BEYOND THE SINGLE STORY: DUAL VOICE TECHNIQUE, NARRATING THE STORY OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract: *This study examines how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie employs Monika Fludernik's dual voice hypothesis in Americanah to interrogate the psychological and cultural displacement of African immigrants in Western societies. Through narratological analysis of free indirect discourse, the research investigates how Adichie's dual voice technique illuminates the identity fractures of diasporic characters. Furthermore, it examines the ways through which this narrative strategy fosters empathy and challenges dominant perceptions of migration. The analysis reveals that Adichie's intermingling of authorial and character voices exposes the involuntary identity shifts of protagonists Ifemelu and Obinze, while simultaneously critiquing institutional failures in both African and Western contexts. By bridging Fludernik's theory with postcolonial literature, this study demonstrates how narrative form shapes reader engagement with migration trauma. Its significance lies in redefining diasporic storytelling as a tool for decolonizing global discourse on race and belonging.*

Keywords: *Narratology; Dual voice narrative; African Diaspora literature; Monika Fludernik; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie;* Americanah.

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, migration has become a defining phenomenon, with individuals crossing borders in search of better opportunities. Among young Africans, this trend is particularly pronounced, as they seek enhanced living conditions, personal security, and economic prospects abroad. However, the process of integration into Western societies often entails profound challenges, including cultural dislocation, identity crises, and systemic marginalization. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* offers a compelling exploration of these experiences, shedding light on the psychological and cultural struggles faced by African immigrants as they navigate life in foreign cultural landscapes.

While existing scholarship on *Americanah* has extensively examined themes such as race, identity, migration, and cultural hybridity, many studies have primarily focused on thematic analysis. Scholars like Elizabeth

Adesunmbo and Yajing Li have explored issues such as discrimination and cultural displacement within the novel (Adesunmbo 22; Li 212), while Ahmad et al. have examined racial dynamics through critical race theory (1417). Moreover, Stefanie Reuter, Mindi McMann, and Du Bois have highlighted the alienation faced by African immigrants due to societal oppression and colonial histories (Du Bois 38; McMann 202; Reuter 9). However, these studies often overlook how Adichie's narrative techniques—particularly her use of free indirect discourse and Monika Fludernik's concept of dual voice—shape readers' engagement with the characters' experiences. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how Adichie's narrative form not only challenges dominant perceptions of migration but also fosters reader empathy.

Adichie's innovative use of dual voice intermingles the narrator's perspective with the internal thoughts of characters. This technique not only provides a nuanced portrayal of identity crises but also critiques systemic inequalities that perpetuate cultural alienation. Unlike previous studies that focus on thematic content alone, this research highlights how Adichie's narratological strategies create a dynamic interplay between authorial commentary and character subjectivity. By blending her personal observations as a Black immigrant with the inner lives of her characters, Adichie constructs a multi-layered narrative that subverts dominant Western discourses on immigration.

This study applies Monika Fludernik's concept of dual voice to *Americanah* to explore how narrative form intersects with themes of identity and belonging. Through reverse contextualization—a method that examines how narrative techniques reflect broader sociocultural dynamics—the analysis uncovers the causes and consequences of identity incongruity within the African diaspora. By focusing on Adichie's use of free indirect discourse, this research demonstrates how her storytelling technique evokes empathy in readers while challenging stereotypes about African immigrants.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the field by shifting attention from thematic analysis to narratological strategies in *Americanah*. It reveals how Adichie's dual-voice technique serves as a decolonizing tool in diasporic fiction, fostering a deeper understanding of racial dynamics, cultural displacement, and global interconnectedness. By situating *Americanah* at the intersection of narratology and cultural studies, this research enriches scholarly discourse on African diasporic literature and offers new insights into how narrative form can mediate power and representation in postcolonial storytelling.

2. Deconstructing the Single Story: Adichie's Challenge to Narrative Hegemony

The intricate interplay between narrative, cultural significance, and societal suppression underscores the historical marginalization of African voices in global discourse. This marginalization extends to cultural practices and literature, with writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie actively challenging these dynamics. Adichie's emphasis on the "danger of a single story" highlights the incomplete nature of stereotypes and the need for diverse narratives to challenge dominant discourses (Adichie). By acknowledging the unique stories of marginalized communities, Adichie disrupts the narrative hierarchy and fosters an alternative narrative style that celebrates black creativity.

