TRANSGRESSIVE SPACE AND BODY IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH* AND TREVOR NOAH'S *BORN A CRIME*

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the African boundaries, the black body is marked with an othered identity that often leaves its bearer open to discrimination. Being black is considered a transgression because, presumably, it constitutes deviance from a particular skin pigmentation, spatial norm and cultural practice. This dissertation examines the depiction of people of colour, particularly blacks, as transgressive bodies and invaders of space. From a postcolonial perspective, it investigates the racial implications of blackness by reason of migration. This study draws on a critical analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) *a*nd Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* (2016) to investigate the intersection of identity, race and spatial zones as thematic concerns in both texts. I contend that despite the fact that race is a social construct, it continually has an impact on the individual living of blacks in the space they inhabit or where they exist. They are burdened by the negativities generated by their colour, consequently perceiving themselves as deviants from the norm.

Unlike Adichie's other novels, the theme of migration is more profound in *Americanah* to reflect the intense consequences of race for African migrants in the western world. Therefore, I seek to establish that the stereotyping of Africans owing to their racial and cultural differences forces them to alter their identity in order to be recognised and accepted. In the same regard, the study projects Trevor Noah's holistic representation of displacement both within self and community. More insightful is the writer's engagement of body politics as a propeller for socio-economic issues. These issues explored in both texts ultimately present a (re)imagining of people of colour within the othered zones.

Keywords - Postcolonialism, Migration, Hybridity, Re-configuring, Othering, Transgressive space, Black body, Adichie's *Americanah,* Noah's *Born a Crime*

OPSOMMING

Buite die Afrikagrense word die swart liggaam gemerk met 'n gemarginaliseerde (“anderste”) identiteit wat die draer dikwels ooplaat vir diskriminasie. Swartwees word as 'n oortreding beskou, want dit is vermoedelik 'n afwyking van 'n bepaalde velpigmentasie, ruimtelike norm en kulturele praktyk. Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die uitbeelding van mense van kleur, veral swart mense, as oortredende liggame en indringers van die ruimte. Vanuit 'n postkoloniale perspektief ondersoek dit die rasse-implikasies van swartheid as gevolg van migrasie. Hierdie studie neem as uitgangspunt die kritiese analise van Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie se Americanah (2013) en Trevor Noah se Born a Crime (2016) om die interseksie van identiteit, ras en ruimtelike sones as tematiek in albei tekste te ondersoek. Ek beweer dat, ondanks die feit dat ras 'n sosiale konstruk is, dit voortdurend 'n impak het op die individuele leefwyse van swart mense in die ruimte waarin hulle woon of waar hulle bestaan. Gevolglik word hulle belemmer deur negatiewe aspekte wat deur hul kleur gegenereer word, en hulself gevolglik as afwykers van die norm beskou.

Anders as haar ander romans, is Adichie se migrasieprobleme meer diepgaande in Americanah om die intense gevolge van rassekwessies vir Afrika-migrante in die Westerse wêreld te weerspieël. Daarom wil ek vasstel dat die stereotipering van Afrikane weens hul rasse- en kulturele verskille hulle dwing om hul identiteit te verander om erken en aanvaar te word. In dieselfde verband projekteer die studie Trevor Noah se holistiese voorstelling van verplasing binne die self en die gemeenskap. Meer insiggewend is die skrywer se betrokkenheid by liggaamspolitiek as 'n voorstuwer vir sosio-ekonomiese kwessies. Hierdie kwessies, wat in albei tekste ondersoek word, bied uiteindelik 'n (her)verbeelding van mense van kleur binne die “ander” sones.

Trefwoorde – Postkolonialisme, Migrasie, Hibriditeit, Herkonfigurasie, Andersheid, Transgressiewe ruimte, Swart liggaam, Adichie se *Americanah*, Noah se *Born a Crime.*

ISIFINYEZO ESIQUKETHE UMONGO WOCWANINGO

Nangaphandle kwemingcele ye-Afrika, imizimba yabantu abamnyama imakwe ngobuzazisi babanye, lokhu okuvama ukushiya lowo walowo mzimba omnyama esesimweni sokubandlululwa. Ukuba mnyama kuthathwa njengento eyisono neyeqe umngcele omukelekile ngoba, kuvanyiswe ukuthathwa njengokwehlukile kwibala elithile lesikhumba, indawo evamile kanye nezinkambiso zamasiko. Le dissertation ihlola ukuthathwa kwabantu abanebala, ikakhulukazi elimnyama, njengemizimba ewukweqa okuhle nokwamukelekile kanye neyabahlasela indawo. Ukusuka kwimibono yenkathi engemuva kobukoloni, iphenya ngemiphumela yombono webala elimnyama ngenxa yokuya kwamanye amazwe. Ucwaningo luthathela kuhlaziyo olunzulu lwemibhalo kaChinamanda Ngozi Adichie ye-Americanah (2013) kanye ne-Trevor Noah's Born a Crime (2016) ukuphenya ngokuxhumana kobuzazisi, ukubuka izinto ngeso lebala kanye nezindawo njengezinto eziyizihloko zemibhalo. Ngibeka elokuthi noma udaba lwebala kuyinto eyenziwe ngabantu, kodwa inomphumela kumuntu ophila njengomuntu omnyama, ohlala endaweni ahlala kuyo noma lapho akhona. Ngenxa yalokho-ke, bathwele umthwalo omubi ngenxa yebala labo, ngalokho bazibona njengabahlukile kokujwayelekile nokufanele.

Ngokwehluka namanye amanoveli, ukukhathazeka ngokuya kwamanye amazwe kubonakala kakhulu kwi-Americanah ukubheka kanzulu ngemiphumela ejulile yokubuka izinto ngokwebala kubantu ababuya eAfrika abaya kumazwe asentshonalanga. Ngakho-ke, ngifuna ukuqaphela indlela abantu abangama-Afrika ababonwa ngayo ngendlela ethile embi nemi ndawonye (stereotyping) ngenxa yomehluko wabo ngokubona izinto ngokwebala kanye nomehluko ngokwezamasiko, ukushintsha ubuzazi babo ukuze bamukelwe nokumukeleka. Ngale ndlela, ucwaningo lubhekisa kwindlela ephelele kaTrevor Noah, yokuzibona eqhelilee nokwehluka ngobuyena ngaphakathi kuye kanye nasemphakathini. Ngokubona izinto ngeso elijulile ngokubheka ezepolitiki kombhali njengesisunduzi kwizinto ezibhekene nabantu kanye nezomnotho. Lezi zinto zicwaninga ngokombhalo kanye nokubeka kabusha ngombono nendlela entsha abantu bebala, emkhakheni wabanye.

Keywords – Postcolonialism = (Inkathi nenqubo yangemuva kobukoloni), Migration = (Ukuhamba kwabantu besuka kwelinye izwe beya kwelinye), Hybridity = Ukubhanqana, ukuhlangana nokungenelana kwezinhlobo zezinhlanga ezimbili, Re-configuring = (Ukuhlela kabusha ngenye indlela), Othering = Ukukhomba abanye abantu ngokubacwasa), Transgressive space = (Ukweqa imingcele phakathi komuntu siqu kanye nokuqondene nesizwe, phakathi kwezindawo noma amazwe okufinyelelwa yidlanzana elincane kanye nokwamukelana kwamazwe), Black body = (Imizimba yabantu abamnyama), Adichie's = (i-*Americanah* ka-Adichie), Noah's *Born a Crime* = Incwadi kaNoah esihloko sithi *Born a Crime*

DECLARATION

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Transgressive Space and Body in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

15 January 2021

DATE

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DEDICATION

In memory of my beloved mother, Cecilia E. Aroki.

I am proud of the woman I have become through your motherly care, support and godly direction.

Contents

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, OVERVIEW AND SCOPE OF STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The issue of black identity being subjected to discrimination and hostility is a prevailing reality that cuts across our society as individuals and the world at large. Its damaging implications worldwide, historically and currently, are a major concern that has received sustained attention from diverse parts of the world. Racial discrimination is a societal menace that has taken diverse forms of manifestation, such as social segregation, anti-Semitism, Nazism, Fascism, apartheid and social inequalities, among others. In some countries, such as America and Australia, the black body[1] has become an identity of threat, where non-whites are prone to unfair treatment. This is one rationale behind the *Black Lives Matter* campaign against violence and systemic racism towards black people. Graham (2018) opines that "To be black is to always be in the wrong place at the wrong time because, in America, there is never a right place for black people. Everything black people do is weighted by irrational white fear. It's mentally exhausting to always be on guard, even during mundane moments like waiting in a coffee shop.'' Similarly, The French West Indian psychiatrist Frantz Omar Fanon (1925-1961), in chapter 5 (titled 'The Fact of Blackness') of *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952] 2008:109-140), states that black people only become aware of their blackness in white society. The visibility of their perceived 'difference', as noted by Fanon, creates a kind of negative image. This fits perfectly into what Du Bois (1961) termed 'double consciousness', where the consciousness of colour, that is, blackness, is a constriction. Du Bois's idea of this concept is centred on investigating how the black body is (re)presented as a minority group within a majority group/culture, in order words, the concept of 'double consciousness' questions: what it means to be black and the long-lasting implications of

[1] In this study, the word "body" is used in two distinctive ways. First, for a certain group of people associated by race. It is also used as a representation of an individual's physical appearance.

being a black. One result of colour consciousness in white space is a psychological conditioning of black people to attach unpleasant experiences or denial to their blackness.

However, before delving fully into investigating the concept of transgressive space and body, it is important to examine the concept of migration. Cross-cultural discourse has flourished as a result of migration. It is a major trope in contemporary African literature and an ongoing critical debate that birthed the idea of otherness. Thus, without migration, it would be impossible to engage issues such as racial contact and cohabitation.

1.2 Migration: The Premise of Transgressive Space and Body

Migration is unarguably an age-old phenomenon. The movement of humans from one geographical location to another promotes racial contact and establishes sociocultural hybridity. In this light, Uwakweh et al. (2014:2) aver that migration is "transforming national borders, cultures, identities of migrants and those of their host nations."

A major factor responsible for migration in the 21st century is the quest for economic survival and a better living condition. This is what influences Adichie's diasporic characters to leave their country for 'greener pastures' overseas. They represent educated Africans who migrate to the West to explore more opportunities to achieve their dreams.

While commenting on *Americanah,* Adichie stated in an interview:

> I think the immigration story that we are familiar with, when it concerns Africa, is the story of, you know, the person who's fleeing war or poverty, and I wanted to write about a different kind of immigration, which is the kind that I'm familiar with, which is of middle-class people who are not fleeing burned villages and who you know had ostensibly privileged lives but who are seeking what I like to think of as a choice – who wanted more, who think that somehow over there, is more exciting, is better. For my generation, it's the US and I think this is probably the case for much of the world because America just has this enormous cultural power (NPR, 2013).

One can infer from this that migration has taken on a new dimension in the 21st century. Migrant writers convey new insights into factors that necessitate migration. Other factors responsible for migration are geographical expansion and population growth, adventure,

and exploration, while in the past, colonial migration emerged owing to the quest for conquest, economic advancement trade/slave trade or territorial invasion (Dubey & Mallah, 2015). Current migration is the consequence of post-colonial problems or uncertanties that Achille Mbembe (2001:14) describes in his book, *On the Post-colony,* as “discontinuity” and “entanglement”.

Various kinds of migrations exist, such as internal and external migration, within and outside a country. Domestic or intra-migration occurs within a country. For instance, the novel *Born a Crime* (Noah, 2016:45-46) describes that during apartheid, the majority of black South African men engaged in migrant labour as they relocated from villages to urban areas to work for an improved livelihood.

Having examined the concept of migration as an integral root in this study, it is equally important to examine some scholarly contributions on the concept of ‘otherness’, otherwise conceptualised in this study as “transgressive space and body”. Thompson (2001:31), in his book *A History of South Africa*, presents an account of how South Africa was colonised under the apartheid regime, which relegated blacks to the lowest rung of the social ladder. By implication, the blacks who were hosts in their homeland became relegated to subordinates once the whites took over. It is important to highlight the relevance of the imperialism enterprise in Africa to the construction of races and the formation of sociocultural identities, which invariably leads to social stratification. During South Africa’s apartheid era, racial asymmetries were institutionalised by the government as it unbarred the frontiers of racism through various exclusionist policies geared towards disempowering the black group. This national stance perpetually relegates Noah’s South African black characters to the background. In addition, it engenders in the *othered* group a kind of inferiority complex in both the individual and collective psyche. Consequently, the white race becomes superior, dominant and overly powerful. Racial identities are therefore imposed on the individual by society as a result of his skin colour. Theories, such as critical race theory, engage these constructed racial identities where whiteness is often constructed as supreme and blackness as the *othered*.

Furthermore, a body of critical works proposes that racial identities are no longer such inflexible constructions in which whiteness and blackness are cast in stone. However,

despite the fluidity of race as a social construct, it continues to exert great force over the identities and everyday living of Africans, and therefore demands academic focus and scrutiny (Smedley, 1998). For instance, despite their political empowerment, many black South Africans still assume the lowest position on the social ladder economically and individually. In the contemporary world, it is evident that the more socially unacceptable explicit racism becomes, the more sophisticated covert or implicit forms of racism are likely to become. Similarly, symbolic racism is a covert form of racism that allows individuals to harbour racist beliefs while simultaneously practising equality. This is illustrated where Caucasians may base commercial merit on characteristics they possess. They may then utilise it in a way that appears equitable but is not (Picca & Feagin, 2020; Bornman, 2006).

1.3 Defining the Concept of Transgressive Space and Transgressive Body

Studies addressing the issue of 'otherness' in space and colour have yielded some of the most innovative contributions to contemporary scholarship. Several scholars have attempted to define transgression within the capacity of their intellectual vision as it relates to racial preference and resentment.

Julian Wolfreys (2008:3), in *Transgression: Identity, Space, Time*, contends that transgression goes beyond its literal definition; rather "it is the very pulse that constitutes our identities, and we would have no sense of our own subjectivity were it not for a constant, if discontinuous negotiation with the transgressive otherness by which we are formed and informed." By implication, transgression generates identity otherness, proffers new insights and shapes perspectives of a migrant within a diasporic and non-diasporic context. It is revealing in terms of uncovering the socio-cultural and political issues embedded in the transgressive space, which are unrecognised and vague to the 'sojourner'.

Explicating the question of space, Anderson (2015:13), in "White Space: Space, Race, Integration and Inclusion", compares white and black space in the United States (US) and argues that:

> … whites and others often stigmatize anonymous black persons by associating them with the putative danger, crime, and poverty of the iconic ghetto, typically leaving blacks with much to prove before being able to establish trusting relations with them. Accordingly, the most easily tolerated black person in the white space is often one who is 'in his place' that is, one who is working as a janitor or a service person or one who has been vouched for by white people in good standing. Such a person may be believed to be less likely to disturb the implicit racial order.

In America, discrimination is a current issue demanding new perspectives and social attitudes because being an American is generally envisaged as being white. Those who are not white are presumed to be non-native-born Americans. So, historically being an American implies whiteness. Despite the emergence of Barack Obama as the first black man to become president of the US, thereby improving black visibility and social status, racial discrimination cannot be said to have fully ended. There are still neighbourhoods in America where blacks cannot safely visit, live, or find decent jobs (Rosenblum & Travis, 2016:16). This bias is one of the rationales that necessitated the *Black Lives Matter* movement. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, South Africa is not left out of racial discrimination, which remains a key challenge to the country's democracy, and as posited by Msomi and Shilaho (2018), "Inequalities created and institutionalized by apartheid are still prevalent 14 years into [the] new dispensation." Hence, close attention will be paid to the major geographical settings of the selected texts in the thematisation of transgressive space and the politics concerning the body of the migrant characters, including the assignment of socio-economic privileges. The first is South Africa (non-diaspora), while the other has its major setting in America (diaspora), thus, its title, *Americanah,* personifying the migrant status of Adichie's central character, Ifemelu.

One can infer from the above submissions how blackness becomes a transgressive identity for Africans both on the home front and in the diaspora. Blackness therefore projects racial prejudice, fear, hostility, social rejection, seclusion and resentment. In Adichie's case, the novel presents a protagonist who is beset by a double crisis, first as a victim of gender stereotyping and secondly as a bearer of a black identity. On a similar note, Noah examines racism by recounting how his mixed identity complicates his existence in a predominantly biracial society in the apartheid and post-apartheid phases

of South Africa. The subject of space and body is therefore conceptualised in this study to investigate its interrelatedness to identity and racial complexity.

While examining the issue of identity in *Americanah*, Arafath (2017) contends that *Americanah* illustrates a protagonist troubled with her identity as an outsider. For instance, when Ifemelu arrives in America, Aunty Uju gives her a fake identity card in order to secure a job, as she only has a student visa. In her struggle to secure a job, she adopts an American accent, which is a switch of identity or inferiorisation of her original identity.

In the same vein, while investigating the issue of identity in Adichie's *Americanah*, Akingbe and Adeniyi (2017:50) argue that:

> The configuration of Other in *Americanah* is in two forms: the geographical ostracism of blacks or the poor from white Americans, and the resentment of Other by another Other. A funny scenario of Otherised Other is presented, indicating a victim victimizing another victim. Labelling or configuration of others is further stressed beyond the geographical separation and grouping of people together in a place. As used here, it also implies using utterances, taking actions that pigeonhole the deprived, the less privileged into a category rooted in helplessness.

The question of transgressive space in the study is conceptualised above where the blacks are geographically and psychologically isolated from the whites. The hostility and discrimination blacks experience being the bearers of this identity is what is described as a transgressive body in this study. It is instructive to state that while a significant number of critical works have been produced on Adichie's *Americanah,* Noah's *Born a Crime* generally has not elicited critical exploration.

1.4 Statement of the Research Problem

This study investigates the representation of non-whites in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* as victims of transgressive occupancy both within the homeland and in the western diaspora and how skin colour informs this marginalisation. Despite the extant studies on the two texts, little or no critical attention has been paid to the relationship between space and body in these texts. Although

Americanah has generated enthusiasm in global scholarship, not much has been done to engage the question of transgressive space and body in the text. Alexander (2013), in *Lived Experiences of Male and Female Hybridity within Chimamanda Adichie's Diaspora,* probes the issue of love and distance relationship in *Americanah*. Cobo Piñero (2016) addresses translation through a post/neo-colonial lens, that is, as a metaphor for the interpretation of culture, race, gender and class in colonised subjects, while Strehle's (2016) article, "Producing Exile: Diasporic Vision in Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun", evokes the strains of domestic migration. Despite the lively debate on this subject, there is a paucity of studies exploring the interface between transgressive space and body.

Similarly, Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* has received little or no critical attention, especially in the context of the current South African land policy and the question of xenophobia. While Noah approaches the question of space from the home front, Adichie captures it from a diasporic perspective. Through a close reading of the selected texts, this study argues that, regardless of location, the black body continues to suffer a racial *othering* through enabling institutional forces.

1.5 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the representations of transgressive space and body in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*.

1.5.1 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the notion behind the portrayal of space and body in the selected texts,
2. analyse the indices of cultural attitudes in the selected texts,
3. carry out a comparative study of the selected texts, exploring the areas of convergence and divergence in portraying transgressive space and body in the texts, and

4. show how the primary texts selected by the study fit into and contribute to the tradition of African migration literature.

1.6 Proposed Methodology

This research proposes to employ a qualitative and hermeneutic method. The primary sources of data for this study are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime.* It is imperative to note that although both texts engage a similar thematic concern, they are different in literary genre. Noah's literature is a memoir, which tells his story from childhood through his teenage years in apartheid South Africa. It details real events and true characters, including the protagonist who doubles as the author, while Adichie's literary work is a realistic fiction that depicts the reality of racism from her informed perception. These texts are purposively selected, being contemporary African literary texts that engage both sides of the migration coin. The two literary texts will be closely read and analysed, paying attention to the artistic mechanisms deployed by the writers in the thematisation of space and body. In addition, a critical analysis that explores Africans' migration and its thematic exploration in African literature, construction of transcultural diasporic and non-diasporic identities and its intricacies will be conducted. The secondary texts include books, journals, articles, online interviews, reviews and other related media.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The proposed theory will be based on post-colonial theory. Swanson (2007:53) argues that post-colonial discourses have provided innovative perceptions and acknowledged the interrelatedness of the concepts of "identity, ideology, knowledge and context". Post-colonial discourse aims at disrupting established doctrines and provides possibilities of resistance to hegemony and oppression for marginalised individuals in society. In this study, "marginalised individuals in society" are synonymously referred to as the *othered*. In his book *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, Neil Lazarus (2011) critiques postcolonialism,

contending that the theory is flawed through lack of material locatedness and revolutionary fervour. In locating his contention, Lazarus recapitulates the ideological formation of the field and its influence on scholarly and literary writing. He states that these writers "formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalizations' of modernity" (Lazarus 2011:12). Lazarus's views are crucial in this study, since it seeks to investigate issues that emanate from cultural and political difference within transnational and national borders. However, Lazarus problematises the static approach to postcolonial reading and criticism among academics. He opines that postcolonialism "has been premised on a distinctive and conjuncturally determined set of assumptions, concepts, theories, and methods that have not only not been adequate to their putative object — the 'postcolonial world' — but have served fairly systematically to mystify it'' (Lazarus 2011:17). This means that the pattern in the current wave of postcolonialism reflects postcolonial critics restricted to some predigested or familiar literary texts on which to premise their arguments rather than extensively reading recent publications to be cognisant of the existing gaps in the field. I agree with this, as it influenced my decision to select *Americanah* and *Born a Crime* purposely, since both are contemporary African publications, to research and bridge the existing gap regarding transgressive space and body.

