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Migration in African Literature: a Case Study of Adichie's Works

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Résumé – La migration devient un problème d'envergure planétaire. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977-) traite de la complexité du problème migratoire dans ses œuvres littéraires. A la différence de ses contemporains, elle s'intéresse à la femme immigrée et aborde des thématiques qui vont au-delà des théories courantes de la migration. A travers une analyse critique et stylistique, cet article essaie de montrer le traitement stylistique et esthétique de la migration dans les œuvres littéraires de l'écrivain Nigériane Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie qui traitent du thème de la migration, à savoir : *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around your Neck* (2009) et *Americanah* (2013). Le cadre théorique et méthodologique de cette étude est basé sur les théories internationales de la migration et de la sociocritique. Il s'agit notamment de la théorie postcoloniale de la migration et celle de « retour de migration » qui permettent au lecteur de comprendre les raisons, les causes et la complexité du phénomène de la migration et l'impact de la migration sur l'identité hybride de l'écrivain.

Mots clés : Africain, identité, migration, littérature, langage, hybridité.

Abstract – Migration is becoming an overwhelming issue all over the world. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977-) deals with the theme of migration in her literary works. At the opposite of her contemporaries, she is interested in women migrants and deals with migration issues that go beyond the current framework of migration theories. Through a critical and stylistic analysis, this paper aims to show Adichie's stylistic and aesthetic handling of migration in her works that deal with the theme of migration, namely *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around your Neck* (2009), and *Americanah* (2013). The methodological and theoretical framework of this study is based on international migration theories and socio-criticism, namely post-colonial theories of migration and return migration, that help the reader understand the causes, reasons and complexities of the phenomenon of migration and its impact on the writer's hybrid identity.

Key words: African, identity, migration, literature, language, hybridity

1. Introduction

Many African writers of the first generation, namely, Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi, etc. experienced forced migration for survival. While in exile, they continued producing literary works. The impact of this migration on their productions remains to be investigated. Yet, even at that time, in or outside the boundaries of their own countries, they tackled social issues, including migration. Chinua Achebe, for example, in his essay, *Home and Exile* (2001), tells his recollection of the "story of internal migration in Igboland." (12). His father, an Anglican Missionary, migrated from Ogidi, his home place, for years, but eventually had to return. He remembers that "of all [their] family, only [his] father had ever lived in Ogidi, to which he now brought [them], and he had not lived there since he first began teaching for the Anglican Mission in 1904; it is

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now 1935." (2) It is a specific case of return migration, when he retired after thirty-one years abroad for religious work.

Following the founding fathers of African literature, contemporary African writers are gradually showing deeper concern for this issue in their works of fiction (Harzoune 2015). A look at most literary productions, in the last fifteen years, suffices to convince the doubtful mind of the recurrence of migration in African literature. For example, the Sudanese Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999) narrates the story of a woman from Sudan living in Scotland. Diawara's *We Won't Budge: An African Exile in the World* (2003) presents how the assimilation process shapes the lives and dreams of immigrants in France and in the USA, setting the experiences of the migrants in both countries into comparison. Edugyan's novel, *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* (2004), tells the story of a young man of astonishing promise, Samuel Tyne, who migrates from Ghana to Canada, determined to improve his life. Chris Abani's *GraceLand* (2004) tells the story of Elvis, a teenager who endeavours to get out of poverty and violence in Lagos. In Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Tales from Entebbe* (2005), set in Entebbe, Kampala, and Los Angeles, Christine, the protagonist of this novel, migrated to America and returned home to Uganda where she struggled to adapt to her former home. Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007) presents Sepha Stephanos fleeing the Ethiopian Revolution for the United States where he finds work, running a grocery store, in a poor African-American section of Washington. Brian Chikwa also narrates in *Harare North* (2009) the story of his unnamed hero as one of the thousands of illegal immigrants seeking a better life in London, with a past in strife-torn Zimbabwe he is adamant to hide. Osondu's collection of short stories, *Voice of America: Stories* (2009), shows a mother who writes to her migrant son in the US asking for support, and also many other characters who have ties in America. Jelloun's *A Palace in the Old Village* (2011) is a novel about an immigrant from Morocco who raised his family in Paris, eventually losing all friendly relationship with his assimilated children. In *Americanah* (2013), and also in her debut novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), the 2007 Orange Broadband Prize winner *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and the collection of short stories *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), Adichie shows a deeper concern for the issue of migration, especially that of women. Because these works are telling depictions of what goes on in contemporary society, they are hefty indications of the large-scale migration dramatized in contemporary African literature.

