

**The Cross-border Journey: Exploring the Unheard Trauma, Identity Crisis,
and Perpetual Pursuit for “Home” in *Crossing* and *Americanah***

By

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts**

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

Cross-border or transnational migration has been a part of human civilization since the beginning, as people moved from one place to another for various reasons before settling down. Taken together, *Americanah* and *Crossing* provide valuable insight into the difficulties and realities of relocating to a new country from the perspectives of double marginalized individuals. This paper aims to address the strenuous cross-border experience by exploring the resettling, victimization, trauma, distress, isolation, identity crisis, in-betweenness or third-space, and assimilation process in the new country. Furthermore, it will provide an authentic representation of the reality of the migration and post-migration experience and deconstruct the colonial view of the colonizers through neo-colonialism which will disillusion the ordinary people. The paper will offer a comprehensive understanding of the plight of refugees and immigrants from the postcolonial, womanist, and queer theoretical perspectives.

Keywords: Refugee, Immigrant, Relocation, Victimization, Trauma, Distress, Isolation, Identity Crisis, In-betweenness or Third-space, Assimilation or Acculturation, Misrepresentation, Neo-colonialism, Queer, Double Marginalized, Dehumanization.

Dedication

All the people in Diasporas, migrants and refugees, and other displaced communities are in my thoughts and prayers as I finish this thesis. I hope that this piece gives a voice to their experiences, unspoken traumas, and shattered dreams and I wish that they find a place where they belong, a place to call home.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.

- Martin Heidegger

One of the most burning issues of the 21st century is the displacement of people due to conflict or natural disasters or better living standards. After World War II, the number of refugees and immigrants significantly escalated with globalization taking over the world as well as many Asian and African countries obtaining their independence, which created unrest and as a result, people migrated to the more developed western nations. Many people left their homes to dream of better opportunities, better life in some unknown land among unknown people and their culture. This migration from one country to another in this contemporary world, where the borders between states are more rigid, has become “the most pressuring concern in the western world and the United States today” (Bleich 509). The modern refugee and immigration system has its roots in the aftermath of World War II, and it has become a more significant issue over the past few decades as a result of the massive displacement of people from colonized countries. This awoke the world to the subject of resettlement, repatriation and integration of people who come from another country either to seek refuge or to live a better life.

1.1 The Difference between “Refugee” and “Immigrant”

Even though the idea of immigrants and refugees may sound similar, they are contrasted in various aspects. One of the most significant issues in our globalized world is the number of

refugees, which has significantly increased after World War II. There is a huge difference between “refugees” and “immigrant” as refugees are those who fled from their homeland due to the fear of persecution or pressure from certain political or social groups, whereas on the other hand, migrants are those who left their country on their own accord for better opportunities, natural disasters or some other reasons. Conventionally, immigrants are associated with the economy, it's considered to be “an economic form of migration” and on the other hand, refugees are regarded as “a political form” (Hein 44). According to Portes, the “World System” does not really differentiate between immigrants and refugees since both exhibits a mix of economic and political fluxes (qtd. in Hein 45). This indicates that from the perspective of the globe, immigrants and refugees are quite the same and hence, their experience in the host country would be similar or the same.

Sometimes they have to go through long and tedious legal processes or sometimes they have to use illegal methods to cross the borders like walking or using waterways as legal ways of traveling might be restricted for them. They experience extreme circumstances while fleeing the civil war or other political conflicts in Africa or Asia, and encountering “the dehumanizing conditions of Fortress Europe” (Gallien 721). The majority of the time, refugees are denied entry and forced to spend months waiting at the borders of the country they want to seek refuge from. Similarly, in the case of immigration, immigrants have to go through a lengthy procedure to get a visa and then must wait months to do so. Furthermore, the social, economic and cultural conditions of the host country influence the process of identity formation in the case of refugees as well as immigrants.

1.2 Refugees and Diasporic Literature:

People are quick to judge anyone who leaves their homeland and settles in another state. However, most of the time, the reason behind their departure is often unheard of and overlooked. One major way of capturing the experiences of the refugees and immigrants, their struggles and suffering is through words that are inscribed in various literary books. Literature is charged with the notion that "refugee" is just a "bureaucratic label" employed by nations for political purposes instead of a sociological classification defining distinct groups and behaviors (Hein 44). In the literary world, several remarkable writers from around the world have tried to encapsulate the experience of the people who have crossed the borders of their origins. These books help the readers to discover the reality of people who come from different countries, especially people from marginalized communities. We can comprehend the pain and suffering of people who leave their country and come to another country for security, a better life or other purposes. The looming works of Asian and African authors are important to acknowledge in the field of literature and art. It is high time that Middle Eastern and African writers, filmmakers and artists should take the limelight "for the literature and arts of the last 15 years" (Gallien 721). There are several postcolonial authors, critics, and scholars who have contributed to the emerging field of refugee and diaspora literature. In the contemporary literary arena, the notion of diversity based on race, gender, class, religion, nationality and so on is celebrated, however, those are superficial. In reality, the acceptance of diversity is rare and is not practiced in all places in society. This modern world's hypocrisy toward people who have crossed borders, particularly those from vulnerable communities, is prevalent in the West. Two of the remarkable works, *Americanah* by the renowned author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *Crossing* by Pajtim Statovci, have significantly contributed to refugee and diaspora literature. These two masterpieces project the

truth of the minority and explore the struggles of refugees and diasporas, these two reflect in the same mirror.

1.3 The Diasporic Struggles:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is considered a prominent feminist writer, who has contributed to the canon of contemporary African literature. Andrade does an excellent work of illuminating the traditions in women's fiction that are emerging in this period and can help us understand the works of modern authors like Chimamanda Adichie, Zoë Wicomb, and perhaps Leila Aboulela and Maaza Mengiste (Coundouriotis 202). She was born and brought up in Nigeria in the late 1980s, reading a lot of “British children’s literature”. She was greatly influenced by the famous author, Chinua Achebe, especially by his prominent novel, *Things Fall Apart*. As she admitted, her initial inspiration came from Achebe as she said, “I like to think of Achebe as the writer whose work gave me permission to write my own stories” (Adichie 42). Being inspired by the major postcolonial author Chinua Achebe, she was determined to deconstruct the already established stereotypical representation of African people and portray the authentic experience of the African Diasporas. Adichie’s critically acclaimed novels *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah*, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, and so many other works have contributed to decolonizing the prejudice against the diasporas. Being an immigrant herself, Adichie sought to voice the struggles of women of color as they face double marginalization due to their race and their gender.

In Adichie’s renowned novel *Americanah*, she has embarked on the groundbreaking articulation of a distinctive diaspora culture in the U.S. through tracing the experience of a black Nigerian immigrant. The novel centers on the protagonist, Ifemelu, who migrated from Nigeria

to the USA and explores her race and identity. She is forced to grapple with the reality of being black and diaspora in the contemporary USA which is a traumatic, disturbing and confusing experience as they have to confront an entirely new culture, society and atmosphere. These damaging experiences shape their lives in the host country as they face “identity crisis, clashes of cultures, alienation and unhomeliness” (Rasool 22). The novel provides a deep insight into the diasporic experience of the immigrants and their ambivalent position of “in-between” as they cannot associate themselves with their homeland anymore, and cannot connect with the new environment of their host country. Adichie was able to highlight the hardships that immigrant African-Black women face on a variety of scales, including their economic, social, cultural, and even psychological ones.

1.4 Albanian Civil War:

Albania, from 1945 to 1985, under the rigid dictatorship of Enver Hoxha, practiced communism, which eliminated almost all forms of private property, and “the idealization of national self-reliance as a guiding tenet of economic policy” (Jarvis 02). This led to the economic collapse of Albania in 1991 when the transition began and it came into contact with foreign influences. Consequently, when Albania included several pyramid schemes in its economic strategy, the populace had little knowledge of market institutions or practices. They were unable to effectively oversee the market economy and banking sector, which resulted in several pyramid scheme failures. As a result, in 1996, the pyramid schemes began to crumble but as the major companies made campaign contributions to the ruling Democratic Party, the government kept silent (Jarvis 08). The people believed in the pyramid scheme and risked their economic security, the common people sold their properties like apartments or land or cattle to invest in this scheme. A local from Tirana described the fall of 1996 as smelling and sounding “like a

slaughterhouse” as farmers drove their livestock to market in order to invest the money in pyramid schemes (Jarvis 13). The scheme eventually collapsed in 1997 when both Sude and Gjallica, one of the funds with genuine interests, filed for bankruptcy. This led to rioting, which quickly spread as the remaining schemes stopped making payments as well. The government went down as the pyramid scheme failed and violence erupted in the country killing more than 2000 people (Jarvis 16).

Albania had gone through a serious social and economic crisis when capitalism engulfed the country after communism fell. Since the majority of people were unaware of capitalist agendas, they were unable to maintain the capitalist way of making money, which led to a major economic crisis. Albania's economy rapidly declined from early 1990 until 1997, which also had a huge effect on the social dimension of the country and resulted in violent rioting and looting. From the moment pyramid schemes completely failed in 1997, Albania was experiencing economic and social upheaval, which led to widespread protests that became progressively violent. Due to both the economic and social crisis, rebellions eventually turned into a civil war in Albania, creating massive anarchy and destruction. To escape from the violence, thousands of Albanians fled to nearby European countries like Italy or Greece. This escalated so quickly that it led to a significant refugee problem where Italy was forced to "declare a state of emergency" (Dobbins 07). In the novel *Crossing*, Statovci features distorted Albania as the socio-economy collapses as a result of the capitalist agendas. The protagonist of the novel grew up during trying times when Albania's economy was in trouble and violence was gradually spreading across the country. Due to the social and economic upheaval in Albania, Bujar suffered a great deal of loss, including the death of his father, the abduction of his sister, and a heartbroken mother and he eventually leaves the country for a better life.

1.5 Rationale for Choosing *Crossing*:

Pajtim Statovci is one of the most promising rising Finnish novelists who tried to voice important issues regarding gender, sexuality, identity and the migrant-refugee experience in his writings. He was born in the year 1990 to Albanian parents who had fled to Finland in the year 1992 as a result of the war that had erupted in Yugoslavia. Statovci's birthplace was Kosovo, where Albanians were persecuted and hence his parents took refuge in Finland.

The Yugoslav Wars were a collection of various but connected ethnic conflicts, independence wars, and uprisings that took place in the former Yugoslavia and broke it down into six republics. Although the Kosovo War began in 1998 and lasted till 1999, the discrimination and oppression against the Albanians started at the beginning of the 1990 Yugoslavia conflict. Kosovar Albanians were sacked from their employment, and restricted from educational institutions, and even the use of the Albanian language on radio, TV, and newspapers was prohibited. According to Branka Magas, the Yugoslav conflict may have been sparked due to the aggressive reaction of the Serbians to the local Albanian aspirations (qtd. in Stokes 136). The war created chaos that caused destruction, took thousands of people's lives, and millions of people were displaced or became migrant refugees. Even though Statovci was too young when his parents fled to Finland, he was still an outsider and refugee who had to encounter different cultures at home and outside. This created a gap in him which led him to reflect on the struggles the refugees have to endure in the foreign land.