Having pinpointed the flaws in postcolonial study, Lazarus underlines the need to harmonise theory and praxis. He proposes reformulating critical approaches to postcolonial literary criticism according to the following categories: ''Mode of production and class relations,'' ''Land and environment,'' ''State and nation,'' and ''Structures of feeling'' (Lazarus 2011:35). The objectives of this study closely identify with Lazarus's proposed approaches as the issues identified and investigated - transgressive space, transgressive body, race, class, migration and politics of power - are all intricately interconnected. Most importantly, the study examines the feeling of being black in a white space and this corresponds to what Lazarus proposes as "structures of feeling".

Further to this, the study will draw insights from Puwar's (2004) *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place*, to examine the treatment of the black body and the female gender as "invaders" of white-dominated space as it relates to *Americanah.*

Bhabha's (1994) *Location of Culture* is also examined to explore the negotiation and reconstruction of black identity. This is explicated as the assimilation, merging and blending of culture and already acquired identities of the protagonists with those of the host country or the 'supreme power' to survive and be socially accepted. It marks the formation of a new identity in the 'third space'. The term is conceptualised as hybridity by Homi Bhabha; he states that "liminality of migrant experiences is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life" (Bhabha 1994:224).

Genette's (1980) *Narrative Discourse* will also be specifically adopted to explore the theoretical framework of autobiography in analysing *Born a Crime* and discussing the distinctive features of the two genres of literature employed in the study.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study will offer more insights into the racial conflicts faced by African migrants in national and trans-national context. Furthermore, it will provide significant insight into the intricacies of negotiating identity at home and 'away', which result in an identity crisis for migrants.

The study will also contribute to the growing discourse on migration, transgressive body and racism.

1.9 Chapter Outline

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One provides a general outline of what the study entails, presenting the background to the study, the problem statement as well as the research aims and methodologies. The chapter also offers an explanation of the concept of transgressive space and body as explored in this dissertation.

Chapter Two examines the phenomenon of migration as the premise for transgressive space and body. The chapter investigates the informed perception and postulations of

various writers and scholars on migration as a pre-colonial and post-colonial discourse, including crisis associated with it. Since the works of African writers are imaginative responses to societal issues, this chapter also examines the introduction of migration into African literary production to its popularity in the contemporary age. In addition, it provides the theoretical background to the study, focusing on Puwar's framework on space invaders to conceptualise the racial and gender discrimination of non-whites as explored in Adichie's *Americanah*. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and ambivalence is examined to show how transcultural migrants negotiate or reconfigure their identity in a racialised world. The discussion is also extended to Genette's theory on autobiography narratology to provide a background for the analysis of Noah's *Born a Crime*.

The focus of Chapter Three is on the diasporic portrayal of black migrants in Adichie's *Americanah*. It investigates how the physical features of the black group, such as hair texture, accent and skin colour, contribute to their othering. In addition, it engages the various survival strategies employed by Adichie's protagonist and other migrant black characters in their fictive society.

Chapter Four engages with Noah's memoir, *Born a Crime,* to account for the displacement of non-whites in South Africa by western colonists. More importantly, the chapter evaluates the agency of the writer in the thematisation of colour prejudice, national despair and the manifestations of transgressive space.

Chapter Five provides an overview of each chapter in this study. It draws conclusions from the study by examining the notions of identity and space. Finally, the chapter provides recommendations for future research on body politics in relation to colour.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two major parts with the following headings: 1. Migration in the African Literary Imagination and 2. Critical Perceptions of Diasporic Racism and Non-diasporic Engagement.

The first part reviews relevant literature on migration as a reality of both pre-colonial and post-colonial African societies. Various perceptions of African writers and critics on migration will be examined, with specific attention being paid to their thematic preoccupations and underlying arguments. This section will again explore African writers' thematisation of migration in three distinctive phases – Atlantic slave trade phase, education phase and economic phase. It will be argued that the slave trade played a prominent role in the efflorescence of migration in African literature. The first generation of African migrant writers is explored, with specific reference to the likes of Olaudah Equaino, Ayuba Diallo and Ottobah Cugoano, alongside their famous autobiographies, namely *Equiano's Travels* (1789), *Some Memories of the Life of Job Ben Solomon (*1734), *Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa (Bhabha 1994)* (Cugoano,1787) and *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (Cugoano,1787). In addition, this chapter explores the various depictions of diasporic experiences of contemporary writers with specific reference to some literary works that illustrate this.

The second heading of this chapter, with the title "Critical Perception on Diasporic Racism and Non-Diasporic-Engagement", will examine racism and xenophobia as the aftermath of migration. This will be explored in a transnational and national context. Albinism as a form of body otherness will be investigated as well. Lastly, this second chapter provides significant insights into the theoretical framework employed in the study. Puwar's (2004) *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place* is adopted in questioning the treatment of the black body and the female gender as "invaders" of white-dominated and

patriarchal space. Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (1994) is examined in the transnational and national context of negotiation and reconstruction of identities. The theoretical framework of autobiography is also explored, using Genette's (1980) *Narrative Discourse* in discussing the distinctive features of the two genres of literature employed in the study.

2.2 Migration in the African Literary Imagination

Over the years, the discourse on migration has enjoyed critical attention, with significant focus on migration from Africa to the West. This tradition has gained currency in the history of literature and is imperative in the social and cultural issues of every society.

Faist (2000:200) defines international migration as a "multi-dimensional economic, political, cultural and demographic process that encapsulates various links between two or more settings and manifold ties of movers and stayers between them." This indicates the fact that globalisation has increased the flow of mobility across transnational borders. The flow of migration is usually from developing to developed countries, as Osirim (2008:367) contends that most Africans prefer the US as the "promised land".

Cummings et al. (2015) examine the causal factors responsible for the desperate movement of Africans from their countries to the West via illegal routes. These factors are predominatly driven by a combination of conflict, political instability, economic instability and a need for a secured livelihood opportunity. Furthermore, they opine that the role of cultural factors cannot be downplayed in influencing migration. It means that citizens with a historical attachment to migration are more likely to embrace migration than people who are less familiar with a mobility culture. Similarly, Kasse (2014) contends that the cause of migration in recent years is mainly increasing wars and civil unrest in Africa and the Middle East. Kaba (2009) agrees with this position, stating that increasing mobility of Africans to countries abroad may not be based on economic reasons, but on the political instability in post-colonial African countries.

Idowu-Faith (2014) proposes another reason for migration from a close analysis of Adichie's *Americanah*. She opines that migration is not necessarily initiated by poverty or

economic reasons, but sometimes springs from the need to experience choice and something new elsewhere. In her perspective, “the need to flee choicelessness defines *Americanah* as a new kind of migration story and sets the text in motion against recognised migration theories.” The desire for choice is another leading cause for some privileged persons to migrate illegally. This opinion adds a new literary dimension to migration theory. Ifemelu and Obinze belong to the well-to-do Nigerian class whose migration is not induced by poverty but by certainty. This attests to the fact that their migratory decision is not specifically initiated by a yearning for socio-economic change, but rather out of a convincing dissatisfaction, which initiates a yearning for better career prospects their Nigerian society cannot afford them. Therefore, to Obinze, Ifemelu and other middle-class diasporic characters in Adichie’s work, Britain and America are metaphorical representations of the ‘land of milk and honey’.

Nonetheless, Flahaux and De Haas (2016) contend that the possibility and realisation of migrating are contingent factors based on the resources available to a prospective migrant, even though an external “push” factor necessitates migration. In a similar manner, De Haas (2014) views migration as a function of people’s aspirations and capabilities. People who do not possess enough resources, whether financial or in the form of psychological readiness and related qualities, might find their migratory dreams impossible to realise and will therefore be left hanging with unfulfilled desires till they find the means to bring these to fruition.

Moreover, a major challenge faced by migrants in the process of relocating to their “new home” is managing their displacement, alienation and the ‘new’ identity formed through hybridisation. This poses a constraint as a result of language and cultural differences in the new environment. Such situations challenge their real identity as they try to find their feet in their current location.

It is evident that with the changes occurring in the present world, brought about by globalisation, there are various reasons that explain the causes of migration and the constraints embedded therein. However, economic and social considerations are the major motivation for mobility, even though a few cases are not linked to economic

reasons. Against this backdrop, migration is unarguably a societal norm that currently serves predominantly as the bridge to a sustainable or better living.

Given the foregoing context, one can posit that the socio-economic and political reality in society contributed to the engagement of migration and emigration in literature. This section thus examines migration in African literary production from its introduction, which is conceptualised as the Atlantic slave trade phase, progression, otherwise presented as the education phase and popularity, which is the economic phase.

2.2.1 Evolution of Migration in African Literary Production

The trans-Atlantic-slave trade constituted a substantial part of African history, which cannot be ignored or overemphasised. Thus, it is difficult for any literary scholar to relate the development of African literature in the light of migration without considering the influence of the slave trade and the significance of the colonial structure. As depicted in the early migrant literature, migration was a consequential experience of slavery and imperial subjugation during the colonial era. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, millions of Africans, most of them from the western part of the continent, were captured and forcefully transported outside the continent and sold as slaves to a life of forced labour (Rossi, 2014). The African victims were subjected to dehumanising conditions while executing tasks for their owners in foreign lands. Consequently, the slave trade played a fundamental role in the development of the colonial economy. The trans-Atlantic slave trade represented a pattern of forced migration. Wallace (2015) investigates the writings of slave returnees of the 18th century, among others Olaudah Equiano, Diallo Ayuba, Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sanchos and Ottobah Cuguano. Hanley (2015) identifies five black authors of transnational slave narratives in the 18th and early 19th centuries, namely James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, John Marrant, Ottobah Cugoano, Olaudah Equiano, and John Jea. For the purpose of this study, the exposition will be limited to Olaudah Equiano, Diallo Ayuba and Ottobah Cuguano. One can barely allude to the growth of migration in African literary production if these people are excluded. Their works are of great significance and indispensable in investigating the first literary accounts of

slave migrants in the late 18th century. Thus, the inception of international migration in African literary production can be traced back to the above-mentioned slave personalities. Their narratives became an agency in the campaign for abolition of slave merchandise and equally constituted the premise for the thematic preoccupation of migration, the African diaspora and returnees.

Equiano's Travels (1789) is an autobiographical narrative significant for its exploration of the pains of slavery and emancipation. Olaudah Equiano, also known as Gustavus Vassa, in his autobiography describes his capture from his town in the eastern part of Nigeria to England at a young age of 11. His enslavement and consequent struggle for freedom, which was achieved in 1766, are explicitly documented. Equiano presents a mixed tale of unimaginable pain and the traumatic experience of the middle passage, as well as his subsequent adventures. In describing the horrific slavery ordeal, he recalls: "the shrieks of the women, the groans of the dying, the floggings, the wish to commit suicide and how those who somehow managed to drown themselves were envied" (Equiano, 1789:36).

Wallace (2015) also emphasises the crucial role Equiano played in exposing the barbaric act aboard the Zong ship in 1781 in which 131 Africans were deliberately thrown into the sea and drowned so the crew and healthier captives on board could have access to enough water. Equiano included in his autobiography his acquisition of literacy and his adventurous voyage round the world while serving as a sailor under his master, Michael Henry Pascal, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Thereafter, he gained his manumission in 1766 and finally settled in England, where he became a renowned abolitionist among the black population for his campaign against slavery and oppression. He died in 1797, ten years before the English slave trade was finally abolished.

Another African caught in the web of slavery was Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, also known as Job Ben Solomon, a high-profile and devoted Muslim. His memoir, an account of his remarkable life, is perhaps the most revealing of the early migratory narratives. Diallo's origin is controversial. Some scholars document him as a Gambian, while others believe he was originally from Senegal. It is worth noting that despite Diallo's literacy and the many letters he wrote while in captivity, his life story, *Some Memories of the Life of Job (*1734), was documented by Thomas Bluett. According to the memoir, Diallo was captured

alongside his translator in 1730 on a voyage back to Gambia after a successful sale of his father's slaves and sold to Stephen Pike, captain of the *Arabella*. He was one of 150 survivors who landed in Annapolis, Maryland after crossing the Atlantic for almost six months. In Annapolis, he was purchased by Mr Tolsey, who employed him as a slave in the tobacco fields in Kent Island, Maryland. Diallo escaped from the plantation and was captured and jailed. With the help of a Spanish judge, Thomas Bluett of Maryland, and James Oglethorpe, the director of the Royal African company in London, a philanthropist and former member of parliament, Diallo was able to regain his freedom and return to his homeland in Bundu, the modern-day Gambia, in 1734. As Bluett recounts:

> About the latter End of July last he embark'd on Board one of the African Company's Ships, bound for Gambia, where we hope he is safely arrived, to the great Joy of his Friends, and the Honour of the English Nation (Bluett 1734:33).

Diallo's exceptional qualities that were evident at the time of the Atlantic slave trade were unconcealable. Because of his intelligence, religious uprightness and monetary prowess, the imperial power and other colonial entrepreneurs around him found him quite admirable and he consequently did not suffer the expected hardship like other slaves.

Herlands (2017) explores the early African Muslim slave subjects and how their religious background and literacy helped shaped their identity during the era of the Atlantic slave trade. The work presents a compelling and revealing analysis of the impact of religion in shaping the personality of some selected African slaves, which consequently distinguished them from other Negroes. This distinction was religion-based or -oriented, emphasising the presentation of Islam as a significant factor in reconstructing the slaves' identity. On another level, the work illuminates two textual productions recounting the slavery experience of Ayuba Diallo, with reference to their strengths and literary deficiencies. The first is Francis Moore's *Travels into the Inland of Africa,* available on the World Digital Library. As suggested, the title of this text explicitly depicts the memoir as a "catch" for a non-African audience interested in reading about the life of Diallo and his time in the US. Moore criticised the text as "source weak in the obvious historical ways; racism, imperial power", placing focus on political issues rather than the protagonist. The second, Thomas Bluett's account of Ayuba Diallo's life, *Some Memories of the Life of Job,* is a brilliant summary of Diallo's story, compiled as a memoir by Thomas Bluett whom

Diallo met while in jail. In Bluett's account, attention is paid to Diallo's hardship and his journey back to Africa. This source's drawback can be traced to the author's personality. Bluett's emotion and empathy for Diallo are reflected in this source and perhaps this influences his foregrounding of Diallo's suffering in order to gain him compassion and instigate his freedom, which eventually became a reality.

Ottobah Cugoano, an acquaintance of Olaudah Equiano, is perhaps the most prolific slave writer of this age. His books are *Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa* (Cugoano,1787), a memoir of his experience of slavery, and *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (Cugoano,1787), a criticism of abject dehumanisation in the form of slavery. He clamoured for liberation and proposed punishments for persons found guilty of perpetrating the act of enslaving. Like Equiano, Cugoano was also captured from his country, Ghana, in West Africa as a 13-year-old teenager and was forcefully shipped to Grenada:

> … horrible scenes which we saw, and the base treatment which we met with in this dreadful captive situation, as the similar cases of thousands, which suffer by this infernal traffic, are well known. Let it suffice to say that I was thus lost to my dear indulgent parents and relations, and they to me. All my help was cries and tears, and these could not avail, nor suffered long, till one succeeding woe and dread swelled up another. Brought from a state of innocence and freedom, and, in a barbarous and cruel manner, conveyed to a state of horror and slavery … (Cugoano, 1787:121).

The above excerpt captures the writer's traumatic experience of slavery in England. In 1772, Cugoano was purchased by an English merchant with whom he travelled to England and was later freed. As a worker at Crossways, he became acquainted with British top political and cultural personalities and joined the Sons of Africa abolitionists to initiate an anti-slavery revolutionary campaign. A recount of this experience from Cugoano paints a clear picture of people being forcefully captured and taken outside their homelands to unknown destinations. Kidnapping was a way of capturing slaves and the three aforementioned "slave-writers" all experienced this forcible "snatching" away from their families.

However, it is noteworthy that in the case of the literate slave narrators, Equiano, Ayuba and Cugoano, whose works are engaged in this study as early African migrant writers,

literacy and religion were fundamental tools for them to navigate life in the face of uncertainties in the western diaspora. Equiano and Cugoano became hybridised through their introduction to Christianity and literacy, which enhanced their communication with Englishmen. On the contrary, exposure to religion and literacy was detrimental to the slave traders. These slaves utilised literacy and religion as tools to negotiate freedom and clamour for abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Gunn's *The Humanizing Project* in Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* and Ottobah Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* (2015) corroborate this. Literacy created an avenue for the slaves to voice their reality through writing. Their well-acclaimed narratives strengthened the voices in favour of the abolition of the slave trade. Gunn further contends that "In the case of Equiano and Cugoano, literacy provided them with the tools to challenge the institute of the slave trade and recreate the image of the African "other"". Consequently, Equiano, Diallo and Cugoano and others formed the first set of diasporic African migrant writers. Because of slavery, they were the first African writers to experience migration and introduce it as a thematic concern in African literature. Their autobiographical publications thematised slavery, oppression, alienation, religious radicalism, emancipation, return and reintegration in African migrant literature. Their works also established many of the genre's conventions and influenced texts in the African literary tradition.

Even though slavery was abolished by the British Parliament under the Slave Trade Act of 1807, it continues to occur in the modern world through human trafficking and other dehumanising endeavours. Koettl (2009:3) avers that "whenever people are forced or lured into exploitation no matter if movement of victims is involved, it is considered human trafficking". Victims are lured into cross-border trafficking with the promise of greener pastures. On arrival in their destination countries, the victims' travel documents are immediately confiscated, and they are therefore left with no option of escape. They are left at the mercy of their supposed helper and forced into humiliating jobs such as prostitution, forced labour (agricultural, industrial, child labour) and similar endeavours. Sadly, hope of economic gain is automatically replaced with regrets, pain, disappointment, shame and a desire to return home. This reality is illustrated in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon (*1995:106), where the protagonist, Mara, is lured by her husband to relocate to Germany with the promise of a better life. On arrival, she is met

with a reality opposite to her expectations. It can be argued that human trafficking that is a consequence of migration is related to economic causes. Victims relocate on the promise of an improved or successful living from their supposed helper who later turns out to be a “slave-master”.

2.2.2 Progression: Education phase

Following the post-independence transition in Africa, the migration discourse witnessed new writings typifying characters whose purpose in migrating was solely the pursuit of higher quality education in the West. Shirley Geok-Lin Lim (2002:141) defends this position, saying that these authors were elites who returned to their countries after the completion of their studies and engaged in nation building and decolonisation through their writings. Fanon (1961) describes the native intelligentsia (alternatively stated as the authors in this category in three phases. The first is the assimilation phase, where the person takes on the host’s (European) culture, the second is the return to his “roots” that is, his journey back to his homeland after completion of education and lastly, the fighting phase, in which he makes a revolutionary move by stirring up in his fellow citizens/countrymen resistance against socio-political issues and governmental ills. Literary works of prominent writers produced during this period include among others Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreter* (1965), Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Fragments* (1970) and Ngugi wa Thiong‘o’s *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Petals of Blood* (1977). It may also be argued that these native intellectual literary works depict their authors’ lived experiences as education migrants and academic returnees and serve to satirise the socio-political situation of their post-independence homeland. As exemplified in *Fragments*, Armah’s protagonist, Bako, returns to Ghana after the completion of his studies in the US. On getting home, he fails to live up to the expectations of his family and allies as a “been-to”. This situation, coupled with frustration about a corrupt government, leads to his depression and mental breakdown. Similarly, Soyinka’s *The Interpreter* is based on the experiences of young Nigerian returnees who are met with corruption in a hypocritical post-independent society. Furthermore, some fictional works of this era are interpreted as asserting, narrating and upholding the integrity of African culture; demonstrating and

demolishing colonial supremacy; celebrating their freedom from colonial rule, and then bemoaning the post-colonial corrupt governments that betrayed their founding visions. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* is woven around the resistance struggle of indigenous Kenyans to British colonial rule. The novel centres on individual characters and their motivations for participating in the fight for independence, or Mau Mau.

Besides exploring the features that characterise African returnee writers' novels, attempts have been made to explore the language use of writers from this period, which serves as an integral feature of their works. Cousins and Dodgson-Katiyo (2016) submit that language is a typical depiction of the position and state of mind of the writers, which include distress and disgust. Furthermore, they point out that an additional feature of these post-independence return narratives is disillusionment, not only disappointment with situations, but also failure to meet the expectations of families and society. This situation is vividly crafted through the character of Bako in *Fragments,* where his family members expect him to redeem them from poverty. On the contrary, Bako's personal dream is to reform his country, but no one supports his dream. This frustration and his failure to live up to kin and societal expectations leave him disillusioned.