Narratives have long served as a communicational bridge between societies, functioning as a medium for cultural exchange. However, the narrative voice often transcends literary boundaries, influencing societal dominance or suppression. Africa, for instance, has been historically marginalized by pervasive racism, slavery, and colonialism, often framed as a "problem to be solved" (Alao 32). This marginalization extends to arts and literature, with Western scholars often confining literary production to Western contexts and excluding non-Western contributions. African voices were largely absent in discussions about contemporary black experiences, with few African-American intellectuals addressing these issues (Hooks 421). This lack of representation drives African writers like Adichie to reclaim their narrative voice, contesting prevailing narratives and enhancing black creativity.

Therefore, Adichie frames a new narrative for black minorities emphasizing their side of the story. To analyze Adichie's narrative technique in *Americanah*, this study examines the authorial voice through an objective depiction of the surrounding context (Seyed Habibi 23). This analysis relies on Adichie's use of free indirect discourse, where the lack of distinction between the narrator's and characters' language creates distinctive effects based on situational, narratological, and ideological contexts (Fludernik 11). Such narrative approach allows Adichie to gently shift between distinct perspectives, embedding character consciousness within broader social commentary, and thereby reinforcing the novel's critique of racial and cultural assumptions without excessively authorial intrusion. By analyzing the authorial and narratorial voices within free indirect discourse, the study elucidates the narrative's contextual dimensions, demonstrating that fiction operates as a complex modal system centered around its own actual world (Ryan 646). Subsequently, this perspective highlights how fictional narratives, while placed in imagined settings, engage deeply with real-world ideologies

and subjective experience, making the interplay between narrator and character a site of meaningful tension. Furthermore, the study explores how the narratorial voice in free indirect discourse shifts from the external world to delve into the characters' consciousness (Seyed Habibi 23). According to Fludernik, this combination of narrative modes enables readers to imagine the narrative's landscape and characters (65). The narrative is not merely a sequence of events but an integral part of human experience, reflecting both the characters and the author's thoughts simultaneously (Fludernik 59). The narrative voice is shaped by both character and authorial perspectives, creating a duality of viewpoints within free indirect discourse (Bal 199). Such a duality allows the narrator to inhabit the emotional and ideological space of the characters while still reflecting broader thematic concerns and deepening the reader's interpretive engagement. As Adichie imbues characters with nuanced traits, the reading process engages with both the text and the cognitive framework informing each sentence (Iversen 135). Readers encounter the narrative's "dual voice" as a blend of character and authorial voices, revealing how the experience of immigration transforms characters' identities (Fludernik 316). This layered narrative structure eventually enables the text to mediate between internal consciousness and external commentary, allowing shifts in identity to be explored not only through character experience but also through each narrator's interpretive lens. In this way, the writer uses characters' discourse to convey their knowledge, employing it for their own narrative ends (Schmid 119). Through this dual voice, Adichie crafts a new narrative for black minorities, illustrating the transformation of the characters' identities after the experience of immigration.

3. Diasporic Aspirations: The Promise and Peril of Migration Portrayed through the Dual Voice Narrative

Adichie Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* critiques the traditional perception of immigration as a straightforward path to success, instead portraying it as a complex cultural phenomenon fraught with challenges for immigrants, particularly black immigrants. The narrative highlights institutional shortcomings, such as the detrimental effects of frequent university strikes, which exacerbate the living conditions of Black characters. Pucherova notes that Black individuals in their home countries face a myriad of challenges, including civil wars, terrorism, inadequate access to essential resources like clean water and electricity, limited educational opportunities, employment instability, pervasive insecurity, and restricted life choices (408). These factors create an environment where achieving personal fulfillment and well-being becomes nearly impossible within their communities. Amidst such social and economic upheavals in African societies, characters yearn for a place where peace and life aspirations can be realistically achieved.

The narrative illustrates this desire by immersing readers in the characters' perceptions and embodied experiences of their surroundings, capturing "not merely the scenery experienced by the character, but also the character's very seeing, experiencing the scenery" (Bundgaard 87). Through this technique, the narrative does not simply report a character's environment but reconstructs it via the lens of subjective consciousness and aligning narrative perspective with embodied perception. This effect is enhanced through the dual voice narrative, appearing not only in passages of free indirect discourse but also permeating the broader narrative beyond explicit representations of speech and thought (Fludernik 6). Utilizing this technique enables Adichie to craft viable experiential characters who must navigate challenges within the diaspora, confronting unfamiliar situations.

