

**THE SURVIVAL OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN  
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*  
AND AMMA DARKO'S *BETWEEN TWO WORLDS***

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the survival of the African diaspora in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and in Amma Darko's *Between Two Worlds*. The argument is that the African migrants are traumatized by their experiences in the West and in Europe. The novel *Americanah* describes two communities constituted by Americans and the Nigerian diaspora. The American community considers the Nigerians as second-class citizens. In *Between Two Worlds*, German citizens categorize Ghanaians and other Africans as phobogenic objects. Yet, the Africans in the West and in Europe go through nostalgia. Using Cathy Caruth's concept of survival, this paper reaches the conclusion that in Adichie and Darko novels migrants' experiences sink them in survival.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Nostalgia, Second-Class Citizen, Survival.

**Le traumatisme de la diaspora africaine dans  
*Americanah* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie et *Between  
Two Worlds* de Amma Darko**

**Résumé:** Cette étude analyse la diaspora africaine comme sujet névrosé dans *Americanah* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, et *Between Two Worlds* de Amma Darko. Le travail postule que les migrants africains sont traumatisés par leurs expériences en occident et en Europe. Dans le roman de Adichie, le racisme emmène les Américains à placer les Nigériens dans la catégorie de la deuxième classe. Dans le roman de Darko, les Allemands catégorisent les Ghanéens et d'autres Africains comme des races phobogènes. Les migrants africains font aussi face à la nostalgie. Ayant pour cadre conceptuel le traumatisme comme développé par Cathy Caruth, cette étude conclut que dans les romans de

Adichie et de Darko les expériences que subissent les migrants suscitent leur traumatisme.

**Mots clefs:** Citoyen de second class, Diaspora, Nostalgie, Traumatisme

## Introduction

Thinkers such as Kevin Kenny do not miss to give their insight into diaspora. He contends: "As a concept, diaspora produces powerful insight into ... world, but it can also produce some powerful distortions *when* displacement ... and longing for a homeland *are its* feature" (K. Kenny, 2013, pp. 1, 2). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin concur: "Diaspora does not simply refer to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory and home which such displacement produces. .... 'Unhousedness' or 'uncanniness' ... characterizes diasporic displacement" (2004, pp. 217-218). Homi Bhabha refers to such diasporic conditions as "the indeterminacy of diasporic identity that rises psychic trauma" (1994, p. 225).

The psychic crisis occasioned by diaspora is often termed as a survival by the trauma theorist Cathy Caruth. For the trauma theorist, "the survival of trauma is not the fortunate passage beyond a violent event ... but rather the endless inherent necessity of repletion, which ultimately may lead to destruction" (C. Caruth, 1996, pp. 62-63). It follows that: "The traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction" (C. Caruth, 1996, p. 63). Caruth means that to survive consists for the individual in living painful past experiences.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Amma Darko's *Between Two Worlds* rightly represent the survival caused by migrants' experiences in the West and in Europe.

In the present study, using Cathy Caruth's concept of survival, I argue that migrants' experiences results in survival. In the two novels, the survival of the African migrants is brought to the fore throughout the representations of Nigerians' and Ghanaians' experiences.

## 1. Crossing borders and survival of African migrants

Western people often view their culture as the center. Because of the differences between the traditional cultures of the African migrants and Western values, the African migrants face difficulties to integrate the host countries. As they live in the margin and are confronted with financial hardships, they cannot return to their home countries. These migrants become diasporic subjects whose psyches are repetitively haunted by the difficult living conditions.

### 1.1. African diaspora as second-class citizen: state of survival

The concept of "second-class citizen" as mentioned in this section refers to the title of the second-generation novel *Second-Class Citizen* written by Buchi Emecheta. In this novel entitled *Second-Class Citizen*, Adah and her husband who are considered first-class citizens in Nigeria become second-class citizens in England because of cultural differences. The culture which brings Adah and her husband to be first-class citizens in Nigeria is different from Western culture and marginalized in England. The cultural marginalization is noted by Bill Ashcroft, et al. as "the condition constructed by the posited relation to a privileged centre, an 'Othering' directed by the imperial authority" (2004, p. 102). This marginalization occasions the survival of the African migrants.

