



AFROPOLITAN HORIZONS: REFLECTING ON CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION AND DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

Shabnam Mansoor
shabnam.mansoor78@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar (Gold Medalist), Department of English
Language and Literature, Riphah International University,
Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Ali Raza
Aliraza414786@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Department of English Language and
Literature, Riphah International University, Faisalabad,
Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

This research examines Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) to determine how narrative of self-actualization in global perspective wins over the single story associated with victimhood and depersonalization. For this purpose, the researcher re-frames African Diaspora in the context of Afropolitan rubric that is distinctly a 21st-century cultural phenomenon. In wake of rapidly growing upward mobility from Africa to the promised lands, African identity by is re-imagined building over cultural hybridization and Diasporic consciousness as key factors. It is a constructive notion of self-empowerment that disrupts an essentialized and territorialized monolithic Pan-African identity. Given that, this study negotiates the transcendental nature of cultural barriers and complexities of plural identity and cultural fluidity that creates a new diaspora _a community of educated middle class, more comfortably aligned with the worldwide progressive sociocultural influences but still rooted in Africa. They are Afropolitans distinguished from Cosmopolitans for their local affinities and global reach. Using Dagnino's concept of global mobility and Epstein's ideas of cultural continuum and middle class, the study encompasses Afropolitan horizons by amalgamating these concepts with transcultural idea of a fluid identity and return motif. Final word, this study captures the inspirational stories of Afropolitans who are quintessentially decentered, plural and hybrid, and aspire to promote a rising Africa, conventionally stereotyped as a fallen continent.

Keywords: *Afropolitanism, Americanah, Cultural Continuum, Cultural Hybridization, Dagnino, Epstein, Middle Class, Mobility, New Diaspora, Transcultural*

Corresponding Author: Shabnam Mansoor (MPhil Scholar (Gold Medalist), Department of English Language and Literature, Riphah International University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan). Email: Islamsalvia6@gmail.com

1. Introduction

We are always becoming somebody else every time we cross thresholds, testing boundaries since the time immemorial in human history. To be more specific, migration from Africa can be linked to the times of colonial conquest and the forced exodus that followed to distant regions of Europe. An unprecedented surge in the cross-border migration of students, skilled, and professional individuals has been observed through the last decades of the 20th century, in consequence of the political unrest, economic challenges and globalization. This voluntary mobility has led to the establishment of diverse communities of diaspora in Europe, America and other parts of the world.

The term 'diaspora' originally described the dispersion of Jews outside of their ancestral homeland. It started with the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE and persisted throughout the eras of Jewish migration and settlement around the globe. However, the term gradually has been used to refer to a wide range of ethnic, cultural, and religious communities. The diaspora's beginnings and growth are intricate and multidimensional, shaped by social, political, economic, and historical variables. Okpewho (2009) draws distinctions between the 'new Diaspora' and the precolonial 'older Diaspora' mostly enlisting the factors that have triggered emigration. The Transatlantic Slave Trade served as the main impetus for the ancient Diaspora, as evidenced by Equiano's memoir *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), which detailed the psychological effects of the Middle Passage. He further states that besides colonization, the collapse of internal political structures in newly independent African countries led to cultivation of diasporic moves rendering homogenous Black identity the primary concern of the 20th century Diaspora writers such as W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey. Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall on the other side, are minimally engaged with regional policies and cultural production. Gilroy (1993) has offered the Black Atlantic theory as a

model for the African diaspora that defies any notion of Black identity as bounded by ethnicity, territory and national ideology. In agreement with Okpewho regarding formation of diaspora, Zeleza (2005) says that though New African Diasporas may be shaped by postcolonial experiences, they do not have the shared histories of the Middle Passage and the New World.

In the most recent times, Afropolitanism provides a counter-discursive over socially ascribed identity by placing it in a dialogic position with a constructed identity, in contrast to the older diaspora writers who invested their intellectual potential for revitalizing pride in African culture and national solidarity. By taking a stand against slavery and the colonial onslaught, Pan-Africanism sought to mobilize Black Nationalism. In contrast, Afropolitanism promotes a relational strategy to shatter the stereotype of Africans as a westernized *Other*. By and large, the 20th century postcolonial migration literature for example Laye's *The Dark Child* (1994), Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) have been infused with diasporic concerns, mainly critique of colonialism, slavery, cultural shock, political turmoil and identity crisis.

To put it more candidly, the new diaspora writers of the twenty-first century are not motivated by the postcolonial tradition of 'writing back empire,' which seeks to articulate the colonial wound and post-independence disillusionment. Traversing the Afropolitan horizons, this study explores how Adichie's *Americanah* addresses the pressing problems faced by immigrants and delves into the process of acculturation—the process by which itinerants bring elements of their home country with them when they relocate, such as European or American citizenship, a way of writing, or a way of life that transforms their identity patterns.

Fundamental to all of this is Adichie's Ted Talk on misrepresentation titled as "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009) that a single story breeds stereotypes that are born out of a Eurocentric mindset and then disseminated by monolithic models of representation like Pan-Africanism and Negritude. Her writings take up multiple versions of stories about the global Africans burying the oft-repeated hopeless tale of victimhood. Adichie places a strong emphasis on the narrative's ability to influence readers' opinions. In particular,

through fiction that portrays individuals like Adichie within rigid racial and cultural boundaries. These portrayals are not entirely false but incomplete stereotypes can lead to a distorted and constrained perspective of the world. In order to represent the diversity of the world, writers and storytellers have an obligation to offer a wide range of tales, characters, and experiences. By challenging such oversimplified narratives, Adichie promotes progressive tales about Africa and its people in her own transcultural writing. The literature of the modern Afrodiaspora thus clearly indicates a loosening of national authority over its borders, population, and cultural homogenization.