2.2.3 Popularity: Economic phase

In the late 20th century to the 21st century, migration in African literature led to new preoccupations in addition to existing trends. As cited in Okome and Vaughan (2012:7), Locke notes that migration in this era arises from "a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom, of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions". As more people emigrated globally as a way of escape from harsh economic realities, this trend became more profound in writing, thus creating a defining moment in black literature. More African writings emerged in the late 20th century to early 21st century to reinforce the quest for improved living condition as a key determinant of mobility. This phase had a great impact on literary history, as an increase in the number of migrant publications and authors can be traced to this period. In addition, one may argue that the writers' lived experiences of the post-

colonial diaspora informed the narratives of their literary works. Their works foreground economic crisis or lack of choice as the major cause of mobility and also depict the writers' diasporic realities to illustrate the social, cultural, economic and political situations that strain the migrants' lives in the host land (Dustmann & Weiss 2007). The contemporary African diasporic writers establish socio-economic and political factors as forces that continually "push" migrants and immigrants from their homeland and "pull" them to western countries envisioned as "lands of opportunity". These authors mostly project their characters as people who migrate to the diaspora for the fulfilment of dreams and a prosperous life (Nesbitt 2003:70; Omeje 2007: 96). These writers popularise the theme of migration and the sub-themes of hybridity, disillusionment, alienation, identity conflict, nostalgia and return. The narrative fictionalisation of the young African diaspora authors is placed in the context of globalisation and transnationalism as a means to engage migration in the present discourse. Here, transnationalism is an encapsulating term given in post-colonial theory to diasporic personae, migrants and refugees who cross national borders.

Moreover, writers in this category infuse in their fictional works elements of contemporary migration across transnational boundaries, such as passports, checkpoints, deportations, identification cards, residence permits and so on to emphasise how immigration is actualised and controlled in the age of globalisation.

From the foregoing, writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Meg Vandermerwe and Teju Cole, among others, typify writers in this group as they engage these issues in their works. For instance, the theme of migration and diaspora is constant in Adichie's works such as *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and *Americanah* (2013). Her narratives focus primarily on the struggles faced by transnational subjects in the "third space". Uwakweh et al. (2014) opine that Adichie's short fiction "captures the burden of African migration" as it explores the burdens and challenges to which migrants are subject when "residing in a new cultural space". Kaboré (2016:8) validates the position that Adichie employs literary techniques such as comparison and contrast to present various reasons for migration in her literary works. From one novel to another, the writer explores various factors that influence migration,

namely poverty, war, education and others. Similarly, Gehrmann (2016) posits that the focus of Adichie's *Americanah* is on migration, narrating the "un/homeliness" of the diasporic characters and the complexity of Afropolitans' identity. This is explicated in the problems faced by Adichie's diasporic characters in fitting into the diasporic community and the struggles that come with being black in a predominantly white community. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu is depressed because of her initial inability to settle in her new environment, which includes securing a decent job. Her struggles are reflected in her renegotiation of identity through change in accent, compromising of her natural hair and trimming down her body size in order to win the acceptance of American society.

It is interesting to note that Adichie's alter ego is pictured in her female protagonist, Ifemelu. After studying for a while at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, Adichie relocated to America at the age of 19 to further her education, because of the socio-political crisis in the 1990s that led to incessant strikes at Nigerian universities. Ifemelu's relocation to the US in *Americanah* is triggered by this same reason. The situation leaves her with no choice but to consider a better learning environment in order to achieve her academic dreams. However, when she arrives in the US, her desire for choice makes her secure citizenship to brighten her economic chances. The passport is synonymous to her mobility and freedom. *The Thing Around Your Neck* is another text of Adichie's that further illustrates economic crisis or poverty as the cause of migration or emigration (Kaboré, 2016). Nkem, the central character, experiences a childhood marred by poverty, which is reflected in her way of eating: "… *in her life, her childhood, you snatched the food up, whatever it was, and ate it*" (Adichie, 2009:24). Hence, she takes advantage of the chance to migrate to the US to afford herself a luxury lifestyle and her children a better life than what she experienced in her childhood. She wants them to be "*the kind of children who sniffed at food that had fallen on the dirt, saying it was 'spoiled'"* (Adichie, 2009:24).

Another contemporary African writer whose work has contributed to the growing discourse on a transgressive body incurred through migration is Meg Vandermerwe. Vandermerwe's debut novel, *Zebra Crossing* (2013), probes the intra-racial intolerance and discrimination against African migrants in African countries, referring to South Africa. In addition, the narrative highlights the representation of albinism as a transgressive body in Africa. The economic chaos in African homelands in 2000 and beyond imparted

migratory narratives of Zimbabwean writers at that period to replicate this reality (Saneliso, 2018). The economic and political crises depicted by these writers are the "push" factors that accelerated migration. This reality is fictionalised in *Zebra Crossing* where Chipo, the 17-year-old female protagonist, forcibly crosses the border of Zimbabwe to South Africa alongside her brother in order to escape the economic hardship in their country. Unfortunately, they encounter unforeseen hindrances to the actualisation of their dreams and Chipo loses her life to the myth that her blood brings luck for wealth. Although Vandermerwe is not a Zimbabwean author, her diasporic experiences and knowledgeability regarding the mobility of Africans within the continent spurs her thematic concerns. Saayman (2016) posits that *Zebra Crossing* is a rare example of a literary work that depicts the unfavourable predicaments and stereotyping of African immigrants within South Africa. Furthermore, Vandermerwe's protagonist, Chipo, is described as a female character who suffers double identity crises: first, as an albino and secondly as a foreign national in South Africa. It is the hostilities she faces on account of albinism that ultimately lead to her death. In an interview, Vandermerwe stated that the motivation for her text, *Zebra Crossing,* was her intention to crack open the social conflicts faced by African migrants within the continent, as they are constantly regarded as outsiders and reminded of this. Moreover, her work is an indictment of xenophobia, which has plagued the 'Rainbow Nation'. Her interview with the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town reveals this:

> *Zebra Crossing* is aimed at anyone who has ever felt like the outsider, the exile, the misfit, 'the other'. It is also aimed at anyone who has ever made someone else feel like the outsider, too different or 'other' to be embraced or accepted. We have all, I feel, occupied both positions at different points in our lives (SCCT, 2013).

Boehmer (2005) illuminates how contemporary African writers significantly contribute to migrant literature. Boehmer contends that postcolonial migrant literature is literary work of "in-between" and cultural hybridity is an integral factor that initiates language hybridisation. The fictional works of these writers are critically influenced by the blending of their culture reinforced by the integration of their language with other diasporic elements. Diasporic characters are the lens through which this feature is reflected. Adichie's distinctive trait of constantly infusing Igbo language in her literary works, which symbolises her African identity, originality, and portraiture of her culture to her diasporic audience, is exemplified in this context (Oha et al., 2018). Through this mode, the African

writer projects her culture beyond continental boundaries. Also, a migrant writer occupies a space between two cultures, fashioning reality from a place of multiplicity. Hence, her culture and diasporic hybridity sometimes clash.

Based on the above exploration, a point of convergence in the works of the first, second and third generation of African migrant writers is the foregrounded theme of return to the homeland, despite each generation having its core reason for return. For the first generation, it was emancipation and a quest for reunion with families and the homeland. For the second generation it was nation-building and cultural self-actualisation. It can be argued that nationalism forms a dominant aspect of these narratives. The third-generation purpose of return is motivated from different angles, which range from satisfaction, home-ties and perhaps self-development. Another common feature in their writing of the period is the critical presentation of a subaltern black body, a diasporic reality either non-fictionalised such as in Olaudah's *Equiano's Travels* or fictionalised as in Adichie's *Americanah,* Cole's *Open City* (2011)*,* Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers,* among others. As these diasporic realities evolved and became more engaging, they formed a prominent motif in recent African literary production.

2.3 Post-colonial Diasporic Engagement

The global dispersion of blacks of African descent through migration increasingly challenges their existence in a predominatly white society. Inequality of social-political power is particularly evident where radical imbalances of privilege, affluence and possession segregate marginal groups from dominant ones. This poses a great challenge in an environment where the issue of race is deeply institutionalised and difficult to eliminate. That is to say, people of colour are discriminated against in a racialised culture where the social-political power structure strengthens the false belief that the white race is more advantageous or privileged. Ikuenobe (2010) opines that racism is the erroneous belief of the superiority of a particular race over others. He further accentuates the cultural attitude of some societies in sanctioning a power relationship or stratification between races. This reinforces the attitude of people to racial discrimination and also validates

their racist beliefs. Race (hierarchisation of humans along colour dissimilarity), a social construct of identity, becomes a recursive concern where certain people enjoy some social, political, economic and educational privileges to the detriment of others in society. This causes societal exclusion for some ethnic minorities.

Grosfoguel et al. (2014:2) view racism as "the global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the capitalist/patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world systems." By implication, race points and directly equates to superiority versus inferiority and affluence versus poverty. According to Michael (2015:5), this situation as it affects a person of African descent is termed "Afrophobia" - bigotry targeted at a particular group of people to deny their humanity and sense of dignity. Michael elucidates the term further as:

> the hostility, antipathy, contempt and aversion expressed directly and through institutional and legal means, towards people with a background in sub-Saharan Africa or who belong to the African diaspora. It manifests itself for example as verbal abuse, spatial segregation and physical attacks as well as systematic racial discrimination within areas such as employment and housing (Michael, 2015:5).

Oftentimes, victims of racism are exploited in areas where they exist as a minority. Here, they tend to be highly vulnerable to racial attacks and therefore, view themselves as "other" and the dominant race as "self". The thematisation of racial injustice by contemporary African writers such as Adichie, Mbue, Cole and their likes is questioningly woven along this path of "othering". Thus, in exploring whites' racism against blacks, prominence is given to the struggles of blacks for significant purpose, especially in areas where whites dominate as majorities.

In a different development, racism does not necessarily answer the question of skin pigmentation or genetic composition of people of a particular race, but as defined by history. Although it is a commonplace perception that global races are divided along lines of skin colour, an understanding of the historical antecedents of the marginalised race could unravel the cause of discrimination.

Furthermore, with the soaring graph of racial consciousness within the global black community, there is a need to unveil other dimensions of racism where not only whites

are answerable to racial offences, but also blacks and other races, including the ones often described as “biracial”. It is also safe to say that the issue of race in the modern world is much too complicated to be constructed in a binary of black versus white, a longstanding binary often represented in histories and literature (Schalk, 2011). The constructed racial binary order represented in white and black colours only cannot adequately serve as the shades of racial discrimination present in the world. It equally dismisses the representation of global races in just two colours, white and black. It suggests that human races are like colour chromes, with black and white on the extremes. The nearer to white, the better the privileges one gets. However, this does not negate the reality that the trending racial sentiments are palpable in white versus black.

2.4 Post-colonial Non-diasporic Engagements

2.4.1 Albinism: Black-on-black Body Othering

The African continent is rife with ancient history of stigmatising people living with albinism. It is evident that some African societies ignorantly subject albinos to vulnerability and insecurity on a daily basis. Across continental borders, Africans bewail racial injustice directed at them as bearers of black identity. Ironically, back home, individuals with albinism are faced with a similar situation of “body othering” because they appear different from the normal skin colour. Despite their “blackness” on the inside, their “whiteness” on the outside exposes them to vulnerability and hostility (Atiemo, 2013:134). Murray (2015:223) also avers that persons with albinism (a skin condition where there is deficiency in melanin production, consequently hindering development of the normal skin pigment) are susceptible to discrimination. Although modern society currently wages war against the stereotyping of albinos in society, the cultural and societal belief that albinos are mystical human beings has not been totally eradicated. African nations such as Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal engage in sharp cultural practices that put the lives of albinos in serious jeopardy. According to media reports, between 2009 and 2015 about 155 cases of human rights violations affecting albinos were reported in Tanzania. In the next year the highest number of ritual killings and mutilations of people living with albinism occurred in both Tanzania and Malawi (Cruz-

Inigo et al.,2011). This societal menace attracted the attention of the United Nations, which prompted the release of an urgent statement on the danger of “total extinction” of albinos in Malawi.

Violence against albinos is perpetuated through name calling due to erroneous notions about albinism. For instance, in the south-western part of Nigeria, there is a popular expression in Yoruba to describe albinos, namely “afin ki nje iyo”. This literally means “an albino does not eat salt”. The myth is that an albino is forbidden to eat salt because it causes his skin to burn, whereas only direct exposure to sunlight causes sunburn. Likewise, in Mali, people with albinism are referred to as “gomble” and “Napwere” (brownish man) and in Malawi as red man because of the effect of sunburn on their skins (Imperato & Imperato, 2006). The occupants of the communities where albinos reside uphold these dehumanising tags. Gottlieb (2001) and Singal (2010) confirm the use of discriminatory/derogatory language for albinos. Likewise, in some parts of Africa, such as Tanzania, Malawi, Burundi and Senegal, as stated earlier, there is the erroneous belief that albinos are harbingers of good luck, wealth and even political success. Hence, widespread ritual killings and mutilation of albinos occur. Victims of albinism are pictured as sacrificial lambs for the fortune of others. They are murdered for their body parts, which are believed to harness magical power for diverse purposes or bring fortune.

This profound otherness unfortunately denies persons with albinism a normal life. Socially induced anxiety creates low self-esteem and identity crises in albinos.

2.4.2 Xenophobia: Black-on-black Racism

Although xenophobia is a global issue, the crisis in Africa has constantly been a central discourse in national and international assemblies. The intolerance, hostility and resentment meted out to African migrants not only threaten diplomatic relations between governments and nationalities, but also undermine social justice, human rights, equality, social co-existence and unity in the continental space.

Yakushko (2009) defines xenophobia as a form of attitudinal, affective, and behavioural prejudice toward immigrants and those perceived as foreigners. Bordeau (2010:4)

explains xenophobia as the “fear of a stranger or foreigner”. Another definition of xenophobia is “the fear of difference embodied in person or groups” (Berezin, 2006). It is the hostility, prejudice and acts that reject and often exclude persons based on perceptions that they are outsiders or foreigners to the nation or society. From these definitions, the issue of xenophobia is linked to expressing negativity and discriminating against foreign nationals on the basis of their difference visible in language, culture, accent, migrant status and nationality.

Some cases of xenophobia in African countries and its possible causes have been identified. As observed in Nigeria, Angola, South Africa, Ghana and Uganda, xenophobia is ignited by economic recession and frustration. Other manifestations of xenophobia are traced to political or cultural incitement, as boldly exemplified in Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa. Concern about border security, especially in war-inclined zones, is arguably the reason for intolerance towards African migrants in Chad and Kenya. Intolerance is often manifested in the threat of elimination of non-citizens, unfair deportation of immigrants and violent attacks against foreign nationals, including destruction of their properties (International Labour Organisation, 2001: 2; Romola, 2015).

In 2014, the Kenyan government inaugurated an anti-terrorism policy to combat national security issues. About 4 000 Somalis were apprehended in an operation named Usalama Watch. Prior to this time, the terrorist attacks carried out by the Somali Al-shabaab faction particularly infuriated Kenyans, consequently making the Somalia immigrants in their country “scapegoats” to bear the backlash. In an observation, Buchanan-Clarke and Lekalake (2015) plainly assert that in enforcing extreme measures to avert violence, the Somalians in Kenya are often stigmatised, thus exposing them to xenophobic attacks.

Likewise, Angola had displayed its “ lack of homeliness” to foreigners outright through its mass deportation of Congolese in 2004. Siegel (2009) recounts that 100 000 Congolese were unfairly asked to leave Angola because of the perception that they stole the country’s natural resources. In December 2007, Angolan soldiers tortured and raped Congolese migrants and deported them afterwards. Adebayo (1999) also provides an incisive overview of 160 000 Congolese who were deported. He underscores the fact that the Angolan government is overtly extremist in protecting its natural resources and

eliminating anything that stands in the way of achieving it. This is reiterated in the Foreign Minister's remark that Angola will do anything to protect its natural resources, including exercising the right to deport citizens who act in a way that does not benefit the country.

During the military regime of President Shehu Shagari, the Nigerian nation was confronted with an economic melt-down and increase in the crime rate, which was blamed on the excessive mobility of migrants from neighbouring African countries. To this end, the government deported immigrants in order to save the crashing economy (Hart 2016). Some scholars (Aremu, 2013:340; Campbell, 2003:74) maintain that between 1983 and 1985, over 2.3 million non-nationals, most of them Ghanaians (about 1.5 million), were evicted from the country. It was an era in Nigeria that popularised "Ghana must go". Prior to this time, in 1969, Ghana was faced with a similar situation and blamed her predicament on non-citizens residing in the country, particularly Nigerians. This resulted in the deportation of about 1.5 million Nigerians by the Ghanaian government (Soyombo 2008:95). In this light, xenophobia in Nigeria and Ghana was premised on socio-economic challenges.

In a similar pattern, South Africa has recorded a long history of xenophobic violence in the post-apartheid period. In 2018, studies conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council revealed that South Africa had an extreme disposition to xenophobia. According to Crush (2001), South Africa has perpetrated the worst forms of xenophobia in Africa if not the world. The May 2008 xenophobic outbreak resulted in over 60 people being murdered, about 100 000 being displaced, 670 wounded and 1 300 arrested. During the violence, a Mozambican citizen was set ablaze near Reiger Park on the East Rand. Sadly, the violence did not end in 2008, as many have been murdered since, according to the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA 2008: 56). In 2009, the Zimbabwean community was forcefully evicted from their homes in the rural town of De Doorns in the Western Cape. This resulted in the displacement of 3 000 Zimbabwean citizens residing in the community (Kerr & Durrheim 2013:583-584). In 2013, other cases of xenophobia were recorded. A Mozambican taxi driver lost his life in police custody after he was arrested and dragged behind a police van. In addition, a South African teenager was allegedly shot by a Somali immigrant and later died, which led to violent reprisals

against foreign nationals around Port Elizabeth (Hussein and Hitomi, 2013). Again, in September 2019, another case of xenophobia was recorded. From the above incidents and many more, it is apparent that xenophobia in South Africa can and often does result in violence.

Crush and McDonald (2001: 7) assert that the xenophobic nature of black South Africans is rooted in the belief that black immigrants deprive South Africans of access to jobs and services and they are also perpetrators of crime. These preconceived ideas have generated increasing resentment that results in a high level of hostility and intolerance towards foreigners, particularly black Africans. Thus, the attacks were a brutal measure to cleanse the nation of people reaping where they did not sow. On the other hand, Wose Kinge (2016) argues that hostility and dislike of black South Africans towards black immigrants emanate from the nation's apartheid history. The segregation of whites from blacks, resulting in tension and contested opportunity, is still prevalent. This argument is supported by Achille Mbembe (2019):

> Of almost all African states, South Africa has the best record in terms of immigration enforcement and control capacity. After all, the South African state was founded on the capacity to ruthlessly coerce Blacks into rigid patterns of mobility...
>
> If this machinery has been partially dismantled, its habitus has remained alive. It involves a capacity to arrest, to detain, to deport or forcibly remove unauthorised entrants unmatched by any other State in Africa. For its operation, it requires the production of violence on a massive scale as well as disastrous and emotionally traumatic experiences. Today, many black "foreign nationals" are at the receiving end of this violence originally designed to discipline and to domesticate Black South Africans.

Even though the apartheid rule in South Africa was dismantled, the tension created by it continues to resonate and it is the blacks from the same continent who are at the receiving end of racial injustice. Violence is meted out in the form of prejudice, name calling, social exclusion and resentment.

Having reviewed the above publications on racism, xenophobia and albinism as forms of transgression in space and body, a common denominator found is consciousness of identity otherness. According to Fanon (1952[2008]:57), "to be the Other is to always feel in an uncomfortable position, to be on one's guard, to be prepared to be rejected". Here, otherness implies entities outside the subjective individual; this becomes visible through

differences in race, nationality and skin pigmentation. This notion selects a measuring standard that divides humans into groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is flawed, devalued and thus susceptible to discrimination. From the foregoing on xenophobia in Africa, it is revealing how the continental space is transgressive to African migrants. While in the western space, African migrants suffer discrimination emanating from skin colour and migrant status; back home in Africa, the migrant is confronted with the same predicament of "self-other", where some African states and their citizens are the privileged "self" while the African sojourner is the "othered". This means an African migrant is still considered or perceived as a "foreigner" in Africa and subjected to stereotyping, hostility, hatred and frustration. In addition, it is clear that xenophobia in Africa has taken on a primarily racial form specially directed at black migrants from other parts of the continent. Against this backdrop, one agitating question that comes to mind is whether resentment for Africans on the continent among fellow Africans is xenophobia or Afrophobia. Why is a black migrant envisaged as a threat by another on the same continent?

The same applies to an albino, who is not totally acceptable in African society because of a skin that is different from the normal. Albinism thus implies a body transgression. This study will offer more insights into the racial conflicts faced by African migrants in national and trans-national context. Furthermore, it will shed significant light on the intricacies in negotiating identity at home and 'away', which result in an identity crisis for migrants.

2.5 Theoretical Framework: Nirmal Puwar's *Space Invaders* and Its Engagement in the Selected Texts

Puwar (2004) questions the perception of a black body and the female gender as "space invaders" in institutional somatic norms. Puwar (2004:8) contends that 'certain types of bodies … are tacitly designated as being the "natural" occupants of particular spaces, with others marked out as 'trespassers'. Because of this, the black "invisible bodies" and female gender do not feel at home, based on how they are being marginalised in spatial zones or institutions predominately occupied by "visible" whites. This is exemplified in the realities of Adichie's black characters in the western diaspora, whose lives are deeply

troubled by racism. In like manner, Noah's black South Africans suffer various forms of oppression through the white supremacists that regard them as inferior entities. Despite the natives being the ethnic majority, they are relegated to the background. Their body (colour) marks them as invisible in a racialised environment where apartheid rule operates. On the other hand, discrimination against the female gender is illustrated through the character of Patricia in Noah's work. Patricia who is Trevor's biological mother is doubly othered by her gender and her race at home and in society. This will be further explored in the third and fourth chapters of this literary project.