The focus is on Adichie's literary productions because the theme is recurrent in many of her literary works. Another reason is that she has a personal experience of migration, because her life, from the age of nineteen to the present, is shared between America and Nigeria. What, according to this migrant writer, are the causes and consequences of migration and what impact

does it have on migrants and specifically on the migrant writer? In other words, what does Adichie's presentation of migration offer? The objective of this paper is to use socio-criticism and migration theory to critically and stylistically examine Adichie's multifaceted presentations of the causes and consequences of migration, and highlight its impact on her identity as a writer and on the hybrid form in her writings.

2. Causes of Migration in Adichie's Works

Migration theorists such as Dustmann and Weiss (2007) say that throughout human history, "economic motives for migration, and motives related to natural disaster or persecution (…) are the two main reasons why individuals migrate." (2). In fact, for ages, people have been migrating because of poverty, natural disaster or social unrest.

Upon examining post-colonial African literature that deals with migration, one comes to the realization that the generally known migration story for African migrants is that of fleeing from poverty or war. Adichie's works abound with examples that buttress this migration theory. Some of her works show that the lack of economic opportunity, natural disaster or persecutions are the main factors causing individuals to migrate. For instance, some of the stories in her collection of short stories, *The Thing around Your Neck*, especially "Imitation" and "The Arrangers of Marriage," show girls migrating to America with their husbands, expecting to rise from grass to grace, i.e., from poverty to riches. Nkem, for example,

> was pregnant when she first came to America with Obiora. (…) [they] live in a lovely suburb near Philadelphia, she told her friends in Lagos on the phone. She sent them pictures of herself and Obiora near the Liberty Bell, proudly scrawled very important in American history behind the pictures, and enclosed glossy pamphlets featuring a balding Benjamin Franklin. (Adichie *The Thing around your Neck* 24, hereafter referred to as *The Thing*).

Through this meticulous choice of a semantic register of happiness (lovely, proudly, glossy) coupled with powerful American symbols (Liberty Bell, Franklin), the authoress leads the readers into Nkem's new life and makes them see how very happy she was, her hopes being fulfilled. Coming from a poor country where, "in her life, her childhood, you snatched the food up, whatever it was, and ate it," (*The Thing* 24) when it falls on the ground, once migrated in America, she wanted her children to be like American ones, that is, "the kind of children who sniffed at food that had fallen on the dirt, saying it was 'spoiled.'" (*The Thing* 24). Her mindset and expectations reveal that poverty drove her to migrate. Likewise, the old woman, Aunty Ada, in "The Arrangers of Marriage," compares the fact of finding "*an ezigbo di*! A doctor in America" (*The Thing* 171), for her adopted daughter, to winning a lottery. This powerful comparison, especially the choice of the word "lottery", reveals the state of poverty of the

place in which the speaker lives and the people's expectations to migrate to America to improve their standards of living.

The word "lottery" denotes chance. Intelligence or wealth does not guarantee a visa, but mere chance as the university lecturer, Ifeoma, explains from her experience in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*, talking about visa officers: "I don't know. If they are in a good mood, they will give you a visa, if not, they will refuse you. It is [like] what happens when you are worthless in somebody's eyes. We are like footballs that they can kick in any direction they want to." (278) Such ill-treatment, powerfully expressed with a strong simile that reduces human beings to playful objects, shows the lack of consideration that is done on purpose to discourage many from migrating. Yet, it does not dissuade many who see migration as a way-out of their poverty.

In addition, the short story "The Thing Around Your Neck" within the collection of the same title opens with these words: "You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so, too. Right after you won the American visa lottery, they told you: in a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house." (*The Thing* 115). The choice of a semantic field of possession (have, win, car, house) helps to show poor people's great expectations to readers. The heroine in this story goes to America by chance after winning the green card lottery. Most of the narratives in this collection can be called "visa stories" where chance is capital, as a queue outside embassy becomes part of the heroines' lives. Adichie focuses on poverty leading women to the road of migration.

