

Afropolitanism and the Making of New African Writers: A Postcolonial Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

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Abstract

The paper examines Chimamanda Adichie's novel, Americanah, from the perspective of postcolonial theory in order to interrogate the inevitable shift in African literature. The early African writers paid much attention to the use of myths and legends in portraying the historicity, beauty and wholeness of African culture, while at the same time reacting against the stereotypical assumptions of the West about Africa. Their vision was centralized in rehabilitating and reestablishing the African humanity and personality. Gradually, there was a shift of emphasis in the 21st century, which came about as a result of globalisation that resulted in transnational and cultural mobility across borders, which have extended the horizon of African literature. In the new century, Africans travel to Europe and America for personal ambition and quest for better life and in the process, the migrants interact with the Europeans or Americans, marry and speak their language in addition to their mother tongue, and work for or among them. Consequently, rather than treat such interaction as exploitative, the migrants review it as beneficial because it enables them to achieve their personal ambition, and even become citizens and this trajectory clearly reflects in literary works. The paper therefore attempts to identify the paradigm shift in African literature and how the cultural and transnational interactions have helped the new writers to condense universal knowledge, and address international themes in their narratives as well as bring the new writers to international recognition. In addition to this, the study attempts to highlight some possible differences between the new and the old writers, the kind of difference that is defined by the concept of Afropolitanism.

Key words: Afropolitanism, afropolitan, avantgarde, colonialism, transnationalism, trans-culture, migrant, paradigm-shift

Introduction

Philosophically and politically there is no such thing as an African people. There is an African world. (Fanon, Frantz. *Toward the Revolution of Africa*. p. 18)

The rise and development of African literature in the late 19th to 20th century cannot be separated from the activities of colonialism throughout the African continent. In addition to the by-products of colonialism such as western education, technology of knowledge production and missionary activities, other factors that qualify African literature as a distinct literature independent of its predecessor, European literature, are the use of African myths, legends and other oral elements to put the record straight by depicting the richness of African culture, and rejecting the colonial version of the same culture. In this way, the early African writers used their creative works to speak anti-colonialism, purity and cogency of African culture and tradition who speak against the Western stereotypes of Africans in their narratives. According to Mathury, “the Africanness of the African text is elaborated and celebrated through positing its appropriation – as well as the use of myth and ritual” (1). The inclusion of oral tradition in narrating Africa has led to the development of a distinct form and style of narration which subverts the European literary form and style of narration, the shift which, no doubt, guarantees African literature its authentic African quality. However, the scope and limitation of African written literature is still disputed among critics such as Simon Gikandi, Chinua Achebe, Ernest Emenyonu, Charles Nnolim, Akachi Ademora, Stephen Newell, Mark Mathuray, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Cecil Blake; but what is so sure about it is the fact that it was borne between the 19th and 20th century.

The 20th century writers used oral tradition in their narratives partly to react to the various stereotypical assumptions of the Europeans against Africa, and partly to justify the existence and aesthetics of African tradition, norms and values. For Young (26), the earliest African writings in the European languages are largely of cultural dispossession or assimilation to European cultures which is considered to be a total loss on the part of Africans. Such writers are named “Black nationalists” by Balakrishnan (575-6) whose struggle was on highlighting racial solidarity and African nationalism. These experiences have warranted the rise of modern African literature with a strong sense of loss of dignity, culture and tradition, religion, land and humanity (Nnolim 1). So, it could be said that the early African writers were realists and anti-colonialists whose style of writing is always linear and

limpid, whose messages are unambiguously articulated, and whose dominant theme is recapturing African humanity and re-establishing African personality.(Nnolim 9).

On the other hand, one can argue that the new writers, in the 21st century, differ from the old writers of the 20th century in terms of style, form, subjectivity, ideology, presentation of gender relationships and other contending issues. The new writers, according to Osofisan (1996), are the new generation of writers who produce metanarratives without authors and plot in which the protagonist's identity is unstable and inconstant, and which, according to Newell is “splintered into a heteroglossic, and sometimes, conflictual phantom” (82). Instead of these new writers to maintain the discourses of the old writers about national identity, cultural purity, racial solidarity, essentialism and authentic Africanness, they choose to develop hybrid literary styles, and to highlight themes of migration, existential anguish and cultural intermingling that may impact on the borders of African literature. Through this rupture, a new genre is borne, “Afropolitan Literature”, in which writers tend to condense universal knowledge, and participate in the production international themes in their narratives, akin to Nnolim's (5) suggestion to writers in the 21st century. It is against this background that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, being one of the Afropolitan novels, in the 21st century, is studied from a postcolonial perspective.