In precolonial times, Africa was a place naturally endowed with cultural luxuriance and human tenacity that was marred by the darkness of colonial rule and the post-independence political turmoil. Afropolitanism, to be precise, is born out of the realization that Africa and its people need to re-figure what it means to be African in the 21st century, to empower the youth by transcending the territorial and virtual borders, and celebrating African art and culture globally. Putting in this perspective, A British-American writer of Nigerian and Ghanaian origin, Selasi (2005) introduces 'Afropolitan' as:

As the socio-economic landscape of today changes, Afropolitanism has been introduced as a suitable vocabulary for transnational Africans who live across societies, cultures, and languages in search of a new politics of identity. Since its founding in 2005, it has most likely been centered on the individualized representation of middle class diaspora writers, intellectuals, professionals, and students. That said, the study presents Afropolitan poetics as a welcome addition to the canon of diaspora studies. It looks at how the middle classes' cultural awareness shapes the perception of a continent that is developing. Between the two diaspora generations, there was a fundamental shift that this study presents. While Afropolitans lay out a strategy for reconstructing identity outside of Africa, postcolonial critics were more focused on how African identities were constructed within the continent. Through transcultural analysis, which promotes discursive practice, cultural commonality, and dialogue, a critical examination of contemporary Africans and their migratory build-up is carried out in this paper. The Cuban author and anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term *culturation* in 1940 to describe the power disparity that

exists between a colony and its metropolis. From a postcolonial standpoint, transculturation is described by Pratt (1992) as “a phenomenon of the contact zone[s],” “social spaces where disparate cultures meet... often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (p.87). Because being a transcultural individual is a transition and experiencing process that integrates different cultures into one’s inner core, transcultural thinking goes beyond dualistic thinking.

Additionally, people can use their transformative potential to change culture itself thanks to transcultural theory. According to this theory, defining oneself is a continuous, erratic process. By framing itself as a flexible framework of symbolic options, it redefines the politics of identity beyond traditional constraints, taking into account national, ethnic, linguistic, and professional dimensions. In order to address the postmodern challenges of the twenty-first century, this study, applies transcultural kaleidoscope to look at how the Afropolitan world of *Americanah* dismantles, questions, and re-appropriates African identity. Africa is lifted out of the crisis cliché in Adichie’s *Americana* by emphasizing the modern struggles faced by vagrants

Adichie is a Nigerian-American writer, feminist and social media activist. Adichie’s prolific literary profile recalls literary predecessors like Chinua Achebe, and Toni Morrison. *Half of a Yellow Sun*(2006), *Purple Hibiscus*(2003) and *The Thing Around Your Neck*(2009) are her celebrated works. Her fiction is praised for its dynamic shifts from the conventional discourse in order to engage readers in a constant dialogue over complexity of issues like, race, gender and identity in the contemporary age. *Americanah* (2013) aims to empower, encourage, and challenge Nigerians through a variety of narratives. These stories have the capacity to mold a more inclusive, compassionate, and nuanced view of the world that can heal divisions between genders, cultures, and races and promote a sense of shared humanity. The story is located partly in military-ruled Nigeria of the 1990s, and partly abroad (in the United States and the United Kingdom), offers powerful and starkly contrasting representations of the migrant experience. It is a transmodern fiction that captures both the challenges and the opportunities created by the mobility, global and transcultural realities of our times. This perspective informs the

present study's deep analysis of middle class Africans who navigate hybrid spaces to achieve critical consciousness and channelize free mobility. Beyond national boundaries, they seek a globally responsive political arena that would enable them to be connected to both their home country and the rest of the world concurrently.

2. Review of Literature

Diaspora refers to both a way of being and a process of becoming simultaneously. It is a journey that involves the potential for neither arrival nor return, navigating various possessions and networks of connections. A diaspora is shaped by the discursive practices of intellectuals and political elites as much as by the fluid and messy contexts of social experience, differentiation, and struggle. Additionally, it is shaped by transnational circuits of exchange of diasporic resources and repertoires of power. This raises the questions of what Africa is and who the Africans are who make up the diaspora of Africa when they are scattered and reassembled.

Arguably the Diaspora of the 21st century complicate the question of African literature previously tied to African continent. The third generation Nigerian writers like Tejo Cole, Helen Oyeyemi and Chimamanda Ngozi situated in multiple geographies and multicultural are comfortable being both local and global at the same time. The early Diaspora writers were clearly fixated on African culture and the glory of their ancestry, to put it in historical perspective. In contrast, postcolonial writers of second generation immigrants have focused on disillusionment following, collective resistance, independence and critique of colonialism. Zeleza (2009) differentiates between the old and new communities of African diaspora. In contrast to the latter, which refers to the emigration from Africa that was primarily voluntary in the second half of the 20th century, particularly from the 1980s onward, the former is typically used in reference to the transatlantic slave trade and its consequences. They include professional elite, traders, refugees and students. He links the origin of new generations of Diaspora with the economic, socio-political crisis and the destabilization of African countries through structural adjustment programmed (SAP's) in 1990s. Moreover, Zeleza acknowledges that

there is no denying that the current diasporic processes, linkages, and flows are integral components of the modern globalization processes. African diaspora are unquestionably essential—in fact, indispensable—to both the globalization of Africa and the Africanization of globalization. According to Harris(1982) the African diaspora concept “embodies the essence of the historical connection between Africans and people of African descent,” including “their settlement in adopted lands without the loss of their African identity” and “the physical or psychological return to the homeland – Africa” (p.18).