Pajtim Statovci sparked the literary world with his debut acclaimed novel *My Cat Yugoslavia*, which won the Helsingin Sanomat Literature Prize in 2014. It depicts the harsh reality of Kosovo immigrants with a compelling coming-of-age narrative. In *Crossing*, Statovci further dives into the subject of the challenges of refugees, double identity, coming-of-age

narrative, gender and sexuality. In Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*, two childhood friends flee communist Albania, which has turned into "Europe's rubbish dump," where slavery, organ harvesting and prostitution manifested as the communist order collapsed. He thus decided to leave the country for good and follow the dream of a better place in the West. Bujar and his friend Agim fled their hometown of Tirana, risking their lives to cross the borders of Albania to reach the desired destination of refugees, Europe. However, when they were forced to confront the reality of the xenophobia and hostility that prevails in Europe towards refugees and immigrants, they felt very disheartened.

The story revolves around Bujar, who was growing up with his brilliant cross-dressing friend Agim at the end of Enver Hoxha's 40-year dictatorship. Bujar and his friend Agim fled from his homeland Albania due to the ethnic discrimination resulting from the Albanian socio-economic conflict. Statovci boldly emphasizes on the identity crisis of the protagonist and the excruciatingly harsh hardships of being a refugee throughout the novel. He succeeded in depicting the difficult existence of refugees who face upheaval, dislocation, oppression, and loneliness, a loss of identity, the twilight stage, war, and more. Bujar finds it simpler to lie about himself, his identity, and his past in the hostile environment of being a refugee. He wanders throughout numerous countries with different names, pasts, and identities, to cope with the hardships of starting over in a distant country with a new language, culture, and environment.

Crossing symbolizes the downward spiral of life in the ostensibly better Western society, where immigrants and refugees face hurdles on a daily basis for the most minor of concerns. People have this idealistic perception of the West as being always affluent, joyful, and free from poverty, especially those who reside in the Orient. The Asian and African people have a false perception of the West because of this, and they desire to move their entire lives to the greater

West. In the novel, the protagonist Bujar is constantly lying about himself, denying his true identity as a refugee since there is a negative image of refugees circulating around the West and most people find it difficult to accept them. He wants to experience a sense of belonging and be free from the constraints and labels of being a refugee, an asylum seeker, an illegal immigrant, etc. Hence, Statovci deconstructs the ideal illusion of the West and explores the unsaid and unheard traumas and struggles of refugees in the global environment.

Statovci was able to portray both the realities of refugees and the colorful and unfavorable stereotypes that refugees or other asylum seekers carry in the west. The ambivalent state of Bujar represents the refugees and their situation as they are no longer part of their home and cannot assimilate into the new nation. Therefore, the novel, *Crossing*, was an excellent option for exploring the struggles such as trauma, identity crisis and the forever ambivalence state of refugees.

1.6 Rationale for Choosing *Americanah*:

Americanah by the critically acclaimed writer Chimamanda Adichie published in 2013 is one of her masterpieces which capture the scrupulous life of the immigrant in a foreign land. Adichie, a Nigerian writer, was able to portray the diasporic struggle from a feminist perspective.

"*Americanah*" is a Nigerian vernacular term for individuals who have lived in a foreign country in the United States for a long period and have acquired some of the American characteristics. The novel directly explores the involvement of geographical regions and their relationship to black subjectivity, the derogatory and negative image of black people that exists in the Western world. Ifemelu, the protagonist, was born in Nigeria but moved to the United States owing to political upheaval there. Ifemelu's coming-of-age encounter with racial identity while studying in

the United States. She was confronted with the harsh reality of being a Black female immigrant who is marginalized in the United States due to her racial and gender identities.

In the novel, Ifemelu's journey in the United States begins in a perplexing, lonely, and financially precarious place due to the racism and colorism that are prevalent in the country. Due to her color, gender, and nationality, she had to endure discrimination and mistreatment. Eventually, she becomes depressed due to the isolation of foreignness, encounters the politics of black heritage in white spaces, explores the distinctions relationship between African American and African students, and internalizes preconceptions that have been placed on her because of the color of her skin. Along with learning about blackness in America, she encountered the unpleasant realities of immigration, such as the inability to find employment, adjusting to new cultures, and not meeting American beauty standards. Adichie repeatedly stresses on the daily challenges faced by immigrants, especially by people of color, who are double marginalized in the western world. Intricacies of racialized identity because the experiences of African immigrants and the native Black population are different. The racial hierarchy is prevalent in America which considers Ifemelu, an immigrant from Nigeria, superior to the native black people as they are regarded as "the most educated immigrant group in the country" (Okigbo 466). Furthermore, Adichie explicitly reflects on the assimilation of the immigrant people in the host country, which eventually leaves them in a space of ambiguity. The immigrants no longer connect to the country they came from and cannot belong to the country they are currently living. They are in an "in-between" or twilight space where they no longer can associate themselves with either their home country or host country, which led to an identity crisis among them.

Adichie was successful in extensively capturing the diasporic struggle of immigrants in the western world. Due to the prejudice and discrimination, the immigrants especially the Black

Africans have to endure racism, colorism, and xenophobia on a daily basis which Adichie represented through the struggles of the protagonist, Ifemelu. Hence, in my opinion, Adichie's *Americanah* is the perfect example of the diasporic struggles of an identity crisis, racism and colorism, and the ambiguous space of belonging.

1.7 Thesis Statement:

The immigrants and refugees have a cross-border experience replete with trauma, distress, insecurity, alienation, identity crisis, and the state of in-betweenness, which people often neglect. Also, the author attempts to represent authentic experience in order to deconstruct long-held stereotypes and prejudices. However, writers from different times and different places shed light on this crucial problem, particularly those with cross-border experience. In my thesis, I would like to encapsulate the immense hardship the refugees and immigrants have to endure due to certain stereotypes and prejudices related to their race, gender, nationality, sexuality, and so on, while struggling with their hidden inner traumas, distress, and a sense of loss. It will also explore refugees' and immigrants' state of not-belonging when they are exposed to two different cultures. Furthermore, I will examine the deconstruction of illusions and myths about the West as they face harsh realities, discriminations, and shattered dreams in light of the two incredible novels, *Americanah* and *Crossing*.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature about the cross-border experience had a tremendous increase during the 20th century when the number of refugees and Diasporas was boosted around the world. There is extensive research available on the subject of refugees or diaspora which addresses the reasons behind leaving their homeland along with the struggles and difficulties they endure. Nevertheless, there is a lack of proper research on the reasons the refugees and immigrants suffer socially, economically as well as psychologically in the host country. In this paper, I will attempt to create a holistic perspective on the experiences of refugees and diasporas by presenting their actual conditions and challenges. Also, I would connect these aspects to colonial and patriarchal constructs of subjugation, as refugees, immigrants, and diasporas are frequently subjected to misrepresentation, stereotypes, and discrimination based on their race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, etc., causing them to experience loss, state of not-belonging, mental distress, and trauma.

2.1 Oriental View:

For centuries Europeans have imagined the Orient and based on those assumptions have defined themselves as Said stated, “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the west) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (1-2). Europe’s “deepest and most recurring images of the Other” is Orient or the East and therefore, Europeans have always placed themselves as the antithesis of the non-Europeans (Said 01). Non-Europeans were defined as the Others, who were the savage, the uncivilized, the primitive and so on as European notions goes by. On the other hand, the Europeans were the opposite of these notions; they are the civilized, the modern etc. These misrepresentations have been “an integral part of European material civilization and

culture” for a long time and this misrepresentation was established “culturally and ideologically” with the discourses that were “supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (Said 02). The discourse was the “systematic discipline” of the Orient and by using it, “European culture was able to manage-- and even produce-- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (Said 03). The discourse links to power and knowledge, which is significant in the case of colonizers and colonized as “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”” (Said 02). By exploiting their knowledge of the Orient, Europeans built various supporting discourses to rationalize and justify their misrepresentation of the Orient and establish their dominance over Asia and Africa.

2.2 Dualistic Ideology:

Edward Said, the postcolonial scholar, used the term “Orientalism”, initially to define the ideology that contributes to the “West-and-Islam dualism” which promotes the idea that “Others are less human”. India, China, or the Far East were not included when the term "Orient" was first employed in the 19th century by Europeans to denote the Arab world or the Middle East more widely. However, Orientalism, in Edward Said's opinion, is “only the crystallization of a hostile ideology” in Western studies, which he further analyzes in his masterwork, *Orientalism*, where Said emphasizes on the “historical construction” of this ideology (Samiei 1145). The term “dualism” here refers to a way of thinking that fosters the duality of “the self” and “the other” in order to “justify and naturalise” certain organized patterns of dominance and exploitation. The Europeans represented “them” as less human or at the bottom of the “great chain of being” to justify certain “implications of hierarchical power”. The crucial aspect of dualistic ideology is

that there is a “difference by nature,” which reduces a certain group of individuals to less than human and makes them more vulnerable to dominance by another complete human being. It was performed to completely ignore the similarities that “they” have with us as members of the human race in order to justify how “we” treat “them” (Samiei 1146). According to Bhikhu Parekh, social identity needs interpretation and judgment rather than an empirical account of concrete truth. It is crucial to understand how differences are categorized differently as the world perspective might change based on the categorization of a person (qtd. in Samiei 1155). .

Collective identity is extremely “dangerous” in dualism as it tends to “essentialise identity” and force “a unity” on both sides that neither side can or should have on the other. A powerful "us" is created in juxtaposition to a rigid “them” and the consciousness of differences are emphasized and strengthened. Consequently, it causes conflicts and the politics of identity transformed into a politics of hate, rage and violence. Dualism magnifies the “minor differences” and even generates conflicts where there are none while “ignoring all actual commonalities” (Samiei 1155).

2.3 The State of Not-belonging:

Edward Said has a perception that exile might feel alluring but is a “terrible experience” as it creates an irreversible “rift” between the “self” and the “home place”. The literary and historical account of exile life may depict a heroic, romanticized and triumphant episode however exclude the “crippling sorrow of estrangement”. Said claims that exile is nonetheless prevalent in modern culture as individuals lack any spirituality, anxiety, and human connection as they suffer from the state of "terminal loss,". According to the critic George Steiner, the 20th century’s “Western Literature” is about exile, by exile, symbolizing the age of refugees and hence, it can be considered “extraterritorial” literature (qtd. in Said 137). There are stark differences between the

exiles of our age and the exiles from previous age as they do not share “similar cross-cultural and transnational vision, suffered the same frustration and miseries, performed the elucidating and critical task” which the other ages refugees used to share (Said 137). So many exiled poets and authors give dignity to a position where it is legal to deny people's dignity and their ability to have an identity. They make it clear that you must map areas of experience outside of those covered by the literature on exile in order to concretely address exile as a modern political punishment. Said advises them to start by looking in directions other than Joyce and Nabokov and to pay attention to the refugees who are unable to go back to their own countries and voice their untold tales (138).

