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YASMIM PEREIRA YONEKURA

TELL MY TRAVELLING SHOES: AN INTERSECTIONAL BLACK FEMINIST ANALYSIS REGARDING IDENTITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN *ALL GOD'S CHILDREN NEED TRAVELLING SHOES*, *AMERICANAH* AND *UM DEFEITO DE COR*

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Yasmim Pereira Yonekura

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Profª. Drª. Alessandra Soares Brandão

(Orientadora e Presidente) – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Profª. Drª Débora de Carvalho Figueiredo

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Profª. Drª. Feibriss Henrique Meneghelli Cassilhas

Universidade Federal da Bahia

Prof. Dr. Pedro Gustavo Rieger

Universidade Federal do Alagoas

Dr. Olegario da Costa Maya Neto

Universidade do Estado do Mato Grosso do Sul

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Prof. Dr. Celso Henrique Soufen Tumolo

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Alessandra Soares Brandao
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“Em nós, até a cor é um defeito. Um imperdoável mal de nascença, o estigma de um crime. Mas nossos críticos se esquecem que essa cor é a origem da riqueza de milhares de ladrões que nos insultam; que essa cor convencional da escravidão, tão semelhante à da terra, abriga, sob sua superfície escura, vulcões, onde arde o fogo sagrado da liberdade.”.

Luiz Gama

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RESUMO

A presente pesquisa analisa três obras literárias *Um defeito de Cor* de Ana Maria Gonçalves, *Americanah* de Chimamanda Adichie e *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* de Maya Angelou. As narrativas são investigadas de forma a analisar a identidade de mulheres negras como um lugar político para agencia social frente às múltiplas opressões, da perspectiva interseccional do feminismo negro (CRENSHAW, 1991). Algumas das questões específicas investigadas são a amefricanidade de Lélia González, assim como a formação de sujeitos híbridos nas narrativas protagonizadas e escritas por mulheres negras, a partir da ideia da consciência *mestiza* de Glória Anzaldua (1987). Também investiga-se como as emoções e relações pessoais dessas mulheres se tornam ferramentas políticas, usando dos conceitos de Sara Ahmed (2004), assim como a dimensão de resistência cultural e social que a ideia da criação de um lar tem nas narrativas analisadas (HOOKS, 2009).

Palavras-chave: Mulheres negras. Identidade. Política. Feminismo.

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes three literary works *Um Defeito de Cor* by Ana Maria Gonçalves, *Americanah* by Chimamanda Adichie and *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* by Maya Angelou. The narratives are investigated in order to analyze the identity of Black women as a political place for social agency in face of multiple oppressions, from the intersectional perspective of Black feminism (CRENSHAW, 1991). Some of the specific questions investigated are the amefricanity of Lélia González, as well as the formation of hybrid subjects in the narratives, based on the idea of *mestiza* consciousness by Glória Anzaldua (1987). It also investigates how the emotions and personal relationships of these women become political tools, using the concepts of Sara Ahmed (2004), as well as how the idea of creating a home has a dimension of cultural and social resistance in the narratives (HOOKS , 2009).

Keywords: Black women. Identity. Politics. Feminism.

SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION 1

1.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND 2

1.2.1. **"The border that crossed us": Displacement, traveling and the politics of (making) home** 3

1.2.2. The ethos of meaning: Black women and the quest for homeplace in bell hooks' *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009) 8

1.2.3. "The Politico-Cultural Category of Amefricanity (*Amefricanidade)*": Debating Lélia González's Philosophy toward a New Epistemology of Black Women.....10

1.2.4. Anzaldúa's Mestiza consciousness and Black women's identity: 15

1.3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND METODOLOGY 16

1.3.1. Methodology: Radical Politics of Community, Home and Decolonial Epistemology through Lugones's *Pilgrimages* 18

1.3.2. "Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions": *Pilgrimages* by Maria Lugones 18

1.4. PROPOSAL OF CHAPTERS: 20

CHAPTER TWO 22

2.0. "What is Africa to me?": Thinking about the diaspora, from Nigeria to U.S. and Brazil. 23

2.1. Kehinde's Brazil: An Amefrican History 34

2.2. A Country that Does Not Love Black People Back: African American Political and Literary Resistance in the United States 50

2.3. Their Traveling Shoes: An Intercontinental Diasporic Conversation amongst Adichie, Gonçalves and Angelou.....60

2.4. The transnational cultural legacy of Black and African Feminisms in activism and academia: .63

CHAPTER THREE 78

3.0 – A cultural politics of Black women's emotions and subjectivities.....79

3.1. – Amefricanity*:* Weaving subjectivities, emotions and political resistance on Black women's narratives 82

3.2. – Writing and affection as resistance: Ifemelu's *Raceteenth*, interpersonal affection and her diasporic journey 83

3.3. – " 'Kehinde' is for the sacred, 'Luiza' is for the whites": Amefricanity and the "New Womanhood" on Kehinde's journey. 88

3.4. – Belonging: Maya's return and the search for home on *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986).....104

3.5. – "Daring to Hope": Amefricanity and the New Womanhood on Ifemelu, Kehinde and Maya 113

CHAPTER IV.....115

4.1. Becoming amefricana: Analyzing Kehinde.....116

4.1.1. Osun as Orisha head and political guide: Kehinde's amefricanity through her connection with the divine: 116

4.1.2. The Malê Revolt, Kehinde's role and Religion as a Driving Force of Social Upraise 123

4.1.3. Kehinde and a politics of affectionate solidarity and change as an expression of the 'new womanhood': 134

4.2. Final Thoughts: Kehinde's amefricanity, Black women's role in national history and a shifting *mestiza* consciounsess 142

CHAPTER V 144

5.0. The Politics of Homecoming: Initial Thoughts in Ifemelu, displacement and home ...144

5.1. To become wild: Analyzing Ifemelu 146

5.1.1. Homecoming, belonging and moving back: 146

5.1.2. Ifemelu's Family and Homecoming: Internal Healing as Part of a Political Culture of emotions for Black Women 149

5.1.3. Writing as resistance: Ifemelu's blog as a feminist political space 155

5.2. Final Thoughts on Becoming "Americanah" and making home – Ifemelu's identity as *mestiza* and amefrican woman and the politics of homecoming: 165

CHAPTER VI 167

6.0. Initial Thoughts: A Brief Discussion on the Creation of the Self in Autobiographies, Autofiction and Writing The Self: 167

6.1. Angelou, Memory and The Search for Home: 169

6.2. Her Traveling Shoes: Analyzing Maya 170

6.2.1. "The streets were paved with gold": 'Mother Africa' under a 'returned' Black woman's gaze in her search for homecoming 170

6.2.2. Community and resistance: A returnee's social network of affective solidarity, healing and the multiple meanings of home 179

6.2.3. "You have seen Africa, bring it home and teach our people about the homeland.": Politicization through emotions and Maya's homecoming 183

6.3. Final Thoughts – "I knew that Africa had creolized me": Maya as a *mestiza*-minded and amefrican woman 187

CHAPTER VII 189

7.1. Amefricanity 189

7.2. Black women's Narratives and New Womanhood 190

7.3. *Mestiza* Consciousness and Homecoming 191

7.4. Final Remarks: 192

BIBLIOGRAPHY 195

1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion on the heterogeneity on the constitution of Black Women's identities and its political meanings means to deal with several cultural and historical contexts, both within the dimension of the subject and structural realities where these women are inserted. Entering this debate, this research will address the constitution of Black women's identities and their relation to the societies they are inserted in through literary works from Brazil, Nigeria and the United States, under a transnational Black feminist perspective that will be further detailed in the research.

When examining the United States, on her book *Sister Outsider* (2007), the Black, Lesbian and feminist scholar, Audre Lorde defines that there is a new wave of racialized women, which is surpassing centuries of slavery and marginalization. According to her, they are emerging as new social and political agents who are capable of changing the current social conditions of their communities (LORDE, 2007, p. 117). Similarly, when theorizing about Brazilian reality, the scholar Lélia Gonzales (1988) defines the Latin American Black women as one of the most potent forces on the struggle against the colonialist structures sustaining race discrimination, poverty and gender based exclusion (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 133). According to her Latin America countries inherited the "ideology of whitening" (*ideologia do branqueamento*) [1] (1988, p. 133) and Black women in these societies have built up a network of political resistance opposing to multiple oppressions. She defines Latin America and Black women on the continent under a epistemological category of amefricanity (*amefricanidade*), a concept that will be further explored on this research.

Lorde and González are two scholars exploring how social struggles, race, gender and class, among other factors (such as sexuality, ethnic difference and age), are directly connected to the formation of the identities of Black women. However, these scholars do not focus only on identity, also addressing its political meaning, its material impacts and how they relate to different social structures. Despite being from different nations, Lorde and González represent a legacy of theoretical and social struggle by African diasporic women on the world.

This legacy turns the study of the literary narratives produced by such subjects into a rich material of analysis. This analytic work can reveal the political and social aspects of

[1] This text will present terms from English and Portuguese languages. When they are first mentioned they will be presented simultaneously and after that they will be presented in English. Regarding quotations from Portuguese written texts, they will be presented in their translated versions. All translations are under the responsibility of the author of this research.

different realities as well as it fosters the debate about the condition of Afro-descendant population after the brutal process of centuries of slavery. In this context, displacement is also an important part of the constitution of Black women's experiences since the first African women were taken away from their motherland (LORDE, 2007, p. 117).

Taking part in this debate and legacy, this research analyzes three works from diasporic African women, analyzing the main character's trajectories. These were based on the experience of shifting places. The first work is Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes,* a book that narrates the author's years (from 1962 to 1964) in Africa looking for her ancestral roots. Then, the research will also engage in the analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's work *Americanah.* It tells the story of a Nigerian couple, Ifemelu and Obinze, whose lives are divided amongst Nigeria, United States and England. Specifically, this research will deal with the female character, Ifemelu to narrow down the analysis. Concerning the Brazilian reality, specifically, I will address Ana Maria Gonçalves's book *Um defeito de Cor* (A Defect of Color). The author (re)creates a fictional life of an enslaved African woman. The book narrates her crossing from Daomé to Brazil and her later return to her homeland after regaining her freedom, during the 19th century.

Developing an analysis of the characters and comprehending the works require a specific theoretical background about themes such as Black women's political struggle, race, class, gender, Black feminism and displacement. The analysis will also require scrutinizing the historical contexts of Brazil, Nigeria and the U.S.

