfortable reality of racial dynamics in American society. According to Ifemelu, instead of being grateful for "how far we have come" as a society and ignoring the significant position of Black skin in the socio-cultural context of America, Black individuals should recognize

the systemic norms that white people established to maintain their privilege. She argues that it is problematic to celebrate America's progress toward ending racism as if white people were the victims. Through Ifemelu's perspective, Adichie suggests that this narrative allows white society to shift focus away from the enduring struggles faced by Black individuals and diminishes the importance of addressing the racial inequalities that persist today (293). As opposed to Ifemelu's classmate who states that race is overrated and suggests to be just "human beings", Ifemelu states that black people should be more conscious about their skin color because "Race doesn't really exist" for white people since "...it has never been a barrier" while "Black folks don't have that choice" (348). As Ifemelu suggests, blacks should vocalize how they feel "different" among whites and how they encounter facial expressions on white faces questioning, "Why her?", indicating her relationship with Curt's circle of white friends (295).

Another treatment that makes whites feel "comfortable" as the previous paragraph is representing racism as a "subtle" concept in literature as demonstrated by Ifelemu in *Americanah* (337). Blaine's sister Shan, a black writer, complains about her editor's request to change the representation of her mother's problems related to her skin color at work, making the story more "subtle". The editor suggests that she should focus on the other contexts of her mother's problems such as having "a bad rapport with someone at work" and being "diagnosed with cancer", drawing away the attention from the "race" alone (337). Concerning his suggestion, Shan disagrees with him because adding some "nuance" to the story means keeping "people comfortable so everyone is free to think of themselves as individuals and everyone got where they are because of their achievement" whereas "it was race" all along which indicates the white societies' attempt to block the possible black "threat" that might expose the "imaginary equal America" (337). Shan's disagreement demonstrates the downplaying role of race in novels that expose the struggles of Black individuals. By focusing on the other factors like personal conflicts or health issues instead of race, the editor portrays the societal tendency to avoid uncomfortable truths about racial inequality. Adichie illustrates the white society's need to maintain the status quo by thereby preserving the illusion of a fair and equitable society while silencing the voices that challenge systemic injustice. Concerning this possible black threat, black people are subdued to be silent and passive about the racism they are

exposed to in America because their anger is perceived as a danger by the white society. As James Baldwin, an African American civil rights activist, suggests in a radio show in 1961:

> To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost, almost all of the time — and in one's work. And part of the rage is this: It isn't only what is happening to you. But it's what's happening all around you and all of the time in the face of the most extraordinary and criminal indifference, indifference of most white people in this country, and their ignorance. (Baldwin)

However, since this "rage" is perceived as "dangerous" by the white society, Shan claims that her book is requested to be written in a more "subtle" way, shadowing her "anger" as an African American meanwhile Ifemelu is free to write her blog because "she's African" (339). Shan refers to Ifemelu's experience as a writer to emphasize the difference between African Americans and African immigrants "...She's writing from the outside. She doesn't really feel all the stuff she's writing about. It's all quaint and curious to her. So she can write it and get all these accolades and get invited to give talks. If she were African American, she'd just be labeled angry and shunned" (339). Even though Ifemelu is offended by this reference, she agrees with Shan because race is not engraved in Nigeria's history as an issue and her representation of the American society does not present a threat since she is a first generation immigrant who is an "outsider" both in African American and white American socio-cultural contexts.

However, Dike, a second generation African immigrant who grew up in the USA in contrast to Ifemelu, "has to tone it down" at school and church so that he can avoid being "marked" as different in American society as Uju explains in the novel (220). When Dike does not want to wear the shirt that is "proper" for the church, Uju argues, "If they are shabby, it's not a problem, but if we are, it is another thing...He has to tone it down, because his own will always be seen as different", trying to protect his son from being stigmatized as "the other" (220). As opposed to white students who experience their adolescence being rebellious to their teachers and parents just as every child in puberty stage, Dike is accused of being "aggressive" due to his skin color even though he acts the

same as the others (176). After Dike's teacher labels him as "aggressive" and advises Uju to consider "special education" (176) for "mental children" just because his skin color is "different" than the other students because black people are considered to be intellectually inferior as inferred by Adichie in the novel. As a response to this, Uju criticizes the white principle's neglectful attitude:

> Then the principal told me, 'Dike is just like one of us, we don't see him as different at all.' What kind of pretending is that? I told him to look at my son. There are only two of them in the whole school. The other child is a half-caste, and so fair that if you look from afar you will not even know that he is black. My son sticks out, so how can you tell me that you don't see any difference? (177)

Based on Uju's statement, Dike is suggested to get a special education in a different class than the rest of the school which will lead him to be "marked" as different in Uju's terms (177). Adichie exemplifies how black people are forced to ignore racism and be "calm" concerning the discrimination they experience, so that they can be a visible and an accepted individuals in American society. As Ifemelu writes in her blog about this issue, Barack Obama is one of these blacks who disregards racism with a calm manner, refusing to display "anger" towards racial discrimination because he is a young American black who did not experience the old, "harsher" and "uglier" America (322). Instead, Obama chooses to be the "Magic Negro", a black American "...who is eternally wise and kind. He never reacts under great suffering, never gets angry, is never threatening. He always forgives all kinds of racist shit", representing the white societies' oppression on American blacks (322). Adichie's portrayal of Obama as the "Magic Negro" illustrates how adjusting to the expectations of white society perpetuates the illusion of progress while ignoring criticisms about racial inequality. Ifemelu's perception of Obama's attitude towards racism highlights how racism continues to evolve in subtler forms, suppressing authenticity not only for public figures like Obama but also for everyday Black individuals in predominantly white spaces.

3.1 Forming Hybrid Cultural Identity: Exploring Bhabha's "Mimicry" and Cultural Memory Loss among African Immigrants

In the represented socio-cultural context of American society, Ifemelu and other African immigrant characters such as Dike and Ginika gradually form their hybrid cultural identity to fit into American culture, adopting some of the cultural attributes of white Americans through "mimicry", coined by Homi K. Bhabha. As Bhabha explains the function of "mimicry" by referring to Jacques Lacan's definition in "Signs Taken for Wonders":

> There is the more ambivalent, third choice: camouflage, mimicry, black skins/white masks. "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry," writes Lacan, "is camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of being mottled-exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare". (Bhabha 162)

Considering Bhabha's concept of the "hybrid identity" formed through "mimicry" as a "new" identity and described as the "third choice", Ifemelu observes that Aunty Uju's habits and behaviors have noticeably changed due to her exposure to American culture. This shift becomes visible to Ifemelu when she arrives in America for the first time, reflecting Aunty Uju's adaptation within this "third space". As opposed to Nigerian culture in which wearing "earrings" and taking care of your physical beauty is necessary to look "beautiful" for women, Aunty Uju's outlook looks very "casual", thus "American", deprived of exaggerated accessories in Ifemelu's point of view (109).

Based on this, Adichie points out Nigerian societies' need to have the worthiest and the newest of every material due to living in the Global South and having a "scarcity" mindset as a result of the years of colonization. Obinze, Ifemelu's former boyfriend, compares and contrasts the West and Nigeria by suggesting "...Third Worlders are forward-looking, we like things to be new, because our best is still ahead, while in the West their best is already past and so they have to make a fetish of that past", drawing a clear line between the developed West and the underdeveloped Nigerian economy (433). According to this, Adichie explains the psychological mechanism behind this longing for

the “new” in Nigerian society through Obinze’s words “We imagine that even the things that are not scarce are scarce. And it breeds a kind of desperation in everybody. Even the wealthy”, indicating the emphasis on the significance of money rather than being sophisticated in Lagos (428). In the context of the given examples regarding Nigerian society, even though they haven’t seen each other for years, Uju gives Ifemelu a “quick hug”, representing the “casual” lifestyle of American society (109). Moreover, Uju pronounces her own name as “You-joo” which is the white American version instead of the Nigerian pronunciation, “Oo-Joo” because “it is what they call” her in the USA. Through these examples, Adichie draws a distinctive line between these two cultures and indicates the hybridization process of Uju’s cultural identity as a consequence of her exposure to the American culture (109).