While there is an unlimited amount of difference in the social, cultural, and psychological histories of the refugees, as well as the diverse conditions they are in, they are all able to connect to the fact that they were forcibly displaced from their homes. As a result, while attempting to define refugees, the concept of “the loss of home” is inextricably tied to them (Taylor 130). The perilous state of "not belonging" between "us" and the "outsider" frontier, which in ancient times was the case for those who were exiled and is now the case for “immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons” in contemporary days. Exile is the condition of “fundamentally a discontinuous being” as they lost touch with their roots, lands and even their past (Said 140). Liisa Malkki argues that the existence of refugees is only a result of the unique forms of belonging and not belonging brought about by contemporary nationhood (Bakara 289). One thing is clear from this historical co-emergence of the country and the refugee: refugee writers have always been the unique witnesses to the “shifting grounds of political life” (289). Although people have been relocated throughout history and across all continents, knowledge of this issue still fluctuates throughout both geography and time (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 01). The key to

understanding the concept of “displacement”, is to comprehend the idea of “home” which was not delved into in the case of forced literature. As refugees are often considered to be a hazard to the “natural order”, they are always engraved as an issue that requires to be resolved or neglected. They are regarded as objects, which spurs concerns about the sense of belonging of refugees to their "home" or the "host" country in an endeavor to normalize them. Nonetheless, this Othering discourse ignores the "complexity and diversity" of the idea of home while also negating the rights of the refugees (Taylor 130).

Political and scholarly discourse often adopts a "here" and "there" dichotomy to analyze refugee belonging. This prompted an examination of the migrants and their capacity for assimilating into host cultures through enculturation to new lifestyles. It also investigates whether the refugees have successfully adapted to their new home or are still loyal to the country they fled from. All of these create uncertainty about immigrants' integration into the nation-state and suggest that they pose a challenge to the idea of belonging and not belonging since they erode the national identity. Refugees are always considered the “epitome of the Other,” and perceived as outsiders except those who can fully assimilate into society are only considered insiders (Taylor 131).

2.4 African Diasporic Experience:

During the late twentieth century, the immigration wave influenced the literary world by producing a new set of African identities and a new way of thinking about African literature. Previously, African literature was only limited to the African continent and included writings that embraced African experiences anywhere around the globe (Bragg 122).

Paul Gilroy's notable work, *Perspectives on The Black Atlantic*, explores the distinctive diaspora culture among Black people. He contributes to the understanding of diaspora by introducing the thought and culture of Europeans as an "inextricable thread" of diaspora culture (qtd. in Bragg 121). In the essay "Whose Black World is this Anyway?" by Laura Chrisman, she delivers a scathing criticism of Gilroy's idea of diaspora culture as she perceived the propensity to overlook African contributions to black radical ideology and movements in his notion (qtd. in Bragg 121). In "The Dialectic Between Diasporas and Homelands," Elliott P. Skinner claims that Africans' diasporic experience has a unique set of dynamics to its more varied philosophical views on the relationship to the homeland. The idea of a shared experience and common aims for African-descended people in the U.S., the Caribbean, and Africa was initially presented by pan-Africanist thinkers. The first black civil rights activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, was committed to creating a worldwide or transnational system that would allow people who were separated by colonialism and slavery to regain "economic access and political enfranchisement." A "race-based politics of identity" that could transcend cultural, geopolitical, and linguistic limitations was necessary to build such a structure. The concept of "a universal black origin and experience," or diasporic identification, was prevalent among black intellectuals in the 20th century (qtd. in Bragg 121-122).

The well-known novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie embodies social and professional realities that raise a distinct set of queries about what it means to be a diaspora. Diaspora writings may not be able to describe transnational African experiences since the majority of authors explore the subjectivity of concepts like "home," "country," and "black identity," which define the diaspora genre's qualities. Zelza, a well-known critic, helps to reframe the conversation on the African diaspora by emphasizing the disparities in the experiences of

diverse communities, which is a more local perspective. Instead of focusing on the contrasts that separate people, he is more interested in the commonalities in their experiences. As he states, "African diasporas . . . relate not only to their hostlands and homelands but also to each other" (qtd. in Bragg 123). The connection between geographical locations and black subjectivity is extensively discussed in the eminent novel by Chimamanda Adichie, *Americanah*. The basic structure of the novel is constantly changing in both time and place, which alludes to the difficulty of navigating transnational identifications. According to Nwakanma, this constant movement echoes the tendency in Nigerian literature as a whole to define identity, leading to "new metropolitan tropes"(qtd. in Bragg 129).

Adichie is concerned with exploring and exploiting symbols to comprehend the gaps between national mythology and real-life experience. This explains why the narrative shifts its focus to the history of the United States, which shapes an African identity in a transnational context. Even the title of the novel, "*Americanah*", describes the modern manifestation of Nigerian identity in the global environment. The term "Americana" often refers to American identity, culture, and ideals. However, adding an "h" to the end of the word signifies her foreign experience in the US as well as her Nigerian identity and perspective. This statement implies "a softening of indigenous instincts or a loss of authenticity," both of which have an underlying derogatory connotation. Being in America for such a long time has had a great influence on the main character of *Americanah*, and her parents express great anxiety when she declares her plan to return to Nigeria, as they believe she has lost connection with her Nigerian identity. Ifemelu's unique identity and her interactions with others are a consequence of the many geographic spaces that have transformed due to migration. The novel contrasts the experiences of Ifemelu with those of her ex-boyfriend, Obinze, who relocated to England in order to highlight how diasporic

subjectivity differs based on the individual. Diasporic subjectivity is defined by the active creation of an expanded identity and one-way assimilation predicated on loss. Despite the fact that their first experiences in a foreign country were similar—both struggled to find work, had to adapt to new social and cultural norms, and felt alienated in their new surroundings—they also differed in other ways. However, by transcending the challenges and developing first psychic and then physical ties with other black communities, Ifemelu was able to integrate into her new environment. Ifemelu's distinctive journey demonstrates that the United States is a place where immigrants may acquire a diasporic consciousness due to the disconnection with space and people (Bragg 130).

2.5 Locating Identity:

People who seek to explore the issue of culture in the realm of the beyond are not prevalent in our contemporary time. In order to survive, we cling to the edge of the present, which is characterized by the "controversial shiftiness" of the prefix "post". The phrase "beyond" refers to an in-between space, which is not a new horizon or a departure from the previous one. The complicated figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, are produced by the collision of space and time in the transitional periods in which we exist. The French phrase *au-delà*, which translates to "here and there", on all sides, perfectly describes the motions that are caused by the sense of disorientation or disturbance of direction in the beyond. The move away from singularities as the main concept and organizational category has led to the diversification of subject positions, such as race, gender, age, institutional location, geopolitical place, and sexual orientation that occupy any claim to identity in the modern world. It is indispensable to look beyond conventional narratives and initial subjectivities in order to express cultural differences. In the process of constructing the concept of society itself, the

in-between spaces contribute to the terrain for developing strategies of selfhood that provide new symbols of identification, as well as an original ground of cooperation and contestation. The intersubjective or shared experience of “nationness, community interests or cultural values” is being prolonged due to the gap that lies in the overlaps and displacement of realms of difference. Racialized violence and the symptom of a social victim that immigrants or refugees may face, and therefore, they can observe the concept of “respect” built at the edges of ethnic deprivation. As the cultural interaction is formed performatively, whether it is oppositional or affiliative; so the depiction of cultural distinctiveness is not the result of any “pre-given” ethnic or cultural traits engraved on the unchangeable tablets of traditions. From the perspective of the minority, social articulation is "a complex, on-going negotiation" that aspires to validate cultural hybridization that appears at stages of historic transformation. The right to express oneself on the outskirts of sanctioned power and privilege is not reliant on the persistence of tradition. The life of the minority is connected by the power of tradition, contingency and contradictoriness. Tradition bestows recognition, which is a type of identification that integrates other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the construction of tradition by re-enacting the past which excludes any immediate access to a 'received' identity or tradition. Borderline interactions with cultural diversity can be both consensual and conflictual as they can confound our conceptions of tradition and modernity, realign the traditional boundaries between private and public, high and low, and question the “normative expectations of development and progress” (Bhabha 1-2).

According to African-American artist Renee Green, it is essential to comprehend cultural differences as the development of minority identities that 'split' is estranged from themselves in the act of being articulated into a unified group. “Multiculturalism” as she explains, “doesn't

reflect the complexity of the situation as I face it daily". He argues that stepping outside of one's own cultural realm is essential in order to see what one is doing, which is essentially "essentialising blackness" (qtd. in Bhabha 03).

2.6 Cultural Translation:

The idea of "cultural translation" by Homi K. Bhabha is similar to the idea of "textual translation," but it involves the movement of people instead of texts. Due to continuous globalization, people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds move from one place to another in the hope of attaining a better life. This led to the interaction between different representatives of different cultures, creating a so-called "third space" that opened up the borders of cultures and created a new hybrid culture (Bhabha 03).

The translation is linked to the idea of migration from an epistemological point of view. When people move from their home country to a new host country, they bring with them not only words from different languages but also their culture. The culturally translated people become a hybrid of the two cultures, discovering "how newness enters the world" according to Rushdie (qtd. in Bhabha 03). However, this newness is not easy to define as it is not contained within the multicultural separation of past and present, or archaic and modern, neither the 'newness' can be held in the mimesis of 'original and copy'.

One cannot ever completely translate their language into a foreign language; the meaning gets lost while translating, making a whole new meaning with different unique attributes. Homi K. Bhabha, who wrote *Location of Culture*, uses purposely confusing language to talk about how "interlingual translation to cultural translation" is always overlooked. Bhabha says that cultural translation is a performance, or "the staging of difference," which is hard to understand. Bhabha,

on one hand, describes that alterity is inherent to all transnational acts. On the other hand, he allows seeing the staging of difference as a prerogative of migrant cultures and eventually as a definite positive value (Italiano 64).

2.7 Psyche of the Refugees and Immigrants

The marginalized community of refugees undergoes an ambiguous state, a sense of loss, trauma, and helplessness, and a scarcity of entitlement. Their experience juxtaposed some of the famous works of literature that tried to portray this as exciting and resilient. The resettlement process for refugees is complex and requires extensive attention. The structural oppression and discrimination of the refugees lead to psychological distress. This profound interdependence between mental health and structural inequalities exacerbates refugees' feelings of loss and trauma (Allan 1700-1701).

In addition, refugees and asylum seekers experience several traumas due to forced migration and psychological conditions. Refugees and asylum seekers often suffer from "pre-migration" trauma while they flee their homeland. They often suffer from PTSD, depression, anxiety, and so forth and these issues occur due to their exposure to violence and abuse. Furthermore, refugees and asylum seekers are extremely vulnerable to "loneliness and loss of identity" as they endure the process of assimilation into a whole new culture (Chatterjee 324). Refugees may have encountered traumatic experiences that led to idiosyncratic resilience, coping strategies, and collapse. Regardless of their traumatic experiences, they have the capacity to cope and have an opportunity to live a happy life (Spouse 395).