1.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, there is a convergence between "racism and patriarchy" (1991, p. 93), different oppressions against different subordinated groups overlaps, creating "(…) another dimension of disempowerment." (CRENSHAW, 1991, p. 98). These experiences resulted in Black women, during the post-slavery period, being portrayed as "(…) chattel, a thing, an animal" (HOOKS, 2014, p. 159), in countries such as Brazil and the United States of America as well as in Nigeria. Crenshaw created a theoretical approach to encompass the conjunction of these oppressions, which was baptized as intersectionality. This concept will be used in this research critically, considering Carla Akotirene's (2018) critique regarding the necessity of expanding this concept, focusing on the

realities of colonized countries and incorporating non-Western influences (in this research, mainly through using the concept of amefricanity and its relation to Black women's social and political identities).

According to these perspectives, enduring and handling multiple oppressions also gave birth to subjects whose perspectives and discourses are more pluralistic and whose existence is engaged with political views and actively changing the social and political environment in which they are embedded. According to Davis in *Women, Race and Class* (1981), Black women "(…) fought against slavery, (…) were beaten and raped, but never subdued." (DAVIS, 1981, p.9). The activist also stands for the idea that these women let to their female heirs a "(…) legacy of hard work, perseverance and self-reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and insistence on sexual equality – in short, a legacy spelling out standards for a new womanhood.". (DAVIS, 1981, p. 9). Based on her readings and her political experiences as a Black Panther, Davis defends this "new womanhood", where these African diasporic female subjects are not victimized others oppressed by the system, instead they are the ones capable of changing it.

The scholar also debates how the moment of detachment from their ancestor land gave Black people a sense of non-belonging. Davis (1981, p. 9) states it as a consequence of structural oppressions originated from colonialism and slavery rooted on the cruel imperialist enterprises.

This research proposes to investigate how race, class and gender – amongst other factors – are related to the construction of Black women as politically active subjects on the aforementioned literary works. Also, I will be relating their experiences to Davis' idea of a "new womanhood" (1981, p. 9). Regarding the question of shifting geopolitical and social realities, this doctoral dissertation will investigate the question of traveling and the forced movement of the diaspora as related to the formation of this 'new womanhood' and the politics of creating a personal and political place to belong.

1.2.1. **"The border that crossed us": Displacement, traveling and the politics of (making) home**

Considering the importance of movement and displacement on the selected *corpora,* I will contextualize the study of these concepts on academic literary research, later relating it to the context of Black women's literary production. The necessity of investigating the contexts of mobility, travel and movement has developed an important field of research on the

Literature area. Mostly known as “Travel Literature”, the concern with the displacement of a traveler started mainly through focusing on European subjects and their transcontinental experiences.

Soon, though, the field received important contributions from scholars of ‘post-colonial’ and gender studies, expanding the political possibilities of this field of study. Investigating the experiences of mobility of non-white/racialized[2] agents allows us to counterpoint stereotypes and to address different forms of challenging social and political structures. Tim Crasswell makes an important contribution defining the question of the human movement as “(...) a social phenomenon – as a human geographical activity imbued with meaning and power.” (2006, p. 176). He also discusses the issue of mobility, which he defines as “(…) socialized movement” (CRASSWELL, 2006, p. 176), contending that “(…) mobility is embodied differently – how the act of moving is reflected in and constructed through different bodies.” (CRASSWELL, 2006, p. 176). The scholar made a valuable contribution to the debate about travel, mobility and movement toward different social and racial groups.

With these key concepts, there is also the question of how the displaced subjects change themselves, and their mobility is a central part of the personal and social change these people go through. It is also remarkable that these subjects can make profound changes in their new environments. On this wise , Banan Al-Daraiseh makes an important contribution throughout her doctoral dissertation “The Jouney Narrative: The Trope of Women’s Mobility and Travel in Contemporary Arab Women’s Literary Narratives” .(2012)

This scholar explores the literary works of female Arab authors who embraced traveling as a central part of their lives and transformed it into written narratives. She contends that these women unveil “(…) unpredictable, unfixed, and hybrid subjectivities” (AL-DARAISEH, 2012, p. 1). They have shown female subjects as active agents, challenging the variety of discourses “(…) that present them at different historical moments as speechless, subaltern, subservient, and stripped of their agency” (AL-DARAISEH, 2012, p. 2). She states that the trope of the journey and movement is a challenging response “(…) to varied forms of gendered power structures, imbalanced social order, and misrepresentation and appropriation of their identities” (AL-DARAISEH, 2012, p.3).

[2] On this text, the terms “women of color” and “racialized” will also be related to Black women, as well as the terms African diasporic and Afro-diasporic

It is relevant to remark the fact that Al-Daraiseh is addressing the specific case of Arab women; due to that the researcher tries to prove, through her selected *corpora*, that this group of women is not a homogenized collective willing to submit passively to patriarchy, religion and marriage, as many Western representations often depict them. The researcher brings the traveling journey and all the experiences of personal displacements as a "(…) a subversive, transformative, and reconstructive strategy to express female agency" (AL-DARAISEH, 2012, p. 4).

Altogether with this important feature of analysis, the scholar frames how the post-colonial works on travel literature from the Arab-Islam tradition highlight the tension between the colonizer and the colonized. These works expose their differences and the economic, political and cultural struggles that encompassed the relations of dominance *versus* resistance. According to her, displacement and mobility are central parts of this conflict (AL-DARAISEH, 2012, p. 12). The scholar entangles the question of the postcolonial dynamics of power *versus* resistance on its multidimensional features (racial, cultural, etc) to the gendering of traveling, which is a central point to my research as well. Al-Daraiseh's contribution is an important point on the discussion of how gender and race are related to certain subjects, who are labelled and controlled through stereotypes. Another relevant point is how the act of traveling can be an act of response to these social oppressions.

Further detailing this debate of traveling journeys as gendered experiences, there is Sidonie Smith's cornerstone work *Moving Lives – Twentieth-Century Women's Travel Writing* (2001). Smith postulates on her introduction that journeys have been defined as the sources to create 'male immortalities':

> The anthropologist Victor Turner claims that the journey—as event, personal experience, and cultural symbol—accumulates all kinds of communal meanings. Prominent in the repertoire of meanings identified with journeying in the West have been the meanings attached to itinerant masculinity. The historian Eric J. Leed acknowledges the constitutive masculinity of travel when he argues that, "from the time of Gilgamesh," journeying has served as "the medium of traditional male immortalities," enabling

> men to imagine escape from death by the "crossing" of space and the "record[ing]" of adventures "in bricks, books, and stories." He even labels this travel, which provides men the opportunity to achieve notable distinction through self-defining experience far from home, "spermatic" travel(SMITH, 2001, p. ix)

As the author exposes on the excerpt above the masculine perspectives about traveling predominated on the debate about the subject. Smith postulates that men have associated themselves to travel, agency and mobility, while women have been associated (by men) with "sessility" (SMITH, 2001, p. x), a botanical term appropriated by her to define something which is "(…) permanently planted, tenaciously fixed, utterly immobile" (SMITH, 2001, p. x). Accordingly, dominant male narratives established that women were their 'home', in the sense of being 'fixed', passive, and domestic. The author uses the trope of 'home' as a metaphor to the gendered relations of power, of who is capable of being agent and mobile (men), and the ones which were 'fated' to be waiting for their return (women). In spite of that, Smith highlights that women have always been on the move, dislocating themselves due to the most variable reasons. The scholar focuses on late 19th and early 20th experiences of mobility by women, mainly bourgeois female subjects belonging to the white-middle class spectrum of society (SMITH, 2001, p. xi). They were benefited from the technological advancement of industrialization and the social changes it bought to the condition of women, for example, access to financial independence through work (SMITH, 2001, p. xi).

She also acknowledges that this is a specific narrative toward white women, since racialized female subjects inside Western societies have different historical backgrounds and different narratives toward the act of traveling and the experiences of mobility. She mentions Zora Neale Hurston, Glória Anzaldua and Maya Angelou, amongst other women of color, as authors of travel literature. Their works are testimonies of the differences between the mobility of white and racialized women (SMITH, 2001, p. xv):

> Moreover, a complicated set of intersecting constraints affects the Western woman of color when

> she travels, given the cultural politics of racial visibility and the vulnerability attending her transit in inhospitable spaces. Women of color often have themes to explore in addition to the empowerment and limitations of flight, automobility, locomotion, and foot travel. And for women displaced from postcolonial Asia, Africa, and the island nations of the Caribbean, many of whom have written of their travels to and in Europe and North America, issues of gendered citizenship, diaspora, and the (de)colonization of subjectivity, rather than technologies of motion, assume primacy. As bell hooks remarks, the figure of the journey rather than the figure of travel, tied as it is to the history of colonialism and imperialism, is a more appropriate means through which to understand the stakes of mobility for people of color, when that mobility is associated with such experiences as "immigration, enforced migration, relocation, enslavement, homelessness" (343). "To travel," writes hooks, "I must always move through fear, confront terror" (344).(SMITH, 2001, p. xv)

Departing from this quotation, I contend that Smith connects the gendering of travel to race, decolonization and postcolonial issues, similar to Al-Daraiseh. They enable us to address the experiences of women of color and how society treats them as travelers. Smith can also be related to Crasswell's ideas, when he addresses that each subject embodies traveling in different manners, due to various social vectors, creating, thus, a wide range of new meanings and possibilities on their journeys.

Considering the context of this research, the debate about displacement, traveling and mobility is central since the shifting of places is present on the journey of the main characters. It is necessary to understand that this is not the same movement a white and middle class person would do, when moving from one place to another. As Black women, Kehinde, Maya and Ifemelu face racism, sexism and other oppressions whistle they move and interact with

different social groups in their journeys. They are not just victims, at one point they manage to overcome the challenges and difficulties and start to interfere in their social environments. They change the environment and its conditions. Their journeys are related to who they are and what they manage to become in hostile social conditions. Those questions that were previously discussed by Crasswell, Smith and Al-Daraiseh will be central to the analysis of each character's trajectory further on the next chapters.