A Brief on *Americanah*

The primary text, *Americanah*, is an Afropolitan novel just like Taiye Seles's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), Tahar Ben Jelloun's *The Sand Child* (1985), Teju Kole's *Open City* (2011), Elizabeth Zandile Tshela's *We Need New Names* (2013), Diran Adebayo's *Some Kind of Black* (1996), in which the conventional framework of the 20th century African literature is ruptured, identity and subjectivity destabilized, racial and gender relationships revised and the structure and style modified. Published in 2013 by Khacifo Limited (Farfina), it is written in more than five hundred pages, fifty-five chapters and many sub-chapters, which are classified into seven parts. Perhaps, one may perceive the novel as dramatic, one composed in episodes and scenes from the manner in which the characters freely communicate among themselves, and from stories presented in the form of scenes and episodes. However, the fluidity of identity and subjectivity among the characters and the collapse in sequential arrangement of plot, in the novel, have positioned it as one

belonging to the new generation of African writing, which therefore, signals the 'non-linearity' feature inherent in the avant-garde writers, akin to Newell's assertion that "so many younger writers [in the 21st century] have moved away from overtly anti-colonial, political... modes of writing about Africa into genres which cannot easily be identified using the conventional critical framework for African literature" (182).

Furthermore, the story is set in three countries, Nigeria, America and England, and three continents, Africa, United States of America and Europe. The temporal setting of the novel covers three military regimes in Nigeria, from Buhari through Babangida to Abacha's administration which extends to civilian administration. In an Afropolitan style, the novel dissolves the boundaries which separate the three continents and countries, and draws the three racial groups (Africans, African-Americans and Americans/Europeans) into a new relationship. The kind of relationship which insinuates, according to Salman and Charbonnier (2014), "a broader reimagining of a world without nations, or what has been called 'post-cultural' pluralism" (Balakrishna 575).

The novel is made up of two stories: frame narrative and embedded narrative. The frame narrative chronicles the plight of some ambitious, dogged, frustrated and disappointed Africans who, as a result of corruption-related matters such as decay in the educational and health sectors, insecurity and poverty that bedevil their continent, resolve to migrate to America and Europe in search of the better life. However, the embedded narrative chronicles the ambivalence of the migrants and the consequences of their actions such as the frustration of trying to become citizens, secure good jobs, and achieve a certain level of education in the new environment. It also reveals the characters' new social relationships and dilemma of living between two worlds as well as their new understanding of racial stratification in America and England.

Afropolitanism and the Afropolitan Writer in African Literature

One of the distinctive features of African literature in the 21st century is the depiction of cultural intermingling which is as a result of massive exodus of Africans to Europe and America. Categories of Africans leave their countries and the continent for Europe and America, for the purpose of study, business, exile or the better life. However, the possible causes that

necessitate such a desperate journey can be linked to corruption, poverty and insecurity which the continent has failed to address. So, one can argue that it is poverty, poor leadership and corruption which force Africans to cross European and American borders. Consequently, this border crossing pulls Africa and outside Africa into a new relationship like never before. Therefore, the anchor of the two worlds is 'globalization', which encourages the migrants to travel to the West, meet their ex-colonial masters in their home, interact with them, as they did to us during the colonial periods, and reinvent them from a new perspective. According to Tuakli-Wosornu, such migrants, who later become writers, are “Africans or children of Africans who moved to the West for various reasons. Most of them are now embodiments of inter-cultural or inter-racial union between Africa and the rest of the world, especially the Occidents” (Mokokha16). The critic further argues that the migrants are also:

Citizens of African nations living in the West...[whose] dispersal across the world cities is an ongoing phenomenon powered by personal ambition, political strife, dynamic of transnational capital and corporate culture as well as the quest for better life away from an 'unpromising' continent (Mokokha 16: My emphasis).