In *Americanah*, Adichie introduces her central experiential character, Ifemelu, as a candid and perceptive young Black woman embarking on a diasporic journey within the American context. Unacquainted with Western cultural norms, Ifemelu soon begins to critically observe fellow Africans who adopt white cultural practices. Upon first reuniting with Aunty Uju in America, Ifemelu immediately senses a notable change in her; this shift becomes apparent as Uju greets her at the airport with "roughly braided hair, her ears bereft of earrings, her quick casual hug, as if it had been weeks rather than years since they had last seen each other" (Adichie 118). While shopping, Ifemelu notices that Aunty Uju hesitates to purchase what she actually needs, choosing instead to "buy what was on sale and make herself need it" (Adichie 121). At this point, the author subtly shifts from the broader narrative context to delve into the character's inner perspective, capturing what is "perceived, thought, remembered, or felt" by the character (Seyed Habibi 21).

This technique of narrating a character's speech or thought process, according to Fludernik, allows the description to encompass not only the tone, style, and content of the utterance but also, when depicting thought, to explore layers of consciousness or emotions that may lie outside the character's own awareness (291). In doing so, the narrative voice gains access to a deeper level of psychological and thematic resonance, bridging internal character perception with external narrative commentary in an often-ambiguous manner. For instance, Ifemelu reflects on how America has subdued Aunty Uju, noting changes in her appearance and behavior:

> That things were not too bad, although she realized now that Aunty Uju had always been vague, mentioning "work" and "exam" without details. Or perhaps it was because she had not asked for details, had not expected to understand details, and she thought, watching her, how the old Aunty Uju would never have worn her hair in such scruffy braids. She would never have tolerated the ingrown hair that grew like raisins on her chin, or worn trousers that gathered bulkily between her legs. America had subdued her. (Adichie 123)

Ifemelu also observes her friend Ginika, whose speech and appearance bear no resemblance to African standards, as she lapses into Nigerian English, a dated, overcooked version, eager to prove how unchanged she is (Adichie 137). Ginika's unusual behavior and her "American-accented words sailing out of her mouth" stand in stark contrast to the image Ifemelu holds of her friend from their home country. Through her careful observation of other Black characters' actions, Ifemelu contrasts the "past and now," enacting what Fludernik describes as a novel comparison between the characters' identities in their home countries and the transformations they undergo in the diaspora (Fludernik 75). The narrative's comparative lens not only underscores the tension between origin and adaptation but also enables the plot to interrogate the fluid, often fractured construction of identity within transnational spaces.

In this way, the narrative purposefully distances itself from traditional plot-driven structures, instead focusing on "the representation of experientiality," emphasizing "intentions and feelings" integral to the human experience, which are both "reported and, at the same time, evaluated in narratives" (Fludernik 109). Within the context of her cultural interactions in America, Ifemelu comes to realize that the Africans' alienation from their homeland stems from their relentless drive for success in the host community, often at great personal cost (Sackeyfio 220). Such an insight foregrounds the psychological complexity of immigrant identity and reveals how external pressures shape internal conflicts that the narrative seeks to explore through nuanced representation. By utilizing what Fludernik refers to as "psycho narration," which vividly conveys the characters' internal thoughts and emotions, the passage adopts a narrative style that presents the character's psyche (Fludernik 298). As a result, the narrative delves into the theme of social assimilation, foreshadowing the potential consequences of either accepting or rejecting the need for belonging.

Within the context of Ifemelu's diasporic observations, the narrative's use of free indirect discourse progressively reveals additional instances of cultural conflict, particularly within the American academic environment. For instance, Ifemelu is uncomfortable with what professors call "participation," which she perceives as merely encouraging students to speak without substance, wasting class time on "obvious words, hollow words, sometimes meaningless words" (Adichie 149). She notes how Americans are taught from an early age to always contribute in class, never saying "I don't know" but instead "I'm not sure," which suggests the possibility of knowledge without providing any (Adichie 149). Among her observations, Ifemelu also targets Americans' language choices; she notices their frequent use of the word "excited," which she finds excessive and which, ironically enough, she unconsciously uses in her speech later on (Adichie 149). Such representations within the narrative highlight a key function of dual voice, where the

predominant authorial or narratorial register subtly incorporates "the character's idiom between lines" (Fludernik 347). This narrative style, dominated by the authorial voice, not only portrays individual experiences but also reflects collective social representations and ideologies (De Fina 7). By distinguishing between free indirect speech and free indirect thought, the author is able to analyze the narrative's exploration of consciousness, capturing both the characters' spoken attitudes and their underlying mental frameworks. In doing so, the author divides the free indirect discourse into free indirect speech and free indirect thought (Mikulan & Legac 215), allowing her to simultaneously explore the characters' mental assumptions within the cultural framework of the narrative.