The next basic reason for migration is education. Using the second person narrative and the literary device of unnamed characters which echoes themes of social blindness and search for identity, Adichie in "The Thing around your Neck" presents the sad experience of a twenty-two-year-old unnamed narrator whose educational dreams are compromised once in America as she has to work hard to pay for her meagre accommodation. All characters in this short story are unnamed, expression that in the new world they find themselves in, names are so important that not having a name means one has lost one's original identity and is reduced to mere archetypes, in the author's grand myth, looking for a new identity and a suitable name. In fact, what name suits a hybrid person? Hence the migrants remained nameless. In this way the author warns readers that this is the fate that awaits anybody whose expectation is to migrate in order to improve their standard of living.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, on the other hand, Adichie deals with another type of emigration—Brain drain, especially through the characterization of Aunty Ifeoma, a University lecturer. Chiaku, another university woman lecturer, cannot bear this brain drain and cries out: "The educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind. The tyrants

continue to reign because the weak cannot resist." (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 244-45, hereafter referred to as *Purple*). The almost chiastic pairing of opposites (leave/leave behind; right/wrong; potential/weak) lays emphasis on the brain drain, the emigration of talented, strong and skilled people from their countries of birth to another country. Usually, these people seek to maximize their revenues and make the most of their skills and talents. But this reason does not apply in *Purple Hibiscus*. In Chiaku's words, brain drain stems from the tyranny of the government (*Purple* 244-45). The latter forfeits this elites' migration to preserve their sit-tight policy.

Aunty Ifeoma justifies her migration on educational ground, that is, to secure university education abroad for her children who cannot get it at home. When she confided to Chiaku that she sent her CV to Philippa in America, she (Chiaku) responds with surprise: "So you, too, Ifeoma." (*Purple* 244). Ifeoma then tells her: "It is not about me, Chiaku. (…) Who will teach Amaka and Obiora in university?" (*Purple* 244). This conversation between the two university lecturers shows that the decision of such a hard-fighting woman to leave her beloved university comes suddenly as a bitter surprise. This surprise turns into a nightmare when one knows that she is not the first of her category; she follows the example of many other colleagues so much so that the university lacks teachers to educate students. Aunty Ifeoma's children, Amaka and Obiora, will not benefit from university education if they remain in Nigeria. Her migration to America is part and parcel of Adichie's wider purpose in the novel: she represents the many Nigerians who think that they could better their lives by leaving their country.

This brain drain is mainly induced by bad governance which creates social unease. The head of state fails to provide even basic necessities such as payment of salaries and fuel for example. We learn from Aunty Ifeoma's experience that "no lecturer has been paid for the last three months. They tell us the Federal Government has no money" (*Purple* 76). She also laments about the shortage of fuel: "We have not had fuel for three months in Nsukka. I spent the night in the petrol station last week, waiting for fuel. And at the end, the fuel did not come. Some people left their cars in the station because they did not have enough fuel to drive back home." (*Purple* 76). Through the repetition of "fuel" the author makes readers feel how dramatic is this shortage of fuel in station in an oil-producing country. In such a situation of bad governance and anarchy, the university is in crisis, and the author invites the readers to see it as nothing but "a microcosm of the country." (*Purple* 224) The military regime, in which "coup begat coup (…), a vicious cycle" (*Purple* 24), leads people to migrate, to find refuge elsewhere. Ifeoma and her family are not that poor. Yet, even endowed with material comfort, Ifeoma who suffers harassment at work, has to emigrate with her family to the USA.

In the same novel, Adichie mentions other personal reasons, such as wedding or friendly visit to a relative, that lead people to migration. It is the case of a woman who is applying for a visa to partake in a wedding ceremony in America. She says to the visa officer: "How can you refuse me a visa? I have shown you that I have money in the bank. How can you say I will not come back? I have property here, I have property. She kept saying that over and over: 'I have property.' I think she had wanted to attend her sister's wedding in America." (*Purple* 278). The rhythmic scansion with "I have" highlights the woman's possessions only to show that "the haves and have nots" alike, to paraphrase Ernest Hemingway's and Tyler Perry's works of the same title, undergo the same pitiless treatment from visa officers; wealth is no sinecure into acquiring a visa.

Next, in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (hereafter referred to as *Half*), Adichie introduces yet another cause of migration: war or social conflict. Interestingly, the novel is dedicated to the memories of her grandparents who "did not survive the war," the Biafran War (1967-1970). "War is coming," she said. "Port Harcourt is going crazy." (*Half* 215). This fiction tells the story of a group of people, Olanna, Kainene, Ugwu, Odenigbo, and Richard, during the Biafran war in Nigeria and shows forced migration as the only option for survival. After Biafra's declaration of secession in the lips of Odenigbo—"I do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory… known as and called Eastern Nigeria…, shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of the republic of Biafra." (*Half* 203)—the lives of the main characters drastically changed and were torn apart by the brutality of the civil war. As a result of the conflict, Olanna, Odenigbo, their daughter Baby and Ugwu are forced to migrate, to flee from Nsukka, the university town, to Umuahia where Kainene runs a refugee camp.