Although migrants, especially refugees, experience pre-migration traumas, discrimination and social exclusion have a severe effect on their mental health. Furthermore, trauma discourse is associated not only with individual meaning but also with social interpretation of events (Schouler-Ocak 10-11). According to Koseolu, immigrants experience cultural trauma due to their fear of losing their cultural identity as a result of their contact with the postcolonial West (27). The inner turmoil of the immigrant is revealed as they struggle to adapt to the host country's culture and face preconceived stereotypes and prejudices regarding their identity (Koseolu 30).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research question:

Primary question:

1. What are the reasons behind the refugees, immigrants and diasporas' misrepresentations, whether it is related to their race, gender, nationality, sexuality or any other identity. Do these identities make one vulnerable to marginalization?
2. Does cross-border literature extensively address the consciousness surrounding identity and trauma? Whether they could depict the prejudice and stereotypical attitudes the Westerners have towards other races and ethnicities?
3. Can cross-border literature break the illusion of the superiority of the western world? Was the delusional image of the West being superior a false perception?
4. Was the west truly a place of dream? Whether they were able to achieve the home they desired or not.
5. Can literature capture the psychological struggle of refugees and immigrants? Whether they were able to overcome their trauma, distress, and sense of loss or not?

Secondary questions:

6. Is there any difference between the refugee struggle and the immigrant struggle?
7. Were the selected novels able to present the xenophobia and discriminations the refugees and immigrants experience?
8. Is literature through the eyes of double marginalized characters able to create awareness?

3.2 Research Design:

To conduct the research, the theoretical method which is the study of logically and systematically comparing theories in terms of their applicability was employed. It is not based on experiments, numeric, interviews or surveys rather it develops theories by observing secondary data or information. From the secondary research materials, the necessary information was excerpted to support the idea of this dissertation. Also, while conducting the research, the biography of the authors, Statovci and Adichie was taken into consideration. Furthermore, scholarly sources like *JSTOR* and *Google Scholar* have been utilized to uncover articles, journals, books and so on secondary resources that are reliable have been included to support the research. Throughout the paper, significant and relevant quotes and lines were composed to strengthen the research.

The postcolonial novels *Crossing* and *Americanah* emphasize on the experiences of post-migration in western countries. The refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants struggle to integrate themselves into the culture of the host country as well as the discriminations and stereotypes they receive in the new society. The postcolonial theory provides a true representation of them and their situation in the Western world. In addition, to understand the refugee, asylum seekers and immigrants' subjectivity in relation to their race, gender, religion, nationality, economic status, sexual orientation and so on in the host countries, womanism, intersectionality, and queer theory were employed.

3.3 Postcolonialism:

The long history of British colonization had influenced the Orient's every sphere of life such as political, economic, social, linguistic, and even the very ideological perspective of the colonized and continues to do so in a different form. Postcolonialism is an attempt to reclaim, reconstruct

and reinterpret history and challenge European's misrepresentation of the Asian and African people.

Postcolonialism is a reaction to the misrepresentation of the Orient and attempts to decolonize what the colonization had constructed for centuries. Especially the postcolonial literature which challenges the colonialist legacies that continues to haunt the Orient and write back to the European center of colonization. One of the prominent ways of challenging the colonial discourse is by using "counter-discourse" against them. This term coined by Terdiman is the change brought into the system against the "capacity of established discourses to ignore or absorb would-be subversion" (qtd. in Ashcroft 50). Counter-discourse is a significant way of challenging the dominant colonial ideology, especially in the canonical English texts which promote the stereotypical representation of the East. The question of the subversion of canonical texts and their eventual reinscription in this process of subversion is therefore raised by the idea of counter-discourse within post-colonialism. This counter-discourse is not only limited to the literature part of the imperial discourses, it can be used in order to challenge the discourses established in the anthropological, historical, social, and other spheres of life to create resistance against the "continuity of preoccupation" of the European imperial rule.

Modern refugee literature arose in the early twentieth century as a result of and in response to the emergence of a new type of European nation-state. It was the era when writing about refugees was a prevalent phenomenon throughout Europe. Refugee literature was essentially ignored because it was hidden from national literary traditions. However, the growth of state sovereignty around the globe following World War II hampered the prominence of refugee writing. At the time, new refugee literature was emerging, which tended to lose its distinctness by being subsumed into the emerging genre of postcolonial literature (qtd. in Bakara

290). Meanwhile, refugee writings that alluded to "humanitarian sympathy" rather than complex political solidarity were recognized. Even though Eleni said, there were stridently political refugee literary works that portrayed the most conspicuous narratives of the "refugee experience," which tended to be unidirectional "stories of flight" from a solitary catastrophic period toward safety and security in the West (qtd. in Bakara 290).

In both the novels *Crossing* and *Americanah*, it is evident that the misrepresentation of East remains in the postcolonial western world. Ifemelu and Bujar are both subjected to stereotypes and prejudices due to the oriental perspective that still exists among the Europeans. Both Pajtim Statovci and Chimamanda Adichie were able to dispel the misconceptions about their respective backgrounds and ethnicities and present the truth about their struggles in the new culture and society.

3.4 Womanism / Black Feminism:

The term "womanist" refers to a woman who is dedicated to the "survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female" according to Alice Walker. Womanism, also known as black feminism, argues that a person's gender identity is inextricably linked to their racial, cultural, national, economic, and political identities. They, unlike white feminists, address the issue from a variety of other perspectives that transcend simple categorization. Womanists fight not just for women's liberation, but also against racial, political, cultural, national, and other types of discrimination that restrict a woman's potential as a human being. The feminist criticism was too one-dimensional to comprehend the numerous challenges confronting women of color. Since Black women are often victimized not only by white males but also by Black men, they are doubly marginalized and understand the significance of one's identity connecting to race, gender,

class, and so on simultaneously. Their struggle goes beyond only restoring their femininity; rather, it is more about regaining the humanity that was taken from them. As a result, many black feminists did not join the white feminists, but instead explored "the gamut of other positions and produced an exciting, fluid corpus" that resists conventional definitions.

Womanists is a philosophy by black women that black roots and womanhood by considering the consciousness of racial, cultural, national, sexual, economic, and political issues. As black females are victims of white patriarchal culture and Euro-American racism, they emphasize on the significance of the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing. Though Africans and African Americans share some "similar aesthetic attitudes," despite the fact that they are different in terms of various factors (Ogunyemi 64). Black women are distinct from white women due to their race, and they often face subjugation due to the hegemonic Western culture that is prevalent in the present time. Therefore black novelists always address sexism and patriarchal power structures and protest against them through literary works. The white female writers just protest against gender-related issues, however, on the other hand, black female writer's battle against the dehumanization resulting from racism and poverty. They address all kinds of issues that are raised by their humanity, not focusing on the one aspect of femaleness like the white feminist. Their novels often express the issues of discrimination based on race, gender, class, nationality, sexuality and so forth. Womanists believe that these issues are part of gender issues as well and without resolving these, they cannot attain equality in society.

By breaking the patriarchal structures and culture, womanist theory tries to adopt the Afrocentric paradigm and embrace the activism of all African women, who want to liberate themselves from the male-centered western society that led to the oppression of African women for centuries. The Eurocentric concept of race categorizes Blacks, Browns, Yellows, Reds, and

Whites into hierarchical groups and allows for cultural oppression as a mental, spiritual, physical, and material reality. Womanism is the theory that tries to include the struggles and perspectives of everyone despite their race, gender, class, nationality, sexuality and so on.

In Chimamanda Adichie's noteworthy work *Americanah*, she was able to portray the different types of oppression and discrimination a woman of color and immigrant has to face in the host country. Through the female protagonist, Adichie depicts the process of acculturation into the host country's culture, in Ifemelu's case Americanization; however, Ifemelu is unable to fully comprehend the American culture and cannot connect with the Nigerian culture either. Adichie demonstrates that it is impossible to fully assimilate into a new culture for the immigrants as they are always at odds with where they belong.

3.5 Queer Theory:

During the 20th century, revolutionary movements took place that deconstructed the socially constructed binary categorization of sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The poststructuralist reconceptualization of identity is not a binary distinction but rather a fixed definition.

Essentialists believe that sexual orientation is independent of culture and that a person's identity is set at birth. In contrast, the identity of constructionists is not a factual category but rather a social construction. Foucault asserts that homosexuality must be a new idea because, even though there were same-sex sexual acts in the past, there was no way to identify as a homosexual.

It is obvious looking at the past that there were literary works by renowned writers, like Shakespeare and Wilde, who incorporated homosexual elements like cross-dressing, gender ambiguity, and same-sex attraction into their works. In the past, writing about homosexuality was

considered taboo and even forbidden. If a writer wanted to write about homosexuality, they would have had to disguise it or write it through the veil of ambiguity. Otherwise, they have to face the consequences, like Oscar Wilde, who was sent to prison. In the mid-1980s, when the AIDS crisis took place, homosexuality came under fire and created a new wave of homophobia. The media coverage, such as "Fight AIDS, Not Arabs," encapsulated the gravity of the situation while also spreading homophobia among the general public. At that time, queer activism was initiated to defeat the stereotypes and prejudices through the mass publication of gay and lesbian texts, especially those "geared towards sexuality and identity" (Malinowitz 172). This mapped the way for contemporary queer theory, which focuses on the unconventional paradigms of gender, sexuality, race, and so on. The politics of sexuality seeks to explore lesbians, gays, and other groups that defy heteronormative ideologies in order to challenge our perceptions of "sex, gender, and sexuality, including the oppositions between heterosexual and homosexual, biological sex and culturally determined gender, and man and woman." These critics developed a new way of viewing these concepts, resulting in a diverse human identity that includes everyone, even the unconventional ones (Spargo 07).

Gender indeterminacy is depicted in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, where she argues that gender is neither "natural fact" nor "cultural performance," but rather discursive performative acts (viii). She believes that gender works as a "regulatory construction" that benefits heterosexual narratives the most. Butler claims that deconstructing gender binary categorization will legitimize queer subject positions. According to her, there is no fixed gender identity or expression, as the "identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (25). For generations, society has performed the binary distinctions of gender and sexuality, which eventually led to the normalization of these performative acts. As

Simone de Beauvoir says in her famous book *The Second Sex*, "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman," which interprets as gender is not a natural identity, rather it is a constructed identity through "a stylized repetition of acts" from the phenomenological tradition (qtd in Butler 519). Due to social concepts of the normative and taboo, gender is nothing but a performative success.

In Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing*, the subject of gender and sexuality is fluid and ambiguous. The protagonist Bujar cannot be identified as a man or woman as he performs the act of both gender and has fluid sexuality. Statovci challenges the socially constructed and heteronormative narrative with the character of Bujar, who repeatedly embraces new identities as he wanders across various countries. Through the lens of queer theory, it is possible to comprehend Bujar's subjective gender and sexual identity, which is influenced by his cross-border experiences.