1.2.2. The ethos of meaning: Black women and the quest for homeplace in bell hooks' *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009)

The debate about making 'home' and belonging is present to the main characters of the selected works as well as it is present the question of their displacement. Looking into these issues, I must address bell hooks' work as a cornerstone part of this research. A fundamental question in hook's writing of Black women is the search for a place on the world that makes sense for them. The scholar defines it as a search for a space of affection and empowerment. Black women scholars have extensively debated the subject. Through the book *Belonging – A Culture of Place* (2009) bell hooks makes her contribution. The work centers on hooks' overview of her personal journey, engaging in discussing her own perception of home as a Black southern U.S. woman.

According to hooks in the introduction of the book, many people seek for a place to belong. It would be an "(…) *ethos* of sustainability (…)" (HOOKS, 2009, p. 1). This *ethos* would be a place where it is possible a balanced exploration of natural resources altogether with the capacity of making lives meaningful and worthy (HOOKS, 2009, p. 1). In a more detailed description;

> Like many of my contemporaries I have yearned to find my place in this world, to have a sense of homecoming, a sense of being wedded to a place. Searching for a place to belong I make a list of what I will need to create firm ground. At the top of the list I write: "I need to live where I can walk. I need to be able to walk to work, to the

> store, to a place where I can sit and drink tea and fellowship. Walking, I will establish my presence, as one who is claiming the earth, creating a sense of belonging, a culture of place." (HOOKS, 2009, p. 2)

Hooks unveils the need to feel attached to a specific place, in the quotation above. This attachment would be fostered by simple things, such as a safe environment to go to work and come back home peacefully. These daily activities may seem ordinary, However, they are not. Due to the racial apartheid in the U.S., Black people were deprived of the right to enjoy these simple actions. This segregation has given to Black people what the author defines as "the psycho history of traumatic powerlessness" (HOOKS,2009, p. 12). Even though hooks recalls this painful historical fact as a constant reason that stimulated her to leave Kentucky, she also acknowledges the parallel histories and groups which have resisted to oppressions on her homeland, managing to build spaces of belonging. She mainly acknowledges the Black communities that, through displacement and cultural resistance, have maintained and cultivated their own traditions, habits and values. Through the experience of a multiracial society, hooks contends, she grew up as a free child, having as reference the communal values of sharing and helping, respecting nature and being an empathetic human being.

The author also exemplifies the feeling of 'homecoming' from a childhood memoir when she arrived at her grandparent's houses after traveling all across the town through white neighborhoods. According to hooks, the "(…) feeling of safety, of arrival (…)" (HOOKS, 2009, p. 102) altogether with the "(…) sweetness and the bitterness of the journey (…)" (HOOKS, 2009, p. 102) were her balsamic escape after a journey that reminded her of geographical segregation. When mentioning this movement, the displacement, hooks is in line with Edward Said and James Clifford. These authors question the imperialistic and white notion of "travel". According to hooks, based on the aforementioned scholars, different ethnic-racial groups have other narratives to tell, crossed by factors as gender, race and class, as well as others. Also, in a direct dialog with Smith (2001) and Crasswell (1999), hooks contends that experiences of violence and oppressions during the Black Diaspora and other racialized groups' experiences cannot be related imperialistic notion of "travel" as sustained by the white European conqueror. Opposing to that, hooks asks for a theory of the journey,

which means a broader theory discussing multiple experiences of displacement, decentralized from the white perspective (HOOKS, 2009, p. 99-100).

Relating to this research, hooks' work is fundamental to the further development of the discussion. The three selected books by Angelou, Adichie and Gonçalves, bring the narratives of women on the move and seeking for their homeplace. This would be the search for a place where a person can feel free to live safely and build networks of affection and trust. Angelou[3] and Adichie's Ifemelu are moving away from "historical powerlessness" (HOOKS, 2009, p. 12). The characters are seeking to recreate themselves as active subjects in the world. As for Gonçalves' book, the Atlantic passage is marked by fear, horror and death, and the shock of arriving in a complete foreign land. This arrival is not the one of the white Conqueror through his own assumed superiority. Instead, it is an experience of objectification, loss of family altogether with the loss of identity and homeland. Kehinde's displacement leads to the need to build a new self in a foreign space. It is not a pleasant travel, it is a forced journey in which the main character has no other choice but to face, seeking survival.

Thinking of hooks proposals and perspectives, these women show us that the search for a homeplace is not a choice. Instead, it stands as the only way for them to keep themselves alive. Homeplace is not a luxury, but a necessity. Through these characters, we notice a pattern in which Black women are constantly struggling to create, or, at least, change the social and environmental realities of capitalist societies. These journeys reframe the role of Black women in social formations in different historical contexts. As the three characters, I and my ancestors are fundamental parts of waging resistance against white colonialism and shaping new cultural and social relations on the places we were forced to come.

1.2.3. "The Politico-Cultural Category of Amefricanity (*Amefricanidade)*": Debating Lélia González's Philosophy toward a New Epistemology of Black Women

Another important idea during this research is to question the hegemonic narratives of the colonizer. These narratives are the ones that establish ideas of domination and degrade certain social groups and subjects. I will use an important Brazilian scholar to present a new

narrative about the formation of Latin America and Black women's role in it. This new narrative is also a completely revolutionary epistemology about the history of our continent. The chosen author is Lélia González. She has elaborated her own epistemology to debate the formation of the Americas. González was born in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais; the youngest daughter of eighteen children. She became an academic professor when growing up (BARRETO, 2005, p. 19). González started to develop a critical consciousness due to the rejection of her marriage by her husband's family; they constantly mistreated her because she was a Black Brazilian woman (BARRETO, 2005, p. 22). During Brazilian dictatorship, González engaged on philosophical debates, which gave her an institutional profile on the Department of Political and Social Order (Departamento de Ordem Política e Social -, also known as DOPS). She was framed as a social subversive agent according to the Brazilian government at the time (BARRETO, 2005, p. 23-25).

Nevertheless, González persisted as a committed member of *the Movimento Negro Unificado*. The scholar joined political activism through affiliating herself, firstly, to the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT*) and, afterwards, the Party of the Workers (*Partido dos Trabalhadores – PDT*) (BARRETO, 2005, p. 23-25). Lélia González's political life and engaged work are essential to comprehend the importance of her theory and epistemology to this research and its literary *corpora*.

The theoretical work developed by González departs from her life experiences and political trajectory. Therefore, talking about it requires the understanding of González's personal life as central to the creation of her work. She focuses on questions of race, class and gender in Brazilian society, especially toward the reality of Black people on the country. Her key text "Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture" (*Racismo e Sexismo na Cultura Brasileira*) (1984) delves into the social structure of Brazilian capitalist society and how it is based on the oppressions of race and gender, altogether with class. Through psychoanalysis and the historical rescue of Brazilian's colonial past, González explains how the white structure of power sustained through the relations of colonialism tried to domesticate Black people and how it tried to erase both our consciousness and memory:

> (...) We are talking about the notions of conscience and memory. As conscience we understand the place of ignorance, concealment, alienation, forgetfulness

> and even knowledge. This is where ideological discourse is present. In memory, we consider it as the non-knowledge that we know, that place of inscriptions that restore a story that was not written, the place of the emergence of truth, of that truth that is structured as fiction. Consciousness excludes what memory includes. Hence, insofar as it is the place of rejection, conscience is expressed as the dominant discourse (or effects of that discourse) in a given culture, hiding memory, by imposing what it, conscience, affirms as truth. But memory has its cunning, (...); therefore, it speaks through the blunders of the discourse of consciousness. (...). And when it comes to us, Black people, we know that [social] conscience tries to erase our history (...) (GONZÁLEZ, 1984, p; 226)

According to her, there was a trial to erase the consciousness of Black people during the process of colonization. It was done through the suppression of ancestral memories and complete obstruction to accessing our ethnical origins in collective history (which she associates to memory). Departing from that, González investigates which are the stereotypes/archetypes on collective history/social memory surrounding Black Brazilian women. She mentions "*mulata*" (mulatto), "*mucama*" (handmaiden) and "*mãe preta*" (Black mommy). Both the stereotypes and the process of erasing of memory are faced by Kehinde on her journey in the book *Um Defeito de Cor* (A Defect of Color). Kehinde is an African woman captured in Ouidah, on the Coast of Western Africa in the Republic of Benin. She is forcefully bought to Brazil against her will and sold as a slave.

Kehinde's process of departure and arrival marks an objectification and dehumanization altogether with this process of erasure of memory and consciousness addressed by González. These moments shows the trial of erasing her identity. Her baptism changes the African name to the slave name, becoming a symbolic rite of violence;

> The one who knew Yoruba told me to speak my true name because there was no Kehinde, and I could not have been baptized with this African name, there must have been another one, a Christian name. (...). Tanisha had told me the name given to her, Luísa, and that's the one I adopted. For whites, I was Luísa, Luísa Gama, but I always considered myself Kehinde. The name that my mother and grandmother gave me and that was recognized by voduns, by Nana, by Xangô, by Oxum, by Ibêjis and mainly by Taiwo. Even when I adopted Luísa's name because it was convenient, it was like Kehinde that I introduced myself to the sacred and the secret. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 43)

During this moment, Kehinde 'chose' the name of a friend. Luísa was another enslaved woman who died during the Atlantic crossing. Regardless of that, she never assimilated it, referring to it as the "Christian name" and the name, which she was known to white people. In order to keep the memory of her family and dear ones alive, she presented herself to "the sacred and to the secret" as Kehinde. This decision shows the dialectical relation referred to González. The name designed by the consciousness of enslaved person was Luíza Gama (the last name was adopted from her slave master). During most part of her arrival at Bahia, she never ceased to be Kehinde. Even though there is the violence of erasing one's name and previous history, keeping alive her original name and associating it to religious traditions from Savalu and Ouah made Kehinde to preserve the memory and to turn it into a way of resistance.

Another important concept, maybe the most important postulation part of Lélia González's theoretical framework, is the concept of Amefricanity (*Amefricanidade*). The scholar refutes the concept of Latin America, putting forward to the Americas a new name: *Améfrica Ladina* (Ladina Amefrica) (GONZÁLEZ, 1984, p. 226). According to her, African and Native Indigenous peoples influenced both Americas with traditions. González defines them as the core and the heart of these continents, even with the presence of white people. From this perspective, González further develops the concept of Amefricanity (*amefricanidade*). Her text "The Political and Cultural Category of Amefricanity" (*A*

Categoria Político-Cultural de Amefricanidade) (1988) was dedicated to explore this idea. She returns to the question of consciousness, but here she focuses on the African cultural roots of Brazil, even if they are erased and suppressed;

> It [Amefricanity] is a new and creative look at the focus of Brazil's historical cultural formation which, for reasons of a geographic order and, above all, of the order of the unconscious, is not what is generally stated: a country whose formations of the unconscious are exclusively European, white. On the contrary, it is an African America whose Latinity, for nonexistent, has changed from t to d in order to have its name assumed with all the letters: Améfrica Ladina [Ladin Amefrica] (it is not by chance that Brazilian cultural neurosis has racism as its symptom par excellence). (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 69).