Putting on an “American accent” is a sign of cultural identity hybridization and the result of “mimicry” of a different culture as demonstrated through the experiences of Aunty Uju, Dike, and Ifemelu in the novel. When Uju, Dike, and Ifemelu do some shopping at the supermarket and Dike refuses to put the cereal carton back on the shelf “in the presence of white Americans”, Uju puts on a “sliding” American accent and pronounces “Put it back” as “Pooh-reet-back”, representing the fluidity of cultural identity and how African immigrants can “imitate” the language of the foreign culture through “mimicry” (113). After he becomes a teenager, Dike reflects his mother’s behaviors in his own, sprinkling “his speech with “ain’t” and “y’all” when he is with his “white” friends (334). Adichie illustrates Bhabha’s idea of mimicry through the code-switching of Uju and Dike, reflecting the effort to gain social acceptance in a society where race and language often determine access to opportunities and respect. While mimicry can prevent being an “outsider” in a foreign culture, it also highlights the tension between maintaining one’s authentic identity and conforming to societal expectations.

However, in contrast to Uju, Dike’s “American” cultural identity is internalized by him as a second-generation immigrant who was born in the USA. Dike is raised by Uju’s attempts to break him off from his native Nigerian culture, not letting him speak “Igbo” since learning two languages “will confuse him” and thus, he can avoid being a “misfit” in American society (114). Regarding Dike’s cultural identity as a second-generation

immigrant, Homi K. Bhabha's theory of "disavowal", which describes the process of "reversing" the domination of a foreign culture by perfectly imitating its cultural attributes, can be exemplified through Dike's experiences in the novel. In "Signs Taken for Wonders", Bhabha discusses how the concept of "disavowal" opposes the idea of the "purity" of cultural identity as follows:

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the "pure" and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (Bhabha 154)

In the quotation above, Bhabha rejects the idea of an authentic cultural identity with a fixed, unchangeable origin. Instead, he argues for the fluidity of cultural identity and its capacity to imitate a foreign culture identically through repetition, holding an unsettling mirror to the "eye of power", which is represented by American culture in *Americanah* (Bhabha 154). In this context, Dike can be analyzed as an example of perfect imitation, as he grows up speaking English with a native American accent within the American socio-cultural environment, despite his mother being a Nigerian immigrant. Alongside the hardships Dike faces in his school life in the USA, as previously analyzed in this chapter, he also has the potential to become a popular student, playing on the basketball team in high school in contrast to the experiences of first-generation African immigrants. In the novel, Ifemelu illustrates how Dike is appreciated by his fellow "white" schoolmates: "…all of them enclosed in a sparkling arc of careless youth, and at their center was Dike. They all laughed at Dike's jokes, and looked to him for agreement, and in a delicate, unspoken way, they let him make their collective decisions…", which indicates the effective formation of his hybrid cultural identity (334). In *Americanah*, Adichie portrays Dike as the embodiment of Bhabha's argument in the quotation above,

highlighting the flexibility of cultural identity, which is not determined by skin color or an individual's native culture.

In addition to Dike, Ginika's cultural identity is also more "flexible" than Uju's and Ifemelu's because she moves to the USA during her teenage years, learning the "codes" of being an American while Ifemelu and Uju struggle to acknowledge and comply with these codes (130). As Ifemelu observes Ginika's relationship with her other immigrant friends who were born in America but whose cultural roots belong to different countries, she realizes that "They all laughed at the same things and said "Gross!" about the same things; they were well choreographed", feeling like a stranger among them (129). In contrast to Aunty Uju and Ifemelu, "...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" (130). This demonstrates their "dominant" American cultural identity, in contrast to first-generation immigrants who engage with American culture only in adulthood.

Nevertheless, although Dike grows up being exposed to American culture and connects with Americans more easily than Uju on a cultural level, he still experiences a cultural identity crisis due to his mother's cultural heritage that differentiates him from both white Americans and African Americans, resulting in his complex cultural identity in the novel. Adichie demonstrates the dual impact of a cultural identity crisis, based on the struggle to balance native and foreign cultures, intensified by the identity crisis that a typical teenager faces as they try to find their purpose and role in life, through Dike's experiences in the novel. Even though Dike seems like a brilliant student who has healthy relationships with his white, black, and immigrant friends from different countries, "he does not know what he is" as he writes in his school essay, representing his struggle to find a place for himself in the American society (221). As Dike becomes more aware of his hybrid cultural identity, he falls into depression and commits suicide which is "a foreign behavior" in Nigerian culture as Ifemelu's native Nigerian friend Ranyinudo argues in the novel (421). According to Ranyinudo, "A boy living in America with everything" as an American citizen and committing suicide is not rational since the wealth and material commodity is more significant than mental health for a Global South citizen

as implied by Adichie to differentiate the priorities between American culture and Nigerian culture in *Americanah* (421).

As for Ifemelu, despite her resistance to change, she gradually submits to the "Americanization" of her cultural identity after she realizes that she cannot be "herself" and "accepted" at the same time in the USA. When Ifemelu tries to register for the university for the first time in America, due to her Nigerian accent her level of competency in English is underestimated by a white employee in the registration office, "Cristina Tomas" (138). Even though Ifemelu can speak and understand English well, Cristina Tomas speaks very slowly as if she talks with "a small child" when she gives instructions to fill out the registration form (138). Because of her "foreign accent", Ifemelu's English, which she has used "all her life," is disregarded by the white superiority symbolized by Cristina Tomas , leading Ifemelu to "shrank like a dried leaf" (138) and to practice "American accent" (139). Cristina Tomas embodies the American societal structure where whiteness is regarded as the default standard of intellectual competence and socio-cultural acceptability. The white supremacy that Cristina Tomas represents in the novel delegitimizes cultural and linguistic diversity, such as Ifemelu's Nigerian accent, which is unfairly questioned in terms of fluency. This behavior demonstrates how language, particularly different accents, is racialized and often stigmatized as inferior or unintelligible in the socio-cultural context of the USA, while white American English is positioned as the norm. Finally, Ifemelu's decision to adopt an American accent can be viewed as a response to these societal pressures, reflecting the painful reality that, in a society structured by white supremacy, immigrant individuals often feel forced to suppress aspects of their cultural identities to avoid being perceived as outsiders.

Later on, Ifemelu realizes that certain American attitudes and expressions such as the "overuse" of being "excited" for everything start to take over her cultural identity as she spends more time with her professors and American classmates, illustrating the hybridization of her cultural identity (139). As opposed to the Nigerian culture, "a professor excited about a new book, a student excited about a class, a politician on TV excited about a law; it was altogether too much excitement" in American culture as Ifemelu indicates in the novel (139). In order to quickly blend in the American society and

“wear a new, knowing skin right away”, Ifemelu learns “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” which leads her to add “being excited” to her vocabulary as well in *Americanah* (140). The more Ifemelu spends time with Americans and learns native expressions that only make sense within American culture, the more she becomes Americanized, gradually closing the gap between her native culture and American culture and creating a hybrid cultural identity.

Another factor the first generation of Nigerian immigrants face in a foreign land is illustrated through Ifemelu’s experience of different cuisines and food cultures of the USA. During her first days in the USA, Ifemelu learns about the American food culture, which is different than Nigerian cooking methods and meal choices as she takes care of Dike at home. When Aunty Uju casually suggests Ifemelu “make sandwiches for lunch”, Ifemelu emphasizes how Uju is accustomed to eating sandwiches for lunch “as though those words were perfectly normal and did not require a humorous preamble about how Americans ate bread for lunch” (112). After Dike requests Ifemelu to make “hot dogs” and Ifemelu uses “oil” to cook the “sausages”, Dike tells Ifemelu that sausages should not be fried with oil as in Nigerian culture, instead they are boiled in hot water (112). When she does not get the result she has expected, Ifemelu realizes that the cooking techniques of Nigerian “Satis sausages” and American “hot dogs” are different (112). Later on, when Dike sees Ifemelu “eating a banana with peanuts”, he finds it “strange” and decides that he doesn’t like Nigeria while this food combination is “normal” for Nigerians just as “peanut butter and jelly sandwich” for Americans (118). Towards the end of her America journey, the impact of American food culture on Ifemelu’s hybrid cultural identity is emphasized through her choice of eating “a granola bar” instead of a full meal as a result of living 13 years in the USA (44). These examples illustrate the gradual transformation of Ifemelu’s cultural identity and how food, as a fundamental part of culture, becomes a powerful symbol of her adaptation. This transformation is demonstrated through her shift in preference from Nigerian food culture to American food culture, eventually leading to her cultural hybridization in the novel.