However, Ifemelu's initial psychological state is characterized by what Matschke and Fehr describe as "identity incompatibility," a cultural concept where an existing identity conflicts with the emergence of a new social identity, leading to "disidentification with the receiving society" (1). Moreover, Ifemelu's bildungs-process is initially characterized by the tension between adaptation and resistance (Reuter 3). Although Ifemelu's decision to adopt a new identity seems arbitrary at first, she remains unaware of her increasing cultural adaptability until her boyfriend points it out: "You know you said 'excited'? […] You said you were excited about your media class" (Adichie 151). He is then interrupted by Ifemelu's surprise: "I did?" To her astonishment, Ifemelu finds herself gradually subdued by American culture, as "new words were falling out of her mouth" (Adichie 151), signaling the beginning of her inevitable maze of transformation. Afterward, in her initial effort to consciously adopt a new Western identity, Ifemelu deliberately sets aside her African accent, choosing instead to emulate the American dialect.

At this point, the narrative shifts from the protagonist's introspection to a broader contextual framework, necessitating a nuanced cultural analysis. Such contextual investigations in narrative take into account both thematic and formal dimensions of the text, while revealing the "epistemological, ethical, and social problems [that are] articulated in the forms of narrative representations" (Nünning 63). Adichie's narrative becomes more contextual when she explicates social problems confronted by black immigrants.

One of the first ethical and social obstacles highlighted by Adichie's narrative is the prejudice that obstructs Ifemelu's cultural assimilation. Prejudice, as DiAngelo and Dyson mention, is a biased judgment of individuals based on their perceived membership in particular social groups—a harmful social construct (104). Prejudice encompasses a range of thoughts and emotions, including stereotypes, attitudes, and generalizations that stem from little or no experience which are then imposed upon an entire group (104). Such Western stereotypes eventually foster an association of urban environments with "poor and black" populations, while equating

"mainstream" with white and affluent (Androne 237). Having had the same experiments of prejudice as an immigrant in America, Adichie merges her voice with that of her protagonist, creating a dual voice narrative. By intertwining personal and fictional perspectives, the narrative not only captures the realities of discrimination but also positions the authorial voice as a critical observer, adding a unique type of interpretation to the protagonist's experience. Through these narrative encounters with prejudice, Adichie reflects not only the protagonist's inner voice but also the narrator's authoritative voice (Bray 40). However, in instances where the expressed thoughts do not align with the character's verbal repertoire, it suggests the narrator's psychological portrayal of the character, often termed "psycho-narration or speech report/indirect discourse" (Fludernik 313). Such instances reveal the narrator's role in shaping the character's inner world, granting readers access to subconscious tensions and societal pressures that extend beyond the character's initial awareness. Adichie's retelling of her experience with a US university class can relate to the author's dominance in the free indirect discourse of the narrative. In her memory, she recalls a time when an American professor was disturbed upon knowing the fact that Adichie, a black youth, was indeed the writer of the best essay in the classroom (Norris). Following such a real-life experiment, the narrative then unravels more of American prejudice which leads to their reluctance to give colored groups an institutionalized privilege.

As another illustration of prejudice embedded within the American social structure, Adichie's narrative highlights situations where racial bias is particularly overt. For Ifemelu, the dynamic between Aunty Uju and her white patients becomes markedly uncomfortable, as the patients perceive themselves as "doing her a favor by seeing her" (Adichie 190). Furthermore, when a non-Black patient realizes that the physician is Black, "the patient's face changes to fired clay" and subsequently requests to transfer to another doctor (Adichie 202). This entrenched bias among Americans toward people of color implies that "looking less Black means looking more professional" (McMann 10), suggesting an implicit belief that "there is something wrong with Black people" (DiAngelo, Dyson 95). These dynamics reveal the complex power structures that govern identity and perception and encourage a critical analysis of how subject and object positions are constructed and contested within overlapping social frameworks. Such encounters lead Ifemelu to critically discern "who is object, who is subject" and how these roles intersect with the values of various social groups, including communities, classes, tribes, sects, and nations (Scholes 153).