Thus, Afropolitanism is the idea of dual 'beingness' – the experience of being an African and other nationalities at the same time, which means becoming citizens of two or more different nations. They try to revisit the dominant stereotypical image of Africa as perceived in the Western thought and equally the stereotypical responses by Africans in replying the West. Therefore, Afropolitan writers such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, Ben Okri, Diran Adebayo, Taiye Selesi, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and many others have tried, in their various styles, to highlight cultural intermingling, the tension of migration, the revision of gender and racial relationships in their narratives.

On this note, it is apt to mention that cultural hybridity and transnationalism, not national struggle or pan-Africanism, form the spirit of Afropolitanism, and serve as the signature marks of African literature in the 21st century – the kind of signature which distinguishes it from the cultural purity, racial solidarity, African nationalism and essentialism of the early writers. In simple terms, Afropolitanism is the expression of transnational culture by African individuals who are open to the worlds beyond their borders. For Kabale, the

expression of Afropolitanism and condensation of universal knowledge into African fiction is “a noticeable feature of the so-called new generation writing” (24). He further argues that Afropolitanism goes hand in hand with cultural ambivalence, cultural amalgamation and cultural overlap (33), and according to Huddart (14), such writings are distinguished by cultural clash, linguistic collusion and transnational movements.

A Paradigm Shift in Modern African Literature: Early Writers Versus New Writers

One of the contending issues in African literature is its resistance to mapping which is as a result of globalisation. Furthermore, globalisation has turned the world into a global space, which also influences literary production, specifically the style, form, quality and structure of African literature in the 21st century. According to Wilson-Tagoe, globalisation is “a process marked by instability and disjuncture. The disorienting and illusionary lives of migrants may enact this disjuncture yet at the same time provide spaces for re-thinking nation, location and identity” (94). To highlight this shift in African literature, Nnolim is of the opinion that the dream of 20th century African writers is to “recapture our lost humanity and re-establish the African personality” (9), which should not be confused with the dream of the new writers in the 21st century. Unlike Thomas Hale who is optimistic about the making of the new writers in the 21st century, Nnolim spells doubt about the focus and waywardness of the new writers; therefore, he suggests that the avant-garde writers should pay more attention to developing 'international theme' in their narratives, and look forward to speculating the future rather than stepping on the footprints of the old writers. He further suggests that the new writers, in the 21st century, should:

Face the future by engaging in futuristic literature, by looking forward to the fulfillment of the African dream...[and] the African writer, in this century, is challenged to envision a new Africa, which has achieved parity (politically, technologically, economically and militarily) with Europe and America...he [or she] has to widen his [or her] canvas (8).

Nnolim's call for re-inventing Europe and America in African literature seems to have been accepted among the new writers in the new century. At this juncture, it is appropriate to mention that the propellers of globalisation have blown away the narrative of victimisation and nationalism, and encouraged the new writers to frame their narratives in such a way to weave multiple voices which is informed by the many narratives of the African past,

and the principled dissent of the present (Kroll 109).

In addition, through this shift, the new writers weave their narratives in such a way to review gender relationships, fluidity of identity and subjectivity, transcultural mutation/hybridity and deep cultural anxieties. This is in reference to what Gikandi views as, “hybridity of Africa [as a result of transnational migration] and cosmopolitanism of its subjects which does not imply the negation of horizontal social relationships, local affiliations and the modes of knowledge that they generate” (10). However, these writers focus on debating the “Africanness” of certain types of literature which reveal the critics' underlying desire and expectations about the identity of African literature. In describing the unique characteristics of the avant-garde writers, Osofisan maintains that “no longer are the authors interested in a linear plot and limp prose whose ideological intentions are unambiguously articulated” (Newell 186).

When Soyinka says that “we do not want to be African writers, but writers” (Wright 4), he probably means that the new generation writers are no longer confined to lamentation about and reaction against colonialism like the old African writers, but extending the frontier through meta-narrativity, review of gender and sexual relationships, innovation of existing form and style, presentation of complex focalisation and packaging of story.