As a result of this hybridization process that African immigrants such as Ifemelu go through for years in the USA, their memory of their native country gets blurry as they gradually adopt the American culture, away from Nigeria's continuing socio-cultural and political progress. When Ifemelu has a conversation with her friend from Lagos, Ranyinudo, her friend mentions a "...new sprawling, modern mall in Lagos" which is difficult for Ifemelu to imagine since she has left Lagos 13 years ago and the only building that she can remember is "the cramped Mega Plaza" (20). Ifemelu's weak memory of her life in Lagos symbolizes her detachment from her native homeland, a result of the impact her hybrid cultural identity has on her sense of memory in the novel. During the phone calls with her mother, Ifemelu realizes that she cannot remember certain features that are accepted as "normal" in Nigeria such as "not having light" for days due to power cuts in the country. In comparison to her life in America, Ifemelu "...could no longer remember what it felt like to spend an evening in candlelight" because she is used to the comfortable living conditions in the USA that she shares with Curt who is the embodiment of "white privilege" (164). Moreover, Ifemelu cannot recall some of the locations that every native Lagos citizen knows such as "the kiosk" when her mother mentions the name on the phone as Ifemelu realizes that her memories are covered with "A sepia tone", referring to her loss of Lagos memories in the novel (205). The phrase "a sepia tone" carries deep symbolic meaning in the novel, signifying the fading and distortion of Ifemelu's memories of Lagos over time (205). Sepia, often associated with old photographs, evokes a sense of nostalgia, suggesting that her memories of her homeland have faded and become blurred. This depiction represents the emotional and cultural disconnection Ifemelu experiences as a result of her stay in America and her gradual adaptation to a hybrid cultural identity.

Bartholomew, Uju's boyfriend, is one of these Nigerian immigrants who "went to America and got lost" since he has been living in the USA for almost 30 years, not being aware of the current status of Nigerian culture in the 2000s (121). Even though he has a solid American accent with "gonnas and wannas" (120) that highlights his "Americanness", Bartholomew criticizes "Nigerian politics with the fervid enthusiasm" as if he hasn't left the country years ago and "followed it from afar", "read and reread articles on the Internet", which represents most Nigerian immigrants' previous perspective of their country that does not match with the contemporary status of Nigeria (121). Later

on, Bartholomew criticizes the American clothing customs by claiming "This country has no moral compass", referring to the short dresses that American women wear and he compares it to the "used to be conservative" dressing culture of Nigeria (121). However, Ifemelu reminds him that "Girls in Nigeria wear dresses much shorter than that" in modern Nigeria, implying his socio-cultural disconnection from his native homeland based on his outdated views regarding Nigeria (121). Bartholomew's backward memory of Nigeria and his strong American accent highlight the fluid cultural identity of Africans in the Diaspora. This fluidity makes Marcus Garvey's vision of a separate African state, isolated from the rest of the world, seem like a utopian dream. As opposed to W.E.B. Du Bois who emphasized integration, education, and political activism with Pan-Africanism as the means to achieve racial progress, Marcus Garvey asserts:

> It is hoped that when the time comes for American and West Indian Negroes to settle in Africa, they will realize their responsibility and their duty. It will not be to go to Africa for the purpose of exercising an over-lordship over the natives, but it shall be the purpose of the Universal Negro Improvement Association to have established in Africa that brotherly cooperation which make the interest of the African native and the American and West Indian Negro one and the same, that is to say, we shall enter into a common partnership to build up Africa in the interest of our race. (Garvey 611)

According to Garvey's perspective in the quotation above, his Pan-Africanism was grounded in economic self-sufficiency, the creation of an independent African state, and a strong, unified black identity worldwide which is in clash with Homi K Bhabha's hybridity theory and Du Bois' ideology exemplified through many characters throughout *Americanah*. As opposed to Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois refers to all black individuals including African immigrants such as Bartholomew who possess hybrid cultural identities as "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face", working towards the integration of races without disrespecting cultural variations instead of segregating black and white people as a solution to the race problem as Garvey suggests (Du Bois 9).

Ifemelu suggests that Nigerian immigrant writers who "visit home in December for a week" (122) reflect a different portrayal of their home country in their writings on the internet just like Bartholomew and "American returnees" who return home years later in the novel (20). Bartholomew, of these people, tries to compensate for his absent years in Nigeria by writing about Nigeria to prove that he is "still" there. However, Ifemelu asserts that these people only write about the "mythologies of home, because the home was now a blurred place between here and there", developed and changed throughout the years while the memory of immigrants remained the same (122). Ifemelu's insights highlight the tension between memory and reality in the diasporic experience, raising questions about who has the authority to define and represent "home" and the implications of such representations for collective cultural identity. This perspective challenges immigrant writers and returnees alike to confront the evolving nature of their homeland and embrace this change. Similar to Adichie's representation of this issue in *Americanah*, Salman Rushdie, a famous British Indian author, underlines the same issue in his collection of essays by referring to immigrants and exiles who live abroad and "…are haunted by some sense of loss" in *Imaginary Homelands* (Rushdie 10). Rushdie suggests:

> But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge-which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands… (Rushdie 10)

According to Rushdie, this imaginary homeland reflects not only what was left behind but also how memory reshapes and reconstructs these places into products of imagination and longing, no longer grounded in tangible reality. This process further complicates immigrants' relationships with their past and identity, as seen in Adichie's immigrant characters like Bartholomew in *Americanah*.

As represented by Ifemelu's point of view, when Nigerian immigrants return to their homeland, they compare Nigeria with America by pointing out the different attributes of Nigerian culture such as the "unhealthy" food culture in *Americanah*. After Ifemelu goes back to Nigeria after 13 years, she joins "The Nigerpolitan Club" meetings that

include former Nigerian immigrants who returned to Nigeria after years of living in America just like Ifemelu (402). During one of the meetings, they criticize the "oily" and "fried" food options and menus in classic Nigerian restaurants, offering to go to a new, "American" restaurant in which there are "the kinds of things" that they can eat such as "fresh green salads and steamed still-firm vegetables" (404). Even though Ifemelu accepts that she has missed Nigerian food while she was in America, she admits the fact that "...she longed, also, for the other things she had become used to in America, even quinoa, Blaine's specialty, made with feta and tomatoes" (404). These examples highlight Ifemelu's evolving tastes and preferences, shaped by her years in America and combined with her nostalgia for Nigerian traditions. Her simultaneous longing for both Nigerian and American foods reflects her hybrid cultural identity, caught between the familiarity of her homeland and the habits she adopted abroad, symbolizing the duality of her diasporic experience. However, Ifemelu does not agree with American returnees' harsh criticism regarding the quality of Nigerian restaurants since "Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be like New York, or anywhere else for that matter" (417). Ifemelu claims that American returnees should accept Nigerian culture as how it is instead of trying to change this culture by comparing Nigerians with "sandwich-eating" Americans and "people with food allergies" (417).