Hence, the performative power of the narration does more than depicting a cultural phenomenon—it simultaneously constructs histories, identities, and communities, shaping both characters and readers' perspectives

on cultural and societal constructs (Fludernik 170). Such narrative power underscores the narration's active role in not just reflecting but also influencing social realities, instructing storytelling as an active means of cultural negotiation and identity formation. Ultimately, Ifemelu understands that, to integrate as a Black immigrant in an often-exclusionary society, she must undergo a significant transformation, altering not only her accent but also her physical appearance. She finally realizes that the narrative she initially constructed about America stands in stark contrast to the challenging reality she confronts upon living there. Therefore, Adichie's narrative critiques the dominant Western narrative of America as a land of opportunity, instead revealing the complexities and challenges faced by immigrants in navigating cultural and societal expectations.

4. Adichie's Critique of Narrative Hegemony

4.1. Obinze's Resistance to Dominant Narratives

As *Americanah* unfolds, Adichie skillfully shifts the narrative focus to Obinze, crafting a diasporic experience that establishes a second major plotline. By paralleling Ifemelu's and Obinze's narratives, Adichie intricately weaves a subplot that intersects with the main storyline, effectively illuminating the racialized experiences of both protagonists and deepening readers' comprehension (Fludernik 46). This narrative technique aligns with Fludernik's concept of dual voice, which emphasizes the interplay between the narrator's perspective and the characters' thoughts, creating a nuanced exploration of their experiences (Fludernik 316). Such a method allows the narrative to operate on multiple levels simultaneously, while blending subjective consciousness with overarching social critique to enrich the reader's engagement more efficiently.

Initially, Obinze's challenging circumstances in England are presented, where his first job as a janitor cleaning toilets starkly contrasts with his aspirations. This occupation, often joked about back home, underscores the harsh realities of migrant life: "he was indeed abroad cleaning toilets" (Adichie 259). Later, when Obinze decides to leave this low-status position, he visits his cousin Nicolas, who offers advice that sharply contrasts Obinze's previous perceptions of England. Nicolas emphasizes the importance of securing an NI number to work legally, taking any job available, spending nothing, and marrying an EU citizen to obtain papers (Adichie 261). This realization prompts Obinze to understand that dominant Western narratives often present idealized or selective representations of reality, rather than accurately reflecting it (Helms 4). Narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse enable a fluid merging of perspectives, granting readers simultaneous insight into the narrator's interpretive role and the character's private consciousness. This insight is facilitated by the narrative's use of free indirect discourse,

which blends the narrator and Obinze's perspective, allowing readers to access both the writer and the character's internal thoughts and feelings (Fludernik 316).

Adapting to this new understanding, Obinze resorts to using another person's ID for employment and engages in the precarious process of an undocumented marriage. Despite operating under a false identity, Obinze remains acutely aware of British racial stereotypes. The narrative employs free indirect discourse to convey Obinze's awareness of his white colleagues' implicit bias, illustrating how systemic racial subordination and discrimination evoke a complex response of "panic and hope" as he confronts the stark contrast between his imagined life and his current reality (Adichie 285). Such engagement not only invites readers into the characters' subjective, often intimate worlds, but also encourages critical reflection on the broader social and cultural forces shaping those experiences.

The narrative takes a dramatic turn as Obinze's attempt to secure legal status through a marriage arrangement results in his deportation and subsequent detainment, transforming his diasporic experience into a prolonged nightmare. In the aftermath, Adichie highlights the profound disparity in the Western experience for Black individuals compared to white natives, rendering the racialized outsider as "inanimate, a thing to be removed, a thing without breath and mind" (Adichie 307). This pervasive hostility drives characters like Obinze to internalize a sense of alienation, feeling outcast, rejected, and stigmatized:

> There had been so many times in the past when he had feared that this would happen, so many moments that had become one single blur of panic, and now it felt like the dull echo of an aftermath. Cleotilde had flung herself on the ground and begun to cry. […] she had no need to worry, though, since she was a European citizen; […] It was he who felt the heaviness of the handcuffs during the drive to the police station, who silently handed over his watch and his belt and his wallet, and watched the policemen take his phone and switch it off. (Adichie 305)