In Adichie' novel, when Ifemelu migrates to America, it is hair braiding that she can afford. The narrator informs:

“Ifemelu had last braided her hair three months ago” (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 10). The hair braiding style shows Ifemelu’s poor economic situation. This style allows her to avoid making her hair regularly in order to save money. The long lapse of time that she spends before braiding her hair expresses the poverty that she goes through in the American society.

The picture of the braiding shop discloses very well the second-class citizen status of Ifemelu. The narrator describes the salon where Ifemelu braids her hair as a craft that is in the shanty “part of the city that had graffiti, dank buildings and no white people” (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 9). Not only does the dirt of the locality reveal the lower status of women like Ifemelu who braid their hair in the salon but also, the use of “craft” unveils the African hair braiders as poorly educated migrants even when they are not.

Next to the hair braiding, Ifemelu is horrified by her other poor living condition: “She did not like that she had to go from Princeton to Trenton to braid her hair” (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 3). The expression “had to” shows that Ifemelu has no other option. She even hates going from Princeton to Trenton. Her disgust rises as the effect of her inevitability of the unpleasurable living condition. Ifemelu’s experience in the West apes Kevin Kenny’s depiction of the translation of the diaspora to an enigma trauma that follows: “Diaspora means ‘a horror,’ ‘trouble’ or ‘an object of trembling’” (2013, p. 4). Since Ifemelu cannot afford a high living standard, she stays in the lower class with its troubles.

Ifemelu reveals her survival in a flashback. The novel mentions: “It was her first time at this salon ... but it would look, she was sure, like all the other African hair braiding salons she had known: there were in the part of the city that had graffiti, dank buildings and no white” (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 9). Though Ifemelu does not know the place where

the new salon is located, she assimilates this new salon to a horrific site.

Ifemelu's poor living condition is expressed through her failure to get a job in America. In fact, poor job and joblessness are the conditions of the African migrants in America. The fact of being black brings the migrants to have difficulties to get job in America. Ifemelu has numberless times been "jobless" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 151). This situation pains her. The narrator voices:

EACH TIME she went to a job interview, or made a phone call about a job, she told herself that this would, finally, be her day; this time, the waitress, hostess, babysitter position would be hers, but even as she wished herself well, there was already a gathering gloom in a far corner of her mind. (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 144)

Ifemelu's psychic crisis occurs as the result of her endless failure to get a job. Her repetitive actions of looking for job unveils her endless effort to search for a job in the American society. In her different interviews, she is refused the jobs on the basis of her race. She is rejected by the American society as an other who does not fit the social norms. The host society refuses her integration. Kwame Anthony Appiah refers to such a racial discrimination as extrinsic racism in "The Invention of Africa". In his study of Western politics of racialization, he contends:

Racialism is, however, a presupposition of other doctrines that have been called 'racism,' and these other doctrines have been, in the last few centuries, the basis of a great deal of human suffering and the source of a great deal of moral error. One such doctrine we might call extrinsic racism: extrinsic racists make moral distinctions between members of different races because they believe that the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities. (K. A. Appiah, 1992, p. 13)

The American people exemplify this type of extrinsic racism against Ifemelu, when they refuse to employ her. Though Ifemelu migrates to America for her development, the American people classify her as immoral person and refuse to employ her. Ifemelu in this vein is degraded and devalued as less important person. Her lower status echoes the condition of the colonized in the postcolony. Referring to Achill Mbembe, the postcolony designates “the native as nothing, as thing, and animal ... created by colonizer” (2001, p. 188). Ifemelu’s status of second-class citizen makes her reflect the colonized subject’s condition of being nothing and animal because of colonization. Though direct colonization is ended, African people’s migration brings Westerners to continue denigrating them as inferior race, a painful condition that they live in repletion.

Ifemelu’s endless psychic loss echoes Cathy Caruth’s stance on survival when the latter writes: The psychic crisis of “the traumatized individual is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction” (C. Caruth, 1996, p. 63). Each time that Ifemelu fails to be employed, her psyche takes her back to a predicament that doubles her crisis. In one of her hopelessness situations where she is refused a job that the employer justifies as reason of wanting to “hire a more qualified person” (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 142), Ifemelu “thought of her mother” who “often blamed the devil. The devil is a liar. The devil wants to block us,” and got “a tight, suffocating pressure rising inside her chest” (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 142). The reality is not that the employer wants to employ more qualified person as he makes Ifemelu believe. The reality is rather that during the interview the employer notices that Ifemelu is black. Being so, this employer just finds a pretext to cover the racist attitude held against Ifemelu. But Ifemelu painfully feels this discrimination. Her psyche develops a repetitive

anxiety. As it can be put in Roy Osamu Kamada's view (2010, p. 108), Ifemelu's repetitive anxiety is justified by the fact that "diasporic identity' ... is unstable identity". Not only is Ifemelu Jobless but also, she is moneyless.