Critics of African literature such as Gikandi, Kabale, Mokokha, Mbembe, Gromou, Newell, Priebe, Hale, Nnolim, Tuakli-Wosornu, Wilson-Tagoe, Suendu, Osofisan, Wainaina, Ilieva, Odiemo, Uko, Ogunbayo, Benabed, Kroll etc., have tagged the new writers as “Afro/cosmopolitan writers”. However, names such as 'new writers', 'progressive writers', 'avant-garde writers', 'cosmopolitan writers', 'contemporary writers', 'Afropolitan writers' and 'third generation writers' are used interchangeably to mark the shift that leads to universalising African literature in the 21st century. And according to Priebe, these progressive writers, “appear to be addressing a concern that a shift has taken place, that instead of living in a multicultural world made up of easily identifiable cultures, we are living in a more fluid transcultural and even transnational world” (50).

Theoretical Framework

Since the research dwells on identifying shifts in African literature which distinguish the new writers from the early writers, largely as a result of

transnational migration and cultural hybridity, which are identified as the spirits of Afropolitanism in the 21st century, and which influence the new writers to using universal knowledge in developing international themes in their narrative, postcolonial theory is appropriate for the study of the primary text, *Americanah*. In the literary context, Postcolonial theory emanates from the experiences of the formally colonised in relationship with the colonisers. It evaluates the mode of interaction between the two poles, weighs the degree of exploitation of one group over the other, and highlights the consequences of such exploitations. Similarly, Barry (193-5) highlights four areas of concern in doing postcolonial criticism, they are: of culture, fluidity of identity and racial difference. He further argues that other areas covered are the creation of pre-colonial version of a nation and rejecting the colonially tainted version of that nation, linguistic experimentation with ex-colonial language, the recognition of dual identity/citizenship which is referred to as hybridity or unstable identity, and stressing on cross-cultural interactions, which is achieved through transnational mobility.

Postcolonial theory is historically and politically limited to exploring hybridity that postcolonial theory draws attention to issues of cultural difference in literary production, and is one of the several critical approaches that focus on specific issues that are related to colonialism such as gender, class, sexual [and cultural] orientation (Barry 197). Thus, it is based on the linguistic experimentation, hybridisation of identity and cross-cultural interactions embedded in the primary text, *Americanah*, which also corresponds to Homi Bhabha's idea of restudying the relationship of the West and the Rising Rests through 'ambivalence', 'mimicry' and 'hybridity', that the primary text is studied from the tenets of postcolonial theory. This is necessary because the text reveals fragmentation of subjectivity which invites hybridisation of identity, linguistic experimentation between Pidgin English, Igbo, Negro dialect and general American/British English (multilingualism), cultural and racial differentiation.

To validate Barry's presentation of four areas of concern in practicing postcolonial criticism, Bertens affirms that:

Postcolonial theory and criticism emphasises the tension between the metropolis (centers of cultural power) and the former colonies...it focuses on the cultural displacements – and its consequences for personal and communal identities...it studies the process and effect of cultural displacements and the ways in which

the displaced have defended themselves...[it] sees such displacements and ambivalences and hybrid cultural forms to which they lead as vantage points that allow us to expose the internal doubts...that the West has suppressed in its steamrolling globalising course(200).

The disappearance of colonies in the 21st century, as conceived by some postcolonial critics, and the abounding neo-colonial relations which pave way for transnational migration, have influenced postcolonial theorists and critics to engage in:

A reassessment of the traditional relationships between the metropolis and its colonial subjects...on patterns of interaction between those identities, on postcolonial migration to the metropolis, on cultural exchanges between coloniser and colonised, [and] on the ensuing hybridity of both cultures (Bertens202).

Thus, hybridisation of culture and identity has been one of the concerns of postcolonial theory. Therefore, according to Bhabha, identity is always “constructed in interaction with others and with the Other” (Bertens207), and for Dobie, the interaction of cultures (hybridisation of culture) “creates blended ones, mixture of the native and colonial, a process [which] is characterised by tension and change... [that are] dynamic, interactive and creative“ (210).