Markedly, the twenty-first century African novel is distinguished by its multilocal setting and transnational characters who seek a-life-elsewhere, in terms of individual empowerment and social integration. The Afropolitan characters are confident, upwardly mobile, cultural mutts, and relatively empowered as Ifemelu in *Americanah*, the Sai family in *Ghana Must Go* and Julius in *Open City*. On the whole, these works add something new to the spectrum of world literature. Afropolitan characters embrace under post-national consciousness a New Africanity (Mbembe, 2007, p.25). As per its claim, Afropolitanism de-robes Africa of the garment of victimhood which previously characterizes its place in the Western discourse as evident in Walter Rodney’s *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* or in Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. The research argues that Diasporas are vivified by a new kind of transnational and transcultural consciousness (Hall, 1994). Unlike the historical diaspora from earlier dispersals, the revolution in travel and telecommunications gives the modern diaspora unprecedented opportunities to be transnational and transcultural, to be people of multiple worlds and localities. In ways that previous generations of African diaspora were not able to, they are able to maintain ties to Africa.

Given the diversity of diaspora, it emerges that Afropolitanism as an outcrop of Globalization susceptible to socio-economic ramifications is hinged upon geo-political mobilization and cultural syncretism. Gourgem(2020) in his doctoral thesis examines Cole’s Afropolitan narrative that moves away from the binary structure of Self-Other to an open-ended pattern of Otherness within the self. It signifies certain resolve to refuse “any form of victim identity” (Mbembe, 2007, p.28). German-Nigerian Protagonist Julius

goes beyond the figurative role of a postcolonial diaspora member through his openness to cultural and ethnic pluralism and hybridity in the host land. He is quintessentially an Afropolitan as conceived by Selasi who finds a home in movement, walks and travels and encounters with people. Rushton (2017) engages herself with the ongoing critical debate over the scope of Afropolitanism to recalibrate diasporic thinking in terms of ontological shifts rather than migratory influx. Her study of Selasi's *Ghana must Go* (2013) and Owuor's *Dust* (2014) proclaims that reverse migration is not rendezvous with a consciousness of permanent displacement but as empowering a communicative sense of re-connection and belonging. Using Michael Kerr's idea of the postmodern self, Megerdichian & Okoye(2021) study Ndibe's Afropolitan odyssey from a pseudo-self to solid-self-study Ndibe's Afropolitan journey in *Never Look an American in the Eye*(2016). As a pseudo-self who lives on pretense and has a false identity, Ndibe pretends to be an American actor, wrestler, and musician. With a quick return to his solid self, Ndibe refused to completely give up filial ties with his ancestral home, Nigeria, despite the many challenges and pressures to jettison his *Nigerianness* for the American culture whilst in America.

New hybrid forms are significant indicators of profound changes that are taking place in consequence of mobility, migration and trans culturalism. The present study is grounded on transcultural theory as conceptual frame work for re-mapping identity dynamics in Afropolitan discourse in *Americanah*. While transculturality has been the mind crop of the Russian intellectuals in the early 20th century, the revival of the transcultural vision in the West during 1990s can be seen as a reaction to multiculturalism's pitfalls as well as a reflection of the shifting global dynamics, which are typified by a rise in intercultural dialogue and a re-evaluation of fixed cultural identities. Along these lines, Welsch (1999) extends the paradigm of transculturality beyond polarities, on parameters of interaction between ownness and foreignness where classical binaries of center versus periphery, national and versus local are being erased in favor of a pluralistic model of cultural permeation. Welsch's perspective on identity in relation to trans culturalism highlights the intricacy of modern identity construction. In

order to adequately represent the variety of experiences that people and communities have; he contends that conventional ideas of identity that are predicated on immutable categories like nationality or ethnicity are breaking down. Rather, in the intercultural exchanges of the modern world, identity is viewed as multiple, hybrid, and continuously dynamic. Additionally, he explores the idea of hybridity in his work, which is the blending of cultural elements to create new forms of expression.

Repositioning the role of culture in societies, Schulze-Engler (2007) states that in the current complexity of global collective and transnational individuals, “the primary subjects and actors (...) are no longer cultures but people, and the main interest no longer lies in the problem of how cultures shape social groups and their perceptions, but in the question of what individuals and groups do with culture in an increasingly globalized world.” (Schulze-Engler, 2007, p.28). Consequently, the emphasis then moves from cross-cultural interactions to the constructive communication processes that help individuals and social groups understand culture in the modern world.

It is a point worth noticing that transcultural resonates with Afropolitan dynamics in terms of its primary focus on the life stories of individuals who are itinerant , knowledgeable and resourceful. Consequently, their privileged position provides them with capability to transform themselves by interrogating the notions like home, belonging and identity beyond geographical as well as imaginative borders. According to Epstein (2009), the main features of the transcultural condition are its out sidedness and individual character that “open a possibility for globalization not as homogenization but, rather, as further differentiation of cultures and their ‘dissemination’ into transcultural individuals” (Epstein, 2009, p.328).