Ifemelu's lower status that accounts for her endless anxieties strengthens when a stand is taken from Nabeel Zuberi. Nabeel Zuberi writes: "If diasporas do not or cannot return 'home,' they still articulate a yearning for home and a sense of belonging to a scattered community" (2011, p. 1042). Though Ifemelu's flashback to her mother in Nigeria awakens her anxiety, this flashback is also accounted for her homesickness. The racial discrimination that the American society inflicts to her occasions her yearning for home. Ifemelu does not know where to get job and how to manage so that the American people can treat her as human being rather than nothing, thing and animal. The American society thus fails to be homely to her.

Migration brings Ifemelu to "encompass and fluctuate between the reproduction of a group's traditions, as well as changes in its culture" (N. Zuberi, 2011, p. 1042). Ifemelu personifies the traditional culture of Nigeria that is not taken into account in American cultural system. Not only is she geographically and culturally uprooted from Nigeria to be located in America but also, this host society refuses her integration. She is refused any job and does not succeed in having a decent live in America. She is lost in the American society.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel pictures another character Auntie Uju as a second-class citizen. Like Ifemelu's condition, Auntie Uju's status sets her into trauma. In a flashback, Ifemelu sees that in Nigeria, Auntie 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" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 110). Ifemelu realizes that America "had subdued" her Auntie Uju (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 110). Auntie Uju can only afford braid. What is more, Auntie Uju lives as a poor woman in America. Auntie Uju who in Nigeria is on the side of the national government finds herself in the lower status in the host country. Referring to the living condition of Auntie Uju in America, the narrator voices: "Nkechi in Maryland had sent her the dining set, Kemi in Indiana bought her the bed, Ozaviza had sent crockery and clothes from Hartford" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 110). America transforms Auntie Uju as a poor woman. From the first class-citizen in Nigeria, she becomes a second-class citizen in the American society.

When Auntie Uju tells Ifemelu about her poor living conditions in America, the latter feels that the former is in troubles: "Her words felt bulky and useless in her mouth" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 110). Though it is Auntie Uju who is in difficulties, Ifemelu feels the pain. Enduring what Achille Mbembe terms as being "non-identical or being other" (2001, p. 4), Auntie Uju has to learn the American culture. For that reason, she "was studying and working three jobs. She was doing retail at the mall, and a research assistantship and ... even did some hours at Burger King" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 109). Auntie Uju is caught in the middle of different works.

Auntie Uju comes across difficult life in the American society because she is not simply non-identical or an other but also, she is "nothing" (A. Mbembe, 2001, p. 4). The African woman counts her failure or nothingness to Ifemelu: "I failed my last exam" (Adichie, 2013, p. 109). By listening to Auntie Uju's failure, Ifemelu's mind travels to one of her phone conversations with Auntie Uju. Ifemelu feels pains from Auntie Uju's troubles: "She had always been vague, mentioning 'work', and 'exam' without details" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 110). These troubles of Auntie Uju bring



Ifemelu experience pain. The status of second-class citizen is not the only identity that sets the diasporic subjects in survival. Negro-phobogenesis is another identity bore by the diasporic subjects that arouses their survival.

### *1.2. Negro-phobogenesis and Germans' hypochondria*

In Anne Anlin Cheng's view, the hypochondriacal response is "a symptom, ... of an 'original, real' pain. ...It is the memory-trace of a missing original trauma...the very manifestation of the absence of origin" (A. A. Cheng, 2001, p. 89). hypochondriacal response as developed by Cheng occurs as the result of a failure to be assimilated. Anne Anlin Cheng holds: "Assimilation and hypochondria share similar logics and can be experienced as indistinguishable" (A. A. Cheng, 2001, p. 78). She adds: "In the heart of every assimilative gesture lies the haunting anxiety of social failure. ...the anxieties surrounding the prospect of assimilation lead to hypochondriacal reactions" (A. A. Cheng, 2001, p. 78). Though the Africans in Darko's *Between Two Worlds* migrate to Germany to achieve developments, they fail to be integrated in the German society. They rather come across Negro-phobogenesis.