At this juncture, it is better to narrow down the discussion of postcolonial theory to Homi Bhabha's perspective, in which he reviews the encounter between the colonisers and the colonised as always affecting the two cultures through mimicry and hybridity. His influential contributions to postcolonial theory are: mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity, which together signal a new relation between the West and the Rising Rests. Unlike Edward Said who treats the two poles as opposing sides, Bhabha argues that the cultural interaction of coloniser and colonised leads to fusion of cultural forms (Bertens 207). The critic further argues that Bhabha's focus on interaction and his notion of hybridity have very fruitfully sharpened the awareness of what actually happens or may happen in the colonial situation or any encounter between the dominant and oppressed group, and to expose any encounter between the West and the Rising Rests to critical examination (209). Reinforcing Bhabha's argument, Dobie believes that, “the two [cultures] are no longer recognizable as separate, but exist as a mixed one”

(206), akin to the concerns of Afropolitanism. Perhaps this is because the modern world is characterised by even more interactions between cultures than ever before which is described as part of the process of “globalisation” (Eglestone 109). Through these processes, Bhabha upholds, the boundary between nations, continents and cultures, seems to have been a “janus-faced [in which] the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity incorporating new people in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation” (4).

By mimicry is meant the attitude of the subalterns of imitating the colonisers for recognition. The imitation may be in form of dress, use of language, gestures, level of education and life style. Dobie sees the 'mimicry' as total submission to neocolonial order, “imitation of dress, language, behavior even gesture – instead of resistance” (209), and according to Fanon, as the colonised become better educated and able to live as their white counterpart, they become increasingly imitative (Dobie 209). Therefore, it can be argued that such mimicry is evident in the primary text in the way the characters compete over speaking the colonial language, behaving and dressing like them, even marrying them, and struggling to achieve certain level of education with the aim of becoming citizens. It should also be stated that the imitation of the metropolitan culture by the migrants in Afropolitan narratives, such as *Americanah*, is the concern of postcolonial criticism.

Issues of Afropolitanism in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*

As an Afropolitan novel, *Americanah* depicts a new direction of African literature as a result of globalisation which has to do with transnational and cultural movements. The story is centered on some African migrants who leave their countries and the continent in general for America and Europe with the aim of either realising or finding a better life, or both as highlighted by Mokokha (op. cit.). Through these movements, the two cultures, African and Western, are brought together in a new relationship because, unlike Edward Said, Bhabha believes that the interaction of the two cultures affect both poles, and therefore, leads to fusion, rather than fission, of cultural forms. In the primary text, such new relationship is best depicted through mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity (which also serve as 'defense mechanism') of the characters. Also, the fusion of the two cultures marks a stamp to authenticate the universality of African literature in the 21st century.

In their effort to live comfortably among, and interact with the Americans in America and the English in England, some of the migrant-characters mimic the manner of speaking of their hosts, in the way they speak in their accent. In addition to being bi-lingual, the characters also master, and fluently speak English language like the native speakers. Such proficiency in English is noticed in Ifemelu, Auntie Uju, Dike, Obinze, Emenike, Wambui etc. partly through their various conversations, academic achievements, or job and social relationships with the Americans or English. In the primary text, the narrator describes how Auntie Uju shouts at her son, Dike, “with the nasal, sliding accent she puts on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. Poo-reet-back (put it back). And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-abasing (AMR: 130)”. Similarly, Ifemelu's telephone conversation with a client also justifies mimicry and proficiency in General American accent, “May I ask who I'm talking to? My name is Ifemelu... is it a French name? No. Nigerian. How long have you been in the US? ...wow. cool. You sound totally American (AMR205)”.

However, the two characters also demonstrate their fluency and mastery on pages 54 and 78. As such, the characters are said to be bi-lingual (or even multi-lingual), and in Afropolitan studies, bilingualism serves as “a first-rate necessity...[and] for a literary person, crossing the language border becomes, in fact, the main way to survive (Gromov91)”. Perhaps such survival is seen in Emineke, whose mastery of the English language enables him to marry and live comfortably under the care of an English woman, Georgina, who is old enough to be his mother (AMC 287 and 308). Ifemelu, having successfully completed her studies at Princeton, engages in love relationships with three Americans, Blaine, the African-American professor, Curt and Abe, the red Americans, through whom she secures her Social Security Card, which qualifies her to be eligible for any white-collar job beside baby-sitting and massaging the red folks. Also, Auntie Uju completes her studies successfully and works in three institutions a day (AMR: Part Two: Chapter 15, 16, 18, 20, 21 and 22). These and many other characters that speak English proficiently and achieve academic success are the representatives of the educated class among the teeming African migrants in the West.