Furthermore, Puwar establishes the psychological effect of colour consciousness on the *othered*. In Puwar's argument, the space invader (synonymous to the term transgressive body) is weighted with heavy burdens that her blackness represents, which makes her perceive herself as a deviant from the norm. These burdens include hostility, inferiority, incompetence and stereotyping by oppressive forces. Consequently, she is forced to de-Africanise her identity, 'whitewashing' her "bodily gestures, social interests and value systems" (Puwar 2004:150) to integrate and progress, exactly as Bhabha posits in his concepts of hybridity and mimicry.

Although Puwar's framework focuses on the exclusion of blacks and females in the academic milieu, her contention shifts beyond that. It is a fragment that reflects racial and gender discrimination in the larger society.

2.6 Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* and its Engagement in the Selected Texts

Migration is an inevitable factor as it concerns human and it is most times characterised by displacement. This correlates with Bhabha's (1994:1) position that as humans, we "find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of differences and identity, past and present, side and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direct in the beyond." Bhabha further states that the colonial environment incites racial imbalances of privileges and power. It is a setting where asymmetries of power between the marginalised and the dominant group play out. Hence, when an émigrée transgresses a border in space or body, she becomes lost within a new environment of culture multiplicity and complexities,

which renders her disillusioned and displaced. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu is faced with the dilemma of social integration as a non-white deemed to be socially inferior in a racialised environment. This contributes to her inability to secure a job and pay her bills. In order to deal with her financial ordeals, she reluctantly sleeps with an American tennis coach. This act, which she sees as shameful, causes her to be disappointed and depressed and breaks up her relationship with her first love, Obinze. This is what Bhabha implies when he states that "there is an estranged sense in the relocation of home and the world – the unhomeliness that is the condition of extra territorial and cross-cultural imitations" (Bhabha, 1994:13). Bhabha further submits that an "unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wilder disjunctions of political existence." This is often the case of African sojourners in their new living spaces across national and international boundaries. There is a correlation between the feeling of unhomeliness and psychological imbalance in a migrant as she battles the challenges of negotiating belonging. Thus, for a trans-migrant to acclimatise and thrive in the contested home, she undergoes a process of compromise and decision, merging and blending the existing culture and identity with that of the host community. Bhabha's theory of ambivalence describes the liminal space occupying the cutting edge of translation and negotiation. Ambivalence acts as a passage crossed by a migrant to adjust to the new culture as a hybrid identity in the third space. The third space, also known as a hybrid space, is the space in which the merged culture of an outsider, the migrant and the host co-exist. This brings us to the concept of *hybridity,* which is the creation of a new transcultural identity within the new society. In the texts under study, the victims of racism and apartheid simultaneously tend to either deny or disguise their racial identity in order to be positioned comfortably for social privileges. For instance, Adichie's protagonist and character writer Ifemelu is able to find her feet in a racialised environment through adjusting her physical appearance and changing her accent (Adichie, 2013:133). For her first job interview, her friend Ruth suggests, "lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters. We want you to get the job" (Adichie, 2013:202). This shows that her hybridised appearance matters in increasing her chances of securing a job. Likewise, Noah's multilingual talent enables him to thrive in a hierarchical and apartheid country. For Noah, whose biracial identity perpetually

displaces him, language becomes his surviving tactic in the community. He “learned that the quickest way to bridge the race gap was through language” (Noah, 2016:65-67). Switching languages easily helps him boost his self-confidence, foster communication, and fortify his relationship with people.

Related to Bhabha’s concept of *hybridity* is the term “the new mestiza” in Gloria Anzaldua’s essay *Borderland/La Frontera* (1987). She describes the “new mesmetiza” as the emerged persona in a borderland who is faced with all kinds of obstacles in language, culture or values. Nonetheless, she embraces these obstacles and transforms the struggles and alienation of the “in-between-ness” into pleasure and empowerment. Anzaldua further argues that this situation equips the migrant with the courage to fight racism and exclusion in a multicultural society. The “border-crosser” or hybrid identity successfully finds a balance in between dual cultures with the dynamics of exchange and inclusion. This is illustrated in the protagonists of both texts - Ifemelu and Trevor and Patricia who against the odds of racial prejudice thrive and become successful individuals.

Furthermore, Bhabha contends that in a post-colonial discourse, the notion of a pure culture and identity is disputable and a fallacy. Identity and culture exist as elements of fluidity, constantly prone to changeability and uncertainty. In this light, he argues that a fresh identity emerges from the interweaving of the coloniser (the western countries) and the colonised (who are Africans and African Americans; descendants of enslaved Africans in America) cultural identity.

Homi Bhabha’s concept of *hybridity* has contributed to the post-colonial discourse on racism. According to Bhabha, colonisers’ intention with hybridity is to make the colonised almost like them, but not exactly like them. The belief has been that full hybridisation could generate a subversion from the othered. He contends that on the contrary, an othered identity has the capability of surpassing inferiority that ensues from a space of displacement through hybridisation. Here, in the case of the black body, the intersection of an inferior socio-cultural identity and the “superior” western culture creates an excellent hybrid identity.

From the colonial to the early post-colonial era, biological and cultural hybridity is viewed from a transgressive perception (Brun, 2007). The prevalent belief was that cross-fertilisation would reduce pure breeds biologically and culturally. This belief informed a negative perception of the concept of hybridity. Therefore, all measures were put in place to restrict or possibly avoid the occurrence of racial contamination. In *Born a Crime*, Noah refers to the Immorality Act of 1927. The purpose was "to prohibit illicit carnal intercourse between Europeans and natives and other acts in relation thereto." During apartheid, residential segregation of whites from blacks was an attempt to reduce racial contact to prevent cultural mixing and the anti-racial marriage law also limits the opportunity of racial defilement. Patricia's character, however, defies the law. Noah (2016:25-28) projects his mother's persona as a social deviant who in her personal and humble way rejects the idea of miscegenation. One can agree that she deliberately breaches the law when she seeks to be impregnated by Robert, a Swiss-German, not minding the legal and social consequences that ensue from her rebellious act. Robert, who is aware that their relationship is legally unacceptable and any procreation from it is criminal, initially declines Patricia's request. However, her persistence and love make him give in and he fathers Noah. Noah commends his mother's heroic act and love for him, which she already establishes even before his birth. It is undisputable that the expression of his mother's love was a driving force in his success.

2.7 Autobiography Theoretical Framework

Lejeune's (1989:4) definition of autobiography is "Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality". According to Lejeune's definition, an autobiography is the retrospective account of the narrator's life, including how lived experiences had shaped it to the present self. In contrast to fiction, which is an imaginative representation, autobiography relies on memory to tell stories from childhood to adulthood. Facts from memory make the narrator's "truth" contested, since it is believed that not all experiences from the past can be totally remembered. Furthermore, the author may include or conceal some aspects of his life stories to serve his purpose in deceiving the reader. Therefore,

time and deliberate acts of the narrator in concealing some information result in under- or over-presenting narrations in the text. These gaps weaken the validity of the autobiographical “facts”, thereby transforming the story to an “autobiography fictionalised” and making it subjective to the reader.

In the genre of autobiography, voice is an important signifier. It establishes the connection between the identity of the author, narrator and the protagonist through the use of the first-person pronoun “I”. This means that in an autobiography, the person who writes/ directly shares the narration and the protagonist are identical (Shen & Xu 2017:59, Anderson 2001:3). This is evident in *Born a Crime,* where the author, Trevor Noah, writes and narrates his story in the identity of self from the first-person point of view. Focalisation also forms a crucial aspect in the level and perception of a narrative. It is the perspective from which the story is told. It also considers the position of the narrator in the story. To elucidate further, Genette (1980:189-194) identifies three possible types of focalisation, which are zero focalisation/non-focalised narrative, internal focalisation and external focalisation. Internal focalisation applies to the two texts under study, where the omniscient narrator has an “all-knowing” perspective of the story and knowledge of characters. However, the narrative voice in Adichie’s work is heterodiegetic (not present in the narrative); it is positioned outside the novel, while the presence of Noah as a character in his memoir, *Born a Crime,* makes him a homodiegetic narrator. Nonetheless, focalisation plays a considerable role in the way a reader understands and interprets characters, but it is incapable of overshadowing the reader’s personal perception and judgement of the characters. Genette (1980) also notes the possibility of alternating between the perspectives from which a narrative is told. As much as zero focalisation is the narrative perspective in Noah’s memoir, it also employs internal focalisation, which allows the characters to be viewed from both fixed and multiple interior perspectives. As an illustration, the narration of Trevor’s past experiences, which shaped him to his present self, is told from a single perspective of Noah indicating the fixed point of focalisation. At the same time, the storyline of other characters who also experienced negative impacts of the same policy - apartheid - is shared in the narrative. Therefore, this exemplifies multiple focalisation providing the reader with multiple perspectives on situations.

Suh (2014) submits the impossibility of marking a clear distinction between autobiography and fiction, as both are intricately connected. In creating a textual representation or reporting a lived experience, the writer infuses literary embellishments to make the narrative interestingly engaging for the reader. This process of including fictional elements displays the artistic side of the auto-biographer. An example is Noah's improvisation of direct speech between his character parents Patricia and Robert to concretise the dialogue on his conception to his audience. Even though Noah had not been born by then, he reports his parents' conversation as though he was present. Furthermore, Noah deliberately uses hyperbole and metaphor in describing his birth humorously. His statement "I was born a crime" is a metaphoric acceptance that his birth was illegal, while the use of satire is a subtle criticism of apartheid. Genette (1980:213) asserts that self is a fictive structure in an autobiography, which means autobiography lies between a non-factual (fiction) and "factual-telling" narrative. It is not fiction, as it is meant to tell the truth about a person's life; neither is it purely autobiographical, since the author employs some imaginative styles and fictional elements in weaving his narrative creatively. Both autobiography and fiction mirror reality either through imagination or lived experiences. The former relies on authorial imagination to tell a lived experience or mirror reality, in the sense that fiction can connect with the author's life or relate to people's experiences. The self and perception of life are intrinsically linked to fiction. For instance, Adichie's *Americanah* is a depiction of migrants' realities in an environment where colour is a transgressive factor. In the same way, the protagonist, Ifemelu, is Adichie's alter ego. Fragments of Adichie's life are reflected in her blogger/migrant character, Ifemelu, whose physical description (colour, hair, accent) and diasporic experiences (racism, education, Preston fellowship) in some way fit the author's. Thus, *Americanah* may be a textual representation of Adichie's reality, that is, a "fictionalised autobiography". In the novel, the writer merges her diasporic experience with her creative imagination in exploring the diasporic realities of African migrants. Likewise, the mentioning in *Americanah* of Obama's election as the first black American president depicts an actual event in the political history of America, which again substantiates reality integrated into fiction.

To differentiate between the two genres: in autobiography, the author is the same as the narrator, whereas in fiction, the narrator is a fictive character authorised by the writer to tell the story (Genette 1980:213-214). To differentiate further, Shen and Xu (2007) attempt a comparative analysis on unreliability as it occurs in different narrative levels of the two genres. In terms of narrative in fiction, the reader transforms the characters into real beings in his/her imagination, while the incognisant audience in an autobiography is limited to the "truth" in the text and not interested in verifying beyond the text-extratextuality. This readership in autobiography remains "unaware of the possibility of unreliable narration in this genre" (Shen & Xu, 2007:48). On the other hand, the authorial and cognisant audiences assume similar roles in fiction and autobiography respectively, where they look out for reliability in the text.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the works of various scholars and critics on migration. Without mobility of people across national and trans-national borders, racial contact, cohabitation and segregation are almost impossible. Moreover, the ever-increasing mobility of Africans from their homelands to the West has been linked to different causes, especially economic and social gratifications. Consequently, this age-long migration phenomenon has evolved into a major trope in African literary production, starting from the literary works of the slave authors to the contemporary migrant writers. Their works depict diasporic realities such as alienation, fear, hostility, identity complexity and reconstruction, return and reintegration. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to investigate migration-induced conflicts in continental and inter-continental context. I argued that the presence or visibility of Africans and people of colour in western spaces is envisaged as a transgression. This inevitably subjects them to racial injustice and diverse forms of discrimination. Similarly, in some African countries, migrants within the continent are envisaged as the *othered,* which makes them feel uncomfortable and prone to xenophobic attacks.

However, in order to reduce or scale through hurdles of marginalisation, the migrant subject must redefine or form a new transcultural identity to settle in the new space.

Finally, albinism in relation to body otherness is examined. It has been investigated that albinos in Africa are perpetually discriminated against and not totally accepted in society. This occurs as a result of their “whiteness” or difference from normal skin colour. Body othering consequently reduces their self-esteem in society and affects their living in general.

CHAPTER 3

AMERICANAH: IMAGINING AFRICA IN THE WESTERN MILIEU

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the diasporic depiction of black migrants. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first, “Africans’ Identity Markers: Transgressive Implications”, investigates migration-induced conflicts experienced by trans-cultural migrants in host countries. As much as the physical attributes of a black migrant serve as an identity marker, they also contribute to othering in a racialised society. This chapter argues that physical features or appearance such as hair texture, accent, skin tone and naming constitute a transgression for the coloured body, thereby challenging her survival and coexistence in western nations. Africans within and outside national borders are constantly confronted with their colour and migrant status (and treated) as foreigners. Hence, they struggle through unhomeliness, depression, and displacement (physically and psychologically). These experiences often occur at the initial stage of relocating and usually endure throughout the period of stay in the contested home.

Furthermore, the second part, titled “Transcultural Hybridity: Accessing White Privilege”, examines the need for migrants to redefine identity in the face of racism. This means transcultural diasporic subjects need to renegotiate, reform, or mask up their identity to enhance a higher degree of self-worth and acceptance into the contested home. This renegotiation through hybridisation contributes to comfortable living for the subaltern. Moreover, Adichie uses her character, Ifemelu, plus other migrant characters as the channel through which she explores transgressive space and body. Through her novel, she reveals the positions of races on the social ladder and hierarchisation of colour in racialised environments and its implications for the lives of black diasporic subjects.

Likewise, dialogue in social media or blogging is a stylistic tool utilised by the author to explore racism. This section will examine how Adichie as a post-colonial migrant writer incorporates technology in her work to investigate racial imbalances. Through blogging,

Ifemelu, a non-American black, is able to uncover more truth on racism from diverse perspectives of her social-media audience. Ifemelu and her blog commenters, mostly black Americans, exchange views on critical issues such as race in America without being criticised. Even though race is noticeably a critical issue to engage in, anonymity displayed by Ifemelu and her blog followers creates an effective platform to discuss race without being accused of racial bias or feeling insecure. This stylistic tool and other artistic mechanisms deployed by Adichie in thematising transgressive space and body are discussed extensively in this chapter.

3.2 Synopsis

Americanah presents the story of a young Nigerian woman, Ifemelu, who migrates to the United States of America to study. On arrival, she experiences racism for the first time, since it is not an issue in her country. Ifemelu's skin colour constitutes a transgression that evolves into major challenges – acclimatising to her new home, thriving in her relationship, becoming a renowned blogger and living comfortably in her identity. Unhomeliness and inability to live constantly in a borrowed identity propels Ifemelu to re-embrace her real self and she returns home despite having American citizenship. Unlike Ifemelu, Obinze, her childhood lover is not lucky enough to relocate easily to his dreamland, America. However, he deviously travels on his mother's visa to Britain where he resides as an illegal migrant and is later deported. After 13 years of sojourn in America, Ifemelu returns to Lagos. The love between her and Obinze is rekindled owing to Obinze's marital unhappiness and dissatisfaction. The novel ends with Obinze announcing his divorce from his wife, Kosi to be with Ifemelu.

The novel explores Nigerian, British, and American culture and society, exposing how prejudicial forces affect the survival of border-crossers in new environments. With a narrative that challenges the negative perception of Africa and its migrants, Adichie provides an interesting analysis of race and identity in contemporary western societies. Likewise, the novel interrogates self-realisation and cultural assimilation.

The narrative is interwoven with transnational experiences of blacks, which are illustrated in the main characters, Ifemelu and Obinze. The narrative structure does not follow a typical, linear pattern. Rather, it is quite complex, with shifts in settings and points of focalisation, with the use of flashbacks. Adichie's departure from one perspective to another offers diverse views on issues such as intercultural relations, racial discrimination, identity, love, and migration, through which these views are projected. The fiction also examines a contact zone where diverse races, cultures and histories converge and merge to form the space of "self" and "other", while the spatial diasporic settings represent a convergence of diverse races and ethnicities.

3.3 Transgressive Implications of Africans' Identity Markers

Adichie's *Americanah* probes global concerns about colour politics through migration. It offers significant insight into the existing stereotyping of black migrants as subalterns in the West. Here, the diasporic subjects who are located racially, socially and economically outside the mainstream power blocks are termed the subaltern. They mainly constitute American blacks and African economic migrants in the western world (Adichie, 2013:138). Amonyeze (2017) refers to Kofo's perspective that:

> attitudes of the public regarding immigration evolved remarkably from the time the United States passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and a third of America's demography started viewing immigrants, especially if they came from outside northwest Europe, as a threat to the American way of life and values. The resistance to cultural pluralism is evident in the "us and them" binary social relationship which is the tap root of Western metaphysics.

This resistance to cultural pluralism is palpable in the construction of a binary social system, the "self" and "other", which forms the root of institutionalised racism and western cultural perceptions of race. Thus, Adichie's novel vividly illustrates the negative perception of Africa and how its migrants are excluded from the mainstream by the structure of whiteness in American society.

Owing to the continental crisis, Adichie captures Africans' perception of western countries as the ideal space for the fulfilment of dreams, propelling Africans to relocate transnationally. When Ifemelu gets to the US, she is appalled at how her American

dreams do not match her reality. She had felt that America would offer her the economic chances lacking in Nigeria. On the contrary, Ifemelu, like Obinze, becomes aware of her blackness, the racial marking and marginalising that exist outside her country. Ifemelu, acknowledging this reality, agrees closely with Fanon's assertion on race. Fanon (2008:89-90) maintains that:

> As long as the black man remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others … for not only must the black man be black, he must be in relation to the white man.

In America, her unconcealable Africanness consequently exposes her to discrimination. From the foregoing, there is a striking difference in the perception of race at home and in the diaspora. Race is not a reality in Nigeria. What exists in Nigerian culture is a subtle colour preference for a light-skinned appearance, which equates to attractiveness. For instance, a biracial or half-caste is bestowed social attention, as exemplified in the character of Ginika and Kosi. Ginika was the cynosure of beauty in high school and Kosi enjoys the attention she gets because of her light complexion, as she is sometimes mistaken as bi-racial. However, the issue of race is a more pervasive part of life in America and the UK. Interestingly, just like her protagonist who doubles as her alter ego, Adichie also had personal experience of racial discrimination while studying in America. She revealed this in an interview:

> … and race is something I discovered in America, because, when I was in Nigeria I did not think of myself as black, and then I went to the US and I became black … race is such a strange construct because you have to learn what it means to be black in America (NPR, 2013).

Ifemelu's characterisation reflects Adichie's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Ufomata (2012) contends that immigrants lack the historical experience of African Americans and the social experience of segregation and oppression, in their most blatant forms. They are also reluctant to assume the negativism that the larger American society attaches to the label, and they resent what they identify as latent hostility from African Americans, whom they perceive as not truly accepting them. This submission thus resonates with the ordeals of Adichie's transnational characters as they are transformed to a transgressive body by racial profiling and stereotyping in American society.

Ifemelu arrives in the US and the first of numerous racial labels she experiences is based on her accent. On her first day at the University of Philadelphia, her encounter with Cristina, the white receptionist leaves her humiliated.

> 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*" (Adichie, 2013:133).

The white receptionist talks to Ifemelu in a very slow manner because she believes non-American blacks have difficulty in comprehending an American accent. Initially, Ifemelu thinks that Cristina suffers a speech difficulty, hence her manner of communicating slowly. However, Ifemelu discovers Cristina deliberately communicates in such a manner because of her African accent. Cristina's response hurts Ifemelu's confidence:

> She shrank like a dried life. She had spoken English all her life, led the debating society in secondary school, and always thought the American twang inchoate; 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, 2013:134).

This experience marks the premise for the renegotiation of identity. It introduces her to the profound racism from the dominant culture. The soreness of otherness is further portrayed when Ifemelu is refused a waxing service at a spa because of her colour.

Adichie equally projects how disparity in complexion directly bars African transnational migrants from accessing social privileges. An instance where politics of colour plays out is the relegation of Aunty Uju in her medical profession. She recounts her experience to Ifemelu of how a patient displayed racial contempt while consulting. Aunty Uju's white patient feels racially superior to her and avoids her service. She cannot stand being managed by an African doctor who firstly, she considers inferior and secondly, incompetent. This signifies that the issue of race constantly challenges satisfactory living for migrants societally and career-wise. For someone such as Aunty Uju, her professional status does not spare her from racial blows. Her patients evaluate her based on her colour rather than her expertise. On the other hand, Ifemelu, a liminal migrant, experiences downward mobility, as her three years of university education in Nigeria is of no value in

America. In fact, Mwombeki advises her not to include her previous education in her resumé because “American employers did not like lower-level employees to be too educated” (139). This again portrays how career advancement for blacks is marred by colour. Because the racialised environment favours the dominant colour as “natural occupants” of some professional sectors, non-whites found in the same environment are presumably occupying a transgressive space. Consequently, their blackness challenges their competence, which they constantly need to prove. Another scenario of otherness in Aunty Uju’s diasporic experiences occurs when she visits the public library and forgets to show the security guard the unreturned book in her handbag. The guard tells her, “You people never do anything right” (182). From this context, one may infer the generalised negative labelling meted out to Africans. The guard not only sees Aunty Uju as the offender, but generalising by using the subject “you people” directly implies the cultural code of racial grouping/profiling. Similarly, Dike is the youngest of the diasporic characters, yet he plays a prominent role in thematising transgressive space, transgressive body, and displacement. At school, he is falsely accused of hacking into the computer network. While at a camp, Dike suffers social exclusion when he is denied access to sunscreen distributed to the white children because the camp leader thinks he does not need it (183). Dike’s response to the former accusation, “You have to blame the black kid first” (349), underscores the depth of racial discrimination against non-whites in American schools. The tone here is that of an innocent child overwhelmed by the feeling of colour consciousness and negativity attached to blackness. Likewise, Eminike was once deprived of transportation service owing to his colour:

> … he had hailed one night, on Upper Street; from afar the cab light was on but as the cab approached him, the light went off, and he assumed the driver was not on duty. After the cab passed him by, he looked back idly and saw the cab light was back on and that, a little way up the street, it stopped for two white women (Adichie, 2013:275).