Negro-phobogenesis is the phobia risen by the Negro. Frantz Fanon exposes this concept of Negro-phobogenesis as in the following terms: "The Negro is a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety" (1967, p. 151). He describes phobia through the reaction of a child: "'Look, a Negro!' ... 'Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!' Frightened! Frightened! Whites were ... afraid of me" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 112). For Frantz Fanon, such a negrophobic anxiety is produced by "the elements of the infantile structure" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 155). His detailed description is phrased by the following formula: "Phobia is a neurosis characterized by the anxious fear of an object (in the broadest sense of anything outside

the individual) or, by extension, of a situation.' Naturally that object must have certain aspects. It must arouse, Hesnard says, both fear and revulsion" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 154). Fanon continues that the object arouses fear and revulsion because "this object is endowed with evil intentions and with all the attributes of a malefic power." Being so, the "contact alone is enough to evoke anxiety" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 156). In *Between Two Worlds*, negrophobia occasions the survival of both diasporic subjects and German citizens.

Amma Darko's *Between Two Worlds* exhibits Jofri and the other African migrants to engender revulsion and fear in the psyches of white Germans. The latter show their negrophobic feelings to the black Africans in Germany. This survival operates through the presence of the African students in the German school. In the school, negrophobia and survival are literally *mise en abyme* of diaspora. The scene takes place specifically in a German textile school where the African students are sent by the governments of their different countries for school education. The African students originate in different African countries namely Ghana and Nigeria.

The German citizen rise into fright when they see Jofri and the Nigerians. The German citizens feel that they are going to be harmed by the African students. The threat exists only in the psyches of German students. It is because of negrophobia that "the German students stared at the Africans in awe *and ask*: was the town safe? ... and scowled *and hushed bewildered*" (A. Darko, 2015, pp. 303, 304). Negrophobia brings the German students to see the African diasporas as "night time, ... very much like the dead of night" (A. Darko, 2015, p. 305). The German students reverse the tendency as Robert Young puts it when he writes that the white people who have always threatened black

people now “are saying that Black are ‘a threat’ to them” (R. Young, 2003, p. 41).

In the foregoing survival of negrophobic fright, Frantz Fanon’s description of negrophobia is resonant. Considering that German students have “heard of all those wild, weird stories about Africa” (A. Darko, 2015, p. 304), Fanon’s insight on infantile structure vis-à-vis phobia helps explain German students’ hypochondriac psyches. It is because German students’ infantile structures have archived black race as savage and barbaric that they rise in hypochondria when they see the African students. Their psychological paralysis is occasioned by their negrophobia. As Fanon contends: “Negrophobes ... is not hatred of the Negro, .... Hate is not inborn; it has to be constantly cultivated, to be brought into being, in conflict with more or less recognized guilt complexes” (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 53). Since the German students are taught to see black race as a phobogenic object, they rise into hypochondria when they come across them.

If the African students do not migrate in Germany, German students’ negrophobia will not be triggered to set their psyches in hypochondria. It is because the African students have migrated to Germany that the German students’ psyches are awakened into hypochondria. Therefore, it is diaspora that has engendered the hypochondriacal survival of the German students.

The process of going back to the infantile structure to relieve the negrophobia archived in the earlier age is a flashback that gives rise to the hypochondria of the German students. It is in this sense that Fanon endorses that, in his/her sight with the Black, the White is taken back to his/her childhood memory where blackness is archived as a being that is “endowed with evil intentions and with all the attributes of a malefic power” (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 155). It is the archival of Black as an evil by German Students’ infantile

structures that sets them in a negrophobic anxiety when they meet Jofri and his Nigerian friends. This manner of reliving the archived disaster hints Cathy Caruth's stance of survival. From Fanon and Caruth's standpoints, it comes out that the German students' encounter with the diasporic students lets the German students experience, in a flashback, the aggressivity of the Black as archived by the infantile structures.