So far, examining Adichie's works following the principles of migration theory, it can be said that they serve as illustrative examples of this theory as they abound with multiple cases of poverty and conflict-induced migration on which is based this theory. Yet, in *Americanah*, she presents another cause of migration that is new to international migration theory.

In fact, one of the peculiarities of Adichie is that in addition to these two main causes of migration, through the characterisation of Ifemelu, she makes it possible for readers to take notice of another reason: choicelessness or the unavailability of choice. In fact, the protagonists Ifemelu and Obinze migrate to the USA and the UK because they are fleeing from what they call the "oppressive lethargy of choicelessness" (Adichie, *Americanah* 5034, hereafter referred to as *Americanah*). Ifemelu was "guiltily grateful that she had a blue American passport in her bag. It shielded her from choicelessness. She could always leave; she did not have to stay." (*Americanah* 6876). Through the

powerful juxtaposition of guilt and gratitude, the author makes the readers take notice of the situation of unease in which Ifemelu's quest of freedom of movement leads her. Her being guilty refers to the illegal way she managed to obtain the visa; yet she is thankful because it enables her to always move; without it, she has no choice but to stay. The passport is synonymous with choice and freedom of movement.

The battle against choicelessness is presented to the reader through Obinze's mind while attending a dinner in a friend's house in Britain. Alexa and Georgina were some of the guests. When Alexa commends Blunkett's intention to transform Britain into a refuge for survivors of wars, Obinze agrees with her. Yet, she is ill at ease because the motivations behind her own migration story are different:

> Alexa, and the other guests, and perhaps even Georgina, all *understood* the fleeing from war, from the kind of poverty that crushed human souls, *but* they would *not understand* the need to escape from the oppressive lethargy of choicelessness. They would *not understand* why people like him, who were raised well-fed and watered but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else, eternally convinced that real lives happened in that somewhere else, were now resolved to do dangerous things, illegal things, so as to leave, none of them starving, or raped, or from burned villages, *but* merely hungry for choice and certainty. (*Americanah* 5034, emphasis mine)

Adichie is using contrast with words and phrases such as "but", "understand/not understand" to vividly introduce readers into a new phenomenon, choicelessness, which is presented as a metaphysical means of oppression. Both Ifemelu and Obinze belong to the Nigerian middle class. They do not suffer from poverty. Their migration is not induced by poverty but by the need to experience choice and something new somewhere else. In this context, one can but agree with the critic Oluwafunlola Idowu-Faith (2014), who, when writing on the stylistics of return migration in *Americanah*, comes to the conclusion that "the need to flee choicelessness defines *Americanah* as a new kind of migration story and sets the text in motion against recognized migration theories." (3). Thus, Adichie adds a new literary dimension to migration theory in suggesting the want of choice as a cause leading some well-to-do people to migrate illegally.

However, to a certain extent, the lack of choice can be seen as another kind of poverty. This does not underestimate Adichie's originality, far from it. She has the merit of revealing this specific type of poverty. Poverty is not only economic or financial. It can be structural through the lack of infrastructures for example, spiritual through the presence of only one religion or spirituality; and all are linked. In a country where the majority is poor, the choices of the few rich in terms of standard of living and lifestyle are very limited. As they cannot create the new structures and opportunities in their environments, they have to leave and find these choices elsewhere. It is this particular type of poverty, the

lack of choice, that characterises Adichie's originality. It is a reason not often mentioned in migration theories. One can say that with this new dimension in Ifemelu's migration story, Adichie introduces a literary intervention to international migration theory in justifying the illegal emigration of some wealthy people.

So, Adichie resorts to many literary aesthetics, mainly comparison and contrast, to present many reasons for migration in her literary works. From one novel to another, she explores various factors which lead people to the road of migration, namely poverty, war, education, personal agenda and choicelessness. Despite its origin or source, no migration is devoid of consequences on the identity of the individuals as these try to adapt to new cultures and situations.

3. Consequences of Migration as presented in Adichie's Works

In *Purple Hibiscus*, through Aunty Ifeoma's migration to America, Adichie presents migration under two faces: good and bad. First, in its positive aspect, it appears as a solution to social instability. Adichie makes the character of Ifeoma stand for the many Nigerians who think that they could improve their living conditions by leaving their country than by staying in such an unstable place. She shows Ifeoma and her children thriving in America. Kambili plans to visit them with her mother and her brother Jaja. In this light, migration appears to be a success.

