

Exploring Cultural Hybridity and Belonging through a Postcolonial Lens: A Comparative Study of Ifemelu in ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor in ‘*Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*’

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Abstract: This article examines cultural hybridity and belonging through the experience trajectories of Ifemelu in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor in Trevor Noah’s ‘*Born a Crime*’. Thus, by means of comparative perspective, the study analyses their life experiences, investigating the challenges of cultural identity within postcolonial African backgrounds and their experiences of diaspora in the United States and South Africa. For this reason, the depiction of their touch with diverse cultural panoramas, linguistic diversity, and societal norms highlights how cultural hybridity defines their perceptions of who they are, their self and belonging across these different contexts.

Keywords: Cultural hybridity, belonging, postcolonialism, identity, self-perception Résumé.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this: a buzzing marketplace in Lagos, the air dense with the smelling of grilled plantains and the vibrant babble of a plethora of languages. Or most likely, visualize the dirty roadways of Johannesburg, where the reverberations of apartheid still continue in the middle of the multicolored drape of township life. It is within these intense scenes that we engage with Ifemelu and Trevor: two characters challenging the jungle of cultural identity with bravery and resilience.

Indeed, in the pages of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor Noah’s ‘*Born a Crime*,’ the two writers take the reader into the innermost universes of these leading characters, each a testimony of the patchwork of human experience. Without doubt, through their accomplishments and struggles, the reader carries witness to the ubiquitous hunt for belonging, an excursion as old as time, yet exclusively their own.

It is in this perspective that the two authors, through the heart of postcolonial Africa, a landscape teeming with diversity, resilience, and above all, the irrepressible spirit of hope, invite the reader. And about what Adichie explores in *Americanah*, Carole Boyce Davies says that she questions “*the issues of migration and the consequence of living in the diaspora’ as opposed to the previous generations of writers who were concerned ‘writing back to the colonial empire and —with tradition in the immediate and post-independence realities.’*” (Davies, p. 175) Therefore, through the lens of their experiences, we explore the nuances of cultural hybridity and belonging, celebrating the richness of differences and the bonds that unite people as members of the

human family.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the rich narratives of cultural hybridity and belonging presented in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor Noah’s ‘*Born a Crime*,’ a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced ways in which these protagonists navigate their sense of self and belonging remains elusive. The complicatedness of identity development within the postcolonial African backdrop, side-by-side with diaspora background, causes considerable challenges to readers in search of deeper comprehension. Therefore, this study seeks to tackle this emptiness by investigating the complex vitality of cultural hybridity and belonging as described in the experiences of Ifemelu and Trevor. Thus, by analyzing the characters’ confrontations with multiple cultural forces and social expectations, this paper aims at dissecting the meaning of identity conciliation in present-day literature, proposing a profound understanding of the human experience in a globalized world.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

In the terrain of current or modern literature, the discussion of cultural identity remains a central theme. Indeed, within this sphere, postcolonial African literature stands as a rich warehouse of accounts that plunge into the puzzlement of identity formation in the wake of colonial histories and global migrations. For this reason, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor Noah’s ‘*Born a Crime*’ appear as important spokespersons within this debate, then highlighting an interesting image of characters battling with

cultural hybridity and belonging. In this respect, S. Rubiya writes that:

“But Trevor Noah, like his mother, had a knack for survival and was popular among both the black and white kids. He could speak fluent English and also the various African tribal languages and won the favor of both the white and black kids. His flair for languages helped him not only in school but also on the streets when he found himself often in trouble in a Zulu or Ndebele neighborhood or with other white people. Language acted as a weapon to fight discrimination.” (Rubiya, P. 65)

Hence, the objective of this study is to carry out a comparative analysis of Ifemelu in ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor in ‘*Born a Crime*,’ with a focus on analyzing the several dimensions of cultural identity and belonging within the postcolonial African setting as already mentioned. Therefore, through an in-depth consideration of the characters’ life excursion, the study aims to untangle the dynamics of identity discussion as they encounter the intertwining landscapes of race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture.

HYPOTHESIS

The characters of Ifemelu in ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor in ‘*Born a Crime*’ face their cultural identities in different ways influenced by their particular postcolonial African background. Consequently, we pre-empt observing patterns of adaptation, resistance, and synthesis as they face the difficulties of cultural hybridity and belonging, eventually participating in a deeper understanding of the thrust of identity formation in contemporary literature.