With colonization, stories such as "The Tarzan stories, the saga of the twelve-year-old explorer, the adventures of Mickey Mouse" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 146) are found recorded in the Western books. In these books, the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage always symbolize the Negroes. These same books are devoured by the white children. Consequently, they are faced with the danger of being eaten by the Black constructed as the wicked Negro when they come in contact. It is in this context that Frantz Fanon makes known that "The Negro ... is the slave of the past .... Face to face with the white man, the Negro has a past to legitimate, a vengeance to exact; face to face with the Negro, the contemporary white man feels the need to recall the times of cannibalism" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 125). The German students' contact with the African students in Germany sets the German students in hypochondria. If German students rise into negrophobic hypochondria, black people are not left asides. The negrophobia of the German citizens immobilizes the psyches of the African diasporas too.

If negrophobia sets the German students in hypochondriac survival, it does not split to haunt the psyches of the African immigrants. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is rich in evocating detail on negrophobia that haunts the psyche of the diasporic subject when he writes that with colonization "moral consciousness implies a kind of scission,

a fracture of consciousness into a bright part and an opposing black part. In order to achieve morality, it is essential that the black, the dark, the Negro vanish from consciousness. Hence a Negro is forever in combat with his own image" (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 194). Put in the context of Amma Darko's *Between Two Worlds*, it occurs that the African diasporas experience survival because of the colonial myth of the Negro. Jofri witnesses survival from the testimony of Ursula, his German fiancée. Following the narrator's perspective, the German students' negrophobia transferred to the listener unfolds:

A male co-worker ... blurted with suppressed fury to Ursula: 'you couldn't get the *sexual* satisfying taste you wanted from any German dick so you went for that of an African? ...'

That evening Ursula narrated the incidence to Jofri. He laughed hard but there was pain in his eyes. (A. Darko, 2015, p. 366)

Jofri bears pain, or to put it crudely, he bears survival because the negrophobic event counted to him bears trauma. This sense of traumatic fear is the reverse of what African people consider as fear. In African community, it is the wild, the animal that is a fear. Kwame Anthony Appiah raises this point when he writes: "In traditional cultures, nature, the wild, is untamed, alien, and a source of puzzlement and fear. Social relation and persons are, on the contrary, familiar and well understood" (K. A. Appiah, 1992, p. 112).

Jofri's survival refers to the traumatic survival of the listener, to comply with Dori Laub and Jonathan Boulter. By listening to Ursula's survival, Jofri's psyche rises at loss. This happens to him because as Jonathan Boulter puts it, the story teller, by "remembering *the painful event*, deposits *the pain in the psyche of the listener* as a snake sheds its skin" (J. Boulter, 2011, p. 13). Jofri in such a trauma of listening is in perfect

line with Doris Laub in “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening”. Jofri goes in line with Doris Laub who writes that by remembering, the individual transfers his or her “bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts” (D. Laub, 1992, p. 58) into the psyche of the listener. Jofri is thus a trop for what Doris Laub calls “the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time” (D. Laub, 1992, p. 57).

The negrophobic survival of Jofri echoes Frantz Fanon’s stance of the effect of negrophobia upon the Black in the West. Frantz Fanon bluntly states that the Black “dislocated ... abroad with the ... White is unmercifully imprisoned in *negrophobia*. And battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects” (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 112). Fanon continues to mention that such a misrepresentation sets the diasporic subjects at loss. They experience a psychic “amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered the whole body with black blood” (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 112). Frantz Fanon’s conception of African diaspora: “The Negro is forever in combat with his own image” (F. Fanon, 1967, p. 194) holds true with the African students among whom Jofri in Germany.

## **2. Multiple identities of the African diaspora: traumatic awakening**

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* and in Amma Darko’s *Between Two Worlds* diasporic subjects bear multiple identities that awaken their psyches into trauma. Nabeel Zuberi writes that diasporas are “split or dual ... subjects” (2011, p. 1043). The diasporic subjects portrayed by Adichie and Darko are split or dual subjects as viewed by Nabeel Zuberi. Such a split or dual identity sets the diasporic subjects in what Cathy Caruth, when taking an insight into traumatic awakening, calls “the imperative to survive”

(1996, p. 105). The dual identity also sets the diasporic subjects in what Frantz Fanon conceives as fragmentation. Frantz Fanon describes fragmentation with his own case: “I existed triply: I occupied spaces. I moved toward the *White*... and the *White*, hostile” (1967, p. 112). The hostility of the diasporas brings them to think about their ancestors and their origin and be homesick.