Through renaming the continent, González redefines the position of Black people in her theory as well on the history of the formation of the Americas. Focusing on Brazilian national formation and departing from Freud's concepts, the scholar postulates a national consciousness and its unconsciousness, where its Black populations are *partialobjekt*(s), symbols, obsessions that haunt the national imagination with powerful cultural expressions related to Blackness while the Black bodies and subjects are objectified, institutionally exterminated and dehumanized (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 70).

Additionally, González also debates the types of racism in the Americas. According to her, the 'Anglo' America and its predominantly English-Protestant colonization have the explicit racism (*racismo aberto*). The Latin societies colonized mainly by Portuguese and Spanish had another type of racism. González defines it as racism of denial (*racismo disfarçado* or *racismo por denegação*). The latter type fostered the discourse of Latin American countries, especially Brazil, as based on a racial democracy (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 69). She contends that the Anglo Racism connects to juridical and legislative apartheid amongst whites and Blacks. It produced more conscious Black subjects, which directly

addressed the issues of racial segregation. Meanwhile, the subtlety of Brazilian racism obliterated the debate of racial differences. The scholar also makes a historical review of the past of the countries on the Iberian Peninsula, tracing their discourses and posture about race heavily influenced by the Moorish invasion. In these places, the dark-skinned color of the foreign conquering people was an important factor on the rhetoric of hate by the Europeans toward them (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 72-76).

González also disagrees with the term "Afro-American" or "African-American" because, according to her, it induces the listener to believe that there are Black people only in the United States. Also, the author contends that using the term America also reduces the continent to a single country, erasing its continental diversity. Then, González proposes the category of Amefricanity and the definition of Amefrican as a new semantic and political category to reunite the Afro-Diasporical people of the Americas around their African origins. But it is also as a political theory focusing on the central role of Blackness as a core part on the formation of American societies.

González's concept of Amefricanity will be significant to the analysis of the literary works here selected, as they are produced by diasporic African women who are looking to find a new place for themselves on the world. Their search for homecoming is profoundly related to their African ancestral roots. Altogether with hooks' concept of homecoming, I will use González's theoretical proposals to investigate the experiences of these characters, trying to frame the formation of amefricanity in each of these works.

1.2.4. Anzaldúa's Mestiza consciousness and Black women's identity:

Glória Anzaldúa is a Chicanx researcher that has produced from a peculiar place. She lived crossed by multiple borders: The physical, the spiritual and the psychological (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 3).

The physical boundary was the restrictive geopolitical border between Texas and the southeastern United States and Mexico. The spiritual frontier was manifested in the author's attempt to rescue Gods and Goddesses worshiped by the people who inhabited Mexican soil before the colonial invasion of Colombo, living with a religious syncretism that arose from contact with the colonizer. The psychological frontier was manifested in the multiple identities that Anzaldúa carried. She was as a mestiza woman questioning herself about the

privileged and the oppressed sides of her miscegenation. She was a lesbian woman raised in an environment hostile to her sexuality. Furthermore, she was also a working-class woman who became a theoretician. The multiple sides of her subjectivity made her create a theory that would express these differences.

Her search created the book "*Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*", published in 1987, in a period when researchers from marginalized communities used their voices creating new political and theoretical expressions in white United States' academic spaces.

Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness proposes that subjects exposed to multiple oppressions and coming from mixed backgrounds can become substantially new beings. Consequently, these subjects no longer fit in simple boxes; rather becoming new creatures, also producing new meanings in the worlds it inhabits and altering them. It is worth noting that Anzaldúa is very concerned with the material and political dimensions of the issues she addresses. On the border between the USA and Mexico, she states that it is the place where "(...) the third world collides with the first world and bleeds" (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 4).

Therefore, she can be understood as a woman who integrates identity and structure, reviewing history from a political viewpoint and dealing with the present from the viewpoint of multiple material oppressions. Meanwhile, she also emphasizes the need for ontological identification and reframing for marginalized social groups. Thus, on her theory, Anzaldúa also states her political place and her deep commitment to subversion of oppressions and creation of agency.

Regarding this research and the context of Black womanhood on the selected corpora, I will analyze how the main character of each literary work develops their own *mestiza* consciousness. Ifemelu, Kehinde and Maya change throughout the narratives and this change create a political impact on their act as well as a fundamental change on their identity. I will also connect Anzaldúa' *mestiza* consciousness to González's amefricanity and Ahmed's proposal of a cultural politics of emotion (the latter will be further explained in the third chapter).

1.3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND METODOLOGY

My research framework aims to analyze Black women and the political dimension of their subjectivity through exploring the main characters[4] of the chosen literary works. Considering that, the main research questions are: How these subjectivities and political positioning are related to displacement, race, gender and class? How these female characters' agency changes and influences their social environments? How it relates to the intersectional debate, Black feminism and decolonial theories in Literary Studies? Is it possible to gender the debate of the African decolonization while investigating its context and the historical context of the diaspora?

From these questions, the specific objectives guiding this research are also verifying how the construction of identities of the women are contextualized and affected by the reality of displacement (in experiences such as kidnapping, slavery and migration).

Another specific objective is to understand how the resistance to colonialism and the anti-colonial struggle on the works is related to the narrative. Also, this research aims to contextualize the investigation under the epistemological perspective of *amefricanity* by González – that will be further developed on chapter two. Regarding this, I also aim to expand González's category in chapter three, altogether with Ahmed's proposal of political culture of emotions, focused on Black women's experience.

Another specific objective is to use the *mestiza* consciousness concept, as proposed by Anzáldua, in the analysis of the characters, which will be done in chapter five. Also, I aim to investigate the characters the possible existence of a "new womanhood"[5] as proposed by Davis, connected to the context of the *corpora*.

It will be also explored the possibility of framing a cultural politics of emotion – and its impact on the character's trajectory – for Black women according to Sara Ahmed's conceptual proposals (2004), explored in chapter three. The idea of a political culture of emotions for Black women will be integrated to the idea of amefricanity[6]. Also, there will be

[4] Even though Angelou is a real person and the novel selected for this research is based on real facts, it is difficult to say how much has changed due to the author's perspective while narrating. This discussion about the creation of self in the autobiography genre will be further addressed in chapter six. But now I highlight that I will address the narrator of *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* as an adapted self of the author and thus when referring to "Maya", I will be referring to her as a character just like Kehinde and Ifemelu.

[5] In this research, I conceptually locate amefricanity as a category for cultural and personal resistance of Black women, as well as a new epistemological approach for the history of the Americas, whistle Davis' new womanhood is used here focusing on the historical practices that Black women, as a collective group, used to resist slavery and other violence.

[6] This research will use both terms as synonyms in the analysis of the *corpora*

the investigation about the concept of homecoming as proposed by bell hooks and it relation to displacement, travel and diaspora.

1.3.1. Methodology: Radical Politics of Community, Home and Decolonial Epistemology through Lugones's *Pilgrimages*

This research's methodology will follow the bibliographical investigation. Nonetheless it is a traditional approach in the Literary Studies, I am bringing diverse epistemologies to this method. Therefore, this research will be based on intersectional and decolonial approach to its literary *corpora.* Mainly, I will explore the approach proposed by Maria Lugones in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*.

1.3.2. "Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions": *Pilgrimages* by Maria Lugones

Epistemologically, this research will rely mainly on the bibliographical research through the approach of intersectionality as proposed by Black female scholars and on the decolonial perspectives as proposed by Latina/Latinx and Chicana/Chicanx women. An important work to set this different way of thinking is Maria Lugones's *Pilgrimages*/*Peregrinajes*. There are many important postulations on this work about coalition, resistance, race and ethnocentrism which are turning points of feminist theory and that question white thought hegemony. Therefore, a further methodological discussion and investigation are necessary to enlighten the path of development, focusing on the future analysis of the *corpora*.

Lugones debates one of the central points to this research, the coalition of women of color, the racialized/nonwhite epistemology of feminism and the white women's concern with the "problem of difference". This perspective will be central to the analysis of my *corpora*.

Working with three Black women from different historical contexts would be impossible (and offensive) to use a theoretical framework and a methodological approach based on white and traditional academic epistemology. I need perspectives congruently aligned to Lugones' proposal that considers the chosen literary work as non-passive objects in the world, tracing altogether with them the trajectories of their creators and their ways of resistance. These

books and their main character's journey are recreations of their realities and worlds, criticizing slavery, ethnocentrism and racism.

Another important category as proposed by Lugones which will be incorporated by my analysis is the coalition among women of color. This idea is developed through showing the meanings and lines of action adopted by these women. This alliance amongst women of color is a central point to political resistance, also important to defeat racism, imperialism and colonialism embedded in postmodern capitalist structures. In this research, this coalition will be an important part of the analytical chapters, as I will investigate how the personal relations among Black women develop from an intimate level to a political dimension on the works of the selected *corpora*.

On this behalf, Lugones also debates the question of how social structures try to avoid that these subjects identify with one another. She contends that social structures produce a process of subalternization of these subjects that can lead to isolation instead of connection. These women have subjectivity and perception shaped to avoid other colored women;

> Thus, it is difficult for women of color to see, know each other, as resistant rather than as constructed by domination. To the extent that we face each other as oppressed, we do not want to identify with each other, we repel each other as we are seeing each other in the same mirror.2 As resistant, we are kept apart by social fragmentation. To identify with each other, we need to engage in resistant practices that appear dangerous. We have not realized the potential lying in our becoming interdependently resistant. As resistant, we appear independent from each other to each other. The coalition sense of "Women of Color" necessitates this identification that comes from seeing ourselves and each other interrelating "worlds" of resistant meaning. To the extent that identification requires sameness, this coalition is impossible. So, the coalition requires that we conceive identification anew. The independence of women of color from each other

> performed by social fragmentation leaves us unwittingly colluding with the logic of oppressions (LUGONES, 2003, p. 10)

The quotation above shows how the scholar understands the difficult on the coalition among colored women. The overcoming of this structural non-identification is fundamental to unleash the power of interconnected resistance is an important tool, as addressed by her.