Yet, in this novel, Adichie presents most migrants as victims of disillusionment. Many of them do not meet good living conditions in America, the *oyinbo* land. *Oyinbo* is an Igbo word for "white man". Some of the intelligentsia who went to the *Oyinbo* land have employments which have nothing in common with the training and degrees they received, and end up living "life as a second-class citizen in America." (*Purple* 244). We learn from Chiaku that "every day our doctors go [to America] and end up washing plates for ***oyinbo*** because ***oyinbo*** does not think we study medicine right. Our lawyers go and drive taxis because ***oyinbo*** does not trust how we train them in law." (*Purple* 244). The training of the migrant intelligentsia is undervalued. They do mean jobs for the *oyinbo*. From being civil servants in their home country, they become domestic servants for white people, the *oyinbo*, in a country of many races. They were not expecting such a humiliating treatment. Even though they are paid, it is not the amount of money they dreamt of while migrating.

Even when migration is internal as in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie uses the technique of regression analysis to show how the intelligentsia suffer ill-treatment similar to migrants abroad. In this novel, readers witness the degradation of the character of Olanna, daughter of Chief Ozobia, who, after

attending university in the United Kingdom, became Professor of Sociology at Nsukka University before the war begins. With the conflict, she is forced to migrate and take on mean jobs: as a school teacher in Umuahia and finally as co-worker with her sister in a refugee-camp. The abasement from being a lecturer at university, then a school teacher, to taking care of refugees with no previous training and qualification for that is but a sad effect of migration.

In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, the stories illuminate the promise and ultimate disappointment of the immigrant's experience. This disillusionment does not lead all migrants to return to their countries of origin. They stay but live in loneliness and regret. For instance, in the short story "The Arrangers of Marriage," Chinaza, a new young wife, finds that her arranged marriage to a Nigerian medical student in America is not as she had dreamt. Her hopes begin to chatter and she faces despair. Another example can be found in the short story "The Thing around your Neck" where a young woman winning the lottery for an American visa and excited to live in the land of plenty is depicted being completely alone, aching but unable to tell her family what is happening to her. Through her pen, Adichie tells in this way the sad experience of African migrants in the El Dorado.

Unable to endure such unexpected hardships, some migrants return home. In *Americanah*, for example, Adichie depicts the challenges befalling Obinze and Ifemelu after their return. Adichie uses characterization to depict such cases of return migration. Analyzing them from the point of view of the theory of return migration, it can be said that her fiction falls within the ambit of this system. In fact, in this theory of migration, especially in its neoclassical approach to international migration, return migration, the phenomenon of return back home of the migrants is "viewed as the outcome of a failed migration experience which did not yield the expected benefits." (Cassarino 2004, 255). The migrants' return to their countries of origin occurs, according to these theorists, as a consequence of their failed experiences abroad, or because their great expectations were not met. For example, back home after her stay in America for thirteen years, Ifemelu tells how difficult migration has been for her, her disillusionment when her expectations were shattered once in America. She criticises the racist America from a non-American African perspective in her "anonymous blog called *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*." (*Americanah* 117). With such examples of return migrants, Adichie subscribes to this theory.

However, Adichie brings something new to this theory of return migration as she did concerning the reasons for migration. In fact, it can be observed that none of the reasons for migrants' return (back to their home countries) that are identified in "return migration" theories fully matches Ifemelu's return decision. In fact, Ifemelu's journey out of his country and voluntary return back

transcend the borders of both "migration" and "return migration" theories because her case, like Obinze's, is motivated by the need to flee from 'choicelessness' and his return is not forced but voluntary and not based on any convincing reason. In this sense, Adichie is bringing in a new dimension to "return migration theory" by focusing on freedom, which makes choice possible. Ifemelu migrated illegally into America but it is freely and legally that she undertakes the return journey. By juxtaposing and contrasting "choicelessness" and "freedom", that is, the motives for migration and those of return, Adichie reinforces the idea that it is only the need for tourism that really leads some rich people on the road of illegal migration when they have been denied a visa. She also shows that they become hybrid like the other migrants as a result of migration.

