

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Border Crossing: Black Women's Subjectivity and the Limitations to Emancipation in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*

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Border crossing significantly complicates the agency of the Black African female subject. The adaptation to diasporic cultural and social dynamics comes with the redefinition of her agency as a Black woman living in a racially categorized system. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) presents complexities in this construction of Black female subjectivity both in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. This means that to fully understand how Black female identity is constructed in the novel, calls for the examination of how they occupy space as Black African women both in Africa and in the diaspora. I acknowledge the strong womanhood that the novel establishes; however, I also recognize major drawbacks in its success as an emancipatory text for Black women. I argue in this paper that *Americanah*'s seemingly teleological closure re-establishes the systematic structures of oppression that continue to pervade Black womanhood. By failing to demonstrate a commitment to the continued fight for female emancipation, and also ignoring the fact that Black women are still significantly stifled and delimited by heteropatriarchal and racial oppressions, the novel's happily-ever-after ending presents a

moment of complacency and complicity and erases the liberating Black female subversion established in the course of the novel.

Reading *Americanah* mainly through African diasporic scholarship of Michelle Wright, this essay seeks to demonstrate the various ways in which *Americanah* presents new dimensions to the definition of Black women subjectivity in Africa and the diaspora. In addition, I will employ both postcolonial and feminist criticism to explore the implication of the agency that Adichie creates, through Ifemelu, on the identity and subjectivity of Black women. Reading *Americanah* through this lens creates new epistemological truths regarding the identity of Black women in contemporary society and illuminate the underlying frameworks that complicate their emancipation.