### *2.1. Awakening of the split African diaspora*

To be a split subject in diasporic context is to be in different worlds. It consists in being fragmented in the context of Frantz Fanon. It is a fragmentation that occasions a survival to the diasporic subjects. Jonathan Boulter’s insight gives credence to the bifocality of the diasporic subjects that occasions their survival as follows: “the traumatized subject essentially lives in two temporalities, two states of being — he is in the present moment; his flashbacks and dreams take him back to the past .... In some senses this uncanny image — the subjectivity of the world split into two” (2011, p. 82).

In Adichie’s *Americanah*, Ifemelu is a diasporic subject whose bifocality awakens her psyche into survival. She is a bifocal subject as far as her erotic life is concerned. Starting her love affair with Obinze in Nigeria, Ifemelu finds herself in love affair with Blaine in America. Ifemelu’s psychic journey in Nigeria to think about Obinze and her present live with Blaine in America sets her in psychic crisis. Her psyche is hunted by the split of her eros. In this circumstance, Ifemelu resounds Kane’s protagonist Samba Diallo. Ifemelu is in perfect line with Samba Diallo’s following dual life:

I am in a distinct occident and *not knowing* with a cool head what ... must *be* taken from it and what ... must *be* left with it by way of counterbalance *with homeland custom*. I have

become the two. There is not a clear mind deciding between the two factors of a choice. There is a strange nature, in distress over not being two. (C. H. Kane, 1972, pp. 50, 150)

Being in a dual life like the aforementioned case of Samba Diallo in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*, Ifemelu in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

feigned indifference to Obinze's concern. She had cut off contact with Obinze, after all, and so much time had passed, and she was newly in a relationship with Blaine, and happily easing herself into a shared life. But after she hung up, she thought endlessly of Obinze. Imagining him at his wedding left her with a feeling like sorrow, a faded sorrow. (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 14)

The fact of being in America and setting her thought on Obinze's life in Nigeria sinks Ifemelu in sorrow. Obinze's marriage in Nigeria is a reality that Ifemelu cannot attend. The only way she can attend this marriage is through survival, a present representation of the wedding which is absent. Her dream which is to make of Obinze her "man" (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 17) is only achieved in her surviving mind.

Like Ifemelu, the biracial Ania in Darko's *Between Two Worlds* goes through survival because of her diasporic identity. Being born from a German mother known as Ursula and from a Ghanaian father named Jofri, Ania experiences a dual world. She experiences both the Ghanaian and German worlds. This duality lodges her in survival. In a flashback, Ania experiences the nightmare from her split world. After twenty-four years, she is returning back to the village of her father that she left when she was eleven years old. Having experienced her traditional custom in her early childhood, and being bred by then in German culture by her mother, Ania has forgotten the cultural attitude to conduct vis-à-vis her father's custom in Ghana. Such a cultural confusion created by her belonging to two worlds sinks her into survival. In wondering which attitude to adopt vis-à-vis the traditional custom, she makes a psychic journey back to her father's village that she left twenty-four years ago to remember what home looks like, what are the



things she is allowed to do and not to do. In this flashback, Ania becomes “hysterical. She flung her arms in the air and sniffed” (A. Darko, 2015, p. 46). Furthermore, she experiences the following psychic trouble:

‘I just want to be careful. I don’t want to go wearing something that would offend a custom or contravene a tradition. They have all these strange customs and traditions especially regarding women. What they can’t do and what they can’t wear or say.’ ... ‘The first eleven years of my life which was like how many years ago? Oh, ... twenty-four miserable years ago, and I am supposed to remember everything I took in from age zero to eleven?’ (A. Darko, 2015, pp. 45-46)

Through the flashback, Ania experiences what Cathy Caruth terms as the “trauma, that is, the outside *the custom and its burden* inside *her psyche* without any mediation” (1996, p. 59). In her infancy, Ania has been culturally repressed. She was not given freedom of speech and style, a repression that she has archived in her infantile structure to which she has access through a flashback. Ania complies with Cathy Caruth’s following stance: “One of the most devastating aftereffects of trauma is that it causes widespread use of repression” (C. Caruth, 1995, p. 85). In Ania’s paternal community, there are cultural norms in which she is obliged to plant herself. But now that she is in Germany, she has forgotten what these cultural norms are. By trying to remember these customs, she rouses into anxiety. Instead of remembering the custom, it is the shock, the pain, and the anxiety of this custom that she reexperiences. In such in-between worlds, Ania is not rooted in any culture. Since she is not rooted in any culture, it is impossible for her to possess a clear cultural remembrance.