4. Hybridization of Characters and Settings in Adichie's Works

Culturally, migrants are bound to imitate the culture and way of life of the country they migrate to. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie makes the reader follow the process of hybridization by focusing on the case of one family, namely Ifeoma and her children. Once in America, they have to adjust to a new culture. Thus, on arrival, Ifeoma's daughter would complain about a lack of enough time for family life as they had back home in Nigeria. She says: "There has never been a power outage and hot water runs from the tap, but we don't laugh anymore, she writes, because we don't have the time to laugh, because we don't see one another." (*Purple* 301). With the use of the contrastive word "but" in the dialogue between mother and daughter, the author is comparing and contrasting two cultures, two kinds of power (machinery or electric one and human warmth) so as to enable the readers to see the passage from one culture to another. At the opposite of Nigeria, in America, things are turned upside down as material comfort takes precedence over sociability.

The process of migrants' settling in or hybridization, Adichie powerfully compares it to "monkeying." In *Purple Hibiscus*, the novelist makes Chiaku share her experience of hybridization with Aunty Ifeoma, telling her that "All [her] years in Cambridge, [she] was a monkey who had developed the ability to reason" (*Purple* 244). She denounces this social prejudice against blacks. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* too, Adichie puts in Richard's mind a dirty joke about Africans in which this cliché appears again: "An African was walking a dog and an Englishman asked, 'What are you doing with that monkey?' and the African answered, 'It's a dog, not a monkey'—as if the Englishman had been talking to him!" (54) The Englishman was rather talking to the dog about the African who is regarded as a monkey. These two clichés in which migrants are compared to monkeys show to what extent migrants are being dehumanized not only in

other people's conception of them but also in their behaviour when under constraint they helplessly try to "monkey" western culture. They are torn between the culture of their home country and that of their host country. They become hybrid.

Afamefuna in "The Headstrong Historian" is another example. A daughter of a convinced Christian convert and grand-daughter of a pot-maker who refused to comply with Western customs and traditions, she finds herself torn between two identities and cultures. The two names she has—Afamefuna and Grace, her baptism name—express her double identity or hybridity. Thus, Adichie presents characters, mostly women, with one foot back home and one foot in the new world, eager for new experiences but unwilling to cut links with the old ways. All these examples lead to the conclusion that Adichie's fiction responds to migration theory because according to the theorists of this field, migration leads to "double or hybrid identities of migrants" (Cassarino 2004, 265).

In *Americanah*, Adichie resorts to the characterization of Alma to express the complexity of identity that is ever changing according to place and circumstances: "If Ifemelu had met Alma in Lagos, she would have thought of her as white, but she would learn that Alma was Hispanic, an American category that was, confusingly, both an ethnicity and a race." (1948). Identity is presented here as something given by the community one finds oneself in: Lagos people would see Alma as white while Americans would take her for a Hispanic. She cannot impose an identity of her own making or choice to any community. Identity is thus presented as being dependent on place and circumstances.

Adichie also uses the road symbolism to express migration or to equate the dynamism of movement with the acquisition of new identities. In *Americanah*, the novelist describes the town of Warrington as "a town contented with itself; winding roads cut through thick woods—even the main road, which the residents did not want widened for fear it would bring in foreigners from the city, was winding and narrow." (3371). The narrow road and the desire to keep it unchanged symbolise the inhabitants' unwillingness to welcome other people coming from elsewhere. Besides, by presenting Ifemelu as someone who is always on the road and who loves "to drive herself because the roads were empty" (*Americanah* 7410), Adichie makes the readers see her as a migrant whose identity constantly changes. The move gives rise to multiple identities. At the end of the journey, the traveller is conflicted. A telling example is that of Ifemelu's cousin whose conflicted identity Adichie reveals through dialogue between Ifemelu and Aunty Uju:

> "Have you read the essay your cousin wrote?"
> "Yes."

> "How can he say he does not know what he is? Since when is he conflicted? And even that his name is difficult?"
>
> "You should talk to him, Aunty. If that is how he feels, then that is how he feels."
>
> "I think he wrote that because that is the kind of thing they teach them here. Everybody is conflicted, identity this, identity that" (*Americanah* 4023).

The child has multiple identities as a result of moving from one place to another so that at the end he does not know what he is. He is so acculturated that his given name becomes difficult for him to pronounce. In the short story "The arrangers of marriage", Adichie presents characters changing their names altogether. Ofodile Emeka Udenwa changes his name into Dave Bell and his wife's name from Chinaza Okafor into Agatha Bell to look more American, or as he says, "to be as mainstream as possible [and] not left by the roadside." (*The Thing* 172). Adichie thus presents multiple identities as something unavoidable.