More importantly, the transcultural perspective attempts to challenge and expand the domain of postcolonial and multicultural approaches that stay in the strictures of difference, subalternity and discreteness which invariably imply subversive stances (Helff, 2012). In short, trans culturalism calls for a more open and critical stance towards human consideration and cultural confluence . It views diaspora as a contentious, dialogical concept that situates critical discourses in a changing, contradictory, and heterotopic

historical reality. Adichie's text *Americanah* captures a compelling narrative of undying love of two Nigerian university fellows Ifemelu and Obinze, their complex as well as illuminating experience of mobility and final reunion in their homeland. The narrative is threaded with a critical dissection of modern attitudes to issues of race, identity and transmigration. Knudsen & Rahbek (2016) interprets Adichie's *Americanah*, "as a reaction to the miniaturization of people from the African continent as they appear in Eurocentric discourses" (p.37). Whereas, cosmopolitans mandate global citizenship, Afropolitans "are not concerned with notions of citizenship, whether universal and local" (p. 15-16). To invoke Dyson's conception(2011) of post-Blackness, Africans are "rooted" in, but "not restricted" by the alliances they forge or oblige either local or global. The reverse journey is not a sordid indication of failure or loss; rather it exhibits a multidirectional potential of the new diaspora in the process of self-transformation.

Globalization processes are closely associated with both transculturality and Afropolitan identity, as they enable greater connectivity and cross-cultural exchanges. A transcultural lens challenges stereotypes and advances a more nuanced understanding of African identities by encouraging critical reflection on one's cultural origins. To sum up, the present study focuses on how cultural hybridization and diasporic consciousness contribute to reshaping power relations of individuals with home and the globe.

3. Theoretical Framework

Investigating the strands of conventionalism associated with African writers, this study aims to suggest new avenues for negotiating diasporic identities. It focuses on readings from the Afrodiaspora via a transcultural lens while also exploring cultural fusion and diasporic consciousness in the context of the Afropolitan landscape. By redefining and reimagining Africanness beyond the confines of race and nation, Afropolitanism gives Africa 'a global positioning'. Epstein's theory of transcultural provides the substantial argument to cover up 'what it means to be an African' today as perceived by Adichie in *Americanah* (2013). Breaking away from postcolonial analytics of binaries of Self and Other, in present study, the cultural hybridization and new diasporic consciousness are

repositioned to shape an identity that is flexible, fluid and transcultural. The central point of research is pinned around Selasi's (2005) preliminary idea of Afropolitanism. Privileging Afropolitan over Cosmopolitan she enumerates her cultural model as citizens of the world with African roots. Cameroonian culturalist Mbembe further extends its scope saying, "there is no world without Africa and there is no Africa that is not part of it" (Mbembe, 2007, p.29).

Afropolitan incorporates transcultural practice in its ontology that expands the boundaries of race, profession, language and other identities. It cultivates the development of transmigrants with multiple identities and unfixed belonging regardless of the cultural center-periphery premise. The transcultural individual has become a sociological phenomenon in the twenty-first century due to factors such as the world's population displacement, the rapidity of human existence, and the freedom to cross and overlap cultures. Zeleza (2005) theorizes that the diaspora is simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings.

In the 21st century, there has been an increasing engrossment in trans culturalism across Europe and America because it is rooted in cross-border shared interests and values. Forging a link between increasing global flows and contemporary shifts in the literary realm, Dagnino (2015) cites an increasing number of writers in her writings who have "experienced the effects of global mobility, transnational patterns, and transcultural lifestyles" (p.144). Selasi and Adichie are transcultural writers since their works depict the recent stories of upwardly mobile, highly qualified and privileged groups of African diaspora. From an individual standpoint, Slimbach (2005) suggests that in these dynamic times, transcultural aptitude, corresponding ability, and competitiveness should be attained by all in order to ingeniously react to a divergent landscape of diverse ethnicities, languages, ideologies, and religions.

Furthermore, two decades of "transcultural experiments" between 1982 and 1998 led both Berry and Epstein (1999) to claim 'transcultural' is a cultural model that flourishes

when culture is transformed from theory to practice, freeing it from its own repressive mechanism. Secondly, trans culturalism undermines ethnocentric borders between nation, community, culture, and homeland. Notably, Berry & Epstein (1999) espouse identity development as a “the process of self-distancing, self-estrangement, and self-criticism of one’s own cultural identities and assumptions(p.307). Further, Epstein defines it as “the freedom of every person to live on the border of one’s ‘inborn’ culture or beyond it.” (p.334). Hence, a transcultural orientation is obtained through a diffused living in ‘continuum’. It is a form of hybridization that occurs inside and outside of all existing cultures irrespective of physical mobility. Epstein’s theory of transcultural continuum and Bhabha’s theory of hybridity have similar conceptual underpinnings. Both seek people’s self-transformation at the crossroads of cultures. However both differ in approach ; postcolonial cultural hybridization struggles, survives, and deals with the implications of mimicry and further divergent ideas between colonizers and colonized; conversely, transculture envisions a ‘third space’ called transpace (Dagnino, 2015) instead of celebrating entanglement as a means of becoming a more capable, enlightened, and aware member of the global community. Identity politics are extracted by transculture from the fundamental tenet of zoning. Epstein (2009) asserts that the Bhabian concept of hybridity is a relatively basic manifestation of transcultural existence, while at its highest levels, transculture “integrates many cultural traditions and sign systems and embraces a universal symbolic palette, from which individuals can freely choose and mix colors in order to paint their self-portraits” (p.343), thereby attaining empowerment, agency and self-determination. As stated earlier, Epstein views transculture as a tool for creating one’s identity by choice above the axis of nation. Model of transculture given by Epstein is contrasted to that of multiculturalism where “difference” is kept intact among various cultures whereas transculture “offers a universal symbolic palette on which an individual can blend colors to produce an expressive self-portrait” (Epstein, 2004, p.49).