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will specifically lay emphasis on the characters of Ifemelu in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor in Trevor Noah’s ‘*Born a Crime*’ within the context of postcolonial African literature. As a matter of fact, this examination will primarily uncover how these characters mediate their cultural identities and feeling of affiliation in both their native African contexts and their journeys in diaspora settings, specifically the United States and South Africa, respectively.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As mentioned above, this study is rooted within the theoretical framework of postcolonialism, which allows a framework through which to examine the dynamics of power, identity, and culture in societies previously ruled by Western

powers during colonial times. In this respect, pivotal concepts from postcolonial theory, such as cultural hybridity, diaspora, and the politics of representation, will help the analysis of cultural identity and belonging in ‘*Americanah*’ and ‘*Born a Crime*.’

Indeed, the concept of cultural hybridity, as unveiled by Homi K. Bhabha and others, will be essential to comprehending how the characters of Ifemelu and Trevor battle their identities in their respective multicultural environment. Overall, the theoretical framework of postcolonialism will provide a strong and determined in-depth foundation for investigating cultural identity and belonging in ‘*Americanah*’ and ‘*Born a Crime*.’ Thus, applying these theoretical perspectives aims to introduce a subtle understanding of how literature contemplates and frames our understanding of postcolonial subjectivities in a globalized world.

METHODOLOGY

The study will follow a comparative approach to probe common themes and narrative techniques employed by the authors to describe the intricacies of cultural hybridity and belonging or affiliation. The aim is to delve into aspects such as social interactions and cultural references to shed light to the characters’ experiences and the broader inference for understanding the framework of identity formation in postcolonial contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of cultural hybridity and belonging through a postcolonial lens in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s ‘*Americanah*’ and Trevor Noah’s ‘*Born a Crime*’ has earned significant consideration. For this reason, this literature review encapsulates major contributions from recent studies, pointing at their strengths and weaknesses to illustrate the unique contributions of the present article.

First, Julie Oosterink’s study, ‘*Arriving at Your Own Door: Transnational Identity Formation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah*,’ offers a comprehensive discussion of the protagonist Ifemelu’s experience towards self-discovery and self-fashioning. Indeed, Oosterink effectively uses Kwame Anthony Appiah’s framework from ‘*The Ethics of Identity*’ to support the different components of identity formation, including the personal and collective identities lived by transnational migrants. However, Oosterink’s analysis, while thorough in its philosophical backbone, could benefit from a broader

comparative perspective.

Next, in “*Black Is Black Is Black?: African Immigrant Acculturation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah and Yaa Gyasi’s Homegoing*,” the study extends beyond psychological thoughts of acculturation to present a subtle view of African immigrant experiences in the United States. Yet, this study’s limitation dwells in its broad approach, which, while hitting the overarching themes of acculturation and identity negotiation, may not fully discuss the individual divergence within immigrant experiences.

Subsequent to this, the examination of triple oppression and transnational identity in “*Triple Oppression and Transnational Identity: The Immigrant Black Woman in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah*” presents the intersecting challenges of race, gender, and immigrant status. Indeed, this study bases its perspective on theoretical tools such as Homi K. Bhabha’s *Mimicry and Hybrid Identity*, Frantz Fanon’s Theory of Racism, and W. E. B. Du Bois’ Double Consciousness to understand the struggles of black immigrant women. Nevertheless, while the theoretical application is very robust and up to the point, the study could be critiqued for its limited empirical evidence.

Furthermore, Mariya Shymchyshyn’s article, “*An Immigrant as a Blogger in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah*,” investigates the role of blogging as a medium for identity expression and social connection. The study effectively demonstrates how Ifemelu’s blog becomes a platform for her to live and articulate her cultural identity, gaining financial stability and social influence in the process. But, this study primarily focuses on the positive aspects of blogging without sufficiently addressing the potential challenges and limitations of online identity construction.

Ravi Kumar Shresth’s “*Navigating Identities: Post-colonial Narratives in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah*,” offers an in-depth look at the post-colonial identity of immigrant characters through an empirical or qualitative lens. Indeed, applying theories such as Homi K. Bhabha’s *Mimicry and Hybrid Identity*, Frantz Fanon’s Theory of Racism, and W. E. B. Du Bois’ Double Consciousness, Shresth illustrates valuable discernment into the characters’ adventures of cultural shift and identity negotiation. For this respect, the strength of this study lies in its

theoretical stiffness and the rich narrative analysis it brings. However, its focus on the protagonists Ifemelu and Obinze might eclipse the broader range of immigrant experiences presented in the novel.