Eminike’s state of mind is well described by the narrator in the following lines: “he was shaking, … his hands trembling for a long time, a little frightened of his own feelings” (275) because an unknown man had deprived him of his rights because of his blackness. His spontaneous expression is that of overwhelming resentment. Another situation of negative stereotyping of Africans is when Elena, Ifemelu’s roommate, warns her not to kill her dog with voodoo because it had eaten her bacon. Here, Adichie registers a

misconstrued belief in the western world that Africans are fetishists. From the exemplified scenarios above, labelling becomes a discriminatory symbol, which projects an African migrant as a transgressive body by utilising segregation and racial intolerance to weaken the social comfort of the subject, thereby reducing her self-esteem, values and cultural traditions as inferior.

Another glaring instance of otherness is seen when Kimberly, Ifemelu's employer, requests the service of a carpet cleaner. When Ifemelu answers the door, the white cleaner is surprised to find a black woman as the homeowner. His reaction is that of confusion and hostility. The moment he realises Ifemelu is the nanny, he becomes comfortable and friendly. Ifemelu is astonished and hurt at the same time by this reaction. Apparently, the cleaner does not expect a non-white migrant like Ifemelu to own a property. Ifemelu might be wealthy enough to own one, but being non-white is enough to upset the status quo. This incident particularly points out that blacks are presented as a homogenous group and that group is presumed to be wretched. Similarly, Laura and the African students at the university of Philadelphia reinforce the depiction of Africa as a continent ravaged by diseases, poverty and starvation. Laura links Ifemelu's relocation to hunger and poverty as she rhetorically questions, "… if she was eating all of this wonderful organic food in Nigeria, why would she come to the U.S.?" (147). She further buttresses her stereotypical representation of Africans by displaying a beauty magazine with a white lady surrounded by malnourished black children. The African students also mimic the western belief of Africa as a disease-stricken continent (139). Here, depicting Africa as inferior may not necessarily be pertinent to historical differences; rather the problem is how the difference is perceived and acted on, as shown in the above instances.

Throughout her novel, Adichie encapsulates how issues of racial injustice and social criticism affect one's personal life, ranging from career, education, identity and relationships to marriage. Ifemelu's relationship with Curt is criticised and viewed as racially unacceptable by society and Curt's family. Though Curt's mother cannot conceal her dissatisfaction when she meets Ifemelu, she also believes she cannot influence her son's decision, since she put pressure on him to get married. In Ifemelu's opinion, an interracial relationship in a racialised society strains romantic connections. While both

partners are good together in private, they are continually separated by the issue of social identity in public. Besides, race increases agitated emotions. Ifemelu sometimes conceals her emotions from Curt in order not to be misconstrued. From this narrative, Adichie explicitly shows that racism and alienation affect even the most seemingly private human affair as Ifemelu sums up her observations on relationship as it affects the subaltern. Some other members of the minority groups in Adichie's America do not experience racial discrimination as much as blacks (205). From the foregoing, blacks are the major targets of marginalisation among the minority groups; that is, they are a transgressive body in a colour-hierarchicalised society.

3.4 "Otherising other": Diasporic Intra-racial Alienation

Adichie's *Americanah* focuses not only on the exclusion of the black body from the mainstream culture, but also examines the marginalisation of blacks by blacks in the diaspora. Akingbe and Adeniyi (2017) aver that "configuration of Other in *Americanah* is in two forms: the geographical ostracism of blacks or the poor from white Americans, and the resentment of Other by another Other. A funny scenario of 'Otherised Other' is presented, indicating a victim victimising another victim." The above situation is vividly captured at Mariama's saloon. While commenting on movies, both Halima and her South African customer unapologetically register their resentment of fellow Africans:

> "In my country, South Africa, Nigerians are known for stealing credit cards and doing drugs and all kinds of crazy stuff. I guess the films are kind of that too."
>
> "Yes, Nigeria very corrupt. Worst corrupt country in Africa. Me, I watch the film but no, I don't go to Nigeria!" She half waved her palm in the air.
>
> "I cannot marry a Nigerian and I won't let anybody in my family marry a Nigerian, Mariama said and darted Ifemelu an apologetic glance (Adichie, 2013:187).

The conversation presents the reader with an uncovering of intra-other rivalry among African nationals. As seen in the dialogue, Mariama's South African customer takes advantage of the opportunity to unleash preconceived and unreserved bitterness against Nigerians. Furthermore, Mariama not only dwells on this negativity, but ensures she extends it to her family by sabotaging marriage to Nigerians.

Similarly, on her way to Princeton, Ifemelu seeks a white passenger's view on race. The middle-aged man diverts his answer to adoption: "Nobody wants black babies in this country, and I don't mean biracial, I mean black. Even the black families don't want them" (4). The man's words confirm that black identity is unwelcome and a transgression where blacks exist as minorities. He also reveals how blacks are not even comfortable in adopting a baby with the same skin colour as theirs because they do not want to complicate the burdens of being black in a white space, which they experience. In the same vein, Halima, one of the braiders, tells Ifemelu: "When I come here with my son, they beat him in school because of African accent … Black boys beat him like this. Now accent go and no problems" (187). Halima's child is victimised in school by black immigrant children who are already "Americanised" through accent. Just like the protagonist, Halima's son is sold out by his African accent and perceived as inferior. However, he is no longer bullied when his accent changes over time to become like that of the others. Consenting to this dilemma foregrounded by Adichie, Akingbe and Adeniyi (2017) remark that African immigrants "look down on Africans as Other, and not 'Us', despite their pitiable occupation of the lower rung of the American race ladder". This submission portrays the intolerance of Africans of one another, which manifests in the way they avoid encroaching into their space through marriage, migration, adoption, and other means of intra-racial contact. Besides, it is also a means to evade further complications of being black.

3.5 Transcultural Hybridity: Accessing White Privilege

Colonised subjects often experience multifaceted changes while navigating social and cultural shifts in a coloniser's space. As African transnational migrants become conscious of their colour outside the continent, they begin to recognise themselves in new ways through the eyes of each society. For this reason, adapting and conforming to the white standards become essential to thrive in a transgressive space. This explains Ifemelu, Aunty Uju, Obinze, Ginika, Iloba, Emenike, Aisha and other diasporic characters' situations in the US and the United Kingdom, respectively. Adichie echoes African

immigrants' survival strategies in the form of denying or giving up their real identity through hair, accent, identity theft, body size and deceptive marriage.

Bhugra and Becker (2005:3) contend that "when an immigrant feels isolated from his or her original culture, unaccepted by the majority culture and experiences lack of social support, a consequent sense of rejection and low self-esteem may occur". Ifemelu cannot get a decent job and pay her rent because she is black. She reluctantly sleeps with the tennis coach in order to resolve her financial crisis. Through this experience, Ifemelu plunges herself into guilt, depression, and displacement. For Ifemelu to purge herself of guilt, she resorts to distancing herself from Obinze by not receiving his calls or replying to his e-mails. Although the distancing might look like a form of therapeutic healing to Ifemelu, it eventually ends her relationship with her lover, Obinze.

Since she is confronted with multiple hindrances incurred by her blackness, the only escape is to conform to western standards to enjoy some social privileges in a racialised society. According to Zalanga (2012:41), "a person's identity is shaped by his or her social location, which in turn is shaped by his or her geographical location and the opportunities it provides". This resonates with the traumatic experiences of Adichie's transnational characters as they try to conform and manage multiple shifts of identity through change in accent, body size, identity theft and impersonation, "sham" or deceptive marriage and similar issues.

In *Americanah,* Adichie seems to establish the view that intonation defines identity or nationality and an impeccable American intonation (depending on which part of the country one comes from) holds the key to American society. In Africa, a person's nationality is sometimes indicated through his accent, whereas overseas, aside from skin tone, accent is a major identity marker. Nevertheless, it becomes a transgressive feature in America as it concerns the blacks. This is well illustrated through the character of Aunty Uju as she adapts her name to suit American diction in a phone call: "Yes, this is Uju." She pronounces it you-joo instead of oo-joo (104). Another instance is seen when Aunty Uju goes to the store to shop and tells her son to put back an item she is not willing to pay for:

> "Dike, put it back," Aunty Uju said, with the nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. *Pooh-reet-back*. And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-abasing (Adichie 2013:108).

It is clear how Aunty Uju is intentionally integrating herself into American culture through faking her accent. She unapologetically feigns her intonation as a means of complying with foreignness. She switches accents in the presence of whites to earn subtle respect and acceptance and lessen the "othered" attention elicited by her colour. The creation of her new persona is influenced by the racial injustice she experiences. It is surprising to her cousin Ifemelu how she effortlessly subdues her real self in the face of racism. Aunty Uju also feels an acquired accent will at least give her son a social resemblance to American children. Even though he looks different, speaking like them will buy him integration. Hence, she makes sure Dike speaks with an American accent. This is further seen in the way she rebukes Ifemelu for communicating with Dike in Igbo (109). Through this deliberate act, Aunty Uju denies Dike his African heritage. She hinders his cultural connection to his language as she tries to protect him from losing the acquired American accent. The overwhelming situation consequently results in Dike attempting murder because he is faced with a complicated identity, lost between "unknown Africa" and (unwanted in) America. This pattern is equally replicated in Nichola's children in the way Nichola ensures they are raised in the British culture: "He spoke to them only in English, careful English, as though he thought that the Igbo he shared with their mother would infect them, perhaps make them lose their precious British accents" (239). Similarly, Ifemelu's encounter with Cristina, the college receptionist, propels her to switching her accent. She feels humiliated that Cristina Tomas, who thinks her English is not good enough, subdues her identity. Faced with this, she immediately picks up an American accent to avoid a future reccurrence of the incident (134). Later in the saloon, she receives a compliment on her accent, which gives her a double-edged feeling of social satisfaction and betrayal. She feels her American accent has elevated her status but does not complement her African roots.

In these instances, Adichie depicts that a sound American accent unbars social restrictions in society. Ifemelu beautifully digs at how the African braiders switch accents in trying their best to succeed in America (9). Through them, she presents a group of

immigrants who are not educated enough to converse fluently in English but try to imitate an American intonation. Thus, the writer emphasises how important a good intonation is for acceptance in a marginalised society.

Hair is a significant motif in the novel. The fact that *Americanah* opens with the protagonist's intention to braid her hair outside Preston points out that the issue of hair is beyond the surface of the story. Hair is symbolic in unravelling the politics of colour. The narrator describes how the protagonist could not get her hair braided in Princeton, but the suburban part of Trenton. This shows segregation in the residential area dominated by whites. The Princeton community apparently presents saloon services unfriendly to non-whites. Hence, Ifemelu needs to travel to Trenton to have her hair braided. The politics of African hair in the US has been criticised by various scholars, including Wendy Cooper (1971), who emphasises how hair in American society is an "easily controlled variable that can denote status, set fashion, or serve as a badge". The author further remarks that "hair is additionally one of the most important physical features in racial classification, further proving its political (and often racist) implications" (Cooper, 1971:181).

Back in Nigeria, Ifemelu's Afro is never a concern for her. On the contrary, it becomes a major symbol of discrimination for her in America. In Adichie's US, hair becomes a professional standard for hiring and a yardstick for success as Aunty Uju explains; "If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional ... you are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (119). In another instance where Ifemelu is presented with a job opportunity, Ruth reiterates the same advice; "Lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters. We want you to get this job" (202). With pain from a burnt scalp, Ifemelu, like her aunt Uju, voluntarily conforms to the public's aesthetic standard by relaxing her kinky hair, straightening it to look like white hair. She needs to break free from the obstacle depriving her of being employed which is her natural hair.

> Her hair was hanging down rather than standing up, straight and sleek … She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hairdresser had flat-ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss (Adichie, 2013:203).

Thereafter, Ifemelu suddenly becomes aware of the consequences of her action. Not only does she feel sad about complying with a standard of beauty that centres on whiteness; she perceives that a sense of her identity is gone with it, which is a price she had to pay to gain social inclusion. The hairstylist tries to reassure her and make her comfortable in her new look when she equates her hair to whites' (203). The woman indirectly associates straightened hair like Caucasians' with the elegance to which every woman must aspire, to mirror the misleading perception of some black females suggesting an Afro style is tacky. Despite this, Ifemelu re-embraces her kinky hair before she returns to Nigeria, thus putting an end to the beauty standard imposed on her by western society. She displays her confidence in the way she firmly chooses the braid colour and disapproves of Aisha's suggestion to relax her hair (12). Ifemelu reclaiming her natural hair equates to self-love. In addition, the narrator subtly presents her as an anti-racist who rejects any objectification of racism.

Besides hair, body size is another beauty standard in America which Ifemelu is compelled to adjust to. When she meets Ginika, her childhood friend, in Philadelphia, she is surprised at how much weight she has lost. Ginika sees the chance to enlighten her on the conception of body size in Nigeria in contrast to America. Ginika tells Ifemelu:

> "Americans say 'thin'. Here 'thin' is a good word." In Nigeria, if "you lost weight it means something bad, but here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you … Do you know I started losing weight almost as soon as I came? I was even close to anorexia" (Adichie, 2013:124).

From this, one may deduce that Ginika's body transformation to satisfy the American concept of body size is deliberately achieved by becoming anorexic. In African culture, fatness connotes comfortable living, whereas in western culture, it is the opposite. "Thin" is the desirable body size that translates to "sexy" in Americans' beauty milieu. To attain the desirable American body, Ifemelu rethinks and re-sizes her body too. From this awareness, she develops a consciousness of her body and even inculcates it in her eating habits.

Further to the tactics for sustenance in a transgressive space is impersonation. Adichie explores impersonation or identity theft as a desperate means of sustenance for transnational migrants through characters such as Ifemelu, Obinze, Illoba and Vincent.

Starting with the protagonist, her experience with the coach signifies the incident for giving up her African identity to which she has been clinging. For her to circumvent a racialised society, she needs to reconfigure her identity. First, Aunty Uju introduces Ifemelu to identity theft so as to secure a job, since her employability is restricted by her visa. She provides Ifemelu with a social security card and driver's license owned by Ngozi Okonkwo (148). Through this, Ifemelu's identity becomes faded and altered as she pretends to be someone else. This impersonation costs her social visibility and self-worth as she constantly struggles to maintain her switched identity. During a job interview, she forgets to answer as Ngozi, which raises suspicion, thus intensifying a reclamation of her identity. Hence, when she gets her credit card embossed in her name, she becomes excited. Her name on the card is synonymous with regaining her identity and this generates a sense of satisfaction (162).

Obinze faces the same predicament in England. Getting a job as a means of sustenance is the most crucial thing for a migrant. Sadly, despite Obinze's education and skills, it is difficult for him to secure a job. To deal with this problem and work as a legal migrant, he impersonates Vincent and agrees to pay him monthly while using his social security card. Obinze considers his fraudulent act as a means to survive; meanwhile, Vincent sees it as normal business and a way to exploit people who have no choice, like Obinze. With Vincent's documents, Obinze finds employment. Though some jobs are humiliating, Obinze is not bothered because he can pay his bills. Describing this experience, the narrative voice again emphasises a partial loss of identity and social invisibility. Besides, there is a kind of enslavement where an illegal migrant is being held to ransom by the person he is impersonating. Vincent demands an increase in pay and when Obinze declines, he threatens to sell him out to his employer. Obinze declines Vincent's request because he feels his economic right is being abused. The next day, Roy, Obinze's boss, receives an anonymous call, which prompts him to question Obinze's migrant status and identity. He requests Obinze's documents to verify the truth and Obinze promises to present these. However, he resigns from his job the next day for fear of being exposed. Again, Obinze becomes jobless and returns to finding a permanent solution to become legal. This leads to his next move of getting married to a British citizen with the aim of obtaining a green card. From this situation, Adichie again accentuates the plights of illegal

black migrants as individuals who constantly live in fear and face instability both physically and emotionally.

In a related manner, Adichie reveals that the stability of African migrants in the West is ensured through a "sham" or deceptive marriage. Adichie captures such marital fraud that stems from migration in her major characters, Ifemelu and Obinze, and minor characters such as Nicholas, Emenike, Okoli Okafor and Aisha. At some point, each character mentioned engages in a deceitful relationship or marital affair where they marry or attempt to marry a British or American citizen to gain a permanent residency permit. To begin with, Aisha, the Senegalese hair braider simultaneously dates two Nigerian men with green cards in the hope that her marriage to either of them will help her gain permanent residency. Hence, she pleads with Ifemelu to persuade one of her boyfriends, Chijioke, to marry her. She believes the tribal bond as Igbos will strengthen Chijioke's conviction and achieve her desire. Even though Ifemelu can relate to this situation or reality, she withstands Aisha's persuasion and equates it with craziness.

Similarly, Ifemelu's relationship with Curt is premised on accessing privileges through his status. At their first meeting in Kimberly's house, the narrative voice describes Curt as "'a rich white guy from Potomac' with a mother also rich, privileged, and white American" (192), an attractive description that entices Ifemelu. Ifemelu is aware of their racial incompatibility, ingrained by a racialised society, yet pretends to be in love so as to leverage on the relationship that caters to her needs. The narrative voice echoes Ifemelu's thoughts thus:

> With Curt, she became, in her mind, a woman free of knots and cares, a woman running in the rain with the taste of sun-warmed strawberries in her mouth … She went hiking with him, kayaking, camping near his family's vacation home, all things she would never have imagined herself doing before. She was lighter and leaner; she was Curt's Girlfriend, a role she slipped into as into a favourite, flattering dress (Adichie 2013:196).

Her role-playing gives her huge contentment in the form of a good job, American citizenship, Preston fellowship and an overall elevation of social status. Hence, it is less surprising that Ifemulu cheats on Curt because she has achieved her set targets.

Unlike Ifemelu, Obinze is not lucky enough to have a rosy process of legal documentation. When his visa expires, he recalls that Nicholas, his university friend who migrated to

England, once told him: “if you come to England with a visa that does not allow you to work … the first thing to look for is not food or water, it is an NI number so you can work … Marry an EU citizen and get your papers” (239). This prompts him and Iloba to contact some Angolans in the business of sham marriages, who assure him a means of legal residency through it (228). After making a payment of 2000 pounds, Obinze is introduced to his supposed fiancée, Cleotide, a British citizen. On the wedding day, while awaiting his marriage to Cleotide, Obinze is regrettably apprehended for visa expiration and deported to Nigeria. Before his arrest at the venue, Obinze notices the name of his classmate, Okoli Okafor, on the notification board for intended marriages. He instantly comprehends Okoli’s marriage as “a marriage for papers” (232). He can relate to this, since he identifies with the intention behind marriage based on deception.

Obinze’s description of Emenike’s marriage also matches this reality. In the context of African morality, if a man marries a woman who is “old enough to be his mother” (248), his marriage could be unacceptable and he could be suspected of ulterior motives. This reality is mirrored in Emenike, married to a white American lady who “is old enough to be his mother and doesn’t talk to ordinary people anymore” (248). From Obinze’s observation, the age disparity between Emenike and his wife is proof that he married basically for spousal immigration benefits. The effect of Emenike’s marital choice is a subdued persona. “In the harsh glare of life abroad” he becomes withdrawn from his old associates, whom he now sees as “ordinary” in a ridiculous attempt to preserve his acquired status. It is imperative to note that Adichie satirises a noticeable trend among some Nigerians in the western space who treacherously marry much older American and European citizens for selfish benefits.

Moreover, Obinze and Ifemelu’s employment experiences clarify the migration tussles both legal and illegal African diasporic subjects experience while fending for themselves in transgressive zones. In the process, they become socially silenced, conflicted in identity, subjected to choiceless exploitation and humiliating jobs. All these characters who are unable to obtain regular permits desperately resort to illegal solutions to make ends meet. For instance, Aisha's desperation to marry Chijioke is well understood when it is explained that she could not attend her father’s burial because she had no “papers”.

It describes a scenario where the diasporic subject cannot voluntarily return to her homeland in case there is an urgent reason for it, because she has breached immigration rules, thereby stranding herself. From the author's informed perspective, her depiction of how illegal African immigrants and migrants bypass immigration laws provides better insight into the reasons they do so. Perhaps the extreme nature of these laws in western countries is the reason for resorting to fraudulent means to obtain permanent residency. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the aforementioned survival tactics deployed by the characters, especially impersonation are responsible for identity displacement. In addition, Adichie's characters are the window through which she examines cultural integration and the plight of documented and undocumented immigrants in diverse western spaces that seem to be racially encompassing but are the opposite in reality. It is ironic for blacks to live in a free state such as America, yet be confined by the shackles of racism.