His forced removal in handcuffs through the airport intensifies this alienation, evoking curiosity and judgment from onlookers who silently wonder "what evil he had done" (Adichie 307). Here, the narrative's dual voice conveys tones of irony or sympathy, underscoring Adichie's empathy for her characters and inviting readers to develop similar sentiments (Fludernik 128). Such a dual voice narrative enables readers to engage deeply with characters' internal experiences, fostering empathy and understanding (Fludernik 128). This narrative approach therefore deepens the reader's insight by combining personal subjectivity and external social contexts, enhancing both emotional connection and critical awareness. By depicting both spiritual and societal

deterioration of the characters, Adichie gradually drives them into a transformative phase of their diasporic journeys.

4.2.Ifemelu's Resistance to Dominant Narratives

Given *Americanah*'s role as a socially engaged novel, Adichie's advocacy for human rights seeks to elevate not only the individual but society as a whole (Atta 165). This goal is achieved when the author prompts a "pragmatic interpretation of textual elements" and establishes a dual narrative voice within a specific literary context (Fludernik 341). Through readers' emotional immersion in the story, a new narrative emerges, moving beyond the Western façade to reveal lives in their raw, unembellished realities.

In the initial plot of the narrative, Adichie delves into similar emotional themes, demonstrating how her protagonists experience analogous challenges related to migration despite differing locales and motivations (Bello 11). The narrative structure allows a fine movement between viewpoints while enabling a deeper engagement with each character's interior world and maintaining a cohesive thematic focus on displacement and identity. Through the use of a dual narrative voice, Adichie transitions "from external to internal perspectives, [moving] from one mind to another" (Fludernik 70), exposing the untold experiences of another marginalized Black character. Like Obinze, Ifemelu faces employment restrictions with her student visa, forcing her to use a fabricated identity. Despite extensive job applications, Ifemelu struggles to secure employment, eventually taking drastic measures to survive in the "white hegemony" (Lipsitz 160). Accepting a temporary job providing massages for a tennis coach offers short-term financial relief but exacts a toll on her personal dignity which she had so long cherished like a valuable trophy:

> She should never have gone there. She should have walked away. She wanted to shower, to scrub herself, but she could not bear the thought of touching her own body, and so she put on her nightdress, gingerly, to touch as little of herself as possible. She imagined packing her things, somehow buying a ticket, and going back to Lago. She curled on her bed and cried, wishing she could reach into herself and yank out the memory of what had just happened. (Adichie 171)

Here, Adichie skillfully employs a dual voice narrative to portray the inner conflicts of her characters, often positioning them in opposition to their own identities (Donatien 136). Eventually, the merging of narrative levels encourages readers to effectively navigate both the emotional depth of the characters and the broader ideological tensions embedded in their realities.

Ifemelu's experience evolves through transformative relationships, particularly her relationship with Curt, a white man. Though initially providing "contentment," Ifemelu recognizes diminished independence

(Adichie 220), and senses the power imbalances shaped by ingrained societal structures (Sensoy, DiAngelo 119). Now at this level of the story, the narrative draws attention to how racial and gender dynamics continue persisting even in seemingly affectionate relationships, complicating Ifemelu's emotional landscape and prompting critical reflection on intimacy across cultural lines. Even in this seemingly supportive relationship, Ifemelu encounters the subtle racism of a society that questions their union, recognizing that, despite Curt's tolerance, race remains a salient factor in her experience (Adichie 320, 25). In challenging him, Ifemelu seeks to make Curt recognize what she sees in beauty magazines and how that impacts her and other black women like herself who will never see someone who looks like them in media:

> Not one of them looks like me, so I can't get clues for makeup from these magazines. […] This tells you about different hair products for everyone__ and 'everyone' means blonds, brunettes, and redheads. I am none of those. And this tells you about the best conditioners__ for straight, wavy, and curly. No kinky. See what they mean by curly? My hair could never do that. this tells you about matching your eye color and eye shadow__ blue, green, and hazel eyes. But my eyes are black so I can't know what shadow works for me. […] Now, let's talk about what is racially skewed. (Adichie 323)

After this, Ifemelu concludes that she should start a blog about her observations, eager to know "how many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze?" (Adichie 323) These parts of the narrative gives access to the thoughts of the character allowing readers to have more empathy and understanding.