Lugones proposes a decolonial *praxis* based on the coalition of women of color, communication among us and the careful analysis of how different oppressions intersect. Moreover, she highlights how blinding the white feminist perspective can be, addressing the necessity of plural and radical feminisms. These could support women of color and answer their necessities. As a research, I can adapt Lugones approach to the methodology of Literary and Cultural Studies seeking an interdependent reading of the selected *corpora,* establishing through that a broader reading while approaching the history of Black women in the Diaspora, their similarities and differences, and how these interconnections are historically important to rethink the history of the Americas and Africa, how it is presented in the selected works and how it can help us to set new strategies of resistance on upcoming harsh historical contexts.

1.4. PROPOSAL OF CHAPTERS:

In this chapter, I introduced the *corpora*, theoretical background, hypothesis, objectives and methodology that guide this research. The following chapters will also dive into the historical context, developing of theoretical ideas introduced in this chapter and review of literature (2-3). The next chapters will also bring the analysis of gender, race, class, subjectivity and emotion on the experiences of Ifemelu, Kehinde and Maya (3-6). There will be a specific chapter (4) dedicated to rethinking Brazil's history and building a narrative of an amefrican nation. Another chapter (5) will explore homecoming, displacement and amefricanity in Ifemelu from *Americanah* (2013). In chapter 6, I will explore the culture of place and the political culture of emotions in Maya's trajectory in *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986).

Finally, the last chapter will present an overview of the common elements in these character's narratives and analyze the political meaning of it to transnational literary research on Black diasporic women's literatures.

CHAPTER TWO
"OUR MOTHERS' GARDENS": Historical Context and Literature Review

What is Africa to me:

Copper sun or scarlet sea,

Jungle star or jungle track,

Strong bronzed men, or regal black

Women from whose loins I sprang

When the birds of Eden sang?

One three centuries removed

From the scenes his fathers loved,

Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,

What is Africa to me?

"Heritage" by Countee Cullen

This chapter will explore the historical context of the African diaspora on the three countries explored - Nigeria, Brazil and United States of America -, how they interconnect themselves in their histories, analyzing critically this shared historical background. Altogether with this, there will be an exploration of the origins and development of transnational Black feminisms - not as a 'segment' of White feminism, but as specific movements with their own epistemology and political struggle. Also, it will encompass a critical discussion on other important thinkers who might not be settled under the label of 'Black feminists', such as Lelia González and Glória Anzaldua.

2.0. "What is Africa to me?": Thinking about the diaspora, from Nigeria to U.S. and Brazil.

This research is focused on the work of three Black women, Chimamanda Adichie, Anna Maria Gonçalves and Maya Angelou. This research focuses on the female main character of each work, but I do consider these women authors and their lives a central part of this work. Thinking about honoring these women's histories and territories, I will build an interweaving narrative of these origins. First, I will dig into the history of Nigeria (Chimamanda and Ifemelu's birth place and home), to (re)think the history of this land even before it became a country and how slave trade changed it. Following that, I will explore the slave trade and its diaspora within different realities such as Brazil and United States.

No Single History: Studying Nigeria and Its Literature - Before And Now.

The departure point of this historical part of the investigation is to reframe what we know today as the country of Nigeria. Deciding to start from this point is a way to establish a paradigm for the chapter, Africa is the original homeland for all Black people in diaspora, but also it means to investigate the roots and influences for Chimamanda Adichie's *Americannah* (2013). Moreover, it also offers an important viewpoint of what were the subsaharan African territories before the colonial intervention made by European colonizers.

According to Falola and Heaton on *A History of Nigeria* (2008), to claim the study of a "pre-colonial" Nigeria is an anachronism (2008, p. 16), since it defines this territory through the external European invasion. They expose to us a diverse history of this land, which was marked by the existence of decentralized human societies; it also received influences from Islam religion, which interfered on the creation of centralized states. According to them; this territory was marked by "many societies and states, and even vast empires (...), none of them having had any direct correlation to the Nigerian state that exists nowadays." (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 17). The current political borders of Nigeria were defined by English colonial rulers, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century; this definition was made by interests that are completely unrelated to the different peoples that lived on the territory (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.17). However, the researchers remark that the people of today's Nigeria still carry "(...) different indigenous languages, historical memories, traditional lifestyles, and social frameworks (...)" that are connected to this ancient past.

The early Nigerian history registers a period of large human development dating to the Late Stone Age (10.000 BCE-20.000 BCE), firstly influenced by the discovery of agriculture and the creation of larger human settlements (Falola, Heaton, 19). Also, during this period was marked by the manipulation of iron, which changed the social structures, since the iron-based artifacts soon became a sign of social status and it also helped to create new professions related to metal manipulations, as well as helping to create a more stable environment for the development of agriculture (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.20).

The development of agriculture altogether with the increasing ability of controlling metals is regarded as cornerstones for the creation of the first states and also the differentiation of local communities fostering ethnic diversity, mainly from the arousal of new language systems (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 21). Both scholars mention that the first societies in contemporary Nigerian territory were considered "stateless", which is, according to them, a wrong approach to these earlier groups' political organization. These societies had decentralized states. Later on, other groups emerged and formed more centralized governments. Falola and Heaton mention the Igbo societies as an example of this early decentralized model; according to them, the first Igbo societies that shared a "(...) common language, similar religious beliefs, and various inter-group social institutions" (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 21) had a village-based model of organization, in which power was held by age hierarchy in patriarchal lineages, also each of these village system functioned independently amongst themselves (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 21). The researchers highlight that much of these Igbo societies maintained such political organization until the arrival of British colonizers. It is also highlighted that such decentralized political organization was shared by other groups, for example , "Isoko, Urhobo, and Ibibio in the southeast and the Tiv of the middle belt" (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.22). Later on, other social groups changed this landscape of village-based political systems, for example , the Yoruba people; they established a monarchical centralized state in the region of Ife (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.22). The apex of this new governmental structure came with the creation and expansion of the kingdom of Benin (Benin has today become a country, but a significative part of its domain as it was in the past is shared with today's Nigeria, therefore both countries do somehow share a common background), by the *oba* (Yoruba title for king) Ewuare. The following *obas* deepened his enterprise and made Benin into a "major imperial center" (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.22). Today Nigeria has "over 200 different ethnolinguistic groups" (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.4); other important ethnic groups

beyond the Igbo and Yoruba are Fulani, Ijaw, Ibibio, Nupe and Tiv (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.4).

This new structure of centralized government was not restricted to Benin and as the Islam expanded its power on the territory, it fostered other centralized states with the decentralized ones;

> Thus, by 1500 the territories in and around modern-day Nigeria constituted a dynamic area characterized by the existence of several powerful centralized states and the proliferation of hundreds of smaller decentralized states. These states were involved in political, economic, and cultural activities that both linked them together and accentuated their distinct contributions to the region as a whole.(FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p.37-38)

Another important fact that came together with these new powerful state areas was the expansion of economy, which included a trans-saharan trade with North African societies. The transatlantic trade also became a meaningful part of the economic lives of these societies on the land that corresponds to the present-day Nigeria. Around 1500, the Europeans were regular economic partners, which started to enslave and to commercialize human beings from the territory (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 38). This transatlantic slave trade would grow and change into the colonial domination by the British government (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 38). Mostly, these slaves came from the South part of the country, and the practice of slavery was also a political tool relate to internal rivalry amongst the societies in the territory (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 39). It is also important to highlight that even though slavery had a participation in the economic structure of these societies, it was not what structured or created them (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 39).

Another important fact is that some societies in Nigerian land had institutionalized slavery as part of their social tissue for a significant amount of time, for example the Hausa and Borno states, However, they were not like the slavery that took place in the diaspora; it

was a more integrative and less dehumanizing social practice which allowed the enslaved individual to overcome this role throughout their lives (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 39), and it has almost nothing to do with the colonial slavery practiced by the colonial invaders. First, they established protectorates on the South of the territory, formally controlling the coast in the period of 1861 to 1865 (Falola, Heaton 93). In 1914, the British colonial administration officially created the government of Nigeria, despite the indigenous local societies and their ancestral government organizations (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 158).

The growth of the importance of the commercial slavery led to the growing influence of foreign influence on the societies today known as Nigeria. In 1850, the British government decided it was the moment to interfere directly and be a permanent presence on the territory. They established coalition with local leaders and during the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), they self-declared themselves as rulers of the area in front of other european countries.

This introductory historical exploration presents us a small background of the history of the territory today known as Nigeria. I do not aim to turn this section into a full historical recovery of Nigeria's past until the colonial invasion because it would be a big amount of information to handle in a single section. I aim to contextualize this historical memory with my *corpora* of research, seeking to explore how literary expression - focusing on Chimamanda Adichie's production - on Nigerian territory deals with the question of colonialism and diaspora.

Nadia Embleton theorized about the formation of Nigeria as a country on her PhD thesis "Reimagining Nigerian Unity: Identity, Ethno-Nationalism and the Depiction of the Nation in Nigerian Novels by Female Authors" (2017). According to her the male Nigerian authors were the first to use literature as a mean to ressignify their history, arguing against the dehumanization and robbery of Africa's peoples and their history - some examples are Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka (10-11). However, they were challenged by African feminists on the field of literary critic, who defied these authors' portrayals of female characters on their books:

> The most common critique postulated by these female authors and academics focused on the image of women that had been portrayed in

> novels written by men, suggesting that those portrayals misrepresented the realities of how women viewed themselves in African societies (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 10-11)

According to the researcher, these critique fostered - since 1966 - the emergence of a group of female Nigerian writers - from both fictional and non fictional fields - that decided that they too would "write back", then Literature became a point of "empowerment and self discovery" (EMBLETON, 2017, p.13). The researcher highlights the high school teacher Flora Nwapa as one of the pioneers of the "writing back" practice, opening the path for other female writers such as "(...) Adaora Lily Ulasi, Zaynab Alkali, Buchi Emecheta, Helen Obviagele and many more." (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 14).