Considering the different historical backgrounds, cultures, and experiences between the portrayed Nigerian immigrant and African American characters in the novel, Adichie and Gyasi emphasize these factors and illustrate the tense relationship between these two groups based on the historical and cultural contrasts in *Americanah* and *Homegoing*. Even though both African American and Nigerian immigrants live in the same country and are generalized only as "blacks" by white Americans, in fact, there is a socio-cultural polarization between them that estranges them from each other. This opposition is illustrated in the context of American educational institutions through the experience of Dike and Ifemelu in *Americanah* and Marjorie in *Homegoing*. When Ifemelu is having a conversation with Uju's neighbor Jane, who is from the Caribbeans, she acknowledges the specific point of view of Africans based on the degradation of American Blacks in the novel (116). Jane criticizes the education level and unsupervised education of "public schools" in Brooklyn by pointing out that her child goes to a "private

school" because "Otherwise she will start behaving like these black Americans", emphasizing the African immigrants' perception of African Americans as the "uneducated" society opposed to the white children in the USA (117). As thoroughly analyzed in Gyasi's *Homegoing*, which partially shares its context with *Americanah* in illustrating African Americans' experiences in the USA, the living conditions and education levels of many African Americans are lower than those of the average white citizen due to low income, thus pervasive drug addiction and the collapse of the family structure. As a result, African Americans are stigmatized as an ignorant culture, perceived as the exact opposite of white culture. Even though this generalization fails in certain instances, such as with Blaine and Marcus in both novels, Adichie highlights the persistent judgment against African Americans and how they are even otherized by African immigrants who share the same ancestry.

While Halima, an African immigrant, chats with a new customer in the hairdresser, she complains about his son's difficult process of adapting to American society and how he used to be subjected to African American children's physical violence due to his foreign accent until he picks up American accent (192). This situation sheds light on the bullying African immigrants endure from African Americans in schools, as well as the underlying cultural tensions between the two groups. African Americans often exhibit "violence" and "anger" toward African immigrants, who may share similar appearances but have not endured the same historical struggles with white Americans. While this may not be the direct cause of their anger, it is subconsciously reinforced by the African immigrants' foreign accents, which highlights their difference in a society where the American accent is considered the norm. . Since most people in African countries are black, the concept of "race" as it is perceived in the context of African diaspora "doesn't really work", making it difficult for African immigrants to relate to the lived experiences of African Americans in the same way. Thus, this discord creates a rivalry between African American and African immigrant children in schools (472).

In addition to African American's marked "criminal" image that is prevalent as a result of the injustices of the criminal justice system in the USA, the reflection of this "violence" on the media networks such as the TV and the News which only represents the

"black" crimes is illustrated in *Americanah*. This portrayal creates a prejudiced point of view for the African immigrants and Africans back in their homeland as Adichie exemplifies through Zemaye in the novel. Zemaye, Ifemelu's co-worker asks Ifemelu "Why is it only black people that are criminals over there?" based on an American TV show called "Cops" demonstrating the impact of the American media controlled by the white supremacy in the novel. The conversation between Zemaye and Ifemelu serves as an illustration of how white supremacy shapes the narratives in American media. Zemaye's question demonstrates the ways in which American media, such as "Cops", perpetuates racial stereotypes, reinforcing a global perception of Black people as inherently criminal. The media, as a cultural institution, operates as a tool of hegemony, normalizing the idea that whiteness is the standard of humanity while portraying people of color, particularly Black individuals, as "other". Adichie emphasizes the media's ability to define reality for its audience and its impact on the perpetuation of racial inequality.

In relation to the stereotyped representation of African Americans, Mary Beth Oliver refers to the Cultivation theory, a communication theory developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s which explores the long-term effects of television viewing on individuals' perceptions of reality in her article:

> Johnson, Adams, Hall, and Ashburn (1997) used this theory to examine how exposure to crime stories in the media affected viewers' judgments concerning another, subsequently presented crime situation. Their research showed that exposure to a newspaper story about violent crime resulted in subsequently greater dispositional evaluations for black criminal suspects (i.e., violent personality), but not for white criminal suspects. (Oliver 9)

In light of Oliver's quotation and the African natives' perception of African Americans in *Americanah*, the stigmatization regarding their identification with "crime" is based on their representation as "black criminals" in American television. This portrayal reinforces a biased and one-dimensional view of African Americans, shaping perceptions both within and outside the United States. In *Americanah*, this stigma influences how African natives, who consume American media such as Zemaye, associate African

Americans with criminality, perpetuating stereotypes and deepening the distinctions between African Americans and African immigrants.

During one of her classes, Ifemelu and her culturally diverse classmates have a debate on the usage of the word "nigger" in "popular culture" after watching some scenes from "Roots", a TV series about American slavery (141). After watching the scenes in the class, one of the students questions the reason why the word "nigger" was "bleeped out" in the scenes and as a response to this, Professor Moore wants them to discuss the representation of history in "popular culture" (142). While an African immigrant student argues that "'nigger' is a word that exists. People use it. It is part of America. It has caused a lot of pain to people and I think it is insulting to bleep it out", an African American student counterargues that "Well, it's because of the pain that word has caused that you shouldn't use it!", indicating the opposite opinions based on the different historical background of these groups (142). African immigrants, like the student who defends the inclusion of the word "nigger" in media, often approach it with a more academic perspective, seeing it as an undeniable part of American history and culture. This viewpoint stems from their position as outsiders to the historical legacy of slavery and persistent racism in the USA; they engage with the term intellectually rather than emotionally, as they are not direct inheritors of the trauma associated with it. In contrast, African Americans, whose collective identity is tied to the historical realities of slavery and segregation, view the word as a symbol of oppression and dehumanization. Accordingly, Adichie demonstrates this fundamental difference as an example of how lived experiences shape cultural interpretations in *Americanah*. Concerning this issue, Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, highlights the difference between racial and cultural identity in his book, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands*:

> From this I came to understand that identity is not a set of fixed attributed, the unchanging essence of the inner self, but a constantly shifting process of positioning. We tend to think of identity as taking us back to our roots, the part of us which remains essentially the same across time. In fact, identity is always a never-completed process of becoming - a process of shifting identifications, rather than a singular, complete, finished state of being. (16)

Stuart Hall's assertion that identity is "a constantly shifting process of positioning" rather than a fixed essence highlights the dynamic nature of how individuals relate to history and culture. Hall's idea that identity is "a never-completed process of becoming" emphasizes that these different perspectives are not static but are shaped by the ongoing interaction between personal experiences and broader cultural narratives. This framework allows us to see the debate between African immigrant and African American students as more than just opposing views; it is a reflection of how identity evolves through engagement with historical and cultural contexts. In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illustrates how the perception of racism differs between the two groups in this discussion, as demonstrated by the African American girl's claim: "Well, if you all hadn't sold us, we wouldn't be talking about any of this" (143). She addresses the African immigrant student in class, accusing her ancestors of "selling" them to white people in the past. In response, an African immigrant student asserts, "Hiding it doesn't make it go away", suggesting that "even if no Africans had been sold by other Africans, the transatlantic slave trade would still have happened. It was a European enterprise", which reflects her lack of comprehension and understanding regarding African American's perspective of racism as a concept since she is an immigrant whose ancestors were not "slaves" (143). Instead of being considerate and empathetic about the struggles African Americans face, the African immigrant student attempts to distance herself from the accusation against her culture by responding with a logical point of view.