In Afropolitan aesthetics, where ‘cultural mutts’ (Selasi, 2005) are notably multiethnic, multilingual, and multi-local, the study explores cultural hybridization as the central component. The next step in humanity’s never-ending quest for freedom is

represented by the transcultural, which is the liberation from language barriers and a variety of artificial, self-imposed, and self-deifying cultural identities. Dagnino(2015) says, “monolingualism limits our versions of self, society, and universe” (p.133) whereas globalizing phenomenon is creating “a multidimensional, multilingual ,culturally curved discourse” (Epstein, 2009). From an ontological standpoint, continental-based Pan-Africanism is incompatible with the theory of cultural hybridity, which upholds the conflicts surrounding politics of race and geography. Conversely, Afropolitanism represents a paradigm shift that fosters cultural hybridity and supports a new African identity that Mbembe (2007) calls a “New Africanity”. Compared to Dagnino, Epstein’s *politics of identity* steps further from the diversity of cultures to the even greater diversity of individuals, transcending their rigid cultural identities. Simultaneously, Afropolitanism is a new diaspora concept in the sense that it is more centered on individual self-definition as compared to older diaspora who configured collective identity cemented with indoctrination of Black Nationalism.

Having said that, Afropolitanism as a representative of Africa is a contested phenomenon inside the intellectual and literary circles of cultural studies. It is labeled as a personalized cultural identity that stands for elite/middle group of diaspora privileged through unimpeded mobility and plethora of opportunities. To set historical record at precision, it can be argued that the political and ideological movements in colonized countries of Asia and Africa were led by significant middle/elite intellectuals and politicians who were greatly influenced by Western education and philosophy. Pan-Africanism and Negritude ideologies were later received and contributed by other stakeholders , like politicians, academia and civil society. These movements address issues of displacement, home, belonging, and cultural identity. Moving a step ahead, Afropolitanism becomes an enabling concept that appeals for sociality of common political agenda and an idealized culture of tolerance for the whole mankind. This philosophical resonates with the humanistic viewpoint inherent in the transcultural phenomenon that Dagnino (2015) expands using Tassinari’s definition of trans culturalism, saying that “we can imagine and envision trans culturalism as a new

humanism, based on the idea of relinquishing the strong traditional identities and cultures which in many cases were products of imperialistic empires, interspersed with dogmatic religious values” (p. 137). According to Epstein (2009), humanism is a worldview that is characterized by shared values and is therefore compatible with each person’s unique cultural heritage. It also relates to positive and constructive interactions between individuals.

This study explores a model of cultural development that is obtained by a distinguished middle class. Epstein (2012) cites the Russian intelligentsia as the example of this group whose task has been to translate and mainstream professional interests and human values across social and economic strata. As per Epstein’s claim, American society lacks the cultural middle class that could bridge the gap between the rulers and the masses.

Dagnino (2015) claims that transcultural metamorphosis is taking place within the mobile middle class, which is made up of immigrants and writers who have a notable ability to explain and transmit the process of transformation to others. She makes it clear that someone is not automatically considered transcultural just because they travel or live abroad for a period of time. Being transcultural requires an analytical, introspective, and rigorous approach. It is evident that the transcultural journey is typically unique, creative, and customized. While some itinerants fully integrate into foreign culture, betraying their true selves, a significant portion stick to their original language and culture. A limited number of people and communities possess the right to diasporic growth and consciousness that surpass customary barriers of ethnicity geography nation, gender and profession (Epstein, 2009, p.330). Thus, the disruptive nature of transcultural individuals presents a potential opportunity to re-examine human resource management theories and priorities concerning roles like agent of change. Besides, transcultural pulls out the new literatures from the narrow boundaries of the national and the regional, shaping the local and the diasporic from a global point of view.

To cut short, by employing trans culturalism as an analytics, the thematic investigation into *Americanah* is intended to go beyond a conventional examination of

cultural conflicts or assimilation. It highlights the agency of characters in forming their identities within a transcultural context and permits a more nuanced examination of the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural interactions. The promising potential of Afropolitan horizons as a progressive alternative to cope with challenges of globality are the core focus of this study. The role played by cultural hybridization and diasporic consciousness is ascertained in articulating African identity in the contemporary moment.