To further the analysis, Dr. Nagendra Bhahadur Bhandari’s article, “*The Cultural Negotiation of Immigrants in Adichie’s Americanah*,” explores the ambivalent retention of immigrant characters towards their home and host countries. Then, utilizing Homi Bhabha’s concept of the third space and Stuart Hall’s theories of cultural identity, the study highlights the fluid and inconsistent nature of cultural identity among immigrants. This study’s strength is its emphasis on the dynamic and ever-changing aspects of cultural identity. However, it could be critiqued for its somewhat abstract approach.

Following this, Mezaache Asma and Smaali Lilia’s thesis, “*Displacement and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah*,” provides a detailed analysis of the themes of displacement and identity through the lenses of Post-colonialism and Ecocriticism. The study effectively captures the protagonist Ifemelu’s struggle to cope with her new environment and the eventual decision to return to Nigeria. Notwithstanding, while the dual application of Post-colonialism and Ecocriticism is innovative, the study might benefit from a more focused analysis. The broad thematic scope could be narrowed to allow for a deeper exploration of specific aspects of displacement and identity.

Also, Aicha Mezari’s thesis, “*A Postcolonial Reading of Trevor Noah’s Born a Crime*,” addresses the persistent effects of apartheid and colonialism on colored ethnic groups in South Africa. Thus, the choice of postcolonial theory allows Mezari to examine the uptake of oppression and the creation of a hybrid society. The focus on Trevor and his mother Patricia’s adaptation as outsiders provides a poignant look at resilience and resistance. In contrast, the study’s heavy reliance on theoretical discourse might overshadow the personal narratives that drive the memoir. A more balanced approach that interweaves theory with detailed personal anecdotes would enhance the study’s impact.

In addition, the article, “*Testaments of Resistance and Resilience: An Analysis of Trevor Noah’s Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*,” by S. Rubiya and Sumathy K Swamy, highlights the themes of resistance and resilience

in the face of apartheid. Rubiya and Sumathy K Swamy, focusing on the experiences of the Noah family, particularly Patricia Noah, underscore the strength and determination of individuals who defied oppressive systems. Yet, though the emphasis on personal resilience is compelling, the study could benefit from a broader socio-political context. Incorporating more historical and social background would provide a richer understanding of the systemic challenges faced by the characters.

Finally, the existing literature on cultural hybridity and belonging in *Americanah* and *Born a Crime* offers valuable perspectives into the complex dynamics of identity formation among immigrants. Nevertheless, there are noticeable gaps, such as a lack of experiential proof, a restricted focus on main characters, and an excessive use of theoretical frameworks without enough exegesis. For this reason, this article aims to look into these breaches by providing a more comprehensive and comparative analysis of the lives of Ifemelu and Trevor, including empirical data and a broader socio-political context to ease the understanding of cultural hybridity and belonging in contemporary postcolonial literature.

I. Cultural Identity in Diaspora

I.1. Ifemelu's Experience in 'Americanah'

First and foremost, Ifemelu, the main character of 'Americanah', faces a significant cultural shift upon her immigration to the United States. And, this displacement is not limited to a physical movement but a profound psychological and emotional battle. In other words, Ifemelu's evolution from Nigeria to America confronts her to a new cultural setting that is filled with challenges and numerous intricacies. In this respect, to validate this point, Ravi Kumar Shrestha writes : *"Although these immigrant characters try to embrace western identity, they happen to embrace postcolonial identity since they mimic their language, education, religion, food, dress and hair for their survival during their struggle in the host nations. So, they suffer from cultural displacement, racial segregation, unhomeliness, hybrid identity and double consciousness."* (Shrestha P. 67) She is no longer simply Ifemelu; she is a Black woman in America, a mark that comes with a host of prefabricated beliefs and detriments. In this respect, Adichie writes:

"Just a little burn," the hairdresser said. But look how pretty it is. Wow, girl, you've got the white-girl swing! Her hair was hanging down rather than standing up, straight and sleek, parted at the

side and curving to a slight bob at her chin. The verve was gone. She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hairdresser had flat ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss." (Adichie, p. 251)