Later in the novel, Ifemelu attends "the African Students Association" (143) meetings which include immigrants from all around Africa, aiding African immigrants like Ifemelu to make friends with other Africans such as "Ugandans, Kenyans, Ghanaians" and assisting them to get used to the American lifestyle (144). In this group, Ifemelu feels a sense of comfort because she does not feel like she has to "explain" herself as she does with white Americans and African Americans since she shares a partially common history and experiences with African immigrants (44). The "ASA" supports the Pan-Africanism movement by advising African immigrants to be friends with African Americans as well as African immigrants "in a spirit of true pan-Africanism", referring to the unifying aspect of Pan-Africanism (145). However, the president of the "ASA," Wambui, suggests that while it is important for African immigrants to form friendships with African Americans,

they should maintain their "perspective" as Africans by not crossing the boundary of friendship and becoming influenced by African American culture (145). Despite the connection between these different social groups that Pan-Africanism promotes, as African Americans are considered "brothers and sisters" who don't mind connecting with African immigrants, there are also the ones who "insult" African immigrants by calling them "Mandingo or a booty scratcher" (145). On the other hand, Wambui illustrates African immigrants' perspective of African Americans through Kofi's life, who was born in Ghana but grew up in the USA, by stating that he is strongly tied to his native culture and claims, "There's no American nonsense in that house. He goes back to Ghana every year. We call people like Kofi American African, not African American, which is what we call our brothers and sisters whose ancestors were slaves", distinguishing them from one another (45). Wambui's distinction between "American African" and "African American" reflects a cultural divide, based on the historical experiences of African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved in the U.S. and the immigrant experience of African-born individuals like Kofi. The phrase "American African" emphasizes Kofi's connection to his native Ghanaian culture, contrasting it with the identity of African Americans, whose cultural identities are shaped by slavery and racism. Regarding this tension, Adichie portrays this difference by referring to a different club that is specifically composed of African Americans, "the Black Student Union" which is established upon the experiences and historical background of African Americans in the novel (45).

The conversation between Shan and Ifemelu in one of her "salon" gatherings regarding how racism is not an issue for Africans whereas it is a significant element in the American society highlights the disaccord between African Americans and African immigrants (317). Shan, an African American author, refers to one of her Nigerian co-workers' opinion about Ifemelu's blog and her pen name, "Non-American Black" at some point in the novel. Shan's friend asserts that "...he was sure the Non-American Black was a Caribbean because Africans don't care about race", thereby critiquing Ifemelu's perspectives based on her cultural identity and highlighting a contrast between their viewpoints (319). Later on, Shan directs a question to Ifemelu and sarcastically asks "Nigerians call us *acata*, right? And it means wild animal?", putting Ifemelu in an uncomfortable position and judging her by her Nigerian roots (320). In response, Ifemelu

feels “guilty” even though she tries to defend herself by saying “I don’t know that it means wild animal, I really don’t know what it means, and I don’t use it” (320). Adichie demonstrates the tension between these cultural groups and how African natives view African Americans as “animals” by referring to certain indigenous vocabulary specifically associated with the opposite cultural group in the novel.

One of the represented differences between African Americans and African immigrants is Ifemelu’s lack of sensitivity and anger towards racism as opposed to Blaine, an African American academic in the novel. Towards the end of their relationship, Blaine learns about Mr. White, an African American security guard at the university library, who was falsely accused of “drug dealing” simply because a white library employee saw him handing his car keys to another Black friend and receiving money in return (345). Even though Mr. White is released after being proven innocent, Blaine asserts, “The university’s response is total bullshit. A simple mistake that wasn’t racial at all? Really? I’m thinking of organizing a protest tomorrow, get people to come out and say this is not okay”, reflecting his African American rage towards racism in the novel (345). Blaine’s reaction to racial injustice and his willingness to take action contrasts to Ifemelu’s comparatively detached perspective on racism. Blaine’s response highlights his alignment with the African American tradition of confronting racism, fueled by a history of collective struggle and resistance. In contrast, Ifemelu does not have the same strong emotions about this protest as Blaine does because she does not “feel up to it” even though she can comprehend the significance the protest holds for Blaine (347). Thus, she prefers “to go to Kavanagh’s going-away lunch instead of standing in front of the university library holding a placard” which is perceived as an act of “disrespect” by Blaine (346). As a result, he accuses Ifemelu of not being “sufficiently furious” because she was not an African American, thus she was not able to understand “the principle of it”, putting a distance between them by making himself a “stranger” to Ifemelu (347). However, this distance does not emerge all of a sudden as it is the accumulation of disregarded moments such as Blaine expecting Ifemelu to show awareness or concern about racism when an old, white woman wants to “touch” Ifemelu’s Afro hair after giving a compliment (314). While Ifemelu does not feel offended by this request since she is not “guarded” against white people, Blaine charges her to be the “guinea pig” of the white woman’s curiosity,

criticizing her for choosing not to express anger in response because “There were things that existed for him that she could not penetrate” due to cultural difference between them (314). As a supporting resource to Adichie’s argument regarding this difference despite their shared skin color, Stuart Hall’s statement in the following quotation underlines the fluidity of cultural identity:

> Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (Hall 70)

Stuart Hall’s quotation emphasizes the evolving nature of cultural identity, arguing that it is not a fixed essence but rather a continuous process shaped by history, culture, and power. By describing cultural identity as a matter of both “becoming” and “being”, Hall suggests that identity is not only rooted in historical experiences but also shaped by future possibilities and ongoing transformations. This perspective challenges the idea of an essentialized identity, emphasizing instead that identities are fluid, constantly redefined by the historical events and cultural contexts. Hall’s framework is particularly relevant to Adichie’s portrayal of Ifemelu and Blaine, as their different responses to racism reflect the ways cultural identities are shaped by distinct lived experiences, even among individuals who share the same racial background.

In contrast to the incompatibility between African immigrants and African Americans, Adichie illustrates the cultural differences between these two groups through the close friendship between Boubacar, a Senegalese professor at Yale, and Ifemelu. Their bond, rooted in their shared African immigrant identity, creates a sense of discomfort for Blaine in the novel. After meeting him, Ifemelu feels an immediate connection with Boubacar as a fellow African immigrant, finding in him someone with whom she can discuss topics related to West Africa that evoke memories of her Nigerian roots. Boubacar has a mixture of “Wolof and French” accents just like Ifemelu’s Nigerian accent and they share “the same silent language” of being an immigrant among African Americans, uniting

them on common ground (341). While racist jokes specific to these two different cultural communities can be offensive when used against each other, Ifemelu and Boubacar can laugh at jokes about Boubacar being a "Francophone African" because they do not perceive each other as a threat, unlike their interactions with African Americans (341). In light of this familiarity between them, Blaine "resented this mutuality, something primally African from which he felt excluded" (342). Blaine's feeling of exclusion stems from his inability to fully connect with or understand the cultural bond that unites Ifemelu and Boubacar. This distinction creates a gap in Blaine's relationship with Ifemelu, as he feels alienated by the "silent language" and mutual understanding shared between African immigrants (341). Blaine's inability to bridge this cultural divide leads to frustration, insecurity and "a territorial dislike" against Boubacar, ultimately limiting the emotional depth and cohesion of his romantic relationship with Ifemelu (341). Through this example, Adichie represents the boundaries of cross-cultural relationships that might block the full potential of a healthy relationship.

As for Ifemelu, she recognizes this subtle distance when she hears Blaine speaking "Ebonics"[1] to Mr. White for the first time (344). As opposed to Blaine's American accent, which he refers to as his "White People Are Watching Us voice", he switches to Ebonics when speaking with an older Black man to build a special connection (344). This choice reflects Blaine's recognition that Mr. White, having grown up in the "inner-city" where Ebonics is the primary dialect, would relate more comfortably to this mode of communication (344). Blaine's African American cultural identity demonstrates a dialectical fluidity shaped by the contrast between "middle-class" and "inner-city" African American experiences (344). This contrast reflects the socioeconomic privilege of middle-class African Americans, such as Blaine, while the relevance of Ebonics and Mr. White associates him with the inner city and, consequently, a lower social class. Adichie represents how Blaine can do "code switching" and adjust his dialect according to different levels of social classes to underline the complexity of African American identity formation and the impact of class-based distinctions within a shared cultural framework

[1] Ebonics, referred to as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), is a dialect predominantly used within African American communities. It features distinct grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, shaped by African linguistic influences and the cultural history of African Americans. For further reading, see Robin R. Means Coleman and Jack L. Daniel "Mediating Ebonics".

(344). Ifemelu observes the change in Blaine's "syntax" and how "his cadences" become "more rhythmic" in Ebonics, portraying him as a person who is different than she is used to know, which indicates the unique elements of Blaine's culture that Ifemelu cannot identify herself with (344). The complexity of Blaine's African American cultural identity illustrates the various factors, such as social class, which influence cultural identity, continuously shaping it, as discussed by Bhabha in the previous pages.