On the other hand, characters such as Aisha (from Senegal), Halima and Mariama (from Mali) (West African Francophone countries) represent the uneducated class whose interaction with the Americans is minimal and

whose level of education and lack of proficiency in English language do not qualify them to any white-collar job. However, their ambition is not specifically defined, and their survival is limited to Mariama's salon. Throughout the narrative, these characters never go beyond the border of the salon, and never make effort to interact with the whites or secure another job, possibly because they lack the credentials and command of the English language. Perhaps, this is because, as Laura observes, “Nigerians (West African Anglophone country) are the most educated immigrant group in this country (America)” (AMR 197). The instances of corrupted English they speak that sounds rigmarole to the comprehension of the Americans and even educated Africans, are found in every chapter that chronicles the activities of the salon. One example is where Aisha explains to Ifemelu how she has attempted marrying a red American in order to get her Identification Number, “Me, I try an American when I come, to marry. But he brings many problems, no job, and every day he say give me money, money, money...How you get your own?” This shows that their chances of surviving at the top, among the majority Americans, are very limited because of poor use of English language and failure to achieve academic success. But still they are bi-lingual because, in addition to the corrupted English, they speak Wolof and Malinke, and bilingualism is one of the concerns of Afropolitanism. On this point, Tuakli-Wosornu in *Mokokha* opines that Afropolitans are multilingual, therefore, “in addition to English and a Romantic language or two, we understand some indigenous language and speak a few urban vernaculars” (16).

However, some of the characters, especially the educated ladies, display a sense of cultural plurality in their choices of dress and hair making. Ifemelu, for example, uses attachment on her hair in order to look American, and sometimes she does 'Afro' or braiding in order to look African. As part of her preparation to relocate to Nigeria, after having spent more than three years among the Americans, Ifemelu travels to Trenton in order to get her hair braided – to look African, and feel Africanness (see chapter one, pages 1-3). Throughout the narrative, the characters use English dress for recognition and acceptance with rare use of African attire. Therefore, it is believed that the blend of hair making and choice of dress (African and American/English) is the distinguishing feature of Afropolitanism as described by Tuakli-Wosornu that “you'll know us (Afropolitan) when you see us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York Jargon, African ethics and academic success” (*Mokokha* 16). By combining African dressing and Western, the characters blend the two cultures they are affiliated with which means they bring the two

cultures together like never before. Therefore, through language and fashion and dress, the characters mimic in order to position themselves well among the Americans and English, meet their personal ambition and live a better life.

The next is the issue of hybridism which is very important factor that promotes the spirit of Afropolitanism. Hybridisation means duality of culture and identity, which is technically transcribed as inter-culturalism (to live between two or more different cultures) and transnationalism (to identify oneself with two or more nationalities/citizenships/identities). The cultural hybridity is seen in various characters, in the primary text, such as Ginika who is born and grown up in Africa, between her American mother and Nigerian father.e.g.(p. 83), which automatically qualifies her to having two identities, African and American. However, cultural hybridity is observed, in the text, through exogamy – inter-cultural marriages, a factor which contributes to undermining continental and national borders in the 21st century. Such inter-marriage practice produces children, and even the couple, with dual identities (national and cultural); and is likely to reduce racism to its lowest ebb as confirmed by Ifemelu in her response to a Haitian woman who is married to a red American, over race in 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*”. (AMR 335: Emphasis added).