## 2.2. *Double-life of the African diaspora: nostalgic awakening*

When giving an insightful reflection about diaspora, Nabeel Zuberi writes about nostalgia: "If diasporas do not or cannot return 'home,' they still articulate a yearning for home and a sense of belonging to a scattered community" (2011, p. 1042). Nostalgia as mentioned by Nabeel Zuberi consists for the diasporas who are scattered between traditional communities and the West to articulate a yearning for home. Such a double-life sinks the diasporas into what Cathy Caruth terms as awakening. Cathy Caruth illustrates awakening with Lacan words: "Awakening is an encounter, an essential encounter – an appointment to which *individuals* are always called with a real that elude ... *them*" (C. Caruth, 1996, p. 105). Furthermore, Cathy Caruth interprets: "Awakening ... occurs not merely as a failure to respond *or to encounter the real* but as an enactment of the inevitability of responding." Such a "real as encounter ... the missed encounter is enough to awaken ... trauma" (C. Caruth, 1996, pp. 105-108).

Awakening as aforesaid is the psychic condition of the diasporas represented by Adichie in *Americanah* and by Darko in *Between Two Worlds*. The African diasporas manifest psychic crisis by missing the real cultures, the cultures of their countries of origins. By missing the cultures of their mother countries, their psyches awaken trauma. In *Between Two Worlds*, Jofri's religion in Germany mirrors double-life that rouses trauma in his psyche. He uproots himself from the Tsilemen to seed himself in the Presbyterian. Jofri chants: "'The church will bury me when I die'" (A. Darko, 2015, p. 109). Jofri cuts himself off from the custom of Tsilemen to dwell in the religion of Presbyterian.

If a stand is taken from Chris Kwame Awuyah's interpretation on Armah's way, Jofri can be said to be

fragmentated. Jofri does not comply with, as Chris Kwame Awuyah puts it, “Armah’s ... philosophy of ‘the way,’ ‘the living way,’ ... as the source of authentic African values ... community, reciprocity, connectedness, and fruition” (C. K. Awuyah, 1998, p. 221). Jofri rather takes the negation that leads him to fragmentation, destruction and death. Starkly put, Jofri dwells in Western religion to the detriment of his traditional belief. But like any Western religion, the Presbyterian Church plays its role of othering Jofri. The Presbyterian Church brings Jofri to remember that he is not one of the church’s members therefore cannot be fully assimilated to the church. As the church minister answers Jofri’s desire to be assimilated till his death and to be buried in the Presbyterian cemetery when he dies, the impossibility for Jofri to be fully assimilated shows: “the church would not want” (A. Darko, 2015, pp. 103, 107).

More striking is that, by taking my cue from Aimé Césaire, it comes out that it is true that superficially Jofri bears the marks of Presbyterian Church but if he breaks with all that, “plumb the depths, then what *is found* is fundamentally black” (A. Césaire, 2000, pp. 16–17). In this context of Césaire, Jofri’s root cannot be totally cut off. Since he is traditionally an in-born Tsilemen, his infantile structure archives the custom of Tsilemen. Jofri’s Tsilemen custom cannot be cleaned as a black board so that the Presbyterian Church inscribes Western religion on it. No matter how hard Jofri tries his assimilation, he always bears some sequels of Tsilemen culture.

The doubleness of Jofri’s religion triggers his nostalgic awakening. Since by practicing Presbyterian Church, Jofri has kept a long period without being into contact with the Tsilemen custom, his memory on this custom is distorted. He struggles to have access to his traditional custom, but he fails. The narrative perspective illustrates his attempt to get

access to the tradition: "The sight of the two dilapidated thatched huts on the plot of land that had belonged to his mother ... awakened in Jofri a sense of longing he had suppressed for a long time" (A. Darko, 2015, p. 109). The impossibility to get access the traditional world sinks him into yearning. He yearns for the ancestral realm. He struggles to set a foot back in the traditional cultural realm. From Presbyterian Church, he struggles to build a bridge to Tsilemen custom. In other words, he struggles to reconstruct his cultural memory. But since he misses the Tsilemen custom for so long, his psyche is at loss.