3.6 Social Media: Stylistic Technique for Diverse Perception on Race

In *Americanah*, Adichie intentionally adopts blogging as a literary technique to explore an emerging literary style. In a society that undermines racial dialogues, the blog is a media space to discuss race openly. The launching of Ifemelu's blog not only emerges from a yearning for freedom and self-expression but is also intended to connect with people in similar circumstances. After Ifemelu's relationship hits rock bottom, she confides in her Kenyan friend, Wambui via email. In reply to Ifemelu's mail, Wambui proposes the blogging idea to relay her migrant experiences: "This is so raw and true. More people should read this. You should start a blog" (295). Ifemelu's breakup with Curt hence births the blog, influencing a wider moment of racial self-awareness, which is elaborated through writings the blog posts.

> But telling Wambui what happened was not satisfying enough; she longed for other listeners, and she longed to hear the stories of others. How many other people chose silence? How many other people had become black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze? (Adichie, 2013:295).

In the lines above, the use of rhetorical questions expresses Ifemelu's inner search for identity and deep connection with people in the same boat. Through blogging her reality, she derives closure and satisfaction. She gains the authority to share her perspectives openly and connect with others. The presence of an active audience makes the blog an interactive space through regular comments. These comments reflect diverse perspectives on racism and shed more light on racial matters. Furthermore, Adichie directly addresses the issue of race and social hierarchisation in America via the experienced character blogger, Ifemelu. By using italics to headline each blog post, Adichie underscores the relevance of each blog post relating to the thematic concerns presented to the reader. The blog lays bare the narrator's views on race and beauty in Nigeria and America. Through it, the issues of racism are directly confronted and it also makes the reader realise the contemporary attitude and views on race in America.

In an illustration in the blog titled "Open Thread: For All the Zipped-Up Negroes", the blogger reaffirms the blog's objective and the purpose of solidarity it fulfils for its online community. She intends the blog as a safe haven for non-American blacks where they can openly voice their lived experiences without fear of being silenced. Ifemelu launches the blog as an avenue to break free from the discriminating silence she long endured and to connect with people in similar circumstances: "This is for the Zipped-Up Negroes … Non-American Blacks who don't talk about Life Experiences … Tell your story here. Unzip yourself. This is a safe space" (307). Paying attention to the author's lexical choices, the words "zipped-up" and negroes" are lexicons emphatically incorporated to reinforce the major target subjects in the novel. The use of "zipped-up" is descriptive of migrants who are socially excluded and confined within the 'othered' zone, whereas "Negroes" is a direct mimicry for racial prejudice of Americans. Hence, this choice of words specifies the target audience.

In the blog post, "To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: You Are Black, Baby", Ifemelu elucidates the status of blacks on the American social ladder and bluntly objects to denying one's identity in a bid to transition from the space of "non-being" to "being" (220).

On a different level, the blog posts aid the reader in comprehending racial debates and developing a sense of the ongoing sentiment towards race in the west, especially

America. This is well illustrated in “Understanding America for the Non-Blacks: A Few Explanations of what Things Really Means” (350). The blog post centres on the evasive strategies adopted by Americans to bypass controversial discourses on race. The narrator points out how Americans strategically use words in context (related to residence, job and culture) to avoid being caught up in race discussions which they find uncomfortable.

Finally, in one of the protagonist’s blog posts, the writer conveys the understanding of how racial imaging is conditioned on histories; that is, history is placed at the heart of racism. This implies that a society’s reaction to race hinges on its historical experiences. The post records chronicles of events for the reader to know how history is pivotal in perpetuating racism; in it, history meets fiction (325).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, attempts have been made to investigate how Adichie explores the confinement of non-whites within transgressive spaces dictated by race, excluding them from mainstream America. The chapter also discussed how the marked difference in physical appearance or biological features that constitute a transgressive body compounds othering. In the process of renegotiating their transgressive body to be integrated, migrants’ identity may be silenced. Berning (2015:20) explains that “Intercultural novels are particularly well suited for probing into states of otherness which lead to a questioning of the self”. Therefore, *Americanah* is both an intercultural and a revolutionary text that probes the marginalisation of black migrants in the west and people of colour in general. It also articulates a new social identity for Africans.

In addition, Adichie utilises her authorship to re-imagine Africa in global race politics. Through her literary work, the author creates a counterculture on global imagining of Africa and its subjects by transforming an identity imposed by history. In the novel, Ifemelu is intentional about shaping a positive image of herself from her diasporic experiences and rewriting her story against the odds of racial prejudice. Although Ifemelu is compelled by the dominant American society to subvert her alterity for social acceptance, she

reconsiders her decision and clings to her real identity. Later, when she becomes successful, she resolves to return to her homeland, a place where she experiences greater satisfaction, thereby countering “western norms of cultural assimilation” that assume the multicultural space of western countries is superior to the rest of the world (Amonyeze, 2017).

Finally, relying on Bakhtin’s theory of polyphony and dialogism, “multi-voicedness” in fiction means the author’s position allows the characters (including the readership) to interact freely and speak with their own voices. This means that the author, characters and the reader have multiple perceptions regarding the argument and interpretation of the “truth” of the novel. This leaves room for a dialogic approach to seeking the truth. Therefore, besides addressing racial issues, Adichie’s *Americanah* also echoes the need for more international exploration of Africa’s “positives” as opposed to dwelling and acting on the “negatives” fuelled by the “single story”[2]. Adichie’s position aligns with Bhabha’s (1994) assertion that the prejudicial way of viewing the human world is composed of separate and unequal cultures rather than an integral world that perpetuates the myth of imaginary people and places. Adichie describes the single story as a narrative that presents one notion, usually the negatives, and consequently results in stereotypical views.

[2] See Adichie’s TED talk on “The Danger of a Single Story.” YouTube, uploaded by TED, 7 October 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg&t=804s

CHAPTER 4

BORN A CRIME: ENGAGING NOAH'S THEMATISATION OF NATIONAL DESPAIR

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the "displacement" of non-whites in their South African native lands by western colonists. In this section, critical attention is paid to various perceptions about the racial order in South Africa through a close study of the text. It is imperative to note that the literature under study is a memoir that details the childhood experiences of the writer, Trevor Noah, under apartheid rule in South Africa. Hence, beyond the nonfictional status of the text, this study will approach it as a literary work by paying attention to Noah's artistic agency in the thematisation of a national racial conundrum.

The first sub-heading, "Investigating the Racial Binary", accounts for racial imbalances as Noah's daily reality. It explores the injustices of institutionalised racism. Besides, this subheading argues that the racial disharmony generated during the apartheid period negatively affects both the society and individuals such as the writer and his characters who double as real personae. Even though the racial policy of oppression and exploitation is evidently targeted at non-whites by the white-dominated leadership, it is worth noting that, ironically, some whites also suffered the harrowing impacts of racial injustice originally established in their favour. This argument will not be omitted in this section of the study.

Noah's *Born a Crime* accounts for his displacement in a police state that marks his existence as criminal. Based on the Immorality Act under the apartheid regime, Noah's birth is blatant evidence of a transgression committed by his parents. The consequence is the author's constant search for his individuality and integration in the community. The memoir presents the reader with the writer's struggles in finding a balance within his environment and other critical situations that challenge his individuality. Noah elucidates how his identity conflicts with his racial categorisation. Even though he is racially classified as (mixed-race) coloured, he comfortably identifies as black. Therefore, the development of his self-bestowed (black) identity is a constant factor that displaces him among people

and places. He always needs to defend his preferred choice of race, especially when it does not match his skin. Furthermore, language is a central theme in the memoir. Noah explores language and humour as the means to bridge the racial gaps that marred his childhood and teenage years. This is argued further in this chapter.

The second sub-heading, titled "Interrogating the Politics of Gender", gives a gender reading and analysis of the memoir, *Born a Crime*. It examines the plight of black women in South Africa as double victims of social deprivation in the larger society and domestic violence on the home front. The author portrays patriarchy as a flawed cultural practice in connection with domestic abuse in his South African society. Hence, the section argues that the dual identity of a black woman makes her vulnerable. Noah also presents his mother's struggles for self-emancipation from a life of hardship owing to racial prejudice. She ensures that her child is not held back with the shackles of segregation that operate in their world. Thus, freedom as motif runs through the text – from Patricia's rebellion against the socio-political restrictions of apartheid to the natives' struggle for liberty.

4.2 Synopsis

Born a Crime is an intriguing chronicle of the childhood and teenage life of the Daily Show[3] host, Trevor Noah, in his racially stratified home country, South Africa. The memoir details the struggles of growing up as a mixed-race child under the apartheid government in South Africa, as echoing effects of colour prejudice heavily influence each memory. Noah was born at the time when the anti-interracial marriage law was fully operational in South Africa. The law forbade any sexual relationship or marriage between whites and other racial groups in South Africa. However, Patricia, Noah's black mother, challenged and defied the anti-miscegenation law by engaging in a romantic affair with Robert, a Swiss-German. The living proof of their illegal relationship was a mixed-race child. Thus, Noah became a product of racial transgression. In other words, Noah lived as a transgressive body in a heavily transgressive/racialised South African space. As a child, his freedom

[3] The Daily Show is a popular talk show in America that airs nightly on Comedy Central. Its contents are satirical and comic discussions based on the latest news and political figures. Trevor Noah is the first black and African to host the show, succeeding Jon Stewart in 2015. `

was restricted. This led to the protagonist spending his childhood hiding from society for fear of being arrested by apartheid law enforcement officials. He was confined within his grandmother's compound, with his cousins as playmates. In addition, the memoir tells the story of a young man with a great sense of humour and a mother's unconventional and unconditional love, while they both struggled to thrive in a racially challenged society at that time in history. *Born a Crime* is a narrative of Noah's relationship with his fervently religious, fearless and rebellious mother - his teammate, a woman resolute in saving her son from poverty, violence and abuse that ultimately threatened her own life.

Like *Americanah*, *Born a Crime* is not written in a linear pattern. Rather, Noah employs a complex structure of narration with multiple flashbacks and stories-within-the-story. Each chapter begins with a vignette containing certain historical facts, gripping events, or flashbacks that provide insight or lay a premise for further development of the chapter. The literature is divided into three parts. The first accounts for the circumstances surrounding the birth of the writer, his childhood memories of growing up as a mixed-race child with his maternal relations and within the community. The second part of the memoir centres on Noah's journey through teenagehood, while the latter part of the memoir focuses on Patricia Noah, the author's mother. Noah recounts his mother's relationship, marriage(s) and crises that almost claim her life. Perhaps, the author deliberately saves this account for the latter part of his memoir to eliminate the emotional sentiments of the government's failure in helping her get justice from her abusive ex-husband, Abel.

Through his memoir, Noah educates the reader on South African history, religion, and cultural practices, as well as geography. His accounts of the apartheid rule inform the audience about the nation's historical ordeals, while the information on religion and culture exposes the traditional belief system and spirituality of Africans. For geographical exposition, Noah's use of imagery for a vivid description of Soweto and Alexandra townships familiarises the reader with hardships in these environments. Furthermore, Noah's *Born a Crime* probes the intersection of history (apartheid), individual lives and experiences in South Africa. As seen in the memoir, the protagonist's identity and experiences are directly linked to the politics of race and class ingrained in the 'Rainbow Nation'.

4.3 Apartheid

Clark et al. (2013) define apartheid as “established policy to separate physically all races within South Africa in a hierarchy of power with whites at the top and Africans at the bottom.” They further note apartheid as a system that legally divided races to the advantage of the whites and the detriment of non-whites. As stated earlier in Chapter One under the sub-heading “Migration; The Premise of Transgressive Space and Body”, the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa stemmed from migration. In 1652, the Netherlands white settlers of the Dutch East India Company arrived at the Cape of Good Hope for trading purposes, followed by British traders. The migrants of Dutch origin adopted the name Boer, which metamorphosed to Afrikaner. Invariably, the white settlers began contacting and interacting with the Aboriginal blacks, the indigenous settlers who were the Khoisan, the predecessors of the black South Africans. Over time, the white settlers, which included other Europeans migrants, populated the country, extending their settlements inwards and claiming the territories of the indigenous group.

After being defeated by Britain in the second Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902), the Dutch settlers formed a coalition against the British with other minority white settlers who were mostly German and French, forming the Afrikaner National Party. On assuming power in 1948, the National Party institutionalised apartheid policy to colonise the natives internally. Noah recounts this historical moment thus:

> As the British Empire fell, the Afrikaner rose up to claim South Africa as his rightful inheritance. To maintain power in the face of the country’s rising and restless black majority, the government realized they needed a newer and more robust set of tools. They set up a formal commission to go out and study institutionalized racism all over the world. They went to Australia. They went to the Netherlands. They went to America. They saw what worked, what didn’t. Then they came back and published a report, and the government used that knowledge to build the most advanced system of racial oppression known to man. Apartheid was a police state, a system of surveillance and laws designed to keep black people under total control (Noah, 2016:16).

Similarly, Noah is a product of a relationship that resulted from migration. Robert, his father, was a Swiss expatriate who migrated to South Africa for business. His relationship with Patricia started with him letting a room in his apartment illegally to her because the law forbade blacks to reside in places marked out for whites.

In an attempt to dominate the majority blacks on their native soil, the white supremacists came up with arbitrary rules and segregationist policies. After the National Party[4] won the parliamentary election in 1948, the Afrikaner party aimed at transforming South Africa into a white country by totally dominating[5] the majority blacks. To actualise this goal, various discriminating laws were enacted against non-whites to segregate them socially, politically and economically. These segregation policies included the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* (1949) and the *Immorality Act* (1950) in which interracial marriage and sexual relationships were forbidden. *The Population Registration Act* (1950) racially categorised South Africans into four racial groups – whites, coloureds, Indians, and blacks. *The Group Areas Act* (1950) relocated the blacks to informal settlements, the Bantustans[6]. *The Bantu Education Act* (1953) placed the education of the natives totally under the control of the system. *The Extension of University Education Act* (1959) banned the admission of non-whites to English-speaking universities. It established race- and tribal-based institutions to cater for natives (Clark et al., 2013:52). The apartheid government also implemented pass laws to control the mobility of blacks. For blacks to access the urban areas designated for whites, they had to possess a passbook with detailed data of the holder and whoever violated the pass law was arrested, jailed or deported to the homelands.

The unfair treatment, which culminated in poverty, poor educational service and other socio-economic suffering, compelled the black majority, political activists and organisations to protest against the tyrannous regime. After over 40 years of hard struggles, both internal and external pressure forced the government to reach a compromise on racial equity and an end to the oppressive rule. Following the resignation of P.W. Botha as president in 1989, F.W. de Klerk became president and began

[4] Before then, the Nationalists, founded in 1914, had ruled under Herzog but later fused with the SAP in 1933 following the gold standard crisis. It was a new National Party that came to power in 1948.
[5] The blacks had always been excluded from power. In 1920, when South Africa obtained self-government from the British Empire, only whites were allowed to vote, except for a few blacks in the Cape Province. One of the first things that the National Party did when it came to power in 1948 was to exclude those few blacks who did have the vote.
[6] The Black Homeland Citizenship Act that was later passed in 1970 regarded native South Africans as Bantustan citizens. They could be deported back to the homelands at any time, even if they lived and worked in the metropolis.

negotiating for equal rights in what would be a multi-racial democratic nation. In 1991, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and later became president in the first democratic election in 1994. It marked the transition of apartheid to democratic rule, ushering in a new dawn in South Africa.

David Attwell and Derek Attridge (2012), in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature,* take a look at the influence of apartheid on South African literature. These historical antecedents greatly shaped the nation's psyche and influenced the literary productions of the period. In fact, literary works produced at the time were simultaneously famed within its mono-thematic preoccupation with racial issues and sub-themes of protest, anti-apartheid, socio-political conflicts and resistance. Among these protest publications were Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), Alex La Guma's *A Walk in The Night* (1962), Nadine Gordimer's *The Lying Days* (1953) and Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Bird* (1986) which all criticised the unjust treatment of blacks and in general, the ills of the repressive regime. From the foregoing, this cursory exposition on South African apartheid is vital, since apartheid formed the situational background of Noah's birth and influenced major events in his formative years. Moreover, racial conundrums and socio-political crises are consequences of the repressive regime.

4.4 Investigating the Racial Binary

Noah's *Born a Crime* begins with the Immorality Act of 1927 in which any sexual relationship and interracial marriage between whites and blacks in South Africa were prohibited. This was later transformed into the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950 (Voget 2018:18). Noah refers to this law as the status quo at the time of his birth. His persona is already controversial right from the moment his mother, Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah decides to conceive him. It will be argued later in the chapter that Patricia's decision to bear a mixed-race child is a move made out of rebellion against an oppressive system. By requesting Robert to sire her child, Patricia exploits her relationship with a white man to upgrade her social status and gain access to the privileges denied her colour. In other words, she intends to use Robert's whiteness to alleviate her disadvantaged position. Fanon (2008:54) asserts that a woman of colour in

a romance with a white man desires nothing “except a bit of whiteness in her”. He further argues that the woman of colour covets a white man as a ladder to attain wealth and high status. This scenario is similar to Ifemelu’s relationship with Curt in *Americanah.* Ifemelu does not deny the racial incompatibility in her relationship imposed by society, yet she leverages it to gratify her needs and social status, which produces her American citizenship and Preston fellowship. Therefore, both characters - Patricia and Ifemelu - can be said to have romantically exploited the white men/lovers to their own advantage.

At his birth, Patricia conceals Trevor’s real identity with regard to his race, nationality and tribe. The repressive rule informs her decision to conceal her child's origin to protect him. This subtly marks the beginning of Trevor’s conflicted identity. Trevor’s hybrid identity as mixed-race classifies him as inferior to his white father but superior to his black (Xhosa) mother, but throughout his stories, he finds it impossible to connect with his white or coloured heritage because he identifies mainly as black. As a child, he is denied freedom of association, as he is confined to his grandmother’s compound and not allowed to mix with other children to avoid being discovered by the police. The situation is very traumatic for the three-year-old Trevor, who at one point negotiates his freedom his by digging a hole to escape and play outside (36). Subsequently, long-term loneliness stemming from isolation permanently turns him into an introvert. The protagonist’s character is portrayed as a reflection of a complex multiracial society. Just as the racial classification of the citizens is arbitrary and complex, so is Trevor’s hybrid identity. The implication of growing up in a stratified society with regard to race and class is an identity crisis for Trevor. He is constantly lost between his multiple identities and often struggles to fit into society. On different occasions relating to his residential locations and education, Trevor is racially alienated and always in a dilemma as to which race to associate with. For instance, in Soweto, where he lives with his grandmother, he is the only “white” child and apparently an outcast among the black children. In the white neighbourhoods of Hillbrow and Highland North, he is coloured, while in Eden Park, everybody looks like him. Despite the fact that Trevor’s skin colour makes him automatically acceptable in Eden Park, a predominantly coloured environment, he is still not welcome because other children see him as a traitor because of his black identity. At school, Trevor Noah is faced with the

challenges of social integration because even the academic environment is structured to match the racial stratification that exists in the larger society. Narrations of the author's experiences present him as the *othered* in an otherised society. In other words, he lives in a transgressive body and exists in a transgressive societal space. The effect of these circumstances on the protagonist is physical displacement and emotional torture, which propels him towards a constant search for his identity.

Furthermore, the protagonist relates the implication of race on forging a bond with his father. Living under the repressive laws, he is denied the right to associate freely with his father and be well nurtured by him. Trevor Noah does not conceal the pain of being separated from his father, especially when he compares his father's love to his stepfather's maltreatment of him. His situation is worsened by the absence of a father figure in his life. Trevor's grandfather, Temperance Noah, is a dead-beat father, a divorcé who flirts around with women and is typically irresponsible. His uncle, Velile, is a nonentity who often gets into fights with people, while his stepfather is a drunk, an abuser who does not care for his family. Abel, his stepfather, does not love Trevor or show any interest in him. This is concretised in Trevor's words when he says, "He never gave me the affection of a father. I was never his son" (298). The tone here reveals the bitterness and disappointment of a child in a stepfather who does not live up to his expectations. He constantly reminds Trevor that he is unwanted in his family and physically expresses his resentment by abusing him. Abel also restricts Trevor visit to his father, thereby jeopardising the father-son relationship. Because of these unpleasant experiences, Trevor constantly yearns for a relationship with his father (298).

Trevor's grandparents typify characters who are deeply affected by racism. Hence, they defer to the power of whiteness and unconsciously assimilate racism. This is evident in the way they both accord Trevor the superiority represented in his skin colour. By way of illustration, Temperance Noah addresses his grandson like his white boss by calling him 'Mastah' (62) and insisting on being Trevor's chauffeur. Furthermore, when Trevor plays with his cousins and injures Bulelwa's ear, Francis does not beat Trevor, the culprit but deals with her other grandchildren, Mlungisi and Bulelwa. When Patricia returns and asks why Trevor has been spared, Francis replies, 'Because I don't know how to hit a white

child, … I'm scared I'm going to break him. I don't want to kill a white person. I'm so afraid' (63). Unlike his black cousins, Trevor's skin gets bruised easily because of its fairness and Francis fears harming him. This scenario shows that Temperance and Francis have a misconstrued idea of race. Both characters' perceptions and judgement are influenced by an endemic racial experience.

Furthermore, because Trevor is light-skinned and speaks English fluently, Francis believes the power of effective prayer lies within the body of her light-skinned grandchild. This further displays her internalising the inferiority of black colour because she already equates whiteness with superiority. Therefore, the actions of Trevor's grandparents justify their unwillingness to break the racial hierarchy long embedded in South African society.