Ifemelu's cross-cultural relationship challenges the assumption that power can be easily redistributed through gradual mutual acclimatization. As McLeod argues, power and equality must be actively pursued, even if achieving them demands significant sacrifices for those striving to reclaim their basic human rights (6). Therefore, seeking to preserve her self-worth (McLeod 6), she ends the relationship. The decision yet reflects a broader thematic concern within the narrative—an insistence on agency and self-definition in the face of systemic pressures that persistently obscure or erode individual autonomy.

Ifemelu's subsequent relationship with Blaine, an African American, reveals further complexities, culminating in a recognition of divergent narrative frameworks shaped by their cultural backgrounds (Müller-Funk 53). Blaine is distinctly described in the narrative as "African-American, not Caribbean, not African, not a child of immigrants from either place" (Adichie 195). The specificity of this description underscores the cultural rift between their lived experiences and emphasizes how identity within the African diaspora is neither monolithic nor interchangeable. While recognizing his

"goodness" (Adichie 195), Ifemelu gradually understands that he makes her assimilate his intellectual preferences (Adichie 340) which leads to their estrangement. Ifemelu's gradual estrangement from Blaine, despite their shared values, culminates in a pivotal confrontation during which Blaine reproachfully asserts, "it's not just about writing a blog, you have to live like you believe it. That blog is a game that you don't really take seriously; it's like choosing an interesting elective evening class to complete your credits" (Adichie 375). Here, the narrative's portrayal of a character's psychological complexity, in terms of stylistic and cognitive attributes, transcends "the mimetically verisimilar construct of that character's linguistic and notional capabilities" (Fludernik 319). These nuanced representations of consciousness specifically serve to frame the world as perceived by the character. After their argument, Ifemelu recognizes that the discord between them arises not from racial differences alone but from divergent narrative frameworks shaped by their cultural backgrounds (Müller-Funk 53). This moment specifically highlights the narrative's investment in portraying identity as constructed through layered, context-specific experiences, rather than through essentialist or static categories.

Ifemelu's cross-continental experiences ultimately lead her to understand why her relationships with both Curt and Blaine were unsustainable; These relationships underscore a constrained capacity to embrace cultural diversity. They were unable to overcome the misunderstandings rooted not only in racial differences but also in the contrasting identities of African Americans and non-American Blacks (Anderson). *Americanah* foregrounds this cultural dissonance to emphasize how even shared racial categorizations cannot bridge the divide subtly created by divergent historical experiences and socio-political realities.

Beyond romantic relationships, Ifemelu encounters characters who persistently relegate African individuals to a lower social status (Stephan 119). For instance, she encounters a White progressive who refers to her as "privileged" (Adichie 186) because of being allowed to pursue a humanities fellowship at Princeton which is typically regarded as more attainable for and emblematic of White Americans (Fordham, Ogbu 183; DiAngelo 26). Now, the narrative draws attention to the irony embedded in these interactions, where progressive ideals mask latent hierarchies, revealing how institutional access does not (and will not) erase deep-rooted racialized perceptions. Adichie emphasizes these interactions between African individuals and White Americans to illustrate that the nature and implications of such encounters play a pivotal role in shaping individual subjectivity, transcending the superficial dynamics of cross-cultural engagement (Stephan 119). Through this lens, the novel invites an active and critical interrogation of privilege, while suggesting that its meanings can never be fixed but deeply contextual

and often unequally distributed across lines of race, nationality, and cultural zone.

Ifemelu's thirteen years in America provide her with numerous opportunities to engage with non-African cultures; however, the common thread across her interactions is the consistent relegation of her to a lower social status by members of the dominant groups, irrespective of her cultural or academic achievements. This marginalization intensifies her feelings of alienation and ambiguous longing, manifesting as "a piercing homesickness" (Adichie 12). In an attempt to reclaim her sense of belonging, she immerses herself in Nigerian websites, Facebook profiles, and blogs, reflecting: "They were living her life. Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil" (Adichie 12). Here, through free indirect discourse, Adichie creates a dual voice narrative which establishes an intimate connection between the characters' internal experiences and the readers' cognitive and emotional engagement (Fludernik 334). This convergence places both characters and readers in a shared dilemma—confronting the consequences of leaving America and returning to a home that is simultaneously familiar and estranged.