3.6 Intersectionality:

The concept of intersectionality is about interconnection and interdependence between social structures and identity structures such as race, gender, class, and so on. It is a framework that provides us with multiple perspectives that explains the experiences of discrimination and privileges based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, social location, nation, and so forth. The idea of intersectionality originated in the 1990s as a part of black feminist activism, which protested against the one-dimensional view of discrimination and prejudices. Feminist scholars employed the idea of intersectionality to define the subjective exclusion and subordination of marginalized people. Intersectionality envisions knowledge as contextual, relational, locational, and reflective of political, social, and economic power. It highlights how closely related social

structures, like gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, etc., are to identify the constructions of subjugation.

Although intersectionality has always been associated with gender studies, it is now connected with numerous other disciplines, including sociology, history, education, anthropology, psychology, political sciences, law and literary studies, health studies, and social work, to comprehend inequality and identity. According to Matsuda, intersectionality explains all kinds of subjugation through the question of “the other question” as she questions the construction of subjugation concerning the other aspects. When she finds something that can be considered racism, she tries to find the relationship it has with sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, or even class (Matsuda 1189). As new disciplines began to explore intersectionality, the concept's scope broadened to include dynamic dimensions of citizenship, education, ethnicity, immigration status, mental health status, nationality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other natural categories of the human population (Gopaldas 90).

Both the characters, Ifemelu and Bujar, face discrimination because of their gender identity, in connection to various forms of subordination based on intersectionality. The intersectional theory enables us to interconnect all forms of oppression, including linking gender identity with other racial, socioeconomic, national, and sexual orientation identities, among others. Bujar's gender and sexual identity are fluid in Satovci's Crossing, as he cannot identify as a woman and only acts like a man. Hence he is subjected to certain discrimination due to his gender, racial, national and sexual identities. Similarly, Ifemelu's ethnic, gender, and national identities forced her to remain ostracized. They are marginalized not only because of their gender identification, but also because of other identities tied to oppressive social structures. The double

marginalization of both Ifemelu and Bujar can be explained with the help of intersectionality and hence, this theory was used to analyze both the novels.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Both Ifemelu and Bujar are part of the marginalized communities due to their racial, gender, sexual subjectivity and often encounter inequalities and prejudices in the host country as well as home country. Pajtim Statovci and Chimamanda Adichie through their masterpieces *Crossing* and *Americanah* represent the reality of *Crossing* the border and settling into a new country. The novels explore the struggles of psychological distress and trauma, identity crisis, xenophobia, discrimination, and twilight or third-space. Both of them deconstruct the myths regarding migration in the western world and represent the authentic reality.

4.1 The Perpetual In-between State: Depressing Reality of Homeland, Forsaking Origins, Twilight or Third-space

The world wars ravaged the whole globe and wreaked havoc on many countries, especially the so-called "Third World" nations. The wars crippled their socio-economic conditions and forced their populations to emigrate, either legally or illegally, to the countries that are considered as "First World". The refugees face several difficulties adjusting to a new country as migration policy is not maintained well. According to the policy, the refugees can be repatriated, the country of first asylum should integrate them within the country, and finally relocate them to a third country. However, these foreign policies are hardly maintained, and most of the time the host countries mistreat them, and do not provide them with the necessities they require. They lost their national, social and cultural identities as soon as they entered the host country. Furthermore, as the refugees had to flee tough conditions, they found it challenging to adapt to the cultural, social, and economic environment of a new country.

Depressing Reality of Homeland:

Pajtim Statovci's novel *Crossing* depicts the challenges of refugees and immigrants through the protagonist Bujar, as he travels around the world and encounters the difficulties of being a refugee or immigrant. During his childhood, Albania suffered from many socio-economic and political crises that led to the collapse of the Communist nation. The situation was so difficult for the Albanians, especially for the women, that they would do anything to escape from the country. Agim tells the story of a woman who would rather sell her body than stay in her homeland, and it was not even a shock for anyone anymore. As stated in the novel, "She would rather sell herself for money than live in Albania— and when Agim told me this, it didn't surprise me in the least" (132). This demonstrates the depressing reality that everyday people in Albania were facing due to the downfall of their nation. Unfortunately, Bujar was forced to endure the painful loss of everything he held dear, including his father's passing, his sister's disappearance, and a mother's broken heart that will never mend. With all these affecting his psyche, he decided to leave his home with his best friend Agim and search for a new start. His journey signifies the brutal state of Albania during the late 20th century and how the national crisis hampered the regular life of people.

While still in Albania, Bujar believed that moving to Europe would resolve all his problems and allow him to realize his ambitions effortlessly. Most Albanians thought this way because becoming Europeans would enable them to gain their humanity. Even though the process of migrating to neighboring nations was extremely dehumanizing itself as the countries closed their borders, or made the immigration process more difficult. According to Fiske, it is dehumanizing when an individual is not heard and is not recognized for their individuality and humanity. In the novel, Bujar says,

Europe was our America; everybody around us wanted to be European, to belong to a European family, to stand on the other side of the invisible but insurmountable fence where people were people, at the forefront of humanity. But Europe wasn't a place you could get to all that easily, and the more difficult the authorities made the process of getting there and the more we read and heard about how other countries... (Statovci 135)

This indicates the depressing reality of Albania, where people did not even have their humanity; they were living in such inhuman conditions that they had to leave their home to gain their humanity despite the dehumanizing process of immigration. Due to the socio-economic breakdown, the general people of Albania did not receive fundamental human rights and security. People would do anything to cross the borders and escape the awful living situation. Every year, millions of people migrate from their home country to another due to the political and social-economic upheavals and natural disasters that leave them desperate to escape from their homeland (Quinn 275). The awful situation in the motherland pushes individuals to flee since they can no longer live the safe and secure life they desire. As Warsan Shire said, "No one leaves home until home is the maw of a shark," which perfectly describes the refugee's situation.

Similar to the political situation of *Crossing*, Adichie portrays a sudden political upheaval that hampers the living conditions of the ordinary people of Nigeria in her critically acclaimed novel, *Americanah*. However, compared to Bujar, Ifemelu was in a much better state, as the instability in Nigeria was not the result of war. The frequent political unrest makes it difficult for people to live normal lives. Students like Ifemelu were unable to continue their degrees as the situation was getting worse day by day. As stated in the novel,

Strikes were now common. In the newspapers, university lecturers listed their complaints, the agreements that were trampled in the dust by government men whose own children were schooling abroad. Campuses were emptied, classrooms drained of life. Students hoped for short strikes, because they could not hope to have no strike at all. Everyone was talking about leaving. Even Emenike had left for England. (Adichie 102)

This explains the condition of Ifemelu in her homeland, Nigeria, as she could not have an everyday life due to political unrest; when she was a student, the political upheaval disrupted the students' pursuit of education. The condition was so difficult that everyone tried to escape Nigeria to get a better life. Ifemelu, despite loving her life with her family, lover and community, had to leave since there was no future for her in Nigeria. The cruel reality of Nigeria and the open opportunities in America influenced her to migrate from her home country.

Forsaking Origins:

Due to the strenuous life, Bujar left communist Albania and started a new journey exploring himself. He forsook everything related to his homeland and embraced a new race, gender, and sexuality, as well as a whole new identity to create a new life for himself. Although Bujar was never proud of his country and never considered much about his homeland, it was still a part of him. As Bujar says in the novel,

A few months later I was granted political asylum, then a few years after that I was awarded the permanent right to remain and an alien's passport.... I forsook hopes and dreams, for there was nothing good about my past, there was nothing in

my past to which I wished to return or that I wanted to tell people about, and nothing in my past had helped me get where I wanted to be. (Statovci 80)

The above remark represents Bujar's disassociation with his homeland since he believes there is nothing there for him to remember and that the only way to be what he sought is to let go of his origins and past. This rift between one's origin and host country can lead to an identity crisis in which people cannot define themselves and connect with either. The separation from one's home country and attempts to integrate into the host country may leave one in an ambiguous space because one can no longer identify with any of the nations. This is evident throughout the novel, as Bujar is unable to find the right place for himself; no matter where he goes, he always feels like an outsider.

The most critical time of his life, his childhood, was spent in the valleys of Tirana in Albania. He grew up with the people of Tirana and felt most connected to them; however, he never appreciated his homeland and was apathetic toward it. When Agim suggested they leave the country, Bujar agreed to leave it too. Not because he wanted but because Agim wished to start a new life in Europe, and Agim was everything to him at that point. Bujar stated in the novel, "It didn't matter where we ended up, I thought then, because every place I had ever been with him had been a home" (164). This denotes that Bujar does not necessarily want to leave, he wants to stay around Agim. The fact that he found himself alone in the western world without Agim may also have contributed to his sense of alienation.

On the other hand, Agim has a deep hatred towards Albania and Albanians, and he wants to leave his homeland, where he never had the opportunity to express himself. As Agim mentioned in the narrative, "Damn it, I'll swim across if there's no other way. I'm not going to stay here, that's for sure," (154). This clearly shows Agim's desire to leave the country as he

could never fit into the social norm of Albania. That is why, like most refugees, Bujar never felt at home in the host countries; he was not mentally prepared to deal with the difficulties of moving to a foreign land.

Ifemelu, the protagonist of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's masterpiece *Americanah*, did not have to separate herself from American society completely. However, she did adopt some of the components of American culture while attempting to assimilate into the USA. Ifemelu had to sacrifice her appearance to conform to societal expectations and conventions as a result of the sociocultural norm. Instead of letting her hair be natural, she began braiding it or using chemicals in order to fit in, as she wanted to secure employment. As she responds to her white boyfriend about why she cannot keep her natural hair, “My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz band, but I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best ..” This exhibits the unacceptability of African traits in western civilization, as Ifemelu is unable to display her natural hair because it does not meet Euro-American beauty standards. Hence, Ifemelu has to abandon her old self and adopt a new version of her to fit into the postcolonial western society.

Moreover, another significant aspect of her cultural identity was also corrupted when she tried to assimilate into the host country's society. Although Ifemelu belongs to a country where English is the national language, American English is dramatically different from Nigerian English, her native language. To illustrate the language diversity that exists in the world, Adichie included Igbo phrases simultaneously with English in the novel. In order to fit into American society, Ifemelu had to abandon her Nigerian accent.

“I. Need. You. To. Fill. Out. A. Couple. Of. Forms. Do. You. Understand. How.

To. Fill. These. Out?” and she realized that Cristina Tomas was speaking like that

because of *her*, her foreign accent, and she felt for a moment like a small child, lazy-limbed and drooling.

“I speak English,” she said.

“I bet you do,” Cristina Tomas said. “I just don’t know how well.”

...She had spoken English all her life....she should not have cowered and shrunk, but she did. And in the following weeks, as autumn’s coolness descended, she began to practice an American accent. (Adichie 137).