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1. Hybridization and Contemporary Cultural Contexts

A growing number of African works highlight cultural hybridity, cosmopolitan ethics and racial embeddedness in the global perspective. As a term for cultural hybridity, "Afropolitan" frames discussions about how to conceptualize contemporary African identities within changing transnational and global contexts. According to Selasi, (2005) Africans negotiate their identities on a racial, national, and cultural scales of identification. In hybrid space, the parental and the host culture, she asserts, must be *braid[ed] together* to facilitate *the crafting [of] a transcultural identity*. Likewise, challenging the colonially charted boundaries of imagined homeland, Afropolitanism problematizes the popular slogan, 'Africa for Africans' and replaces it with that of 'Africa for Africans of the world'. Epstein and Dagnino call for flexibility and tolerance at the crossroads of mobility and hybridization that release a person geographically, ethnic and cultural trappings. This article encompasses Ifemelu's cultural continuum that she attains in a trans-space (Dagnino, 2015) culminating in a meaningful negotiation of self in a multicultural world of *Americanah*. The protagonist negotiates her real self through a tense interaction between the fixed and the fluid. She is not the prototypical migrant of the postcolonial world who suffered from identity crisis and a dispossessed diaspora status in the strange land. As her father often tells Ifemelu, "America creates opportunities for people to flourish. Nigeria can learn a lot from them," (Adichie, 2013, p. 210). Despite that Ifemelu's father persistently shapes his daughter's perspective by propagating stereotypes about the United States and his own nation, Ifemelu moves to America in search of her personal

growth that she attains passing through a complicated experience. Initially her identity is tarnished by a cultural shock that disrupts cultural codes and elicits sense of powerlessness, disorientation, and loss. In other words, racism in America makes her “Black”. Additionally, it appears that this transformational approach highlights the “need to move beyond traditional concepts of society that continue to rely on the nation state as the only conceivable frame of reference” (Schulze-Engler, 2007, p.27).

During acculturation process, Adichie’s middle class characters undergo numerous challenges in the white society. At the onset, Ifemelu’s struggle begins with faking her identity as a Black American Ngozi Okonkwo to get legitimate work as a health aide, waitress, and baby sitter in Brooklyn. Her financial worries become a challenge to stay and study in America. Secondly, this study determines how the characters' experiences are shaped by language, illustrating the difficulties in communicating across linguistic and cultural divides. The protagonist’s so-called Nigerian English makes her a misfit among foreigners in university premises. Generally, the American accent and lexicon choice are taken to be an advantage _in order to integrate in the American society. So, Ifemelu is left with no choice except to deliberately assimilate into dominant culture of beauty and language. She acknowledges the fact that she is overweight in relation to American beauty standards, but Ginika forbade her from using the word “fat” because, in that country, it was a derogatory term loaded with moral condemnation, such as “stupid” or “bastard” . Thus, “fat” had been expunged from her lexicon. (Adichie , 2013, p.5-6). The social barriers urge her to discover real America through books and get her American accent approved as quite *convincing*. “She spoke up in class, buoyed by the books she read, thrilled that she could disagree with professors and get, in return, not a scolding about being disrespectful but an encouraging nod”(p.136). Thirdly, Black hair is a distinct marker of African identity as well as racial profiling in Europe. Auntie Oju persuades Ifemelu to flatten her hair because braids are looked upon as unprofessional in America. She agrees to have her kinky hair straightened to comply with the American standards of beauty and professionalism. The tension between the local and global gradually empowers Adichie’s protagonist when predetermined notions of white privilege associated with

language, beauty and body are challenged by her as the phase of her self- realization commences. Her individual identity as an African woman is restored with a “credit card pre-approval, with her name correctly spelled and elegantly italicized... (making) her a little less invisible, a little more present. Somebody knew her.”(*Americanah*, p.132). Ifemelu stops faking an American accent and resists being subdued in foreign dialect in contrast to the overtly assimilated Auntie Uju on one hand and the cosmopolitan flamboyant Ginika and the ‘Americanahs’ at Nigerpolitan Club on the other hand. She decides to keep her natural hair as an act of political autonomy. Thus, she is a prototype of African women who are “deprogramming themselves from thinking that Black hair is not beautiful on account of the increasing politicization, but also the celebration of Black hair” (Dabiri qtd. in Knudsen and Rahbek , 2016, p.172).

Transcultural relationship impact the protagonist’s odyssey of Afropolitan identity to a great extent. She defies the stereotypes like “the authentic credentials, that whole authentic African thing” (*Americanah*, 2013, p.320) of which Blaine’s sister talks about. Ginika, an archetypal biracial African friend, guarantees Ifemelu’s socioeconomic ascent as resident intellectual and a race blogger. Secondly, Curts’ class and white privilege expedites her new identity by slipping out of her old skin (p.247). This relationship gives Ifemelu an awareness of racial politics in America where she finds her at the bottom of social ladder and Curts, at the top. Relationship with Blaine, an elite American-African, Blaine exposes Ifemelu’s political naiveté precisely because as African Black as race was not embroidered in her fabric of history: it had not been etched on her soul (p.414). She is not that much grieved over Mr. White’s racial manhandling because Blaine believes that she is not an American Black. More than anyone the romantic ties with Obinze significantly impact her course of self-invention. In the light of aforesaid, it is evident that relationships with play a major role in conditioning her multiple consciousness that makes her African of the world.

The title ‘*Americanah*’ sums up the story’s investigation of a hybrid form at the nexus of cultures. All returnees to Africa from Europe or America are not, however,

equally Americanized. The alterity industry of postcolonial thinkers has less of an impact on Adichie's cultural hybrids. People in Nigeria start to doubt Ifemelu's initial impression of being a stranger in the city of Lagos on her return. "You are looking at things with American eyes. But the problem is that you are not even a real Americanah. At least if you had an American accent we would tolerate your complaining!" (*Americanah*, 2013, p.385). Although she finds herself comfortable among other returnees and identifies with their needs, she cannot hold her back from criticizing these "sanctified returnees for their extra gleaming layer" (p.408). Ifemelu is unable to place herself in a collective consciousness in Nigeria. Even though her homesickness brings her back but her individuality still claims its American side. "She loved eating all the things she had missed while away, jollof rice cooked with a lot of oil, fried plantains, boiled yams, but she longed, also, for the other things she had become used to in America, even quinoa, Blaine's specialty, made with feta and tomatoes" (p.409).