Racial bias is further explored in how criminal justice favours whites against blacks who breach the anti-miscegenation rule. To this end, Noah avers:

> The police would kick down the door, drag the people out, beat them, arrest them. At least that's what they did to the black person. With the white person it was more like, 'Look, I'll just say you were drunk, but don't do it again, eh? Cheers.' That's how it was with a white man and a black woman. If a black man was caught having sex with a white woman, he'd be lucky if he wasn't charged with rape (Noah 2016:26-27).

The above excerpt describes injustice as it relates to race in Noah's South Africa. Blacks caught in the act are dealt with ruthlessly, but whites are only warned but barely penalised. Noah's summation here foreshadows how Patricia is denied justice when she reports domestic abuse and attempted murder by her ex-husband. This substantially reveals a prejudiced judicial system in the delivery of justice for blacks.

Furthermore, Noah depicts race and racism as critical issues in the way society is highly hierarchised. Although blacks constitute the majority, they still occupy the lowest rung on the social ladder. The whites are the superior race while the coloured or mixed race exists in the middle. Racial marking and social stratification are further evident in the residency assigned to citizens by the government. For instance, black-designated zones are the Soweto suburb and Alexandra slum; coloureds reside in Eden Park, while whites live in the highbrow neighbourhoods of Hillbrow and Highland North. To access the metropolitan areas, the locals must possess a pass document. The law bars the right of black South

Africans to own land and reside or work where they want. In other words, the movement of native blacks is totally controlled as they become immigrants on their own soil. The country is transformed into a transgressive space where accessing and residing in some locations becomes a transgression for non-whites. In other words, the blacks are a transgressive body in a white-controlled country. In this case, Ojo-Ade's (1992) *Exile at Home* resonates with the possibility of being disintegrated and displaced even in one's home country. This was evident when an individual was deprived of normal life in the homeland because of socio-political and economic tyranny within society. Moreover, the segregationist system assigned careers to citizens unequally based on racial grouping. For instance, blacks were prohibited from taking up skilled labour, but Patricia broke the career embargo and secured a secretarial job. The establishment and practice of racial boundaries limited non-whites in all spheres of life.

Born a Crime highlights how racism eats deeply into the psyche of the innocent young generation. For instance, at HA Jack Primary, the children practically segregate themselves into racial groups where the dominant whites are perceived as "self" and the rest as "other". Noah summarises it thus:

> I had never seen people being together and yet not together, occupying the same space yet choosing not to associate with each other in any way. In an instant I could see, I could feel, how the boundaries were drawn (Noah 2016:69).

The oppressive system of apartheid ensures that social division is implemented in all sectors, including education. In HA Jack Primary, the children are racially stratified; the white children are assumed to be brilliant and occupy class A, while the blacks are put in class B. Trevor, because of his lighter skin shade, is placed in class A but feels like an outcast and redeploys to class B where he integrates comfortably with the black students. However, the school counsellor tries to rationalise to Trevor the entire idea behind the racial classification. She tells Trevor his choice will affect his future negatively, but Trevor's decision remains unflinching (71). This situation establishes a physical and psychological border that confines the black children in the *othered* space exactly as it happens in the larger society. In addition, social stratification is an insidious form of prejudice designed to destroy the morale of non-white students. At the same time, it artificially inflates the self-worth of white children. In Chapter Six of Lamont's (2005: 73)

Historical Controversies and Historians, Dubow attempts to locate the evolution of apartheid ideology. In investigating the rationalisation and intellectual justification of whites' beliefs in racial superiority, Dubow terms the above situation "scientific racism", where the white race is considered more genetically intelligent than the black race. Various critics contend that the idealisation of apartheid hinges on naturalising the social hierarchy based on biological concepts; that is, apartheid ideologists believed racial hybridisation would lead to contamination of race. Hence, the preservation of white progeny could best be achieved through anti-miscegenation. Dubow (2015:238) states that "obsessive fears of race mixture, white degeneration and contamination marked the phase of apartheid's rise". Visibly, one major intent of apartheid pioneers was to have the blacks under total control and promote the interest of Afrikaners at all costs. Arguably, scientific racism was pivotal to the ideology strand of apartheid and reinforced implementing repressive rules such as the Mixed Marriages Act and the Bantu Education Act (Lamont 2005:72). In the same vein, Dubow (2015:237) states:

> … although scientific racism was by no means the most important or determining ideological strand of apartheid, it was an indispensable component or trace element in apartheid discourse, an assumption that helped sustain the everyday assumptions of difference.

Furthermore, Dubow states that Christoph Marx's investigation of South African Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd reveals that his political views on segregation were heavily influenced by the perception of German developmental psychology that Africans were intellectually handicapped. The implementation of the Bantu Education Act (which provided black South Africans with inferior education that automatically limited them in career advancement) could possibly be Verwoerd's way of concretising this idea and protecting the Caucasian intelligentsia (Dubow 2005:244). On his election to power as prime minister in 1958, he aggressively promoted the apartheid legacy of his predecessors. H.F. Verwoerd, denying his racist propaganda, claimed that the policies were the means for individual races to develop independently, that is to say, "separate development".

Noah satirises the arbitrary racial classification in his country where race is determined by physical attributes such as hair texture. The author refers to the pencil test as an absurd measure adopted by the government in grouping citizens into races. In addition to this, Noah criticises the eccentric categorising of race. This is evident in the case of a coloured who can be upgraded to white, relegated to black or marked Indian (139). Another example of this absurdity is the classification of Chinese as blacks, while Japanese were categorised as whites, for political and economic reasons. Noah lampoons the complexity of race grouping in an illustrated dialogue between a policeman and a Japanese. While going about his duty, the policeman is confused with distinguishing between a "black" Japanese and a "white" Chinese who are both typical Asians. This scenario is ironic and an attempt to ridicule the complex reality of racialisation during apartheid. Noah also satirises religious practice in apartheid South Africa, where the reader gets to know that worship is anchored in racist laws (6-7). Churches are established to cater for each racial group; thus, one finds black, mixed and white churches.

4.4.1 Mixed-race/Coloured People

Noah's *Born a Crime* depicts the complexity of the South African racial order. In addition to this, it is an explicit exploration of the effect of racism per race. While blacks are the most marginalised, coloureds/people of mixed race are not exempted. In the societal stratification, coloureds are racially superior to blacks but inferior to whites. In this regard, they enjoy more privileges than blacks but are denied the full privileges that whites enjoy. This in turn makes mixed-race people constantly aspire to whiteness at all cost and despise their biological trace of blackness. Noah explicates this with a reference to the arbitrariness in the racial categorisation of citizens. Therein, coloured subjects apply for a race upgrade under the law, which oftentimes they are denied. Simultaneously, coloureds consider it demeaning to associate with blackness or relate their bloodline to blackness even when it is biologically evinced: "One worst way to insult a coloured person was to infer that they are in some way black" (140). The coloureds' desire for racial

upgrading is to totally eliminate the inferiority associated with their partial blackness. Thus, coloureds also regard their partial blackness as a transgressive body.

In Eden Park coloured neighbourhood, Noah's blackness turns into a stumbling block for him. When he relocates to the neighbourhood, he is delighted to see that he shares a resemblance with the children. However, the coloured children regard him as an outcast because he identifies as black. Unlike previous neighbourhoods where he lived, Noah expects to fit in easily in Eden Park. Unfortunately, his expectation is marred by his nativeness. Even though Trevor is a mixed-race child, the other children consider him a cultural sell-out because by conversing in African dialects, he negates their expectations.

Furthermore, Noah highlights how coloureds are racially profiled as notorious criminals in the community. The author presents the reader with personal experience to substantiate his claim thus: "By the time I was a teenager, anytime I was profiled by cops or security guards, it usually wasn't because I was black but because I looked coloured" (276). When Trevor is remanded in a cell for driving a car with no vehicle particulars, he fakes his identity as a coloured gangster to ensure his safety among real criminals. This makes other criminals avoid him for fear of getting into trouble with a "coloured gangster".

4.4.2 Racial Prejudice: Aftermath of the Dominant Race

Although racial prejudice was targeted at South African blacks, some whites also bore the backlash. The system restricted romantic and marital relationships between races. In a situation where a white developed a romantic feeling for a black, such a relationship became a mirage owing to the racial incompatibility imposed by the Immorality Act. This situation is illustrated through the character of Robert, whose love life is deeply affected by racism. As much as he is in love with Patricia and wishes to nurture the relationship, the shackles of institutionalised racism hold him back. This consequently affects Patricia, as she ends up marrying an abuser who almost kills her.

A further instance of racial injustice suffered by whites is evident in Robert's deprivation of fatherhood. To begin with, Robert is legally stripped of his paternity because an indication of his name on his son's birth certificate is criminal. Thus, Trevor's birth

certificate does not include Robert's name as the father. Equally, he is not present in the early life of his son, Trevor. Robert is robbed of the opportunity of nurturing his child within a nuclear family, even though he accepts and loves his child from birth, ignoring Patricia's demand for him to be an absentee father. Unlike his mother, Trevor does not really know his father closely. Noah recalls that while they were playing together in the park, Robert suddenly fled for fear of being apprehended because Trevor had publicly called him Dad. He might have been traumatised by the guilt of abandoning his child at that time. Perhaps the trauma of being perpetually separated from his son influenced his decision to relocate to Cape Town. This incident reveals how apartheid demoralised people in society owing to such challenges in family relationships as seen in Robert's publicly fleeing from his son. Although Patricia ensures that Trevor spends time with his father occasionally, most of the protagonist's childhood is spent with his maternal family. Little wonder Patricia requests Trevor at age 18 to reunite with his father to rebuild the relationship that they (Patricia and Robert) both value.

Furthermore, Noah reveals how Robert's anti-racist act ends his successful business. Despite being a white with racial privileges, Robert does not shy away from condemning racism in its entirety, as seen in Trevor's description of him: "One thing I do know about my father is that he hates racism and homogeneity more than anything, … Because racism never made sense to my father, he never subscribed to any of the rules of apartheid" (22-23). Robert's anti-racist stance is portrayed in his establishment of a restaurant that integrates all races. This restaurant exemplifies a levelling of classes and races where customers interact freely without borders. When advised by the police to mark racial boundaries for his customers, he shuts down the restaurant instead. Hence, Robert loses his thriving business owing to his allegiance to anti-racism.

On the other hand, whites are depicted as being in perpetual fear of black violence, crime and reprisals. Based on this, the white children in Highland North practically isolate themselves from the others. All of them are confined within the compound of their houses against their wishes.

4.5 Sociocultural and Economic Impact of Racial Prejudice

4.5.1 Family Dysfunctionality

Noah's narrative traces dysfunctionality in black families to apartheid. The nature of the labour system demanded that the men leave their families in the homelands to work in the townships. Since the townships were transgressive spaces for black families, (blacks had to possess a pass document to cross this border), other members of the family were forced to live in the rural settlements. Noah affirms that:

> apartheid had taken away their fathers as well, just for different reasons. Their fathers were off working in a mine somewhere, able to come home only during the holidays. Their fathers had been sent to prison. Their fathers were in exile, fighting for the cause (Noah, 2017:45).

Consequently, children were disunited from their fathers and wives separated from their husbands automatically became the family matriarchs. Thompson (2000:215) shares a similar view when he remarks:

> African families were disrupted … In the reserves, for example, where families were split by the periodic absence of men, women were assuming the full burden of maintaining the domestic economy as well as bringing up the children.

Different situations from apartheid denied other black children the opportunity of being raised by their fathers; just like Trevor, they were also restrained from a paternal relationship. Similarly, the female domestic workers employed by whites were not permitted to live in with their children, even while caring for the children of their employers. On the basis of the aforementioned, apartheid is held responsible for the breakdown in black family units.

In her book titled *Like Family: Domestic Workers in South African History and Literature*, Ena Jansen (2019) attempts a sociological and literary exploration of the role, indignities and subjugation of black domestic workers in South Africa. The author traces the issue from colonisation where the slaves were subjected to dehumanisation while carrying out the enterprise tasks of their European masters. She argues that the pattern is replicated through domestic workers in apartheid and post-apartheid South African society. Jansen further contends that the white employer's children often realise discrimination and class

distinctions through the experiences of some domestic workers in their homes. As a result, they are conditioned to conform to society's expectation that superiority is determined by colour. This explains the generational realities of domestic workers. Aside from the harsh realities in their white bosses' homes, Jansen's work focuses on and celebrates the strengths of the domestic workers (who are integrated like a family member) in upholding the family ties of their employers and bridging some socio-cultural gap, which is often ignored by society. This strength as investigated by Jansen transcends beyond the domestic frontier into politics in the way domestic workers are involved in political activism to resist the disintegration of family caused by apartheid and negotiate family unity.

Jansen's argument resonates with the thematic exploration of the extremity of the pass laws on black women in Elsa Joubert's (2019) *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena*. The story details the unlimited life struggles of the protagonist, Poppie Racheal Nongena, a Xhosa domestic worker in Cape Town who struggles relentlessly against the separation of her family in the face of apartheid. Having lived all her life in Cape Town, she is denied the renewal of her pass document after 17 years of constantly renewing it. She becomes an illegal immigrant, left with no choice but to be deported to the homeland. All her efforts and perseverance, including her boss's intervention to be reconsidered by the authorities, prove abortive. The impact of the pass laws affect Poppie beyond bearing, stirring up a revolution. Jansen credits Joubert's literary work for exposing (to the white audience in particular who lacked exposure or awareness) the ferociousness and damage of the pass laws.

4.5.2 Poverty

Noah investigates the interconnectedness of poverty and crime as the socio-economic implications of colonialism and apartheid. Years after the supposed end of apartheid, most blacks still struggle for financial freedom owing to the socio-economic marginalisation entrenched by colonialism and the apartheid regime (Lundahl & Petersson, 2013). Fanon (2008:188) states that:

> Colonialism hardly ever exploits the whole country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it extracts and exports to meet the needs of [the] mother country's industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the colony to become relatively rich. But the rest of the colony follows its path of under development and poverty or at all events sinks into it more deeply.

The above highlights poverty as a lasting pitfall of economic exploitation on the colonised, which continued as a pattern into apartheid.

Noah thematises poverty, growing up with his grandmother in Soweto. The architectural design of Soweto houses typifies the prevalent poverty in black families. Francis's house consists of two rooms with no toilet or kitchen. All family members sleep in the same room, with the children on the floor and the adults on one bed (49). This shows the level of poverty in the township dominated by blacks.

Poverty is further thematised through Patricia's persona. Trevor recalls that his mother literally lived in a hut in Transkei with her 14 cousins where they all struggled to feed on just one chicken for dinner. On days of extreme hunger, she consumed food meant for pigs and dogs. Her experience of abject penury was so extreme that she ate soil to satisfy her hunger (77-78). Patricia's childhood experiences of penury motivated her to give her child the best she could offer. She was determined to secure a decent childhood for her son. Hence, she ensured that Trevor did not lack the basic things, including a good education.

In a bid to save the family's auto-mechanical business from collapsing, Patricia sold the house and moved with her family into the mechanic workshop. Their situation was quite pathetic; mopane worms (edible caterpillar) and wild spinach were the only food they could afford for a long time. At times, meat remnants intended to feed dogs were what they consumed as meat. Customers' vehicles brought for repair became Trevor's bed. Trevor relates this period as the most traumatic time in his life.

> I live in a garage. Oh, I hated it so much. I hated sleeping in cars. I hated working on cars. I hated getting my hands dirty. I hated eating worms (309).

Food marks the level of poverty in the homes of Noah's black South Africans. For example, cheese has symbolic status among the black less privileged in Alexandra. Whoever can afford the luxury of cheese is better off than the rest.

From these instances of poverty identified in the memoir, Noah views poverty as a generational tread re-enacted in an endless cycle by blacks. Most blacks still continually withstand the worst of economic exclusion foisted on them by the legacy of apartheid.

4.5.3 Crime

Poverty is directly linked to crime because many people resort to stealing to make ends meet (Kelly, 2000). After Trevor graduates from high school, he moves to Alexandra because he is unable to further his education to tertiary level because of financial constraints. In Alexandra, he becomes a shrewd entrepreneur venturing into sales of pirated CDs and stolen items traded by hoodlums. Soon, he is faced with the reality of a society where crime is the only option for survival. In describing this ghetto reality, Noah portrays the uncomfortable truth about crime thus:

> Crime does the one thing the government doesn't do: crime cares. Crime is grassroots. Crime looks for the young kids who need support and a lifting hand. Crime offers internship programs and summer jobs and opportunities for advancement. Crime gets involved in the community. Crime doesn't discriminate (245).

The above depicts the reality of assimilating crime. By personifying crime, the protagonist emphasises crime as the survival tactic for wretched blacks. For them, crime becomes the only means to escape poverty and hopelessness. The narrator's choice of words in describing crime as caring is an ironic depiction of crime as a persona who ensures the wellbeing of the hopeless who engage in it. Furthermore, the reality of crime in Alexandra as presented by Noah reveals how crime is normalised in the society. Nonetheless, because of his background and education, Trevor still considers himself privileged because he has the choice to quit such a life. Besides, he becomes aware that people who start committing crime always find it difficult to quit.

4.6 Language as Motif

Language is a significant motif in Noah's *Born a Crime*. Noah investigates the diversity of language as a symbol of either unity and/or disintegration. The narrator avers that:

> Language brings with it an identity and a culture, or at least the perception of it. A shared language says, 'We're are the same'. A shared language says, 'We're different' (58).

This signifies language as a cultural identity and a symbol of oneness. Noah further reinforces this view, quoting Nelson Mandela: if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart (279).

Patricia's fluency in various languages helps her traverse ethnic borders seamlessly and thrive in a marginalised society. Through language, she is able to unbar the political and social restrictions forged by the "powerful" racial group. For example, her exposure to English affords her the opportunity to work as a secretary regardless of the racial restrictions on skilled jobs. Similarly, Patricia effortlessly switches between languages to suit situations. An instance is seen when she and Trevor are in an Afrikaner store and the shopkeeper instructs the guard to follow Patricia and her son, so they do not steal. Patricia replies to the man in Afrikaans, thereby forcing him to apologise for criminal profiling. Abel, her ex-husband, also communicates in various South African languages "in order to deal with his customers" (207).

Because of his "in-between" identity, Trevor frequently battles alienation in his society. Nevertheless, just like his mother, his multilingual skill helps him manoeuvre challenging situations. Noah notes: "I learned to use language like my mother did . . . It became a tool that served me my whole life" (55). Through language, Noah survives the hybrid space that forms his controversial identity (he is born white, racially classified as coloured but identifies as black) and builds inter-tribal relationship across his immediate environment. This grants him a degree of freedom and flexibility, which other coloured children in the same predicament probably lack. Thus, Trevor describes himself as 'a chameleon' (67). This metaphorically translates to his flexibility in adapting language, accent and mannerism to engage people's perception of him. A chameleon takes on the predator's colour for safety; in this same way, Trevor uses language as a defence mechanism.

Patricia, Trevor and Abel's multilingual status validate Fanon's (2008:18) position that a "man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language."

Furthermore, in his narration of a matric dance with his date, Babiki, Trevor describes his frustration owing to the language barrier. On getting to the venue, Babiki stays in the car and refuses to go in because she does not understand or speak English. Perhaps she feels intimidated by her inability to communicate fluently in English with Trevor and his friends, hence her refusal to follow Trevor in. When they both return to Babiki's house, surprisingly, she kisses Trevor. Trevor realises that even though his matric dance has been ruined by communication challenges, Babiki's feelings for him are intact. Here, language is depicted as a motif of confusion between the two teenagers because it initially hampers their relationship.

4.7 Freedom as Motif

Freedom signifies another prominent motif in *Born a Crime*. Patricia's persona is that of a social deviant who does not bow to the socio-political restrictions imposed on her. She is ruthlessly determined to break free from the racial bondage, not minding the consequences. First, she declines working as a maid, a job typically reserved for her race. Instead, she takes up a secretarial job in a pharmaceutical company, a rare opportunity for any black. Again, she crosses a geographical barrier by residing in a white-dominated area. The climax of her rebellion is when she decides to have a child with a white man. Noah describes her audacity in challenging the system thus:

> If you ask my mother whether she ever considered the ramifications of having a mixed child under apartheid, she will say no. She wanted to do something, figured out a way to do it and then she did it (27).

Despite being aware of the consequences of such a grievous offence, she is headstrong in her persuasion of Robert to father her child. From these instances, it is evident that Patricia personally embarks on a voyage of freedom long before it becomes a reality in South Africa.

Patricia also ensures that her child enjoys freedom right from birth, especially within a police state that undermines it. To protect her child, she conceals his real identity either as a Xhosa or Swiss-German (technically unacceptable to the government) and bestows on him Swaziland citizenship (31). This subtly marks the beginning of the protagonist's conflicted identity. As Trevor grows, Patricia ensures he enjoys elite opportunities. The following quotation affirms this:

> My mom raised me as if there were no limitations on where I could go or what I could do. When I look back I realize she raised me like a white kid — not white culturally, but in the sense of believing that the world was my oyster, that I should speak up for myself, that my ideas and thoughts and decisions mattered (88).

This illustrates how Patricia raises Trevor to believe that racial prejudice should not limit his choices and ambition. She teaches and offers him freedom long before his counterparts access it. These series of purposeful choices Trevor's mother make prepares Trevor for an exceptional life.