> Flora Nwapa was the first female author in Nigeria to be published by Heinemann African Writers Series (Currey 2003). Her body of work includes novels such as *Efuru* (1966), *Idu* (1970), *Never Again* (1975), *One is Enough* (1981) and *Women are Different* (1986). Arguably, Nwapa's first intentions as a writer were not political as she states: "(...) In my first two novels, I tried to recreate the experiences of women in the traditional African society – their social and economic activities and above all their preoccupation with the problems of procreation, infertility, and child-rearing" (Nwapa 2007:526.528).(...)
>
> Nwapa's legacy was continued by Buchi Emecheta, who also began the process of writing because she had stories to tell rather than for any political pursuits (...), she likens her experience of story-telling to the Igbo oral tradition of the Big Mother: "I am simply doing what my Big Mother was doing for free about thirty years ago. The only difference is that she told her stories in the moonlight, while I have to bang away at

> a typewriter I picked up from Woolworths in London" (Emecheta 2007:552). EMBLETON, 2017, p. 14)

As the quotation above shows, these pioneering Nigerian women did not consciously aim to be political or to make a political statement, neither did they sought to claim a feminist place for themselves. Rather, it was their more immediate environment that inspired their creation as writers; Nwapa taught in high school, so she was involved with the education of of her community, while Emecheta was following an old tradition shared by several communities on Nigeria, the female storyteller who passes down several intergenerational tales and memories known as Big Mother (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 14). Emecheta oftenly compares her role as writer to the role of this female figure in the communities, establishing the act of storytelling as an act of preservation of memory; she also establishes these women as figures of power which she admired since childhood (Fisher 193). Emecheta came from a multiple ethnic background (she was both Yoruba and Igbo), being the first female author in Nigeria to claim a unity from difference, something that deepened the political importance of her work, even if as a writer she did not aim to be political in a more conventional understanding of the word (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 14).

Similarly, Seffi Atta is highlighted by Embleton as a multi-ethnic writer coming from middle and upper class backgrounds, who further developed on the issues of Nigerian women lives, like her predecessors (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 14). Chimamanda Adichie is mentioned by the scholar as a "global icon" (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 14), not only known through her work as a writer - which includes globally acclaimed works like *Americannah* (2013) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) -, but also as a feminist activist. Adichie's stardom as a global feminist icon came when one part of her TED talk was mentioned by Beyoncé Knowles on her song *Flawless* (2013).

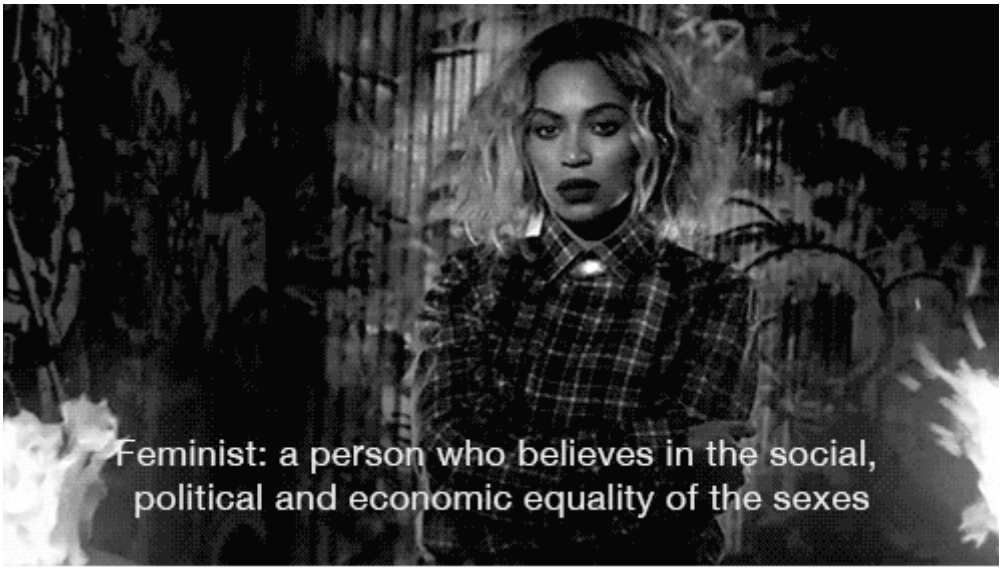

Image 1 - Beyoncé sampled Chimamanda Adichie's TED talk on feminism on her single *Flawless* (2013).

Adichie then overcame the boundaries of Literature, becoming a multimodal author through her participation on Beyoncé's work (the song title does contain "featuring Chimamanda Adichie", attributing to the writer participation on the song as if she were a musician too). The song came to be a huge success and promoted Adichie's work on a global level unseen by any of her fellow contemporaries on Nigeria. Chimamanda's writing is rich and diverse. She writes about Nigeria women in diaspora, the Nigeria-Briafa War, besides discussing gender inequality, internal ethnic issues of her country and racial justice, always having a strong political tone. This strong writing style is probably related to Chimamanda's literary influence, one of them being Chinua Achebe (EMBLETON, 2017, p. 15).

It is important to briefly talk about this particular influence, since Chinua Achebe is considered an important influence for African and non-African writers and critics. Susan Z. Andrade debates Achebe and other important questions regarding novels on her seminal book *The Nation Writ Small – African Fictions and Feminisms, 1958-1988* (2011). Chimamanda Adichie is a novelist, like her aforementioned predecessors; Achebe, Nwapa and Emecheta. Andrade reminds us that although novels have become an important part of African culture in different countries, the novel as a genre comes from outside, alongside colonialism (ANDRADE, 2011, p. 2). She also highlights that most of African novels are written on European languages (ANDRADE, 2011, p. 2). Like Embleton, the scholar also remarks that

the first novels written by women in Africa were regarded as apolitical because they dealt with the domestic sphere of African lives (ANDRADE, 2011, p. 4). Andrade also raises the question that talking about "African novel" or debating feminisms in Africa must be connected to being aware of the diversity of the continent; she uses Simon Njami – a Cameroonian artist – to postulate about African diversity;

> "Nevertheless, my working historical model insists first and foremost on Africa as more than a cluster of countries south of the Sahara and sees Africa as a continent inhabited by people of different ethnicities, religious practices, languages, hues and racial phenotypes" (ANDRADE, 2011, p. 3).

Those are important considerations for my research because Adichie's work – just like Angelou's and Gonçalves' – deal with diaspora and diversity inside and outside the inland Africa; for example, both Kehinde (main character from Gonçalves' book) and Ifemelu (from Adichie's book) are African women somehow displaced that return to Africa. This return brings clashes and conflicts which can be better discussed having a broader and non-essentialist notion of 'Africaness' or '*africanidade*'. Andrade reminds us that North Africa is an important part of the continent – even with its Arabic and Asian influences. It helps us to understand how the Malê Revolt. It was an Islamic slave anti-colonial upraise on Bahia that we find on Gonçalves' narrative, where Kehinde plays an important role that will be further explained in detail in the fourth chapter. This revolt was an important social event on the fight against slavery in Brazil, influenced by a religion that is not usually considered an 'African' religion.

Another important feature of Andrade's analysis that I ought to take in consideration is the redefinition of the "(…) terms of conversation about politics and gender in Africa" (ANDRADE, 2011, p. 1). Her work has bought a new dimension to the connection amongst social hierarchies inherited from colonial intervention and the patriarchy relations that shifted Africa's internal dynamics and how they influenced the lives of people in these societies

and/or countries. I intend to explore how gender influences the internal actions on the literary works, adopting a perspective similar to Andrade's, what means that I do not understand or share the idea that discussing gender is an "UnAfrican" approach. I believe, rather, that gendering the analysis acknowledges a multidimensional oppressions and that it allows me to shed light on gender relations before the European invasion – as it was mentioned before, the first societies on the territory today known as Nigeria were patrilineal ones, which means that the male heritage was the privileged criteria to ensure power (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008, p. 21). Highlighting the importance of a gender based analysis, Andrade states;

> Although gender should constitute a primary category of analysis, it is (still) too often conceived of as a marginal and private discourse within African letters. Both African historiography and literary historiography have pretended to be gender-neutral when, in fact, their genealogies reveal an implicit ideology of gender. As a result, the "feminine" has been elided, and until now nationalism has lacked the means by which to integrate either the Igbo Women's War or the first Nigerian woman's novel into its narrative.(ANDRADE, 2011, p. 42)

She mentions the implications of gender as a secondary category of analysis, which is the eliding of female political movements on the history of the continent. This can be understood as a way to make the implications of colonialism in the lives of the native women a 'secondary' issue on the context of the liberation and decolonization of the country. Understanding gender secondary undermines questions such as rape, exploitation and underpayment of female work, sexual and physical abuses against children (mainly, girls), exclusion of women from accessing representative political power in the continent and hyper sexualization of African women. Ignoring the gender dimension makes it 'minor' issues,

apolitical questions that do not relate to a major context of economic and social subordination of African countries.

Proving how the erasing of gender analysis is also the erasure of women's struggle and political resistance, she exemplifies through the lack of historical analysis and debate over the Igbo Women's War (known in Igbo as Ogu Umunwanyi), a native female revolt against the British interference on the Igbo political organization that ravished several cities across Nigeria (ANDRADE, 2011, p.47). According to the scholar, this event is core to Chinua Achebe's cornerstone work Things Fall Apart (1958), but Achebe de-structuralized the possibility of a gender debate within his novel since his narrative is focused on a male-based narrative, diminishing the female characters and placing them in a secondary role (ANDRADE, 2011, p.50).

Chimamanda Adichie is then a product of this vast and rich legacy, and debating her production and how she deals with different social questions on her fictional narratives requires a political aware analysis that encompasses the intrinsic relations amongst gender, colonialism, different social forces, displacements and the reshaping of what being an African women means, from the perspective of a self-declared feminist author producing for a global audience.

The book selected for this research was *Americanah*, which tells the story of a young Nigerian woman studying abroad in the United States, Ifemelu. She also writes in a blog, where she keeps a virtual journaling of her routine as a Nigerian woman in her own micro diaspora. Selecting this specific work from Chimamanda Adichie has to do with my own path as a researcher, being a mixed-race Black woman from Pará that moved to the Brazilian South to study. Ifemelu's journey of displacement and rebuilding of her own self as a human being has a lot to do with my life story, since, just like her; I am also 'trapped' in a infinitude of worlds and sometimes even homes feel 'unhomely'.