Jofri is so uprooted from Tsilemen custom that the ancestral spiritual realm denies him the title of ancestor. When Jofri gets a car accident, he cannot enter the ancestral world because he suppresses Tsilemen custom. This custom denial brings him to yearn entering the ancestral realm. His Presbyterian Church cannot yield the ancestral realm for his soul. To put it bluntly, Jofri cannot be an ancestor. He also cannot belong to the living "because of a spiritual puzzle" (A. Darko, 2015, p. 114). Jofri is thus in perfect line with Cathy Caruth's following standpoint of awakening: "The awakening represents a paradox about the necessity and impossibility of confronting death" (C. Caruth, 1996, p. 100).

When reference is made to Homi K. Bhabha, Jofri can be said to be in a state of in-betweenness. The doubleness of his spirituality sets him between the livings and the ancestors. He yearns for the ancestral world but cannot get access. In his nostalgic awakening to the ancestors, Jofri stays in

another world ... were faces that he knew had existed decades and centuries ago. He rushed towards it but the world moved ... away from him. Jofri understood instantly. The ancestors had denied him entry into their world ... The floating consciousness dissipated. Jofri twitched violently on the bed. (A. Darko, 2015, pp. 108, 109)

Like Jofri in *Darko's Between Two Worlds*, Ifemelu in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* experiences nostalgic awakening. Contrary to Jofri whose diasporic journey lies in religion, Ifemelu's diasporic journey is geographical. It is Ifemelu's migration to USA that occasions her nostalgic awakening. By living in USA, Ifemelu misses Nigeria. From the narrative perspective, Ifemelu's homesickness unravels:

She had a fellowship at Princeton ... and yet there was cement in her soul. It had been there for a while, an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness. (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 6)

Ifemelu's homesickness is not always deposited there alone in her psyche as a snake sheds its skin and deposits it there. It is engendered by her missing to easily assimilate American life. Coming across difficulties in America, Ifemelu's homesickness awakens:

Walked back to the station, mourning the train fare. The trees were awash with colour, red and yellow leaves tinted the air golden, and she thought of the words she had recently read somewhere: *Nature's first green is gold*. The crisp air, fragrant and dry, reminded her of Nsukka during the harmattan season, and brought with it a sudden stab of homesickness, so sharp and so abrupt that it filled her eyes with tears. (C. N. Adichie, 2013, p. 144)

Both Jofri and Ifemelu are in nostalgic awakening. They are in continual ambiguous relations to their traditional cultures that they have left for their diasporic journeys. Installed in an ambiguous space, Jofri and Ifemelu are like Samba Diallo who "installed in an ambiguous space ... is no

longer *a* or *b* but more than *a* or *b*. He is in the margin ... a site of loss" (O. Nnaemeka, 1998, p. 313). They ambiguity reflects Boulter's stance for which "nostalgia is a mode of being that places the subject in continual relation to the past" (2011, p. 118).

### Conclusion

The probe of Chimamanda Nozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Amma Darko's *Between Two Worlds* reveals that the writers are concerned with voicing diasporic identity as a traumatic hybridity. The two novelists are concerned with the fact that the diasporic identities that the African migrants acquire in the host counties set them in trauma rather than in development. This is clearly obvious when reference is made to Adichie's portrayal of the survival of the second-class citizens. Similarly, Amma Darko's depiction of the Ghanaian diasporas to be tagged as phobogenic object which sets both the Ghanaians and German citizens in survival is her clear-cut representation of diasporic identity as trauma. Adichie's and Darko's moves to represent split subject, and double life as Nigerians' and Ghanaians' diasporic identities that awaken their nostalgic trauma are perfectly illustrated as diasporic identity of trauma.

Adichie's and Darko's portrayals of diasporic identities, it must be made plain, have nothing to do with the appraisal of a fair cultural hybridity for migrants' development. Adichie's and Darko's representations of diasporic identities respectively in *Americanah* and in *Between Two Worlds* are clearly their denunciations of Western cultural hegemony as the root of the trauma of the African diasporas.

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