For Trevor, who constantly battles physical and psychological displacement with his controversial identity, language and humour are tools that facilitate his freedom. Hence, he is able to fit in, move freely between diverse cultures and blend in with individuals from different races. Despite his encounter with different cultures in a multiracial society, Noah's use of language and humour acts as a tool for togetherness and opposing racism. Moreover, his comic personality is reflected in his writing style; he employs dark humour to recount his early life experiences as dysfunctional and traumatic and to satirise the vices of apartheid. The author also beautifully crafts his stories with humour in thematising critical issues such as racial prejudice, poverty, crime, family dysfunctionality, violence, abuse and other issues that constitute nationwide despair.

In the same vein, Noah describes how the *othered* group strive for freedom from the oppressors. This is recounted in the history of colonialism presented in the memoir where the colonised battle the colonisers for freedom. The native South African in a similar manner strives for liberty from the whites' oppressive government during apartheid.

4.8 Investigating the Politics of Gender

Noah's memoir probes the harrowing experiences of African women as victims of sociocultural, political, economic discrimination and domestic abuse. Through Patricia's persona, the narrator portrays a woman victimised by the society owing to her skin pigmentation. She also suffers abuse from her spouse. On a night when Patricia is returning from church with her children, she is almost stranded and hails a local taxi. While driving, the taxi driver capitalises on the vulnerability of Patricia's femininity to attack her personality. He starts with an unsolicited lecture on the dangers of being out at night, then insinuates that it is only a promiscuous woman who endangers her life by riding alone with a strange man at night. Patricia authoritatively tells the taxi driver to mind his own business. This makes the Zulu taxi driver feel emasculated and furious that first, a woman, and second, a Xhosa, challenges his chauvinism. For the male taxi driver, it is a transgression to be challenged by a woman. His ideology is further aggravated by the ethnic stereotype that projects Xhosa women as promiscuous. The man unapologetically calls his passenger a whore and vows to teach her a bitter lesson; an intention to abuse her physically, sexually or both. This incident clearly illustrates that the female gender is twice vulnerable in South African society (18). First, she is vulnerable for being black in a racially stratified environment and second for being a female in a highly patriarchal (African) society. Both her colour and gender are disadvantageous to her person, making her a transgressive body inhabiting a transgressive space.

In engaging the prevalence of spousal abuse, the text explores the fact that the majority of black South African women are constantly assaulted by their men. Studies (Daniels et al., 2017; Langa-Mlambo et al., 2014) have shown that about 50% of South African women suffer domestic violence. Marupeng (2019) reports that the lives of South African women and children are threatened daily through the increasing incidence of gender-based domestic violence. According to Marupeng, statistics reveal that about 131 210 cases of gender-based violence were reported to South African police stations between 2014 and 2018. In recent years there has been an overwhelming increase in this societal menace from 3.9% to 41,583%. Unfortunately, not many perpetrators were arrested and penalised compared to the numbers reported (Cohen & Vecchiatto, 2019). This has led

to major protests in society and the media, raising more concern from the government. The Institute for Security Studies indicates that domestic crime in the country is deeply ingrained in its past and perpetuated across generations. The Institute further asserts that:

> Most violent behaviour is learned or tolerated in the home, communities and schools where children either directly experience or witness violence. Many people grow up believing that violence is an acceptable way to solve disputes or assert authority. This drives much of the violence that occurs between men in public places, and at home against women (Cohen et al., 2019).

In Noah's argument, this scourge has eaten so deeply into the fabric of society that it is unconsciously normalised. In some way, the males equate battering to chastising expressed in love or a way of resolving conflicts at home, while the females helplessly acclimatise to it (45). In some cases, women who are fed up with constant abuse revolt drastically by burning their spouses with hot water. When doing so, they can be likened to a goat pushed against the wall, left with no choice but violence to regain freedom. Noah further reveals that domestic abuse is rooted in the traditional practice of patriarchy. Ademiluka (2018), referring to Bvukutwa, similarly avers that the oppression of women is undoubtedly an element of patriarchy. According to Ademiluka, patriarchy is a phenomenon that positions women beneath men in ranking and personhood. Noah satirises patriarchy in the Tsonga tradition in which women are subject to total control by men. Referring to the cultural practice rooted in patriarchy where females bow to males, it may be argued that the cultural expression symbolically translates to gender subordination. Patricia is a non-conformist to the Tsonga culture and its perception of women. She indulges in certain forms of humour, such as dramatically rolling on the ground to ridicule the tradition. Like her previous satirical practices, she does "mock the system" to "fight the system" (297). Abel is infuriated by Patricia's non-conformity. He feels Patricia publicly embarrasses him by violating his male supremacist idea, making him feel less of a man. Abel's aggression can thus be described as a time-bomb awaiting explosion.

When Abel's auto-mechanical business begins to fail, he becomes frustrated and resorts to alcoholism. Patricia steps in to rescue the business from collapsing. She supports

Abel's interest and ambition by investing her time, entire finances and enterprising skill in the business. However, Abel's insecurity makes him view his wife's benevolence as a way to usurp his position as the head of the home. It is further aggravated by the accolades customers shower on Patricia for the smooth running of the business. The situation is ironic, because Abel feels intimidated by his wife's financial smartness and independence. Frustrated and depressed, he begins to batter Patricia, making it look like his only option to restore his self-esteem and assert control over her. Patricia's initial experience of physical assault occurs when Abel returns home drunk and almost sets the house ablaze carelessly. Patricia angrily rebukes him for being careless but unfortunately, Abel beats her up. Enraged, she goes to the police, but they dismiss her complaint. Instead, she is accused of triggering Abel's anger and bringing the consequence upon herself. The police ask, 'What did you do? Did you make him angry?' (303) to justify her abuser.

While Noah holds Abel responsible for the violence he commits, he also criticises the incompetence of the South African judiciary system in neither helping nor supporting his mother in getting justice. Twice, Patricia reports domestic violence to the system instituted to protect her, but ironically, the police are insensitive and refuse to help her. The circumstance prompts Patricia to retreat to her family house helplessly. Nonetheless, when Abel is sober, he seeks forgiveness and pleads with Patricia to return home. Patricia is reluctant to accept Abel's plea but Frances, her mother, convinces her otherwise. Francis remarks that battering is a normal experience for women and mentions that her husband beat her too. Sibongile, Francis's oldest daughter, is also maltreated by her husband, Dinky, who only masks himself as a patriarch to brag about controlling his wife. Here, Francis's remark reveals that victims of domestic abuse are psychologically and culturally conditioned to display their compliance with it. Equally, this scenario emphatically mirrors how domestic violence can be normalised and passed down to younger generations. In this context, Patricia has few options for recourse. The country's legal system fails her twice and her own mother encourages her to stay with an abusive husband.

Despite being abused, Patricia cannot leave the marriage. Trevor Noah foresees a dangerous end to the marriage and implores his mother to leave, but she is reluctant. Women in an abusive marriage sometimes find it difficult to leave with the children for many reasons. They might be emotionally too drained to relocate and start life all over again independently. Victims who have no financial freedom and rely mainly on the spouse for their livelihood become entrapped and their hope to break free is constrained. The thought of the challenges of surviving scares them from taking the leap of liberation. In addition, it may be argued that there is cultural stigma attached to divorced females in African society. The perception is worse when it is not the woman's first divorce. In this situation, African traditional society often perceives the woman as promiscuous, whereas a man in the same situation is guiltless. Since Patricia is already labelled a "prostitute with a white man's child" (87) in her community, perhaps she tries to endure abuse so that people's perception of her will not hold true.

Since the protagonist cannot fathom his mother's initial decision to endure violence and abuse in her marriage, he decides to move out and fend for himself, which limits their relationship. However, Patricia eventually remarries and Trevor is occupied with his thriving comedy career. The climax of the narrative occurs on a Sunday morning when Trevor receives a call from his younger stepbrother, Andrew, who tells him that his mother has been shot by Abel, her ex-husband. Abel is embittered by his failures and feels jealous of how Patricia moved on with her life. In a bid to exact revenge, he decides to murder Patricia. Abel drives to Patricia's house and shoots her when she returns from church with her husband and new family. Luckily, Patricia escapes death and permanent damage, as the bullet narrowly misses her skull and vital parts of her brain. She and the medical team attribute her luck to a miracle. Abel is charged with attempted murder but later released on probation. In an interview with *PEOPLE* editorial director Jess Cagle, Trevor Noah reveals that his mother sees Abel as a victim of his society:

> My mother said to me, 'Don't hate him for doing this, but rather pity him because he too is a victim, in his own way, of a world that has thrust upon him an idea of masculinity that he has subscribed to and is now a part of (Cagle, 2017).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that race is a critical issue that affects non-whites not only in western nations but also within the home country. Noah's *Born a Crime* traces history to the era of colonialism where the white settlers invaded South Africa through migration. The aftermath is the domination of people of colour, mainly the natives, by the white supremacists through repressive racial laws. Thus, the land becomes a transgressive space for the blacks. The black body is an identity subjected to othering, discrimination and other forms of racial prejudice. Ironically, blacks are transgressive citizens in the country, regardless of the fact that they are the aboriginal South Africans. The chapter investigates how Noah utilises his memoir to engage political and racial injustice in South Africa. It is imperative to note that Trevor Noah presents his narrative based on his personal perspective and understanding of his past related to history. A memoir is a personal reflection of one's understanding of life. Hence, while some incidents are valid, others are contestable. It has also been argued that the personal life experiences of the author are directly linked to the historical legacy of a nation. Throughout the memoir, Noah's narratives establish the physical and psychological effect the oppressive system had on all South Africans, regardless of their race. Personally, for the narrator, much of his identity and many of his experiences are directly tied to race and racism. According to the apartheid law, Trevor Noah was not meant to exist. However, his parent took the risk of procreating him and he came to life as a consequence of his parents' action, constantly defending his existence in a society where he is unwelcome. Thus, Noah lives as a hybrid identity in a transgressive body and exists in a transgressive South African space.

Furthermore, even though the oppressive laws of apartheid were enacted to the advantage of the dominant culture, some whites bore the brunt of racial segregation, which had an impact on their lives, while others constantly lived with guilt. However, blacks were the most oppressed group under apartheid rule. Noah accentuates how the system convinced blacks that their capabilities, potential, limitations and life generally were determined by their skin pigmentation.

This chapter also probes socio-political issues such as poverty, crime and family dysfunctionality, exacerbated by the practice of racism in Noah's home country. These societal issues entrenched in the apartheid legacy are still prevalent in contemporary South African society.

Finally, Noah reflects the traumatic experiences of African women, particularly black South African women, as victims of perpetual abuse in the family/domestic unit and society at large. It depicts a pathetic situation where the black woman is unprotected at home and by society, including the (police) institution set up to protect her. It presents a black South African woman as an identity that is doubly othered by her nativeness/blackness and her gender. In summary, the arguments in this chapter are investigations of human versus society conflicts heavily influenced by race. It is a reflection of being home but not at home.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The focus of this study is the depiction of blacks as occupants of transgressive spaces within the national and transnational context. So far, this study has explored how blackness or physical attributes of Africans contribute to racial othering. It has investigated how the black body projects racial prejudice, fear, hostility, social rejection, seclusion and resentment for its bearers in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* and Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*. The two texts in this study engage different sides of the same coin on migration relating to otherness. In addition, this study has paid attention to the literary aesthetics and artistic mechanism of thematising transgressive space and body in both literary texts.

The first chapter establishes migration as a phenomenon peculiar to all human cultures, on which the notion of transgressive space and body is premised and racial contact, cohabitation and racial conflicts are established. Hence, this chapter highlights racism as an aftermath of migration.

The second chapter of this study reviews existing literature on migration as a pre-colonial and post-colonial reality. Various factors have been identified as the causes of migration. However, the quest for economic opportunities and social satisfaction are the major motivation for the migration of Africans from their countries to the West. In addition, the chapter emphasises that in a bid to adapt to their new environment, migrants in general often experience constraints such as displacement, alienation and cultural conflict, a situation that challenges their original identity.

Furthermore, the chapter traces the evolution of migration, a major trope in African literary production, to the autobiographical works of slave returnees and its popularity/prominence to contemporary migrant authors. It further explores the thematisation of migration by African writers in three distinctive phases – the Atlantic slave trade phase, education phase and economic phase. In the first phase, I argued that the

slave trade played a prominent role in the flowering of migration narratives in African literature. The first generation of African migrant writers is explored, with specific reference to slave returnees such as Equiano, Diallo and Cugoano in the context of their experiences documented in their autobiographies. These writers, among others, were victims of the Atlantic slave trade during which they experienced slavery, oppression, alienation, religious radicalism, emancipation, return and reintegration. These diasporic realities formed their narratives. I further contend that the African slave writers are the first African writers to experience migration and diasporic realities. The second phase consists of the native intellectuals whose literary works depict their lived experiences as education migrants and academic returnees who satirise the socio-political situations of their post-independence homeland. The economic phase is the third phase, where migration becomes a more prominent and engaging theme in contemporary African literature. The African writers of this age foreground economic crisis as the major cause of mobility. Their literary works also deploy diasporic realities to illustrate the sociocultural, economic and political situations that strain the migrants' lives abroad. Moreover, common features that cut across the three distinct phases are the critical presentation of the subaltern black body, return and reintegration in the homeland.

In the second part of this chapter, an attempt is made at investigating migration-induced crises such as racism and xenophobia within national and global memory. Along the transnational context, I argued that victims of racism are often exploited in areas where they exist as minorities. This causes their visible difference to be envisioned as a transgression in a racialised space dominated by the colour presumed to be superior. This minority status subjects the victims to racial injustice and diverse forms of discrimination. On the other hand, black/African migrants on the continent are sometimes treated as "outsiders", making them feel uncomfortable and easily prone to xenophobic attacks. This means that some African countries are transgressive spaces to African migrants.

Also in this chapter, albinism, similarly conceptualised as a form of body otherness, is examined. It has been investigated that albinos suffer perpetual labelling and treatment

as outcasts in African society. The discrimination results from their skin pigmentation and has a negative effect on their self-esteem.

The second part of chapter two discusses the theoretical frameworks employed in the study. Puwar's framework of "Space Invaders" is adopted to examine the notion of transgressive space and body. It entails investigating the subverted race and gender in space(s) predominately defined by whiteness. As Puwar argues, some spaces and positions are naturally designated for some race and gender (white and male), which means any other occupant of this space or position, specifically non-white or female, is a deviant. This corroborates my findings that blacks and (black) females constantly battle racial prejudice and sexism where they exist as minorities or subordinates. In this regard, the effect of their blackness is traumatising. Finally, the second chapter engages Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and ambivalence to gain further insight into how the marginalised subject negotiates her integration in a transgressive space. Bhabha's theory of hybridity posits that a trans-migrant must merge or blend her original cultural identity with that of the "foreign" community in order to acclimatise and thrive. In this study, I interpreted this position as "induction rites" for the *othered* to become an "insider" in a transgressive space. That is to say, since the *othered* has no control over how her colour is perceived, she succumbs to altering her identity to satisfy the sociocultural demands of the host community. The hybrid identity develops in the third space formed by merged cultures. Bhabha's concept of ambivalence describes the process of negotiating the new identity. Along these lines, my analysis revealed that Bhabha and Puwar's idea of reconfiguring identity in a transgressive space favours the marginalised identities as seen through the black characters in the primary texts. Specifically, the protagonists in both texts, Ifemelu and Trevor Noah, excel against the odds of racial prejudice through various ways in which they mask their transgressive bodies. The other aspect focuses on the second theoretical framework employed in this study, which is the autobiographical framework. Its adoption is significant in understanding the similarities and differences in the two literary genres analysed in this study, especially at the narrative level. The autobiographical framework, which establishes a connection between the author, the narrator and the protagonist of an autobiography, provides the premise for the analysis of Noah's autobiography *Born a Crime.*

Puwar's concept of space invaders, Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Genette's *Narrative Theory* on autobiography formed an illuminating approach in reading, interpreting and analysing the primary texts in this study.

The third chapter centres on the global perception of people of colour, particularly African migrants in the western diaspora, as depicted by Adichie in *Americanah*. It discusses the various prejudices Africans encounter in white-dominated society. The textual analysis in this chapter lays bare how skin colour, hair, accent and other physical identity markers expose blacks to inferiority and discrimination. These distinctive features, which define blackness and migrant status, strongly mark Africans as different from the rest. The negative perception of the marked difference automatically becomes a burden for them in the western diaspora. Therefore, the chapter reveals that if one wishes to be fully integrated into a racialised society, it is often difficult to retain one's original identity as black without a level of compromise. The significance of cultural hybridity or reconstruction of identity for African transnational migrants is thus foregrounded in this study, given that their blackness often constitutes a setback. This is evident in Ifemelu's character where her African accent, hair and skin are initial stumbling blocks to her socio-economic opportunities and relationships. Furthermore, I explored ways in which African migrants negotiate or reconfigure their identity in transgressive spaces. This I did with a view to understanding how they scale the hurdles of racism and other crises associated with migration. Again, my argument proved that being black and a migrant heavily constrains progress. Nonetheless, the *othered* subject still manages to excel in a transgressive space, through tedious means in most cases.

The fourth chapter of this study takes a look at the implications of race and class for the lives of people in Noah's South Africa. This exploration is directed at the conflicts of humans versus society in the writer's country, identifying apartheid as responsible for the predicament of his black characters. Personally, for Noah, his birth is in contravention of the anti-miscegenation law of apartheid. Because of this he finds himself in a society that forbids his existence. In other words, Noah's hybrid individuality is originally transgressive in the apartheid South African space and it is further complicated by identifying himself

as black. Throughout the memoir, there is no instance where the protagonist identifies himself as coloured. However, it is undeniable that Noah's conception and physical appearance classify him as having a hybrid identity. This shows that Noah, just like other coloureds, is caught in conflict between two racial worlds - black and white. Nonetheless, his complicated identity denies him access to the coloured privileges, making him suffer the hardship that comes with blackness. In addition, Noah's hybrid body becomes the major cause of his identity crisis within the social and educational environment, perpetually displacing him physically and psychologically. Likewise, we see that his choice to identify as black complicates his identity more. Since he does not physically resemble the blacks, he constantly has to convince them (through humour and speaking the same language) to be accepted. This whole experience of colour otherness influences the transformation of the narrator to his present self. However, rather than succumbing to racial prejudice, Noah utilises the opportunities provided by his mother to his advantage.

In the same vein, Noah accentuates how the system challenges the lives of blacks and dictates their capabilities and potential. Since it may be argued that racist beliefs in the west uphold the legacies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, my findings established that the same pattern is re-enacted in Noah's home country through the legacies of colonisation and apartheid. This is seen in the way in which the apartheid ideologists aim to internally colonise Noah's South Africa and in turn present the native blacks as inferior. The result is categorisation of the natives as transgressive body and transformation of their land to a transgressive space through segregation laws. Even though racial segregation is mainly targeted at non-whites, some whites suffer the consequences while others bear the guilt of apartheid. Furthermore, chapter four investigates the challenges of poverty, crime and family dysfunctionality as indicators of racial tension in Noah's home country. It has been argued that poverty, crime and family disintegration are repercussions of the repressive system on black society.

Finally, the last part of this chapter examines the depiction of African women, particularly South African blacks, as victims of abuse and discrimination both on the home front and within the larger society. While an African woman's blackness subjects her to

discrimination and oppression, her gender supresses her voice at home and in society. My argument is further buttressed by the fact that the practice of patriarchy in traditional African society contributes to the subjugation of the female gender. Patriarchy reinforces the belief that the African man is the absolute head of his home, highlighting the idea of gender dominance perpetrated through violence and abuse. As seen in the characterisation of Abel, he is obsessed with being perceived as a man who controls his wife; when Patricia does not succumb to his dominance, he feels emasculated, adopting physical violence as his only option of negotiating. Furthermore, the female gender is widely envisioned as weak. This is echoed through denial of justice to Patricia. The police mock her gender rather than coming to her aid. Hence, I have argued that these dual identities of race and gender project a black woman as a transgressive body in a racialised and patriarchal African society.

In conclusion, my reading and analysis of *Americanah* and *Born a Crime* have shown that both Adichie and Noah, from different sides, present migration as a staging ground for transgressive space and body. While Adichie's African migrant characters journey overseas to experience racism, Noah's aboriginal South Africans are displaced and subjugated by colonial invasion brought about by migration. Both writers depict how race and class directly influence individual living regardless of location. This study has unravelled the dynamics of living as the *othered* in a white-dominated/controlled society. Because whiteness projects superiority, its space is often constructed as transgressive to people of colour. In the same way black embodiment represents a transgression in the white space. This ultimately becomes problematic for its bearer. With her awareness of colour in a racialised environment, the black subject is burdened with invisibility or loss of individuality, doubts about competence, inferiority and similar problems. These consequences of her blackness are unfortunately beyond her control most of the time. In addition, the black subject is forced to be colour-conscious and first relates any negative experience or unfavourable condition to having racial undertones before looking for any other reasons. Bearing this in mind, she is left with no choice but to contest and renegotiate her identity constantly because to a large extent, her blackness influences her daily living experiences in the white space.

Through an investigation of the notion of transgressive space and body through a close reading and analysis *of Americanah* and *Born a Crime*, this study has shed more light on the growing scholarship on the challenges of migration and a transgressive body. The research has also contributed significantly to the study of racism and othering. However, racism undoubtedly transcends the general binary of white versus black. Some other racial groups in various parts of the world are also recipients of racial backlash similar to the blacks analysed in this study. Therefore, the researcher suggests further investigation of these inconspicuous groups that also occupy the space of otherness.

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