Fludernik asserts that the dualistic function of a text arises from "the reader's pragmatic interpretation of textual elements within their specific literary context" (341). This framework underscores how Adichie aligns her narrative voice with that of Ifemelu by situating them within a shared narratorial context. Upon returning to African culture after thirteen years in the diaspora, Ifemelu experiences a profound cultural dissonance, reflecting on how "Lagos assaulted her" and observing that "Lagos was unpretty, roads infested with potholes, houses springing up unplanned like weeds" (Adichie 414). Her response is marked by a disorienting confusion as she struggles to reconcile her sense of belonging: she is simultaneously at home and alienated, unsure "what was new in Lagos and what was new in herself" (Adichie 414). Here, Adichie is creating a dual voice discourse in which the character's thoughts and expreivces reflect that of the author's (Fludernik 74). Ifemelu's thoughts reflect Adichie's personal experiences which mirror this cultural reentry shock, as Adichie recounts in an interview: "You leave home and create home in your mind and you go back and it's not what you've built up in your mind and it's a sense of loss because you imagined that it happened when you weren't there" (Norris). The inclusion of Adichie's own voice not only blurs the boundary between fiction and autobiography effectively but also enhances the emotional authenticity of the protagonist's journey and invites readers to perceive the narrative through a lens of lived truth. This reflection exemplifies Fludernik's notion that a text often contains traces of the writer's individuality, including personal emotions and perspectives (Fludernik 79).

Within this framework, the text becomes more than a solely fictional account—it acts as a conduit for processing diasporic memory, allowing authorial selfhood to intermittingly echo within the protagonist's psychological landscape. The narrative's dual voice structure frequently intertwines the author's and protagonist's rhetoric, producing passages that resonate with both the author's reflective voice and the character's internal monologue (Vološinov 138). Adichie's and her characters' diasporic experiences reveal how migration destabilizes identity, and make it challenging to define a cohesive sense of self and home (Melucci 62), underscoring the ongoing tension between belonging and alienation that artistically shapes much of the narrative's emotional core, prompting the question, "Will you be able to cope?" (Adichie 23).

Ultimately, Adichie's novel reflects Fludernik's notion that narratives can shape reality through their narrative structures and schemata, playing a central role in constructing identity (Nünning 173). By navigating these complexities, Ifemelu and Obinze develop a nuanced understanding of living an itinerant life, negotiating change and seeking balance in their transformed realities.

5. Conclusion

In *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie transcends conventional narratives of migration by employing a dual-voice technique that challenges the hegemony of Western perspectives. Through a strategic integration of free indirect discourse, Adichie not only illuminates the internal lives of her Black characters but also interweaves her incisive authorial commentary on navigating Western spaces. This approach fosters a profound engagement with the psychological struggles of marginalized individuals, cultivating empathy and a richer understanding of their complex realities.

This study's narratological analysis of *Americanah*, conducted through the framework of reverse contextualization, unravels the novel's intricate narrative layers, exposing the root causes and repercussions of identity incongruity. It underscores how Adichie's deliberate storytelling choices convey thought-provoking messages about power dynamics, racial tensions, and multifaceted representations within a global context. By examining the emotional and psychological impacts of migration on characters navigating diverse milieus, this research illuminates the profound inequities arising from geographical and sociocultural positioning.

Adichie addresses themes often marginalized within dominant Western-centric immigration narratives, thus inviting readers to engage with the text politically and challenge the pervasive Western gaze. This analysis contributes to the emergence of a new narrative framework that resists the single story, creating space for historically marginalized voices and fostering

a more sophisticated understanding of social dynamics, racial relations, and global interconnectedness.

As global and ethnic narratives increasingly converge, analyzing diasporic stories through a narratological lens—integrating textual formalism with contextual analysis—becomes critical. *Americanah* exemplifies narrative subversion, dismantling dominant ideologies while creating a discursive platform for historically excluded perspectives. By embracing these multifaceted viewpoints, Adichie's work underscores the convergence of global and ethnic narratives, offering a richer and more inclusive understanding of the complexities of human experience. This study demonstrates how dual voice narration serves as a decolonizing tool in diasporic fiction by subverting single-story tropes and redefining agency for Black protagonists. The application of Fludernik's dual voice framework to a postcolonial novel addresses a critical gap in narratological research and challenges neoliberal narratives of migration.

By situating *Americanah* at the intersection of narratology and cultural studies, this research establishes a blueprint for analyzing how narrative form mediates power in diasporic literature. This has far-reaching implications for literary theory and social justice discourse, urging policymakers and educators to prioritize migrant narratives that center structural critique over individual resilience.

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