Ifemelu's determination to arrange her hair for a job interview draws attention to the stress faced by Black women to comply to Western norms of beauty and professionalism, which are often rooted in whiteness. Thus, this highlights Ifemelu's persistent struggle with cultural identity and the tense sense of alienation she feels despite living in America for a long period of time. In the same vein, Adichie writes :

"Later, she said, I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair... If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional. So there are no doctors with braided hair in America? Ifemelu asked. I have told you what they told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed. There it was again, the strange naivete with which Aunty Uju had covered herself like a blanket. Sometimes, while having a conversation, it would occur to Ifemelu that Aunty Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place. Obinze said it was the exaggerated gratitude that came with immigrant insecurity." (Adichie, pp. 146-147)

Again, Adichie uncovers the symbol of hair and particularly Black women's hair in the novel through the character of Uju who has learned that for a Black woman to wear her hair naturally or in braids is considered 'unprofessional'—or essentially, not white enough to be professional. Thus, Adichie critiques American culture for how racism is ingrained at every level even including standards of beauty and fashion. This societal expectation forces Black women like Uju and Ifemelu to alter their natural appearance to fit a biased standard of professionalism. Furthermore, this requirement to conform extends beyond superficial appearance, revealing deeper issues of identity and self-worth. Indeed, by straightening her hair, Uju is not only changing her look but also suppressing a significant part of her cultural identity.

I.2. Trevor's Struggles in 'Born a Crime'

On the other side, Trevor Noah also crosses a complex and challenging backdrop in apartheid-

era South Africa due to his mixed-race status. Clearly, the legal and social barriers he confronts are profoundly entrenched in the routine of racism and colonial history of the country. Indeed, in apartheid South Africa, racial categorizations were strictly implemented by the government through legislation that separated the population into racial categories and social stratification, including White, Black, Coloured - a term used for mixed-race individuals -, and Indian. These classifications defined nearly every aspect of life, from where people could live to what jobs they could hold. Thus, the legal framework was designed to enforce a rigid racial hierarchy, privileging white people while systematically disenfranchising others. In this respect, Noah writes: *“The genius of apartheid was convincing people who were the overwhelming majority to turn on each other. Apart hate, is what it was. You separate people into groups and make them hate one another so you can run them all.”* (Noah, p. 3)

Understandingly, from Trevor Noah’s perspective, the “divide and conquer” mechanism was the primary means of governance implemented during apartheid in South Africa. This means or strategy was not just a political tool but a deeply embedded system of control that thoroughly molded South Africa’s societal structure. Therefore, under apartheid, South African society was carefully organized into racial and ethnic categories. Not only were the colored, Indian, and black populations continually separated from whites, but the different ethnicities within the large black majority were also estranged from each other. To go further, Trevor Noah adds : *“I was eleven years old, and it was like I was seeing my country for the first time. In the townships you don’t see segregation, because everyone is black...Ten minutes earlier I’d thought I was at a school where they were a majority. Now I realized how few of them there actually were compared to everyone else.”* (Noah, Born a Crime p. 57)

Here, Trevor Noah recounts a pivotal moment at age eleven when he first fully perceives the rigid racial boundaries of apartheid-era South Africa. Trevor Noah contrasts the segregation he observed in white spaces, such as churches and schools, with the more homogenous environment of the townships, where racial divisions were less visible. At Maryvale, a predominantly white school, Trevor is struck by the overt social segregation among students, who occupy the same spaces but maintain strict racial boundaries.

Interestingly, Trevor Noah’s mixed-race status places him at the intersection of this complex legal system. His very existence challenges the apartheid regime’s rigid racial boundaries. For instance, his mother, a Black woman, and his father, a white man, were involved in an illegal relationship under apartheid laws. This illegality was not just a social taboo but a criminal offense that reflected the deep-seated racism of the era. In this purpose Trevor writes : *“In any society built on institutionalized racism, race-mixing doesn’t merely challenge the system as unjust, it reveals the system as unsustainable and incoherent. Race-mixing proves that races can mix—and in a lot of cases, want to mix. Because a mixed person embodies that rebuke to the logic of the system, race-mixing becomes a crime worse than treason.”* (Noah, Born a Crime, p. 21)

Consequently, both Ifemelu and Trevor Noah’s experiences highlight the deep impact of systemic racial and cultural divisions and differentiations brought to life by historical and socio-political forces. Ifemelu’s life in *Americanah* illustrates the struggle of maintaining her cultural identity while confronting the challenges of racial assimilation in the United States. Similarly, Trevor Noah’s reflections in *Born a Crime* reveal the deeply enforced racial segregation and social barriers in apartheid-era South Africa, showcasing how these divisions persist and shape personal and collective experiences.