This humiliating experience drives her to practice the American accent in order to assimilate into society and avoid being singled out. As a result, she cuts herself from her “home” and tries to integrate into the “host” country. The linguistic separation creates a distance between her “self” and “home.” According to Esplin, as Ifemelu modified or abandoned her accent, she detached herself from her language, and by doing so, she was able to protect herself from some of the difficulties she would have faced as an immigrant (80). The linguistic separation creates alienation from one's "self" and "home," which leads to their sense of not belonging in the new society because they cannot fully assimilate into it and lose connection with their home.

Twilight or Third-space:

The state of not-belonging is evidently present in Bujar, an Albanian refugee, as identity is related to one’s country of origin. He cannot ever be part of the “host” country's identity as he is unable to completely integrate into the culture and society of the host country. This can be exemplified by the fact that even after living in western countries for many years, he still has an attachment to his homeland and culture. On the other hand, Bujar cannot go to his country as nothing is left for him there, and everything dear to him is lost. As Bujar says,

We visit a place in the heart of the Bronx popular among Italians and Albanians: the real Little Italy, they call it. It's essentially just one street lined with Italian restaurants and kiosks owned by Albanians, and I pretend not to understand anything coming from the mouths of the kiosk traders and people walking on the street, though of course their speech is the focus of my attention: how distant and foreign my mother tongue sounds, as though it had been mixed with the stresses and cadences of another language, as though it could no longer be used to discuss the world from which it had once come. (103)

The above lines from the novel specify the mixture of cultures as Bujar has resided in many countries and learned many languages, but he is unfamiliar with his mother tongue. Thiong'o believed that colonialism continues to control different spheres of Africa, like the economic, political, and cultural, in a more subtle and systematic manner. The cultural aspect of it is hugely influenced by the language as the European colonizers have the "biggest weapon" of the "cultural bomb," which they unleashed on the colonized people to condition their realities (Thiong'o 05). However, he is unable to comprehend the host country's language, which also reflects the hybridization of his culture. As Bujar can no longer connect with his homeland's culture and cannot completely integrate into the host country's culture, he develops a new hybridized culture. This leads to the conclusion that the space of in-between exists in regard to refugees and immigrants as they are unable to assimilate into the host country. This created an alienation of them from their roots, which caused them not to identify themselves with either places. It gets difficult to identify them in the hybridized culture as some of them still lingers to their old culture or completely denies it. They find it difficult to accept that they cannot fully preserve their native culture or fully adapt into the culture of the host nation. Furthermore, Bujar

could not establish a home in the host countries because he was unable to connect with the host country's society and culture. As mentioned in the narratives,

It's not my place, I tell her. That's why I left, that's why I've never spoken about it to anyone but you, I say, and she nods sympathetically. And from then on I haven't had a homeland, only other lands, strange countries in which I've had to make a home, and when I tell her about all this, I can't control the slight tremor in my hands. (Statovci 191)

The binary categorization of whether they belong to a “home” or “host” country cannot define their state of belonging. This Othering view on refugees and immigrants denies the complexity of their situation; they cannot fall under either of the categories. As a result, they are neither welcomed by their host country nor accepted by their homeland; hence, they coincide in the space of twilight or in-betweenness. According to Bhabha, this is a cultural translation where two cultures interact and create a “third-space” or the in-between space. Pajtim Statovci was able to depict this twilight or third-space or in-between space of refugees and immigrants in his novel, *Crossing* through the protagonist Bujar, who is unable to connect with either his homeland or the new country and feels a perpetual state of not-belonging.

Furthermore, refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants always have ambiguous identities as they practice multi-cultures, one from the homeland and the other or others from the host country. This exposure to different cultures leads to cultural identity ambiguity, and they step forward to create a new hybridized identity. The outstanding work of Chimamanda Adiche, *Americanah*, depicts the equivocal identity of the protagonist Ifemelu as she was no longer Nigerian nor was she ultimately American. As mentioned in the novel,

Her parents, too, seemed to think that she might not be able to “cope” with Nigeria. “At least you are now an American citizen so you can always return to America,” her father had said. (Adichie 169)

The above passage expresses Ifemelu’s father’s concern about her as he believed she was Americanized and would not be able to conform to her homeland anymore. Ifemelu has been living in America for thirteen years, which has brought stark changes in her cultural, social, linguistic, and other aspects of life. However, she was not able to assimilate into American society altogether, as some elements of that society surprised her. Still, she has lost touch with her home country as well. Hence, she remains in a space between “home” and “host” country, which can be considered as an in-between space. As Bhabha develops Turner's fundamental idea of liminality, which is about the median or in-between stage, he calls it “the realm of the beyond.” He conceptualized “Third Space” within the context of postcolonialism and explained the complicated nature of the identity crisis. Bhabha's "beyond" space is ambiguous as the reality of transculturation's deep-rooted and mostly irrevocable cultural impacts (Kalua 25). Ifemelu’s identity has irreversibly changed due to the transculturation process, and she is unable to connect to either her “home” country’s culture or her “host country’s culture. She is, therefore, in a third-space or twilight space since she cannot connect with either cultures and now belongs to a hybridized culture that is a mixture of the two.

4.2 Debunking the Myth: Authentic Representation, Disillusionment of Reality

Everyone living in the Orient has this image and perception of the “Great West” due to the representation of the West as the dream land where one can achieve everything that they could not in the East. Occident always has been represented as a place that can fulfill one's dream.

However, the reality is far from the myth of the West having everything, and Statovci has deconstructed it once they face the harsh truth. The whole perception about the greater West is nothing but the misrepresentation of the oriental point of view which deconstructs the idea that anything is possible in the Great West.

Authentic Representation

In *Crossing*, Pajtim Statovci tried to portray the experiences of refugees and immigrants in the host country. The illusion of the Great West, where everything is possible, crumbles as soon as they enter the host country. They recognize that they must work twice as hard to succeed, and in some circumstances, they are unable to excel owing to their refugee status. The protagonist, Bujar's, experience shows that the life he imagined in the Great West was nothing more than a fantasy, impossible to realize. In the novel, he mentions,

When I first arrived in Italy I was sure I would be able to secure a job I enjoyed, I would meet a partner who loved me and start a family for whom I would be prepared to give my life. I was convinced that somebody would find me and see the potential I had, and appreciate everything I could give to the world. I waited and waited, a year, a second and third, waited for these things to start happening.... (Statovci 10)

This implies that the life Bujar envisioned in the West was an illusion caused by centuries of misrepresentation of the Occident, or the West, as superior. According to Said, the Orient or East is the "deepest and most recurring image of the Other" in the Occident or West. The East was portrayed as inferior, primitive, and illiterate, while the West was seen as superior, cultured, and educated, owing to the fact that the West had better living conditions. Due to this, people living in the East manifested the idea that the West was a land of dreams where everyone could achieve anything. This Othering discourse is still very evident today through media which reinforces the mainstream by differentiating individuals and groups. The media dehumanized the Albanian people and represented them with derogative Othering notions. As mentioned in the narrative,

Agim read the paper to me Italy is not a charity but a country in a state of emergency, someone said, and another added Albanians barbaric, like wild beasts, violent criminals whose unabated bloodthirstiness put the security of our civilization at risk. (Statovci 136)

This signifies that the oriental view of the East remains as the Othering discourse of the non-European being savage, barbaric, primitive, and so forth still prevails in the western media. Most of the time, refugees are associated with the images of "floods," "waves," "flows," and dehumanized outlooks on refugees from the perspective of the mainstream populace globally. They are distanced from their sociocultural identity, while the host country misrepresents them as a "homogenous group" (Quinn 276). It is part of neo-colonialism, where the media controlled the colonized people. The colonial rule did not end in the 20th century; instead, it took a new form of neo-colonialism, which influenced the economic, political, cultural, and other aspects. The colonial rule continues to oppress people in the colonized countries in the new form of neo-colonialism and capitalism. By repeatedly representing the Albanian people in a negative

light through the media, they are implementing the concepts into the minds of the ordinary people. Even the Albanians began to believe that, as stated in the novel,

Eventually Agim and I began to think along the same lines as the Italians. Didn't these criminals understand that, apart from worsening their own opportunities, their bad behavior impacted the chance of their compatriots who wanted to make a fresh start?...reach Europe we will never tell anyone we are Albanians (Statovci 136-138)

Here, the above passage reveals neo-colonialism's dangerous influence through the power of media. The media repeatedly dehumanized the Albanian refugees and asylum seekers which led to the construction of stereotypes and prejudices against the Albanians worldwide. According to Thiong'o, the cultural aspect of neo-colonialism is even worse than colonialism as it psychologically colonizes the minds of the oppressed people. They are unable to see the oppression and accept the discrimination. He claimed that the "physical violence of the battlefield" was replaced by the new psychological battle (06). These are evident in the case of Bujar and Agim as they are continuously exposed to the western media, they perceive the misrepresentation of the Albanian people. Despite being Albanian, Bujar and Agim were ashamed of their origins due to consuming the western media's representation of Albanians.

Chimamanda Adichie's critically acclaimed novel, *Americanah*, represents the harsh realities of immigrants in the postcolonial western world. Through the voice of Ifemelu, the author emphasizes the ongoing arguments over "Africa" and "Africans" at Euro-American boundaries as she depicts the challenges of immigrants (Hallemeier 231). The European colonizers misrepresented Africa and Africans during the colonial rule as Said said Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (01) was the East. Even if ex-colonies have

achieved independence, they are still subject to colonialism, which has taken on the shape of neocolonialism. In the postcolonial western world, misrepresentation persists, albeit in a different manner, through the use of the media. The novel examines the influence of neo-colonialism on Africa's economic, political, and cultural aspects through the new weapons of indirect control that the former colonial powers and the newly developing superpowers exploit to rule the so-called "Third World." The media portrayal of Africa and Africans were typically stereotypical and prejudiced. The dominant media representation is that African nations are always at wars or conflicts. It is stated in the novel, "Nigeria. Isn't there a war going on there?" which confirms the misrepresentation of Africa and Africans in the western countries.

The cultural part of neo-colonialism, in Thiong'o's opinion, is far worse since it mentally colonizes the minds of the oppressed people, making it impossible for them to recognize and accept their subjugation. The arguments regarding the electronic media's representation of Africa as an ahistorical setting are one of the main issues that are highlighted in the postcolonial writings. According to Ogunyemi, there is growing evidence of geopolitical and sociocultural factors from African viewpoints on the Internet and it also has the power to challenge the misrepresentation of Africa and African people by incorporating African voices (qtd in Hallemeier 232). In the novel, Adichie was able to represent the authentic struggles and reality of the African immigrants in the Euro-American world. Through Ifemelu's blogs, Adichie deconstructed the stereotypes and prejudices by showing the inequalities that exist in the western society on the basis of race, gender and nationality. In one of Ifemelu's blog she mentioned about the discrimination writing,

There's a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and

American Black is always on the bottom, and what's in the middle depends on time and place. (Or as that marvelous rhyme goes: if you're white, you're all right; if you're brown, stick around; if you're black, get back!). (Adichie 187)

This suggests the hierarchy in western society based on a person's racial, gender, national, religious, linguistic, and so forth identities. Based on these identities, one can receive privileges and, similarly, is subjected to discrimination. Due to the cultural and societal issues arising from the standardization of whiteness and the devaluation of blackness, Adichie represents the transnational experience of non-European black people. Her novel was one of the few that addressed the identities of African immigrants to locate the gap between myths of a nation and lived experience.