However, through Wambui, a Kenyan migrant, Ifemelu discovers that there are three classes of blacks in America: Africans (they the Africans who for one reason or the other (studies, business, work, political asylum, exile) settle in America in their adulthood such as Professor Boubacar, Ifemelu, Aunty Uju, Wambui, Aisha, Halima, Mariama, etc.); African-Americans (they are the descendants of African slaves such as Professor Blaine) and American-Africans (they are Africans who are either born and brought up in America or brought to America at tender age such as Dike and Kofi). (AMR, Chapter 14). From this classification, it becomes clear that Kofi and Dike are trapped between two cultural and national identities. Dike, having been born and brought up in America by Nigerian parent and Kofi, having been brought to America at a tender age by Ghanaian parent, are said to have belonged to two worlds, Africa and America, and as such they are Afropolitans (Africans of the world). These and many other instances of cultural hybridity in the text, succinctly echo Bhabha's theory of revisiting colonised and colonisers' relationship which should affect both. According to Tuakli-Wosornu,

Afropolitans such as Adichie's characters, "are ethnic mixes...others are cultural mutts: American accents, European effect, African ethos...[they] are Afropolitans – not citizens but Africans of the world" (Mokokha 16).

Hybridity, in whatever form and appearance, according to Gikandi, is conceived as the source of "deep cultural anxieties and psychological division" (Wawrzinek and Makokha 9). Therefore, the ambivalence in Adichie's characters appears in the manner they struggle to cope with the anxieties of living between two cultures or in simple term, through cultural displacement. Despite their effort to devise means of survival in America and England, some of these characters become disenchanted with life in America thereby resolving to return to their home countries. Ngozi Okwonkwo, whom Ifemelu impersonates before she gets her Identification Number, relocates to Africa and settles permanently in Lagos. Ifemelu is disenchanted with America and everything there; she is introduced as making preparations to return to Nigeria (AMR, Chapter 32 and 33). As part of the disenchantment, in chapter 17, Ifemelu thinks of withdrawing American accent because of the Americans' racial preferences and her failed relationship with Blaine and Curt, quits her job to become an independent blogger and even cuts her hair to look African (AMR: Chapters 20 and 34). Similarly, Auntie Uju expresses the same disenchantment in chapter 21 after having fed up of working in three different places, shouldering the responsibilities of her husband and son, and racial segregation of the red Americans:

I even don't know why I came to this place. The other day the pharmacist said my accent was incomprehensible...and that same day, as if somebody sent them, one patient, a useless layabout...told me to go back to where I came from...why do I have to take this rubbish? (AMR: 253).

The same frustration is seen in Obinze in England, who, after struggling to live a good life and after going through much travail in order to become a citizen, is arrested and deported to Nigeria in chains together with other migrants whose visa has expired. (AMR, Chapter 28, 29 and 30). The same condition is applied to Aisha in Chapter 41. The entire African migrants, in America and England, attribute their sufferings to the unpromising condition of Africa. Auntie Uju attributes her anxieties of living between two cultures to three military Heads of State, Buhari, Babangida and Abacha, "I blame Buhari and Babangida and Abacha because they destroyed Nigeria". (AMR 253).

At the end, having crossed the African borders and returned to mother Africa, the returnees form an association/forum in Lagos, which is named “Nigerpolitan” through which they remind themselves about the good and bad of living beyond borders. Through this forum, they also help themselves and guide those who want to cross African borders about how to live a good life in the West. (AMR, Chapters 48 to 49). It is important to note that majority of the returnees become well established in Nigeria, and live peaceful life thereafter. Obinze becomes a well-established business person in Lagos and Ifemelu works as an editor in ZOE Magazine.

Conclusion

The study of *Americanah* through the lens of postcolonial theory, specifically Homi Bhabha and Charles Nnolim's perspectives, allow the exploration of how the narrator as one of the new writers, frames her narrative to highlight the condensation of universal knowledge and development of international themes, an effort which signals the shift in African literature – in terms of styles, form, thematic concerns, and which probably draws the new writers to international recognition. For example, through mimicry, ambivalence and cultural hybridity, the narrator portrays how characters such as Ifemelu, Obinze, Auntie Uju, Aisha, Halima, Mariama, Emenike, Ginika, Iloba, Nosa and other culturally “hybridised” characters try to become the citizens of America and England, meet their ambition and live a good life among the whites. Through these migrant- characters, the narrator succeeds in addressing the impact of inter-cultural interaction and fluid identities on both cultures, an effort which contributes to the undermining of borders and nations in the 21st century, and re-imagine Africans as citizens of the world.

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