II. Intersectionality and Belonging

2.1. Ifemelu’s Intersectional Identity

Ifemelu’s blog emerges as a crucial medium through which she examines and critiques her intersectional identity amidst the complexities of American society. The quotation, *“You know why Ifemelu can write that blog, by the way? Shan said. Because she’s African. She’s writing from the outside. She doesn’t really feel all the stuff she’s writing about. It’s all quaint and curious to her. So she can write it and get all these accolades and get invited to give talks. If she were African American, she’d just be labeled angry and shunned”* (Adichie, *Americanah*, p. 418) subtly critiques Ifemelu and portrays her as an outsider, meaning : an alien ! Shan argues that Ifemelu’s ability to write about race in America and gain recognition for her insights stems from her status as a non-American. The implication is that Ifemelu’s outsider perspective—being Nigerian rather than African American—affords her a certain detachment that allows her to discuss racial issues from a more objective standpoint, which may be

more relevant to American audiences.

Thus, Shan's remarks highlight a complex dynamic where Ifemelu's outsider perspective is both a strength and a limitation. It underscores the challenges faced by immigrants and non-native commentators in being fully accepted and valued within discussions on race and identity in America. Shan's criticism reflects a broader tension about whose voices are heard and validated in conversations about race, and how experiences of racism are perceived depending on one's cultural and racial identity. Ifemelu says:

"The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists you and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that real deep romantic love is so rare, and because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved". (Adichie, *Americanah*, pp. 366-367)

Ifemelu's blog serves as both a personal and public commentary on the intersecting influences of race, gender, and class in shaping her sense of belonging and identity. Through her reflections, she exposes the deep-seated inequalities and challenges inherent in the American social landscape, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and addressing these complexities in the pursuit of true understanding and equality.

2.2. Trevor's Intersectional Identity

Trevor Noah's intersectional distinctiveness is deeply framed by the racial segregation system in South Africa, which profoundly influenced his mother's survival approaches. The apartheid regime's tight racial categorizations interbreed with gender roles and economic opportunities, creating a complex web of restrictions and opportunities that influence their lives. It is then very clear that the economic panorama under apartheid was heavily deformed in favor of the white minority, leaving black South Africans with confined access to resources and opportunities. Of course, Soweto, as depicted by Trevor Noah, symbolizes the harsh realities of apartheid's urban planning and racial segregation. As a matter of fact, appointed as an area for black South Africans, Soweto was on a regular basis deprived of sufficient resources and constructions. However,

Trevor's mixed-race status, being indeed born to a black mother and a Swiss father, situated him in a unique situation within this system. His appearance allowed him certain privileges but also exposed him to distinct forms of discrimination. Indeed, Noah Noah writes:

"As a kid I understood that people were different colors, but in my head white and black and brown were like types of chocolate. Dad was the white chocolate, mom was the dark chocolate, and I was the milk chocolate. But we were all just chocolate. I didn't know any of it had anything to do with "race."

*I didn't know what race was. My mother never referred to my dad as white or to me as mixed. So when the other kids in Soweto called me "white," even though I was light brown, I just thought they had their colors mixed up, like they hadn't learned them properly. "Ah, yes, my friend. You've confused aqua with turquoise. I can see how you made that mistake. You're not the first." (Noah, *Born a Crime*, p. 54)*

Trevor's mother capitalized on this unique racial positioning to maneuver through societal constraints, often exploiting loopholes in the system to her advantage. However, this also meant that Trevor had to navigate a complicated identity that did not fit neatly into any of the apartheid's racial categories. To sustain this perspective, one reads: *"My mom raised me as if there were no limitations on where I could go or what I could do. When I look back I realize she raised me like a white kid—not white culturally, but in the sense of believing that the world was my oyster, that I should speak up for myself, that my ideas and thoughts and decisions mattered."* (Noah, *Born a Crime*, p. 73)

Thus, the analysis of Trevor's intersectional identity reveals the profound impact of apartheid's racial classifications on individual lives and survival strategies. It demonstrates how intersecting factors such as race and economic status shaped the experiences of those living under apartheid and highlights the ways in which individuals like Trevor and his mother navigated and resisted these systemic constraints.