Besides that, analyzing *Americanah* can be a powerful way to challenge and to debate what being African means and to ask ourselves about what is 'Africaness'. On this wise , Adichie is also bold when she declares herself as a feminist and she has multiple essays stating this position. The discussion of feminism as an UnAfrican question has been a debate within the continent and outside it, regarding the diasporic women of African descent. Authors as Ogunyemi in Mekgwe oppose to the term feminism claiming that it is distracting

from the colonial challenges that Africa faces nowadays, choosing to use the term Africana Womanism to designate a gender political movement inherently native to African soil. Other scholars, for example , Patricia Hill Collins claims that adding "Black" or "African" to feminism can be a way to redefine the label and to confront White and Western feminist epistemologies (WILLMANN, 2015, p. 8). Adichie has clearly chosen her side and so did I, which is to claim and to struggle for the right of being African/Black and feminist and to state that it does not make us 'less' engaged with our communities or traitors, as recent radical groups on social media have been claiming. This question will be further detailed as chapter progresses.

Being African and (twice) displaced, being a Nigerian woman and a globally recognized feminist icon, talking about several kinds of oppressions to multiple audiences on different media; all of this turns Adichie into a unique writer in contemporary literature. It also turns her into a sphinx riddle for those who believe in boxes and that do not understand how complex reality is. Scrutinizing an important part of this complexity of Chimamanda's work, Embleton analyzes her literary creation as part of a group of writers in Nigerian literature that express a conflicted identity that features a sense of 'unbelonging' (EMBLETON, 2017, p 83). According to the scholar, this is a common theme on Nigerian literary history. This sense of not belonging comes generally from characters that are shown as having a shattered human experience of two or more cultural and social environments, generating "(…) a hybrid sense of identity" (EMBLETON, 2017, p 83).

Embleton's discussion of Adichie's hybrid identity departs from Du Bois and his idea of double-consciousness, where the Black diasporic subject born on the diaspora lives as two selves in the same body (EMBLETON, 2017, p 82). According to Du Bois, this split self is divided between the African side and the American (non-African) one, which generates a irreconcilable conflict within Black people's lives. Embleton uses Du Bois' ideas to analyze some characters of Adichie's *Americanah.* I would like to use Du Bois double-consciousness to discuss Lelia González and Glória Anzaldua. As previously discussed on the introduction, Lelia González is a mixed race woman coming from Indigenous (Native Brazilian) and African origins, she created the idea of *amefricanity*. This is an anti-colonial epistemological proposal that shapes the history of the Americas from the African diaspora and Native Brazilian people struggles. Although González thought it in sociological terms, on this research I will expand it to the analysis of subjectivity and personal resistance, later on the

research we will deepen the study on González's proposal. As previously mentioned, Anzaldua is a *Chicana,* a mixed race theoretician coming from White and Indigenous (Native Mexican) backgrounds. She also proposed an anti-colonial epistemological approach known as the *mestiza* consciousness, in which she unites her ancestral contradictory roots to conceive a multiple way to see the world, a way that encompasses several epistemologies in itself.

Du Bois shares with González and Anzaldua the consciousness that within one body there are multiple selves. However, the way both women deal with that is different from his, Du Bois says that these split selves are 'unreconciled' (EMBLETON, 2017, p 82), whilst both women create new possibilities to reconcile these selves under their own and unique coined epistemologies. Both González and Anzaldua's ideas will be important for the development of the latter analysis of this research. It is under their *amefrican-mestiza* sights that I will scrutinize Ifemelu and Adichie's work, seeking out to discover new possibilities through their lens and connecting Ifemelu's story to Kehinde and Maya's. Through this connection, I accomplish Maria Lugones' (2003) methodological proposal of theorizing as a way to confront a multiple set of oppressions and a path to foster our coalition. Defying Western/White epistemologies that put research corpora as a passive thing to be analyzed; here I aim to share with you the idea that these women's works are active tools to change the world we live.

In conclusion, I must say that Nigeria should be seen as a complex and diverse territory with multiple peoples that were strongly changed by the colonial invasion by the British people. The idea of a homogeneous continent is a common narrative that spreads through the world about the African continent - despite its diversity. Discussing the historical diversity and literary expressions of its countries set a tone for a political project (realistic and critical) that would help to overcome the effects that colonial violence has generated and that remains until nowadays.

2.1. Kehinde's Brazil: An Amefrican History

Brazil is my homeland by birth attribution, but it is not the first place I relate when I think about "home". My city, Belém, in the state of Pará, at the heart of the Amazon forest, will always be the first place. Our process of annexation to Brazil was tough, marked by my maternal ancestors' revolts against the leash of imperialism. However, they were brutally

defeated, consequently Brazil became the place on my birth certificate assigned as ‘origin place’. Then, it is also somehow my home, even if it will always come second to the Amazon region, the source of my soul and identity. As a Brazilian writing about Black women and how we and our ancestors shaped and built this nation, I must talk about this country that often does not love me back. The act of writing about this bittersweet home will never be easy.

According to the study “Genetic Consequences of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Americas” (2020), the genome of the population in American continents (North, Central and South) is undenaibly African-related. But, contrary to the narrative of ‘racial democracy’ fostered by White Brazilian scholars as the chanonic Gilberto Freyre, this genetic contribution was made not through an ‘organic’ miscegenation of ‘three races’, but through slavery, rape, dehumanization and systemic racism, also backed by demographic projects that aimed to erase Black Brazilian people out of existence. The concept of racial democracy is created and sustained mainly by Gilberto Freyre on works such as *Interpretation of Brazil: Aspects of Brazilian society as a process of racial and cultural amalgamation* (2001). Freyre’s main idea is that slavery in Brazil was more subtle than in other countries and that the social and racial mixture and miscegenation coming from it served to undo the violence and oppressions coming from the enslavement of African peoples and the genocide of indigenous people.

Reframing the political narrative about my country's foundation and formation, I will analyze it from the previously introduced epistemological approach of Lélia González, who proposes Brazil as part of an 'Améfrica Ladina' (1985, p. 130). González was a Black female scholar and political activist whose proposition regarding our historical origins is an Afro-centric and anti-colonial one, therefore discursively changing the narrative of the colonial occupation of the American continent. It was not a civilizational process, it was done through looting and raping. Also, according to her Brazilian history - regarding its social and cultural constitution - has been the history of resistance and of the struggle of the oppressed social groups. In this transmuted Brazilian history from González's perspective, she creates the political and cultural category called amefricanity and it arises as a mean to change the focus under which we investigate and navigate Brazilian history, and it “(...) incorporates a whole historical process of intense cultural dynamics (...)” that refer to the diverse social and cultural strategies of these oppressed groups. Amefricanity expresses a political unity forged within this soil, starting from the connection of the different needs of these oppressed non-white social groups.

González also defines Brazil as a country that has not yet fully constituted itself as a nation. In fact, the author postulates that an actual racial democracy will only be possible when blacks, whites, indigenous people, Asians and all other ethnic and social groups in this country come together as a political unit to discuss and combat racial discrimination and prejudice originated from the wounds of slavery, all this rooted in a libertarian, anti-racist and anti-colonial political practice (GONZÁLEZ, 1985, p. 255). Pointing out how the idea of racial democracy was never a part of any national Brazilian project during the colonization period, the author quotes José Bonifácio, considered the Brazilian "Patriarch of Independence" (GONZÁLEZ, 1985, p. 255). Bonifácio was politically opposed to the slave trade, however, he based his ideal of nation on the imagery of a place of homogeneity. Heterogeneity would be bad and it was synonymous with black people on Bonifácio's mind. So, according to him, it should be removed. I would add that not only the black presence, but also the indigenous, mixed race, Asian, and any presence that would diverge from the European white heritage desired as ideal by the colonizers and orchestrator of our first governmental demographic projects.

González did not limit herself to produce academically about Brazilian racial formation, but rather she provided us her own structural approach about the formation of Brazilian society as a sub-developed country on the periphery of capitalism, profoundly marked - and yet currently influenced - by the material and cultural consequences of imperialism and colonialism. González had a profound comprehension of economic processes and how they are tied to the racial question in Brazil. According to her historically, due to the results of the process of abolition of slavery, black Brazilians have become the reserved and low-cost labor group in which the structure of capitalism in Brazil relies on to keep its dominance (GONZÁLEZ, 1980, p. 98). Racism is a central structural part of Brazil's capitalism, providing to it a set of material practices and cultural ideology to keep Black people in the country in the margins (GONZÁLEZ, 1980, p. 98). She also argues against the idea of Brazil as a 'racial democracy'.

González's Amefricanity emerges, then, as a rather a politically articulated category to reframe the history of several peoples oppressed by the colonizer in Brazil, rewriting the history of the formation of this country as a history of struggle and subversion instead of harmony and peaceful coexistence in which the traumas of slavery, the genocide of the native peoples, the subordination of the mestizo population and patriarchy were overcome through

miscegenation that formed an alleged 'racial democracy'. The discussion about Amefricanity will be further explored in the next chapter.

Another important perspective to discuss the history of Brazil is Abdias do Nascimento's *Brazil: Mixture or Massacre - the Genocide of a Black People* (2011). This work was written as an essay for Nascimento's participation in an international symposium in Nigeria, but it was turned down due to censorship from both Nigerian and Brazilian authorities. This text is an important one due Nascimento's presentation of a counter-narrative of Brazilian's "racial democracy", where the author investigates in details Gilberto Freyre's narratives about the Portuguese colonizers as a 'gentle' settler that willingly mixed themselves with the receptive and passive Native Brazilian populations and with the equally benevolent and docile African peoples extracted from their original land (NASCIMENTO, 2011, p. 39). Instead, Abdias do Nascimento shows to us a country built on the rape, dehumanization and humiliation of African women, with the massacre of indigenous Brazilian population and the persecution of African men.