In addition to these cultural differences between African Americans and African immigrants in *Americanah*, One another significant difference between African Americans and African immigrants is African Americans' lack of connection to their original ancestry that dates back to hundreds of years ago as implied by one of Blaine's African American friends. While Michael and Ifemelu are having a conversation about Ifemelu's home country, Nigeria, Michael asserts that Ifemelu is lucky to know where she is from since African Americans are the "long lost children" of African countries who are too far gone from their cultural roots. Even though Ifemelu has formed a hybrid cultural identity during her time in the USA, she still has a motherland that she can always go back to owing to her "Africanness" (329). As opposed to Ifemelu, the cultural identity of African Americans such as Blaine is transformed into a unique form because of his ancestors who lived in the African Diaspora for years. While this lack of connection to their ancestral roots demonstrates the fundamental difference between these two cultural groups, it also suggests that cultural identities are flexible and open to variations shaped by the unique experiences of the diaspora rather than being tied to a continuous lineage of specific African cultures. This disconnection also represents the enduring impact of oppression, highlighting how slavery and colonization disrupted African cultural continuity.

However, considering these cultural differences between two distinct socio-cultural groups such as their perspective on racism based on their experiences throughout the years, they are still simplified as only a "black" individual by white Americans, completely disregarding their different cultural and historical backgrounds in the USA. In *Americanah*, Adichie refers to this generalization through Aisha and Ifemelu's conversation in the hairdresser when Ifemelu asks Aisha where her sister works in Africa.

In response, Aisha simply says "in Africa" instead of specifically naming her country, Benin, because she knows that white people do not pay attention to the distinctions between African countries (21). She suggests, "You say Senegal and American people, they say, Where is that? My friend from Burkina Faso, they ask her, your country in Latin America?" (21). This reflects a broader lack of interest in the diversity of Black cultures, as white superiority tends to generalize and overlook differences. This generalization stems from a history of colonialism, slavery, and racism, which established whiteness as the standard of identity and culture while degrading non-white identities to simplified and monolithic categories. By erasing the distinctions within Black communities, white superiority perpetuates a narrative that diminishes the rich cultural, historical, and social diversity of individuals of African descent as exemplified by Adichie in *Americanah*.

3.2 Promoting Solidarity between African Americans and African Immigrants through an Afropolitanist Perspective

In light of all these disregarded cultural, social, and dialectic differences between African Americans and African immigrants, both Yaa Gyasi and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie claim in their novels that the distinct features both of these groups have, shaped throughout the centuries in different socio-cultural contexts, should be acknowledged and accepted within the boundaries of respect by the whole world. Accordingly, their argument aligns with the ideals of Du Bois' Pan-Africanism, which are further developed through Taiye Selasi's Afropolitanist perspective. Selasi advocates for a fluid cultural identity that transcends the borders of any single country, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter. Instead of considering these differences as a distinctive factor that positions the other group as an opponent, Adichie and Gyasi implies that African Americans, and African immigrants should focus on how their skin color unites them as the same target of racism and utilize this as a common point to create an alliance without disrespecting the other socio-cultural group. Regarding the formation of this alliance, Adichie highlights how technological advancements in communication, such as improved transportation and widespread internet use driven by globalization, have helped to close the physical and cultural gap between these groups.

In *Americanah*, Adichie emphasizes the significance of globalization and its role in revealing ongoing racism by enabling the formation of a global community of black individuals. As Chielozona Eze argues in his essay regarding the impact of globalization on the representation of the fluidity of African identities:

> Globalization has shrunk the world to the size of one's palms in the forms of cell phones or iPads. It is now possible to experience in most African villages lifestyles hitherto unknown to them thanks to these modern means of mass communication. As Byung-Chul Han (2005) has argued, reality is now hyperlinked and therefore hypercultural. Culture is delocalized. And so is identity. (Eze 235)

Reflecting on Eze's argument and Adichie's description of different characters in various cultural environments and with distinct backgrounds such as Ifemelu, Dike, Curt, and Blaine, Ifemelu starts writing about her various experiences and observations in a blog, "WordPress", as a Nigerian immigrant in the USA (299). In her blog, Ifemelu criticizes the racial generalization in America, "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", touching upon African immigrant's common issues (225). Furthermore, since being "black" is not a cause of discrimination in African countries, even though they are not able to grasp certain racist words and attitudes, African immigrants "...must show that" they "are offended when such words as "watermelon" or "tar baby" are used in jokes, even if" they "don't know what the hell is being talked about—" in the socio-cultural context of the USA (225). This expectation to conform to African American cultural identity reflects a widespread disregard for differences within cultures of the same race in *Americanah*. Owing to this blog, Ifemelu raises her voice and asserts her native cultural roots while also embracing her hybrid cultural identity. By presenting this flexibility of cultural identity through her writings, she indicates the racist norms of white society that equate all black people and ignore the individuality of people of African descent while also focusing on the factors that differentiate African immigrants from the rest of society. Once Ifemelu starts reading the comments in the blog, she realizes that she is not alone, and numerous African immigrants experience the same kind of racial

discrimination in the USA. By expressing their thoughts on specific topics and communicating via the internet, both African Americans and African immigrants challenge the simplification of their cultural identity based on their skin color. Even though this blog sometimes causes discomfort for Ifemelu, as some of her readers disagree with her opinions about these two culturally distinct groups, it serves as a platform that allows these groups to explore their similarities and bond with each other. After some time, Ifemelu takes a break from the blog to focus on her "life change", but she reflects on its growing influence: "All those readers, growing month by month, linking and cross-posting, knowing so much more than she did…" (11). One of the blog's readers, "SapphicDerrida", highlights its significance by stating, "You've used your irreverent, hectoring, funny, and thought-provoking voice to create a space for real conversations about an important subject" (11). Adichie portrays Ifemelu's blog as a safe space for black people to share their personal ideas about cultural and racial issues in the USA, reflecting the impact of contemporary technological developments on communication between different cultural groups in the global world.

In this regard, Adichie and Gyasi highlight the doctrines of W.E.B. Du Bois' Pan-Africanism, which promotes solidarity among all black individuals, excluding the political aspects emphasized by Garvey, as I contextualized in the previous pages of this chapter. As opposed to Garvey's perspective of Pan-Africanism that disregards the hybrid cultural identity of Diasporic Africans, Adichie underlines how these hybrid cultural identities must be acknowledged and respected in *Americanah*. At the same time, Adichie represents the fluidity of cultural identity and how it takes shape within the context of global communication among black individuals. Through *Americanah*, she raises awareness of a new perspective on cultural identity, one that is closely connected to the concept of Afropolitanism. Even though Afropolitanism emerged against the ideals of Pan-Africanism as a result of the critiques of Pan-Africanism such as Achille Mbembe who suggests that "these narratives often reduce African history to events such as slavery, triangular trade, and colonization", Adichie and Gyasi find a common ground between these two approaches where African individuals can be just "themselves", accepting both their pasts and their current, flexible cultural identity (Kasanda 387). Regarding this idea of solidarity promoted by Du Bois, Adichie demonstrates Barack Obama's candidacy for

the US presidential election in 2012 as a factor that led to the social and spiritual union of all black people of African descent living in the USA despite differing in terms of cultural identity such as Blaine and Ifemelu in *Americanah*.