Disillusionment of Reality

The same Othering discourse is reflected in the thinking of Bujar as he abandons his past to achieve his goals in the host country. However, he soon realized that the West was not the land of dreams and it is not simple for him to establish his goals here. This realization eventually leads to discarding his dreams and falling into the depth of despair. As Bujar states in the novel, "As time passed I realized that I no longer considered myself special or unique, and this perhaps the worst thing that can happen.." (10). The disillusionment with the reality of the West created a void within him and shattered his inspiration for life. In the West, refugees like Bujar are often dehumanized and perceived as a burden; neither the social workers nor the government cares much about the well-being of Bujar. He wished to study psychology but they asked him to consider more practical options that would ensure him a guaranteed job. It is mentioned in the novel,

...but the authorities and the social workers didn't care for my plans and hopes, they scoffed at my dreams of studying psychology at the University of Rome, though I explained I'd read basic texts many times. *Shouldn't you study a vocation instead?* they asked. *You don't even have one of those, some even have a university degree...* (Statovci 10)

Here, the above passage explicitly indicates that the refugees are restricted to a certain way of life. Bujar could not follow his dream of studying psychology as he had to make rational decisions about his career; he could not follow his passion due to limited opportunities and rights for the refugees. This demonstrates the actual condition of the refugees and immigrants in the West, debunking the myth that having a content life and achieving one's dreams is possible without facing any difficulties or hardship.

Moreover, the novel *Americanah* disillusioned people about the harsh reality of the western world, which the majority of people tend to believe is a better place and they will be able to attain a better life. When the protagonist Ifemelu moved to the United States, she believed that life would be wonderful. Nonetheless, the illusion was quickly shattered as she struggled to assimilate into society due to different sociocultural standards. In addition, she had difficulty getting employment due to her accent, kinky hair, and darker skin tone. Furthermore, the racial hierarchy that is set in the Euro-American society makes it harder for black people to secure a job. As mentioned in one of Ifemelu's blogs, "American racial minorities... all get shit from white folks, different kinds of shit, but shit still.... However, all others think they're better than blacks because, well, they're not blacks" (Adichie 187). This indicates that even if other minority groups are subjected to discrimination and stereotypes, the degree is far worse in the case of black people. Adichie describes the pre-migration and post-migration struggles that immigrants

experience in terms of racial and ethnic identity. Essentially, the novel depicts the complicated acculturative process as they explore Blackness in the cultural imagination and lived reality.

According to Fongang,

Structural inequalities as they relate to race, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, class, language, and dominant hegemonic ideologies continue to affect the ways in which postcolonial, transitional subjects struggle to adapt in new spaces of the diaspora. (138)

The above lines refer to the systematic discrimination are connected to people's identities as the diasporas face the transnational border struggles to adjust in a new environment. This shows the structural discriminations are constructed by the society in order to keep the social hierarchy. The construction of Blackness as the Other of the Whiteness, places at the bottom of the social and racial ladder and distorts their humanity. Adichie was able to portray the difficult realities of black immigrants and deconstruct the socially and culturally established myths about life in a Western country through the novel, *Americanah*.

4.3 Psychological State: Distress, Insecurity, Trauma, Sense of loss, and Identity Ambiguity

Refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants around the world suffer from psychological breakdowns as they have to go through complex socio-cultural transitions. They frequently experience mental distress, a sense of loss, trauma, identity crisis, and other problems as a result of the complicated circumstances surrounding their migration. Both Bujar and Ifemelu had to endure difficulties related to their psychological condition as their psyche was severely impacted by the sudden social and cultural changes.

Mental Distress, Insecurity, and Trauma:

Pajtim Statovci shows the psychological distress that refugees in the West feel because of the social and cultural differences between their home country and the West. Due to the differences between the two cultures, the refugees and immigrants are most of the time distressed about how to present themselves and how they should interact with others, which contributes to a broad sense of insecurity among them. Bujar wants to blend with the host country

....This is not my life, these days are not mine. It is not me who obsessively washes stains of urine and excrement from around the toilet bowl in cafes and restaurants simply so that nobody using the toilet after me thinks I'd left such a mess. That is someone else, a ghost living at the edge of my shadows. (11)

Here, this indicates the distress of the protagonist Bujar, who was double marginalized due to his race, gender, nationality and sexual position. He was an Albanian by birth, and he took refuge in European countries as well as America. Due to his lack of knowledge about the culture of the

host country and his vulnerability of being another nationality, he was having issues with adjusting to the new environment. Bujar

Furthermore, throughout the novel it is evident that Bujar not only discards his national identity but also rejects his other identities as well as his past. He is insecure about his origins as the western media have represented it in a negative manner. Bujar's rejection of his past and origins affects his psyche as he is unable to mentally and emotionally connect with anyone in the host country. As Bujar says in the novel,

But how can you go about starting over, working in a language you don't understand? What is the best first step? How can you establish a relationship with someone if you want to deny your past, your nationality, if you don't want to tell anyone anything about yourself, if what you most want to do is forget where you've come from, wipe your past away like a smudge of dirt from a shoe? In a situation like that, what choices do you have? (Satovci 80)

This shows that Bujar is incapable of forming interpersonal connections because he rejects a part of his identity, which may be indicative of his insecurity. Bujar does not have any close relationships despite living in the western world for many years, and if he does manage to form one, it does not last long. His connection with Tanja, a Trans woman who was madly in love with Bujar, demonstrates this. However, Bujar was unable to fully connect with her, breaking her heart and leading her to commit suicide. Due to his insecurity, he is profoundly incapable of developing any human relationships. In addition, the trauma of losing his best friend while crossing the borders had a severe impact on him. Bujar had an ambiguous relationship with his best friend, Agim as they were more likely to be partners than friends. Although Bujar was in denial of his sexual orientation, he still was physically involved with Agim. As Bujar says,

....Agim placed his hand on my thigh and allowed his fingers to slide around the back of my leg....head and started to kiss my neck, and how wonderful it felt when he slid his hand into my trousers and started to rub, and I closed my eyes and it didn't occur to me for a second to ask him to stop. (Statovci 153)

The above lines suggest Bujar's homosexual desire for Agim, as he was unable to refuse Agim's sexual approach. Bujar and Agim always had a confusing relationship from their childhood; they were more like lovers than like friends. Bujar was subconsciously sexually attracted towards Agim and was explicitly in love with him as he admits in the novel, "I loved Agim as much as it is possible to love another person" (164). Clearly, Bujar loved Agim, and losing him was a traumatic experience for him and as a result, he distanced himself from real commitment and was incapable of forming a genuine human relationship.

In Chimamanda Adichie's worldwide remarkable novel *Americanah*, the immigrants have to endure the difficulties and challenges of migrating from one culture to another. As they migrate to a new country, immigrants must contend with feelings of helplessness, insecurity, and the need to learn the local language, values, and norms, as well as confront traumatic experiences (Pathak 53). The protagonist Ifemelu was an immigrant from Nigeria who came to get education in the USA. Ifemelu had to face different challenges as she resettled in the new country due to the social, cultural and linguistic unfamiliarity. She had to endure the distress of integrating into the culture which has certain stereotypes against the African people and a hierarchy system that is clearly unfavorable to her. As divulged in the narratives,

...."Are you strong?" / The advertisement in the City Paper had stressed strong. Strong Home Health Aide. Pays cash. / "I'm strong enough to do the job," Ifemelu said, and fought the urge to back out of the apartment and run and run. /

“That’s a pretty accent. Where are you from?”/ “Nigeria.” / “Nigeria. Isn’t there a war going on there?” “Okay. Thank you.” Ifemelu knew she would not get the job and for this she was grateful. (Adichie 133)

This reveals the struggles of a Nigerian woman in the western world as they often double marginalized on the basis of their racial and gender inferiority in the western world. In *Americanah*, Adichie was successful in depicting the struggles a black African woman had to face in the postcolonial western country. With the assistance of her white lover, Blaine, she was able to obtain a solid job after a long search. Also, Ifemelu was gravely disturbed by the new cultural norms and values as she adjusted to life in the United States. The distress of assimilating into the unfamiliar culture and society, where Ifemelu has to face discrimination and oppression every day in order to live a better life, hampered her mental health severely.

In addition, the challenges and discrimination Ifemelu faced in the postcolonial western nation left her permanently traumatized. The experiences she undergoes change her perspective, creating a distance from her home. In the novel, Ifemelu had to go through traumatic experiences, especially in the initial stage of her resettling. As Ifemelu was desperately trying to find a job to support herself, she could not get one due to her national, racial and gender identity. This drove her to the point where she slept with a man for money out of desperation. Ifemelu was extremely traumatized by this incident that she alienated herself from the memories of her past self. As a result, she distanced herself from her Nigerian lover, Obinze, marking the end of her relationship. It is mentioned in the novel,

SHE WOKE UP torpid each morning, slowed by sadness, frightened by the endless stretch of day that lay ahead. Everything had thickened. She was swallowed, lost in a viscous haze, shrouded in a soup of nothingness. Between her

and what she should feel, there was a gap. She cared about nothing. She wanted to care, but she no longer knew how; it had slipped from her memory, the ability to care. Sometimes she woke up flailing and helpless, and she saw, in front of her and behind her and all around her, an utter hopelessness. She knew there was no point in being here, in being alive, but she had no energy to think concretely of how she could kill herself. (Adichie 158)

This shows her psychological state of being traumatized after the incident, she lost the ability to care, to connect and fell into the dark abyss of hopelessness. Adichie could link her psychological trauma to the separation from her home; Ifemelu was not able to vocalize her traumas and became distant from her homeland. The traumatic experience of the events led to what is known as "privilege distancing," which in turn resulted in the development of distance from home and the past (Tunca 120). After many years, when she was moved back to Nigeria, reconnect with her "self" and was able to voice those traumas to Obinze. Adichie through Ifemelu was able to capture the painstaking trauma of the immigrants as they suffered from difficulties of assimilation into the new culture and facing the discrimination and oppression in the host country.

Furthermore, the American beauty standards and norms created insecurity in Ifemelu's psychology as she is unable to accept her natural self. The widely accepted beauty standards in America are to be White, blue-eyed, thin, and straight hair, which clearly does not go with Ifemelu. The imperialistic aesthetic is the Western conception of beauty, characterized by straight or wavy hair, a thin physique, and a pale complexion, as contrasted to larger, more robust bodies and darker complexions. This concept of beauty is constructed by the media, placing black women in opposition while emphasizing on white women (Yerima 643). This Othering view on

beauty is a construction of the western which explicitly affects the confidence of black women and creates insecurity among them.