III. Colonial Legacy and Cultural Hybridity

3.1. Ifemelu's Postcolonial Identity

Ifemelu's postcolonial identity is intricately linked to her experience facing America's racial landscape. Indeed, when Adichie writes *"She recognized in Kelsey the nationalism of liberal*

Americans who copiously criticized America but did not like you to do so; they expected you to be silent and grateful, and always reminded you of how much better than wherever you had come from America was...” (Adichie, *Americanah*, pp. 232-233), the writer captures the essence of a paradox within American liberalism: while liberal Americans are often vocal in their criticism of their own country, they simultaneously expect immigrants to remain silent and grateful. Kelsey embodies this contradiction by critiquing America while resenting Ifemelu’s criticism and expecting her to appreciate the perceived superiority of the U.S. over her country of origin. This dynamic highlights the complex expectations placed on immigrants to conform to a narrative of American exceptionalism, despite the reality of their critical perspectives. It is in this vein that Bhabha writes :

“Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, it’s shifting forces and fixities; it is the name of the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal, Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.” (Bhabha, p. 112)

Thus, it can be said the Ifemelu’s cultural hybridity is determined by the American racial landscape which uses race as a potent tool of social division and discrimination, which is more immediate and tangible to Ifemelu.

3.2. Trevor’s Cultural Hybridity

Trevor Noah’s life as a mixed-race individual is a serious challenge to the racial hierarchization imposed by apartheid South Africa. As a matter of fact, Trevor’s mixed-race identity embodies a direct challenge to the apartheid system’s racial segregation and rank. Furthermore, apartheid was based on a strict racial classification system created to maintain white supremacy by categorizing individuals into severe racial categories. Hence, by existing outside these boundaries, Trevor is representative of a form of rebellion against the regular racism that called for controlling and limiting personal and social identities. In this respect Noah writes:

“As the outsider, you can retreat into a shell, be anonymous, be invisible. Or you can go the other way. You protect yourself by opening up. You don’t ask to be accepted for everything you are, just the one part of yourself that you’re willing to

share. For me it was humor. I learned that even though I didn’t belong to one group, I could be a part of any group that was laughing. I’d drop in, pass out the snacks, tell a few jokes. I’d perform for them. I’d catch a bit of their conversation, learn more about their group, and then leave. I never overstayed my welcome. I wasn’t popular, but I wasn’t an outcast. I was everywhere with everybody, and at the same time I was all by myself.”

Trevor’s cultural hybridity, therefore, is more than just a personal trait; it is a form of resistance. His mixed-race identity and the challenges he faces as a result is representative of the broader societal and political struggles against apartheid’s racial classifications. Through his narrative, Noah examines how cultural hybridity can be a powerful form of defiance against oppressive systems that seek to define and constrain identities within narrow racial boundaries.

CONCLUSION

In this comparative analysis of Ifemelu in *Americanah* and Trevor Noah in *Born a Crime*, we explore how cultural hybridity and postcolonial legacies shape their respective experiences of identity and belonging. Indeed, Ifemelu’s experience in America, marked by cultural displacement and the struggle with racial and cultural expectations, discloses the complexities of developing a self identity in a new cultural context. For this reason, her blog becomes a crucial platform for critiquing American racial dynamics and exploring the intersections of race and class.

In contrast, Trevor Noah’s life in apartheid South Africa is the embodiment of a narrative of fight against a system of racial abuse. Therefore, his inter-racial identity provoked the unbending racial classifications imposed by apartheid, integrating a form of disregard against the systemic racism that limited individual identities. Then, Noah’s portrayal of apartheid’s inheritance and its impingement on his family affects the ways in which racial and economic divergences continue to affect South African society long after the official end of apartheid.

The comparative study of Ifemelu and Trevor Noah’s experiences provides a nuanced understanding of how cultural hybridity and postcolonial histories influence personal identity and societal interactions. Their stories demonstrate the resilience and complexity of navigating identity within oppressive systems and offer

valuable insights into the enduring impacts of colonial and racial histories on contemporary experiences.

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