Even the setting in Adichie's fictions becomes hybrid, heterogeneous, covering both the country of origin of the characters and the country they migrated to. For example, in the collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, the stories dealing with migration are mostly set in the USA, in the cold, and in Nigeria after the Biafran war. Even when the setting seems homogeneous, Adichie uses the technique of souvenirs brought back after migration to make readers feel the presence of other settings. It is the case in "Cell One," the first story in the collection, which begins symptomatically, "The first time our house was robbed, it was our neighbor Osita who climbed through the dining room window and stole our TV, our VCR, and the *Purple Rain* and *Thriller* videotapes our father had brought back from America." (*The Thing* 3). Adichie strategically makes the shade of America present through the materials brought from there. The setting becomes thus heterogeneously complex.

The hybridity that permeates the setting, the place where characters live, demands from the reader extra effort to familiarize with the setting or to develop a type of "migrating reading" where the mind moves from one common and familiar place to an unknown one. What is fictitious to the reader who has not migrated is but reality for the experienced migrant reader. And these powerful and stylistic depictions of hybrid setting and characters are made possible by the fact that the writers themselves have hybrid identities.

5. Impact of Migration on Adichie's Identity

When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, she chooses to be identified as an 'Americanah' rather than as an 'American'. Oluwafunlola Idowu-Faith (2014) says that "in Nigerian parlance, the term 'Americanah' is an identity term that is premised on a person's previous experience in America." (3). It is self-revealing in the speaker's American accent. 'Americanah' denotes an affinity to

America without deep roots in it, where 'American' is the identity signifying rootedness in America.

With this new term "Americanah", Adichie introduces a novelty in African literature. "The been-to" was the phrase that was used so far. 'Been-to" figured prominently in African (written) literature since its beginnings. It is a term that designates an African migrant, that is, an African who has been to Europe, usually for education or employment purposes, and later returns to his home country. For instance, Kwamankra, the protagonist in Casely-Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound*, arguably the first West African novel published in English in 1911, is a been-to. This term has continued to be used by African writers of subsequent generations. But Adichie coined a new term, "Americanah," to enrich African literature. The term "been-to" sounds neutral, denoting the displacement from one country to another while "Americanah" explicitly carries marks of hybridity resulting from the sojourn in another country, namely the US.

The term "Americanah" calls for other terms that can be specific to each country of destination of migrants. Migrants to Nigeria may be called "Nigerianah". It may be the case, in *Half of a Yellow Sun,* of Richard who is an English writer who comes to Nigeria to explore Igbo-Ukwu art. He teaches at Nsukka University and attempts to write a book about the Igbo-Ukwu art. He is happy to witness the birth of Biafra, thinking it would actually make him Biafran. He could be called "Nigerianah" or "Biafranah" if ever Biafra were an independent country. Yet, Adichie shows no concern for European migrants in Africa. She does not even call them migrants but "expatriate" (*Half* 33, 53, etc.), seven times in her novel. Like Richard, she does not think that their case is her story to tell. It should be European writers' preoccupation. In this way, it seems that each writer produces his/her fiction for his/her people. In fact, Richard's fascination with the Nigerian and later Biafran culture leads to his speaking for Biafrans by trying to write two novels, one about the art, and the other about the Biafran war. Yet, he is unable to complete either, and concludes that these are not his stories to tell. However, he has no difficulty writing about the war for the Western press. Through Richard's character, Adichie suggests that maybe it is about time that Africans write about Africa. But what about Americanahs? For whom should they be writing? Adichie's identity as an Americanah may be at stake.

In fact, some critics say that writers in a foreign country like Americanahs can no longer be referred to as native writers as their experiences and identities have changed over time. It is the case of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) company which decided to open a new literary prize only to Nigerian writers resident in Nigeria (Aloh 2015). Nigerian writers in diaspora felt discriminated against and reacted in protest because their citizenship and identity have been ignored at home. Some of those who argue against giving

the Nigerian identity to writers in the diaspora say that these writers are not telling Nigerian stories, being far from (Nigerian) realities, they write of an imaginative Nigeria or Africa, or of an Africa their hosts want them to tell about their home (Sopeju 2001).

However, geographical location cannot be used as a basis for identity. The psycho-historian Erik Erikson perceives identity as a process in the core of both individuals and their cultures. In this sense, any novelist whose writing reflects the culture of his country of birth should have the national identity. Adichie, in all her works, reflects the cultural heritage of Nigeria, drawing mainly from her experience within the Nigerian society where she was born and grew up. Adichie is using the Nigerian folklore, anecdotes and proverbs in her works. She has a double identity: Nigerian and American; hence, 'Americanah'. She mixes facts and fiction in her works. In an interview about her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she said: "I wrote this novel because I wanted to write about love and war, because I grew up in the shadow of Biafra, because I lost both grandfathers in the Nigeria-Biafra war, because I wanted to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present." (*Half*, "PS" 2). She clearly shows that she mixes facts and fiction in her works. As "hybrid writers mix fact and fiction; poetry and prose; memoir and history; biography and memoir," (Larson 2015, para. 2), one can but say that Adichie is a hybrid writer.