Ginika made a face. “Obinze had better hurry up and come to the U.S., before somebody will carry you away. You know you have the kind of body they like here.” / “What?” / “You’re thin with big breasts.” / “Please, I’m not thin. I’m slim.” / “Americans say ‘thin.’ Here ‘thin’ is a good word.” (Adichie 127)

The above lines illustrate the typical beauty standard of beauty which often objectifies women. The Othering perspective on beauty produces psychological insecurity among women of color since they are not viewed as beautiful by the norms. These aesthetic standards are embraced by women all around the world, resulting in self-loathing as a result of colonization's psychological impacts. This is evident in the way Ifemelu does not consider her natural as desirable and uses harmful chemicals to fit the beauty standards of American society. As Ifemelu's hair began to fall out and she was forced to stop using the dangerous chemicals and cut her hair, she plunged into a spiral of insecurity and self-consciousness over her appearance. As stated in the novel,

Ifemelu found a pair of scissors. Wambui cut her hair, leaving only two inches, the new growth since her last relaxer. Ifemelu looked in the mirror. She was all big eyes and big head. At best, she looked like a boy; at worst, like an insect. “I look so ugly I’m scared of myself.” (Adichie 209)

This depicts the self-consciousness and self-insecurity over her looks as she no longer belongs to the western beauty standards anymore. The imperial aesthetics affected the psyche of women across the globe to such an extent that those who do not adhere to them are considered as unattractive. Despite Ifemelu's explicit rejection of American beauty standards, she is

subconsciously influenced by them. Additionally, she was forced to comply by the western beauty standards imposed by American society. Otherwise, she would not be able to secure a job as she would look unprofessional. Ruth suggests Ifemelu to “lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff, but it matters. We want you to get the job” (Adichie 209). This demonstrates the unspoken beauty norms that women of color had to adhere to in order to fit in with society and even obtain employment. The politics and power behind these beauty standards create a hierarchy among women. Adichie was able to deconstruct these stereotypical western beauty standards through the character of Ifemelu as gradual, Ifemelu accepted her natural beauty. As Bhandari suggests, Ifemelu was able to oppose “the white standard of beauty by proposing an alternative form of aesthetics on the basis of bodily features of the black in her blog posts.” The novel was able to capture the impact westernized beauty standards had on women of color, creating self-insecurity and self-consciousness. Adichie was successful in capturing the psychological state of women and also deconstructing those beauty standards by exploring the aesthetic of women of color.

The Sense of Loss:

Refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants often suffer from a sense of loss as they left many life aspects, social, cultural, emotional and so forth at their homeland. The arduous separation between the “self” and the “home place” creates a sense of isolation within them. Pajtim Statovci was successful in capturing the painstaking grappling of the refugees and asylum seekers as they attempted to assimilate into the new environment. However, no matter how desperately they try, they are never able to grasp the new culture completely. “I wander around the city in a state of melancholy: I don’t feel at home here, it feels like I am carrying my suitcase everywhere I go” (168). It indicates that he does not feel at home no matter where he travels, he cannot connect

with the people, the place, the culture and the society. The rift with his homeland and the ongoing struggle to assimilate into the host countries leave him feeling a constant sense of loss, and consequently, they lose touch with their emotional aspects.

Refugees and immigrants both often feel out of place as they are unable to completely connect with their homeland and the host country. In *Americanah*, it can be seen that Ifemelu was never able to completely integrate into American society even after leaving there for almost a decade. According to Pathak, the refugees, immigrants and others in exile who had to leave their motherland due to the political upheaval most of the time endures a lasting effect of “traumatic loss of their familiar land and culture” (53). Due to the terrible situation at home, Ifemelu was forced to leave despite not wanting to. As she thought back on her life, she yearned to reunite with her family and friends in her home country. As expressed in the novel,

...an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness. She scoured Nigerian websites, Nigerian profiles on Facebook, Nigerian blogs She looked at photographs of these men and women and felt the dull ache of loss, as though they had prised open her hand and taken something of hers. They were living her life. (Adichie 13)

This signifies a sense of loss Ifemelu faced as a result of her separation from her homeland, and she finds it challenging to adjust into the new culture even after many years of living in the USA. It depicts Ifemelu's loss of the life she had once envisioned for herself, which included attending university in Lagos, being with her first love Obinze, and staying close to her family and community. As she browses the Nigerian websites, profiles, and Facebook, she realizes that she

has lost the life she had hoped to build for herself and is now living a whole other life. This loss compels her to return to her own country and attempt to build her life in the way she has always desired. Studies have shown that the ethnic identity is closely intertwined with psychological well-being and hence, immigrants might feel out of place as their racial, gender, sexual, ethnic and national identities were marginalized in the host country (Marzana 33). In addition, Ifemelu does not have a community in the host country, which may contribute to her feeling of loneliness given that she is from a large community. All of these reasons contribute to their loss of a sense of home and identity, which leaves a gap in their hearts and renders them unable to truly belong anywhere in the world.

Identity Ambiguity:

Identity is fluid and subjective since it represents a person's different features that can define them; identity can be defined by its association with race, gender, religion, culture, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, nationality, etc. In the context of immigrants and refugees, the question of identity is pivotal because their complex identities are typically intertwined. Constructivist identity theorists claim that identity is socially constructed and may be studied through discursive practice (qtd in Hatoss 49). This culminates in the performative aspect of identity, which is manifested through the repetition of socially approved normative acts. As there are diverse dimensions of identification, the ambiguous identity can be interpreted in numerous ways; it can be investigated from racial, sexual, linguistic, ethnic, and so many other perspectives. In Pajtim Statovci's notable novel *Crossing*, the protagonist Bujar's identity is ambiguous as he takes on various identities as he roams around the world. He stated, "I am a man who cannot be a woman but who can sometimes look like a woman." (Statovci 08). This portrays fluidity of Bujar's gender and sexual identity as he sometimes desires to dress like a

woman, even though he was assigned to “man” at birth. The cross-dressing aspect of queer expression is also noticeable in the case of Bujar as likes to play the “game of dress up”. The gender identity and sexual identity of Bujar is equivocal as he does not follow the binary distinction of the society. As declared in the story,

Are you a man or a woman? Sometimes I tell them I am a man, sometimes I say I’m a woman. Sometimes I don’t answer them at all, sometimes I ask them what they think I am, and they are happy to answer, as though this were a game to them too, they are eager to construct me, and once I’ve given them an answer order is finally restored to the world. I can choose what I am, I can choose my gender, choose my nationality and my name, my place of birth, all simply by opening my mouth. Nobody has to remain the person they were born; we can put ourselves together like a jigsaw. (Statoci 09)

This passage demonstrates that Bujar was not constrained to the binary classification of gender, national, and sexual identities, man or woman, home country or host country, homosexuality or heterosexuality. These standards are performative because they have been practiced by society for centuries. It is impossible to obtain one's gender, sexual, ethnic, or other identities, as they are not innate but rather socially constructed. Throughout the narrative, Bujar explores his ambiguous identity by adopting a new identity, name, nationality, and story. This continuous changing of identity, however, could be tied to the shame he feels about his origins, his past. The Albanians were portrayed as the Other of the Europeans in the novel, and this Othering view of them created negative stereotypes about the Albanian people. It is clearly seen in the text that Bujar was ashamed of his past as he says, “I would not be an Albanian, not in any way, but someone else, anyone else.” This signifies the gravity of the negative representations of the

refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, which led to the dissociation from one's home country or origins. It is clearly reflected in the case of Bujar, who no longer wants to connect with his homeland and creates new identities to hide his past.

Furthermore, in the case of Ifemelu, the protagonist of *Americanah*, her identity is closely related to her race, nationality and gender as she expresses herself as black Nigerian woman. As a Nigerian writer Adichie explores the struggles related to one's racial, gender and national identity in *Americanah*. In the novel, diasporic consciousness which emphasizes on racial identification and self-expression was clearly evident. According to Yerima, women are oppressed due to their racial identity as well as they are also subjugated on the basis of gender. In the postcolonial Occident or the West, a woman of color's self-expression is influenced by "notions of beauty and femininity" (641). Spivaks' double suppression of the subaltern of the women from the developing countries shows the exploitation due their racial and gender identity (Yerima 641). The concept of beauty is closely related to people's gender, national, and racial identities, as what is considered beautiful in one country may not be considered beautiful in another. In the novel, Ifemelu had to follow certain beauty standards set by American society in order to gain acceptance. As stated,

"I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair. Kemi told me that I shouldn't wear braids to the interview. If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional."

"So there are no doctors with braided hair in America?" Ifemelu asked.

"I have told you what they told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed." (Adichie 119)

This exemplifies American beauty standards, which constantly favor the White woman while neglecting the woman of color. The beauty of women of color is either a subject of lust or a source of inferiority. The black women have to style their hair to fall under the beauty standards that are set to privilege the white woman only. Ifemelu has to follow these unrealistic standards for women of color; otherwise she would not be able to get the job. On the other hand, their unique beauty standards are exploited in the media and entertainment industry by exoticizing and objectifying them. It is mentioned in the novel,

“Why do you have to do this? Your hair was gorgeous braided. And when you took out the braids the last time and just kind of let it be? It was even more gorgeous, so full and cool.”

“My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz band, but I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best but if it’s going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky.” (Adichie 207).

The preceding lines highlight the hypocrisy of western beauty standards in that, on the one hand, women of color are not allowed to express their uniqueness in the professional field, but on the other hand, they are given the opportunity to exploit the very aspect that society rejects. These biases and restrictions on the expression of Black women signify the denial of their racial and gender identity in the western world. Ifemelu encountered a new reality of their blackness in western society, which shattered their prior established identity in her home country and paved the way for a new hybridized identity comprising their racial and gender identities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the globalized world of the 21st century, where cross-border journeys are standard, the literary works are subjected to their experience capturing refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant struggles. Some may have fled from their home voluntarily, and others may have been victims of political, social, economic, or natural disasters. We often tend to misunderstand the reality of resettling in a new country. We believe that struggles are only related to the pre-migration stage. However, some extraordinary writers are out there to prove us wrong. Two of them are Chimamanda Adichie and Pajtim Statovci, who extensively wrote about the resettling, victimization, trauma, distress, isolation, identity crisis, in-betweenness or third-space, and assimilation of refugees and immigrants in their novels, *Crossing* and *Americanah*. In addition, they debunk the stereotypes and prejudice established in the western countries regarding refugees and immigrants due to the oriental views on the colonizers. Nowadays, the misrepresentation of the Orient is spreading through the media, which indirectly controls the psyche of ordinary people. Both novels also represent the realities and hardships of the refugees and immigrants as they try to fit into the host country and are disillusioned with the myth about living in the Great West. These literary works have explored the unheard, unsaid stories of refugees and immigrants, voicing the struggles and hardships of their journey.

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