Finally, the idea of culture's transcendence rather than its amalgamation is reflected in Ifemelu's return. Her homecoming may not be viewed through traditional nostalgia, but rather as evidence of hybridization full of stories of familiarization and strangeness, rejection and acceptance, and ultimately the achievement of a fully realized individuality.

Afropolitan Narrative and Diasporic Consciousness

Trans culturalism is a discourse about blurred boundaries between nations, cultures, races, nativity and foreignness; cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism are just part of the much bigger canvass. Even for those who are not part of diasporas, cultural cohesiveness and transcultural mobility have provided cosmopolitan experiences in their communities.

New African diaspora is a hybrid but indeterminate space that is lived in, negotiated, contested and constantly evolved as it draws both from the richness of Africa and the existing canvases of the globe. Adichie(2009) opined that identity is something

that shifts often depending on where you are and what you are doing, they are not competing identities.

To begin with, Adichie's *Americanah* is recognizably Afropolitan. Ifemelu's identity evolves through her free mobility and diverse experience in various locations of Lagos and Nsukka in Nigeria, in New York, Princeton, in the USA and back in Lagos. As a middle class Nigerian university graduate, she appropriates her lived experience and politics of owning a place and voice in America. Accounting for what, in part, distinguishes "Afropolitan privilege", Ifemelu, for all intent and purposes, is Adichie's quintessential Afropolitan. The narrative depicts how she was "HUNGERED to understand everything about America" (p.135) leaving behind the sociopolitical chaos of beleaguered Nigerian universities battling continuing faculty strikes in post war Nigeria.

More importantly, Obinze plays a crucial role in the self-transformation of Ifemelu. The study shows that Upwardly mobile Ifemelu's story is contrasted with downwardly mobile Obinze's in order to show varying degree of diasporic attire. Obinze's trajectory in the UK is marked by tension, fear and discomfort. He confronts a re-shifting of gender roles in the West and Nigeria. Obinze as an illegal immigrant is forced to do ordinary jobs otherwise ordained for females in African culture. Imbalance of power in gender roles is further asserted through the image of Obinze as a powerless and intimidated deported soul in contrast with Ifemelu as an independent powerful woman. Here one observes how African stereotypes are broken through 'a perspective in which all cultures look decentered in relation to all other cultures including one's own' (Berry & Epstein, 2009,p.312). Her final renunciation with Obinze and homeland puts her insatiating spirit finally at peace. A sense of cultural belonging with something like home, autonomous voice and agency is reached upon back in Lagos.

In perspective of Zeleza's theorization that African diaspora 'Africanize' and 'globalize' their identity, Adichie invests her narrative with a motif of reverse journey. The return of the Nigerian characters is rethought as previously understood in Pan-Africanism and Négritude. Adichie refrains from eulogizing or lamenting homeland nor does she blindly criticize the host land. Ifemelu comes back with a retained consciousness

of Afropolitans “who belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many ”(Selasi, 2005, p.3). Facebook profile stories and blogs of diaspora returnees who have invested in such areas as music production, fashion and entrepreneurship, deeply influence her perceptions and beliefs and deconstruct the myths about Africa’s darknesses. Considering both Igbo and English to be her native tongues, Adichie demonstrates a contemporary form of cultural hybridity that was overlooked during the previous language debate. In her writings, she portrays language use as a site of cultural expression. Simultaneously, Ifemelu does not become an ‘*Americanah*’ as her people anticipate. Even after her prolonged stay and stable career abroad, she remains rooted to her Igbo culture and language.

The identities of immigrants are threatened by insecurity and a lack of belonging. This could be the reason Aisha uses Ifemelu’s international experience to help her see her own immigrant story in a positive light. She begs Ifemelu to persuade her Igbo suitors to marry her. In that salon, Ifemelu still encounters these stereotypes. Depending on how long they have been in the nation, immigrants develop a sense of pride. Permanent residency in the United States is the aspiration of many immigrants in the Ifemelu area. She is therefore questioned by almost everyone, including strangers and family, about her decision to return to Nigeria.

Additionally, she develops a global identity as part of African diaspora. Her transcultural experience in America increases her awareness and builds up her perceptions about the gulf between the white and the black and the citizen and the foreigner. Therefore on her return, she was initially unable to figure out her confusion “what was new in Lagos and what was new in herself” (*Americanah*, 2013, p. 387). Having witnessed the socio-economic vulnerability of her friend Ranyinudo, Ifemelu feels herself in an advantageous position that “she had a blue American passport in her bag. It shielded her from choice lessness. She could always leave; she did not have to stay”(p.390). Hence there could be secondary and repeat migration.