Throughout the presidential election process, the relationship between Blaine and Ifemelu grows stronger as Obama's potential chance of winning and having a "black" president addresses both of them regardless of their cultural identity since they share the same skin color in a racially discriminated country. As Paul Tiyambe Zeleza analyzes the significance of Obama's election as the new President of the USA for both African American and African immigrants in his article:

> Obama's rise signifies a pan-African present in which the continent and the diaspora are mutually inscribed, that invokes memories of the past and imaginations of the future that are diverse and inseparable... The Obama phenomenon reveals the potential of not only contemporary transatlantic pan-Africanism borne out of struggles for civil rights in America and independence in Africa, but of forging a new global pan-Africanism as borne by his initial electric appeal among African diasporas in Europe and Asia and the interest of the African Union to forge a new compact between the continent and its diasporas globally. (Zeleza 36)

Zeleza's analysis refers to Barack Obama's election as a transformative moment for both African Americans and African immigrants, reflecting a shared historical and cultural identity. Zeleza's perspective highlights how Obama's rise emphasizes the potential of modern, transatlantic Pan-Africanism. This version of Pan-Africanism acknowledges historical struggles yet extends beyond them, capturing the global appeal of Obama among African diasporas in Europe, Asia, and beyond. This notion of a new global Pan-Africanism reflects a more interconnected world where shared identity and solidarity can be mobilized across geographical and cultural boundaries. Based on this context, Adiche illustrates the influence of Obama's election on the relationship between Ifemelu and Blaine in the novel. After having an argument with Blaine about Ifemelu's ignorance regarding racism and not attending to Blaine's protest due to this reason, they grow distant from each other. However, Ifemelu asserts that Obama "united them in an

intimacy they had never had before, an unfixed, unspoken, intuitive intimacy: Barack Obama. They agreed, without any prodding, without the shadows of obligation or compromise, on Barack Obama", indicating their common issues related to their skin color (354). In the novel, Barack Obama serves as a unifying figure for Blaine and Ifemelu, bridging the cultural and ideological gaps that had strained their relationship. Obama's appeal lies in his ability to embody a Pan-African and diasporic identity, identified with both African Americans like Blaine and African immigrants like Ifemelu. His election represents a historic breakthrough against racial barriers, creating a sense of solidarity that is "unfixed, unspoken, intuitive", based on their shared experience of racial discrimination and mutual investment in a better future (354). When Blaine learns that Ifemelu has read "Dreams from My Father", a book by Obama, and she considers Obama as an honest man who is suitable to be a black president, he gets excited because after their argument "he had not dared hope she would believe the same thing that he believed" since she disregards the significance of Blaine's protest against racism as mentioned in the former pages due to their cultural difference (355).

Barack Obama and the new hope of a "different" America kindles a spark between them including sharing the same kind of fear and anxiety concerning Obama's life and the possible assassination attempt by the predominantly prominent racist society in America. As Ifemelu asserts, "Every morning, Ifemelu woke up and checked to make sure that Obama was still alive" because as a black candidate, he is the target of racists who cannot accept the candidacy of a black individual whose ancestors were slaves (355). During the election stage, Ifemelu reads posts regarding Obama such as "How can a monkey be president? Somebody do us a favor and put a bullet in this guy. Send him back to the African jungle. A black man will never be in the white house, dude, it's called the white house for a reason", which raises anxiety among all black people who look forward to Obama winning the election (355). These kinds of threats also indicate the inefficacy of a prestigious social class in overpowering racism and how even being the President does not prevent black people from being subjected to racism in the USA.

As opposed to how she felt "excluded" due to her cultural identity and her different ideological perspective as a Nigerian immigrant among Blaine's African American friends

before, Ifemelu starts to feel like a member of Blaine's inner circle and his special gatherings owing to Barack Obama's promise of "equality" for all the people of color in the USA (357). Despite their differences, all black individuals attend Obama's meetings regardless of their cultural roots just as Ifemelu and Blaine, "holding hands in a thick crowd, raising placards, CHANGE written on them in a bold white print", which means that "there were so many people in the world who felt exactly as she and Blaine did about Barack Obama", indicating Obama as a symbol of unity among all people of African descent in the USA (358). At the end of the election process, Blaine, Ifemelu and his friends share an intimate hug, shedding tears of happiness including Dike. When they hear that "Barack Obama is projected to be the next president of the United States of America" on TV, Dike cannot believe that his president is "black like him" (362). Later on, Ifemelu refers to Barack Obama's famous speech:

> Young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled, Americans have sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of red states and blue states. We have been and always will be the United States of America. (362)

Through Ifemelu's perspective, Adichie demonstrates how Barack Obama transforms Pan-Africanism into a more contemporary version of itself in the globalized world, free of its political aspects that endanger the cultural identity of both African Americans and African immigrants which reflects the ideals of Afropolitanism as well. Adichie refers to Barack Obama's speech as a perfect example of what Selasi implies by suggesting, "We are Afropolitans—not citizens, but Africans, of the world" as I analyzed further in the Introduction chapter (Selasi 528). Barack Obama portrays the United States of America as a place in which every citizen must be treated equally regardless of their skin color which does not comply with the norms of the white society. He acknowledges the variety of races and cultures in the USA and welcomes everyone, which is signified as a significant milestone in the history of America by Adichie in *Americanah*.

In conclusion, Chapter III has illustrated the complex processes of cultural hybridization that African immigrants experience in the socio-cultural context of the USA,

as portrayed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. By analyzing characters such as Ifemelu, Dike, and Aunty Uju, Adichie highlights the fluidity of cultural identity, shaped by mimicry, adaptation, and the pressures of white societal norms. These experiences result in a hybrid identity that exists in Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space", where individuals struggle with the tension between preserving their native culture and integrating into a foreign one. Additionally, the nuanced dynamics between African immigrants and African Americans further emphasize the separation in their socio-historical experiences, creating cultural polarization despite their shared ancestry. Through these arguments, Adichie critiques the rigid boundaries of cultural essentialism and highlights the transformative potential of globalized identities, reflecting Selasi's arguments regarding Afropolitanism, challenging traditional frameworks of Pan-Africanism, and emphasizing the ongoing struggles against racism and inequality in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

In contemporary postcolonial literature, the scope has expanded beyond a singular emphasis on the colonial experience and historical background of African nations to encompass the complex formation of hybrid cultural identities among African immigrants and African Americans. This synthesis of the national origins of native Africans with their diasporic experiences over time is critically examined and thoughtfully acknowledged by numerous authors in the contemporary postcolonial canon. Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, as two examples within this canon, demonstrate the fluid nature of cultural identity through the experiences of African American, African native, and African immigrant characters, emphasizing the historical and cultural distinctions shaped by colonialism, slavery, and migration. While highlighting these differences between the aforementioned cultural groups, Gyasi and Adichie also illustrate how their narratives embody Afropolitanism, a 2000s ideological movement that encourages the embrace of hybrid cultural identities in a globalized world. Prior to this alteration of cultural identity, the philosophical developments of the 20th century, alongside the decolonization of African countries during this period, resulted in a heightened cultural awareness among both native and diasporic Africans worldwide, as I analyzed in Chapter I. These developments such as post-structuralism, introduced by Derrida in the 1960s, led to an inquiry into ideological structures, uncovering what he referred to as "the structurality of structure." Consequently, the "center" of these structures, previously considered fixed, was revealed to be unstable, challenging earlier perspectives on this argument.

Colonialism, being one of these structures, gave rise to postcolonialism as a response to questions surrounding the misrepresentation of the colonial period and the developments that followed. Frantz Fanon's contributions to the field of postcolonial studies, particularly his theory on the internalization of racial hierarchies that position the white race as superior to the black race, significantly advanced the discourse in this domain. Building on Fanon's work, Edward Said's concept of "orientalism" exposed the Western domination over the East, which perpetuates the normalization of white supremacy over all other races. As a result, these arguments accelerated the global

acknowledgment of racism as a critical issue during this period, paving the way for its representation in literature.