Adichie's hybridity is also expressed in the many languages she makes her characters speak in her works. Through her characterization, she expresses the migrant soul with a migrant style by making migrants speak different languages as a result of their hybridity. In the short story "The Arrangers of Marriage" for example, the new husband teaches American English to his new wife:

> "Cookies. Americans call [biscuits] cookies." …
> "Yes, but [Consultant] is called Attending here, an Attending Physician."
> "Biko, don't they have a lift instead?" I asked. …
> "Speak English. There are people behind you," he whispered… "It's an elevator, not a lift. Americans say elevator." (*The Thing* 174-176).

Three languages—British English, American English and Igbo—have been used here and they express the reality of a change in modern society in which people speak many languages. The social identity itself begins then to take on a hybrid nature and can create difficulties to non-hybrid readers. The latter may find it difficult to understand a hybrid text in which many languages are mixed with no glossary. Yet hybrid readers, such as the Americanahs, may enjoy such migrant literatures.

Sometimes, Adichie finds solution to this problem of communication in the presence of many languages by resorting to the stool of translation or to a

stylistic explanation of uncommon things, as in this telephone conversation in *Americanah*:

> Aunty Uju's cell phone rang. "Yes, this is Uju." She pronounced it *You-joo* instead of *oo-joo*.
>
> "Is that how you pronounce your name now?" Ifemelu asked afterwards.
>
> "It's what they call me."
>
> Ifemelu swallowed the words "Well, that isn't your name." Instead she said in Igbo, "I did not know it would be so hot here." (1938)

The readers receive a lesson on pronunciation and are also informed that a person's identity changes with the pronunciation of one's name. Aunty Uju is both *You-joo* for native Americans and *oo-joo* for Igbo people. She and Ifemelu speak both English and Igbo in translation in order to be understood by audiences who are not bilingual. Writing about "*écriture migrante*", Combe has shown that such double belonging to two cultures and speaking two languages are a source of creation from the artist and express at the same time an identity that is schizophrenic (Combe 2010, 193). The critic Aloh also, reflecting on writers' hybridity, comes to the conclusion that "this hybridity of social identity does not make them any less African or Nigerian, but expands their horizon and place their writing in a wider context." (Aloh 2015, para 18). Therefore, migration is rather opening new areas of exploration for writers, expanding their worldview and enriching their literature beyond orality.

6. Conclusion

Most of Adichie's works, namely *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun, The Thing around your Neck, Americanah*, give witness to migration-induced tribulations in African societies. With the help of international migration and return migration theories and sociocriticism, this paper has critically and stylistically investigated Adichie's works and has shown Adichie's deep concern for migration as well as its impact on her identity as a hybrid writer. Adichie's handling of the issue of migration, especially that of women and the elites, to promising horizons has caught my attention. My analysis has shown that Adichie goes beyond current migration theories into supplementing them by suggesting "choicelessness" as another cause of migration. Among migration-related consequences, she mentions humiliation, ill-treatment, hybridity and disillusionment, and she highlights that "return migration" is sometimes done freely. The traditional "been-to" becomes "Americanah", fully hybrid. Besides, Adichie's hybridity, which is expressed in her characters' complex identities and the settings of some of her works, far from being a hindrance, is an opportunity door that allows her, and migrant writers in general, to enrich their literature for a wider reading public in an ever globalizing world. Finally, this case study of migration in Adichie's works

reveals that the question of migration, which is at the centre of most post-colonial literatures, gives rise to a new category, called *migrancy*, which in turn leads to migrant writing or *écriture migrante* (Combe 2010, 196) of which hybridity is a basic characteristic. The nature of the national identity of the writer of such literature creates an on-going debate. How can one define the nationality of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, born and partly educated in Nigeria, then further education and work in America, and life shared between Nigeria and America? Or what is the nationality of a playwright like Wajdi Mouawad, born in Lebanon, brought up in France, lived in Quebec, then in France? Maybe, as many nations are claiming such migrant literatures as theirs, it may be convenient to call them inter-national literatures.

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