This study contributes to an enhanced understanding of the cultural and sociopolitical implications of mobility and cultural hybridity by reconstructing the notions of home and belonging. In the end, Ifemelu's American maturation culminates in her becoming a fully realized Afropolitan lady. Her transcultural adroitness through American mediation to turn over a new leaf because it promises a rightful place in America and Nigeria. Diaspora consciousness describes both a process of becoming and a state of being at the same time. Ultimately, Ifemelu's quintessential Afropolitan agency and advantage as a Princeton scholar puts her in a better position to interact, navigate, and develop the desired consciousness and voice across national boundaries

4.2. A Cultural Middle Class __An Advantageous Position

Adichie particularly complicates questions of class and mobility in the context of Afropolitan diaspora. As Epstein(2009) posits *transculture is acquired at the crossroads of cultures through an agent's cultural wanderings and transgressions*. The ability to negotiate between different cultural identities depends on the specific individual capabilities, attitudes, and resourcefulness. Adichie particularly complicates questions of class and mobility in the context of Afropolitan diaspora. Ifemelu's desire for upward mobility and access to opportunities constrained in Nigeria due to the economic meltdown is what motivated her to study in the United States. She negotiates social norms regarding language, accents, and appearances—all of which are connected to ideas of privilege and class.

Americanah (2013) epitomizes the spirit of Afropolitanism despite Adichie's claims that she is only an African. It captures the free mobility of upper middle class Nigerian transnationals who choose to leave their country to pursue their American dream. As a consequence, privileged background and unimpeded mobility offer Ifemelu an enabling position in the American world. Her experience is contrasted with that of working class immigrant Africans who are struggling in America. The research highlights Ifemelu's polished 'certainty' produced in Princeton imbued with socio-cultural capital as part of a cultural middle class in order to highlight the distinction between the privileged and the

unprivileged in terms of diasporic sensibility. Salon workers, who are a low-income minority group struggling to survive, would not otherwise be able to access Adichie's unapologetic diaspora disposition. Ifemelu's positioning as *Americanah* resonates with Afropolitan feminism—the same kind of feminism Ifemelu starts to embrace after becoming a citizen of the United States. She advocates agency and empowerment for and on behalf of non-American African women.

In the light of textual evidence it is clear that Princeton gives Ifemelu the chance to explore the subtleties of Black identity in the digital diaspora space through blogging. In her blog, *Raceteenth* or *Various Observations about American Blacks by a Non-American Black*, she voices African Americans' concerns regarding racial issues. Ifemelu breaks down stereotypes and starts a cross-cultural conversation about Black identity, race, and beauty. By doing so, she puts an unconventional resistance from 'within' American society against racial inequalities and white privilege_ living at the border of her in born culture (Epstein, 2004,p.61). In her blog titled as *The Small Redemptions of Lagos*, she provides critically speaks about 'Third wordless'. From this vantage point, Epstein's concept of the cultural middle class goes beyond just passing along professional values to the inept. There is a chance that this class will translate cultures across strata of different societies. The high-up's and bottom line are typically less resilient to transcultural transfer of values and intellectual output. Ifemelu develops a more differentiated view on Nigeria and America, people and her relationships with friends which she freely shares through her blogs. Possessing multiple cultures does not cause confrontation but brings her peace. It resonates with Epstein's (2009) notion that a transcultural orientation tends to embrace the universal quality of humanity that renders one culture amenable to the existence of other cultures.

In the end, this research *finds in Americanah* the depiction of a feminist ethos that is Afropolitan, concerned with securing an uncontested position and stake in a geopolitical space. The protagonist is raised by the multifaceted nature of the new diaspora, which fosters his or her diasporic consciousness without being condescending or idolizing it. This

could be interpreted as the right to express a transcultural viewpoint above that of national identity. This is the way characters navigate the ins and outs of a hybrid world where they must simultaneously deal with constraints and participate in the global web. In Adichie's work, mobility is not valued only in terms of spatiality but rather as a sign of possibilities for Afropolitan characters to have transformative lives. In conclusion, Ifemelu is a perfect example of Adichie's 'nkali' which best describes 'an overarching power for individuality' and the human desire for upward social mobility.

5. Conclusion

Since the new diaspora works are shaped by transnational experience of their writers, the findings of this research underscore a paradigmatic shift in debates over cultural affinities, politics of identity, home and belonging often in challenging and contested diasporic conditions in 21st century. Epstein's protean approach determines migrants' relations with the native as well as non-native communities inside social, economic and cultural epicenters of a hybrid living. This study examined diasporic experience of cultural hybrids in *Americanah* (2013) meticulously placing issues such as nationality, culture and identity under a critical enquiry.

The Afropolitan approach, which strays from the widely studied histories of colonialism and its aftermath, concentrates on pressing African issues that have an international bearing. Results demonstrate that Adichie values urban migration crossings that emphasize how fluid bodies, borders, and identities are in modern society. The novelist examines Africa and Africans from a variety of global perspectives, with a particular emphasis on cosmopolitanism and cultural hybridity. Epstein believes that critical consciousness and cultural synergy are befitting trajectories for the educated and resourceful middle class. Similarly, the people in Adichie's world are middle class Nigerians rather than the stereotypical 'savvy cohorts'. A growing number of global society's collective imaginations may be influenced by Adichie's Afropolitans. Contrary to the critique that Afropolitanism denounces Black diaspora unity, this study affirms that particularly in the American context, this identitarian logic marks a moment of re-

conceptualizing Blackness and diasporic sensibility. The reader accompanies the female protagonist on her individual journey of reinvention on the bumpy road of transnational build-up as ‘more ‘self-aware’ and ‘more guarded’ putting forth an example of how to embrace a positive social change in a world where national and cultural divides continuously shape society. This is achieved through immersion in the meaningful process of identity formation.

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