Developing further, starting in the 20th century and continuing into the 21st century, the question of cultural identity and its analysis in relation to the differences between native African, African immigrant, and African American identities, has emerged as a critical focus within the field of postcolonial studies. Regarding the different variations of cultural identity, Homi K. Bhabha applied the concept of "hybridity" to postcolonial studies, rejecting an original cultural identity that has a fixed essence. Bhabha also introduced the concept of "mimicry" in his studies, exploring how individuals from different cultures form a hybrid cultural identity in the diaspora by mimicking the attributes of the new culture. Consequently, Bhabha argues that this new hybrid identity, composed of two distinct cultures, exists in the "third space," emphasizing the fluidity of cultural identity. In this thesis, Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory is examined through the experiences of African Americans and African immigrants by illustrating the hybridization process throughout the years in *Americanah* and *Homegoing*. In relation to Bhabha's theory, African immigration and the formation of diasporic African cultural identities, with their inherent variations, form the central argument of this thesis. This argument is explored through Bhabha's cultural theory and further developed with more contemporary perspectives, such as W. E. B. Du Bois' Pan-Africanism and Taiye Selasi's Afropolitanism. While there are many forms of Pan-Africanism, Du Bois' ideology stands out as a socialist perspective, advocating for the integration of Black people into white society and encouraging greater education about the issue of racism. As an evolved form of this concept in contemporary society, Afropolitanism acknowledges the diversity of African cultural identities shaped by historical events, such as the African diaspora and migration waves following the independence of African countries. Moreover, Selasi's Afropolitanism promotes solidarity among Africans, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, as it views cultural identity as a dynamic and ever-changing concept.

As exemplified in Chapter II with Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, African slavery, Western colonization, and African immigration are among the most significant themes in African literature that address racism and the hybridization of cultural identity throughout

history. Demonstrating the difference between colonized Ghanaian natives and Ghanaians who were separated from their homeland and forced into slavery in America forms the primary objective of Gyasi's novel. By portraying the two distinct ancestral lines of the half-sisters Effia and Esi, Gyasi illustrates the formation of diasporic African identities within the socio-cultural context of the USA, while also highlighting the major impacts of Western colonization on Ghanaian natives, shaping their cultural identity during the colonization period in the 1800s. Gyasi identifies the Atlantic slave trade as a crucial juncture in the history of African cultural identity, initiating a diaspora that led to the historical and cultural disconnection between Ghanaian natives and African Americans. Through Esi's lineage, represented by characters such as Ness, Kojo, H., Willie, Sonny, and Marcus, Gyasi illustrates the formation of African American cultural identity and their rupture from Ghanaian culture. On the other side, Gyasi portrays Effia's lineage by examining the impacts of colonization and immigration on their cultural identity through characters like Quey, James, Abena, Akua, Yaw, and Marjorie in the novel.

In light of the differences between these two cultural identities, Yaa Gyasi highlights the cultural division and its profound influence on each group's relationship with black skin color from the 18th to the 20th century in *Homegoing*. This separation gave rise to distinct understandings of "black" skin color within their respective socio-cultural frameworks, a central argument of this thesis. By means of Esi's bloodline, which continues in the United States, Gyasi indicates racism as a significant concept in the predominantly white populated socio-cultural context of American society, where African American individuals with black skin color are identified as "the other". Throughout the analysis of Esi's bloodline, Fanon's theory regarding the normalization of racism in this context and the resulting discrimination faced by black individuals is applied to the argument presented in Chapter II. Additionally, Bhabha's theory is used to explore the representation of fluid cultural identity and to demonstrate how Ghanaians become detached from their native culture through the experiences of Africans in the diaspora. However, Gyasi does not particularly emphasize racism as a discriminatory factor within Effia's bloodline in Ghanaian society, as black skin is not considered "other" in contrast to its perception in the United States. Instead, the formative effects of Western colonization on Ghanaian socio-cultural contexts, including the increasing erosion of their

native language, religion, and culture due to the imposition of English and Western values, are analyzed in relation to Fanon's and Bhabha's theories in Chapter II.

In Chapter III, Adichie's portrayal of the Nigerian immigrant experience in the USA is examined through various immigrant characters, primarily Ifemelu, Uju, and Dike in *Americanah*. In this chapter, Bhabha's hybridity theory is comprehensively applied to the different immigrant generations depicted in the novel, emphasizing the distinctions in their experiences based on the time they spend in a foreign socio-cultural context. Accordingly, while Uju and Ifemelu struggle to adapt to this new culture as first generation immigrants, Dike has a relatively less challenging experience as a second generation immigrant, having grown up in a foreign country. Nevertheless, Dike is still subjected to racism despite his Americanized cultural identity, which unites all of them under the shared burden of racial discrimination. Furthermore, Adichie illustrates how Nigerian immigrants encounter racism upon their arrival in America and how they are gradually pressured to conform to the ideals of white culture, such as white beauty standards and adopting an American accent. This representation is analyzed through Fanon's theory, particularly regarding black individuals' awareness of their skin color upon encountering the white race and their subjugation to the normalized superiority of American culture. Adichie also indicates the loss of memory Nigerian immigrants experience concerning their homeland as a result of their disconnection from their native culture and being adapted to the American culture.

In contrast to the representation of racism as a unifying factor among individuals with black skin color in the novel, Adichie highlights the cultural differences between African Americans and African immigrants, primarily through Ifemelu's relationship with her African American boyfriend, Blaine. Even though Blaine and Ifemelu share the same skin color, associated with the lowest social class in comparison to other minority ethnicities such as Asians and Mexicans in the socio-cultural context of the USA, they possess differing perspectives on racism as a significant issue. Adichie depicts how Blaine's ancestors passed down to him an acute awareness of the struggles endured by African Americans, resulting in an irreversible change in their cultural identity. This makes Ifemelu unable to fully align with Blaine's sensitive approach to this issue. Through

this example, Chapter III analyzes the variability of cultural identity, regardless of the shared cultural roots of African individuals, with reference to Bhabha's arguments.

Although both Gyasi and Adichie examine the substantial differences among African Americans, African immigrants, and African natives through strong points in their novels, they also promote solidarity between these groups, which is another argument of this thesis. However, instead of equating their cultural identities for the purpose of black unity, Gyasi and Adichie encourage the world to acknowledge the instability of cultural identity. Thus, they criticize the neglect of Africans' interactions with many other cultures in the developing globalized world. In both novels, the formation process of different African cultural groups is closely analyzed, and the significance of distinguishing each group from the others is emphasized by Gyasi and Adichie. Nevertheless, while this difference is underlined through the chapters, the novels' invitation to the world to accept cultural change within these groups is conveyed with an Afropolitanist perspective. Accordingly, Gyasi portrays the meeting of fire and water, symbolizing the union of Marjorie and Marcus, the future generations of Effia and Esi's bloodline, in *Homegoing*. On the other hand, Adichie demonstrates the unifying impact of Barack Obama and the 2008 U.S. presidential election on the relationship between Ifemelu and Blaine, despite their differing perspectives, in *Americanah*.

As analyzed throughout the chapters in this thesis, the hybridization process of cultural identity raises questions regarding the extent to which hybrid cultural identities influence the experiences of different generations of African immigrants in the context of globalization. The evolving representation of hybrid cultural identities in African diaspora narratives should be examined to understand how these identities are negotiated in response to shifting socio-political contexts in the 21st century. Given that immigrant generations include nuanced distinctions, such as 1.5, 1.75, and 1.25 generations, each of these groups and their unique developments deserves further examination in the field of postcolonial studies. Moreover, comparative studies exploring the experiences of African immigrants alongside those of other marginalized groups could provide a richer understanding of how race, class, and migration intersect. In addition to the Ghanaian and Nigerian characters represented in this thesis, various African cultures and their interplay

with foreign cultures across the globe, beyond the American context, should be explored. Since the increasing influence of globalization on cultural identity formation presents an opportunity to expand the discourse on hybridity, studies on diasporic identities can be advanced with new perspectives. For instance, Adichie's representation of the African immigrant experience in European countries, particularly through Obinze, Ifemelu's former boyfriend in Nigeria, who was not the focus of discussion in this thesis, could be critically examined to shed light on his experience in postcolonial literature. Additionally, the literary techniques employed in both novels, such as nonlinear storytelling and multiple perspectives, warrant further analysis to assess their impact on the representation of hybrid cultural identities as shaped by the characters' viewpoints. Following the theoretical and political developments discussed in Chapter I, the intersection of postcolonial theory with Afropolitanism and Pan-Africanism invites further exploration of how contemporary African authors such as Gyasi and Adichie reconcile the tensions between cultural preservation and global interconnectedness. These explorations would not only deepen critical engagement with postcolonial literature but also contribute to a broader understanding of identity in a rapidly globalizing world.

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