Regarding the supposedly culturally mixed aspect of the Brazilian society, Nascimento defines it as being the result of constant resistance from the African peoples, always being criminalized and pursued by the Catholic Church and the white Portuguese society. These African peoples mentioned by Nascimento are some of the following:

> A.Sudanese cultures: represented primarily by the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, the geges from Dahome (Benin), the Fanti and Ashanti from African's Gold Coast (Ghana) and some other groups less relevant to the Brazilian context;
>
> B. Guinean-Sudanese cultures, Islamized, mainly originating from the Peuhl [fulas], Mandingas, and Hausas of Northern Nigeria;
>
> C. Banto cultures, represented by the Angola-Congo ethnic group and by those from the East Africa.(NASCIMENTO, 2011, p. 102)

Nascimento (2011, p. 102) states that not all of these ethnic groups were capable of maintaining their tradition due to the dehumanizing conditions in which they lived in Brazil. He highlights to the fact that most of these groups' native languages did not resist outside religious contexts, being replaced by the hegemonic language. Thus, Nascimento states that the influence of African culture in Brazil was not a peaceful consequence of a harmonic society, but instead the result of a constant fight and adaptation strategies from oppressed social groups against the colonizer. Nascimento also demystifies the idea of the Portuguese colonizer as a benevolent settler; which was sustained by Portugal through the propaganda of the Portuguese colonialism slavery as being "humanized" and "positive" to African peoples, the mixed-race offspring in diaspora and indigenous Brazilian populations (NASCIMENTO, 2011, p. 47). Like the aforementioned scholar Lelia González, Nascimento also explores the material and economic fruits of slavery and colonialism in Brazil:

> The role of the Black slave was decisive for the beginning of the economic history of a country founded, as was the case in Brazil, under the sign of parasitistic imperialism. Without the slave, the country's economic structure would never have existed. The enslaved African peoples built the foundations of the new society with flexion and the breaking of their backbone, while at the same time their work meant the very backbone of that colony. They planted, fed and harvested the material wealth of the country for the exclusive enjoyment of the white aristocracy. They did it in sugar cane and coffee plantations and in mining, and in the cities, the African person was the hands and feet of the ruling classes that would not allow themselves to self-degrade into vile occupations like those of manual labor. The noble occupation of the ruling classes - landowners,

> traders, Catholic priests - consisted in the exercise of indolence, the cultivation of ignorance, prejudice, and the practice of the most licentious lust.(NASCIMENTO, 2011, p. 46)

Nascimento depicts a country that was literally built on the backbones of enslaved African peoples and their continuous dehumanization and killing. A country that was materially built on the sacrifice of non-white and racialized bodies and whose infrastructure would not exist without these sacrifices. A country whose processes of racial mixing was through rape, sexual exploration of racialized women and the inheritance of the patriarchal and oppressive familiar structure coming from the Portuguese colonizer (NASCIMENTO, 2011, P. 60). This fostered subalternization of women in general - especially of the non white ones -, as well as the oppressions to sexual diversity and shaped the censorship and oppressions to sexual expressions that were considered 'deviant'. With this process of exploring Black peoples there was also the extremely brutal genocide of the native population that was here when the Portuguese colonizer invaded. Therefore, I can not let the indigenous (Native Brazilians) voices outside this narrative, since it was their blood and labor work that gave birth to this nation:

> How the originary peoples of Brazil dealt with colonization, which wanted to end our world? What strategies did these people use to overcome this nightmare and reach the 21st century still kicking, claiming and making noise on the chorus of Western happiness? I saw the different maneuvers that our ancestors did and I nourished them, the creativity and poetry that inspired the resistance of these peoples. The civilization called those people barbarians and waged an endless war against them, with the objective of transforming them into civilized people who could join the club of humanity. Many of these

> people are not individuals, but “community people”,cells that can transmit their views of the world over time.
>
> Sometimes, anthropologists limit the understanding of this experience, which is not only cultural. (...). How many realized that these strategies were only meant to postpone the end of the world? I didn't make this up, but I feed on the continued resistance of these peoples, who keep the deep memory of the land, what Eduardo Galeano called the *Memory of fire*. In his book and in *The Open Veins of Latin America*, he shows how the peoples of the Caribbean, Central America, Guatemala, the Andes and the rest of South America were convinced of the mistake that was civilization. They did not surrender because the proposed program was an error: “We don't want this jerkiness”. And the colonizers said: “No, you have to accept this jerkiness. And you have to accept the Bible, the cross, the school, the university, the road, the railway, the mining, the beating ”. To which the peoples responded: “What is it? What weird program! Is there any other?”.(KRENAK, 2020, p. 12)[7]

The excerpt above comes from Ailton Krenak’s essay *Ideas to Postpone the ending of the World* (2020). This text is a transcription of Krenak’s talk in an international academic event. He discusses possible ways to rethink ‘civilization’ as a process of standardizing human diversity, in which white Europeans believed they could spread around the world imposing their own way of living and exploring other human societies in benefit of their own.

[7] Translated by the author of this research

He talks about the process of colonization in Brazil as a process of 'ending of the world' for the originary social groups that lived here. He addresses the civilizational project imposed by the colonizer as a violent war against the oppressed people. Originary indigenous peoples in Brazil were also subjected to compulsory labor, rape and sexual exploration, genocide and aculturation. Just like Nascimento and González, Krenak emphasizes how culture and community-based resistance were key to the survival against the colonizer's violence and how it allowed indigenous Brazilians to survive until nowadays against the violent project that is Western 'civilization'.

Since we have made a brief overview of Brazilian history and colonization departing from a critical perspective of non-white Brazilian authors, it is important to address the chosen work that I will analyze as a mean to explore further questions of social and historical relevance to Brazilian society, such as the different dimensions of Brazilian slavery, the role of African women in national history, the intercontinental connection between Brazil and Africa and other questions previously addressed on the introductory chapter. The book selected was *Um defeito de cor* by Ana Maria Gonçalves, who is a Black Brazilian author from Minas Gerais who currently lives in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. The book is a metafictional historical narrative that mixes historical reality and fiction, telling the life of Kehinde - later Luísa - who was born in Dahome (Benin) and bought as a slave to Brazil, arriving in Bahia.

It is also important to also acknowledge the history and legacy of literary production made by Black Brazilians, that laid the path to Gonçalves and her work to be socially acclaimed (*Um defeito de cor* won the 2006 *Casa de Las Americas* award in the category of best novel of the year). The question of Brazilian literary production by Black people starts with a question of name. Some people refer to it as "Afro-Brazilian Literature", other as "Black Brazilian Literature" and there is also the expression "African Brazilian literature", as well as the expression "Brazilian Literature made by African descents" (used by Assis Duarte, an important scholar of the field in Brazil, on a 2002 essay). All those terms have their own meaning and even political contexts inherent to them. The first one means to acknowledge African roots and the 'Brazilianess' of these authors, the second one states a double condition which is within a national identity, the expression "African Brazilian" highlights emphatically the African condition of the authors, stating that their identity is a African one and the last one brings the 'Brazilianness' first. For this research, I will switch amongst the three expressions, choosing to use them as synonymous in this text. Also I am here agreeing with the idea that

Afro-Brazilian literature is the one produced containing characters, themes, meanings, language and memory of the Afro-Brazilian people, as well as socially committed to this community's struggle on Brazil, and created by the diasporic Afro-Brazilian authors (SOUSA, 2019, p. 107).

According to Cuti (2010, p 16) the period after the first four centuries of the colonizer's arrival was marked by a cultural subalternization to Portugal, including on the literary field, and the cultural expressions within the colony were controlled mainly by whites. The Republic was the moment when Brazilian elites discovered their desire for separation and they decided to be independent from the Portuguese administration. Literature followed this movement of independence, being a place to search for a national identity that could be considered authentically Brazilian. This moment was known as Brazilian Romanticism, during the 19th century. Cuti highlights that the role of African descent people in Brazilian literature was one of subalternization and degradation:

> Until then, in this context, the descendants of enslaved people are used as a literary theme predominantly from the perspective of prejudice and commiseration. Slavery had objectified Africans and their descendants. Literature, as a reflection and reinforcement of both social and power relations, will act in the same direction when characterizing black characters, denying their complexity and, therefore, humanity.(CUTI, 2010, p. 16)

The author explains that this first century of Brazil as an independent nation was marked by a total absence of a social project to integrate Black Brazilians in the national society. He explains that mainstream and critically acclaimed national Literature reproduced these ideas and it was used as a political space to legitimate the national project of - using Abdias do Nascimento - Black Brazilian genocide. Literature was a way to ratify the eugenic project and future that the Brazilian elite had for the country. Despite that, Black Brazilians

produced cornerstone works in the literary field regarding the nation's political situation and regarding the violent process of diaspora that Afro-descent Brazilian population suffered.

According to Almeida Pereira (2010), the first Black Brazilian to 'infiltrate' on the literary pantheon of the 'Portuguese colony' was Domingos Caldas Barbosa, a mixed race Black man that produced back on the 18th century, participating on the movement known as Arcadism, a literary movement which rescued aspects of Classical Ancient Greek poetry (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 2). Barbosa changed Arcadist poetry by introducing words from the popular Portuguese on his written pieces, and a significant part of this vocabulary was rooted on African languages (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 2). Other cornerstone author for Brazilian Literature was a Black man named Machado de Assis, an widely and internationally acknowledged Afro-Brazilian person who was so successful that his death certificate changed his race. Assis was posthumously declared a white person (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 2). During the Republic, when the country was already politically independent, Luíz Gonzaga emerged as a significant political voice on the abolitionist movement and in poetry (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 2). Gonzaga was a mixed race man with a Portuguese father and African mother that was sold out at the age of ten, but later got his freedom and became a lawyer and an activist anti-slavery and had a poetical production in which he changed the representation of Black woman, transforming the mixed-race Black woman on his own reference of beauty (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 2).

When it comes to the Black Brazilian women in national literature, they are often discussed under the idea of representation on the production of both Black and White men, but this would not be a research done under the principles of Black feminist if I adopted this same approach. Many scholars tend to focus on the production of Black Brazilian women in contemporary Literature (during the 20th and 21th centuries in Brazil), but women of African descent have been producing written literature before the XIXth century. The first official written register produced by a Afro-Brazilian woman was Esperança Garcia's - an enslaved woman - letter to the administration of the Piauí state, denouncing the brutality of the insttitution of slavery (SOUSA, 2017, p 107). Other important voice on the construction of a literary cultural expression by Black Brazilian woman was the Maranhão-born Black woman called Maria Firmina dos Reis, whose literary work and life were dedicated to the fight against slavery, racism and sexism.

> Maria Firmina dos Reis was born in 1822, in the city of São Luís, capital of the province of Maranhão. Born Black under the sign of bastardy, Maria Firmina claimed that she owed her literacy and cultural knowledge to her cousin from mother 's side, the writer Sotero dos Reis. In 1830, she moved with his family to the village of Guimarães, municipality of Viamão, city where she lived until his death. When she was 22 years old, in 1847, Maria Firmina competed in the State Contest for the Instruction Primary Chair in the village of Guimarães[8], being approved in the first place. Already exercising the teaching profession, Maria Firmina published Úrsula, her first novel, in 1859. From that date, and until the end of her life, the author collaborated with several newspapers in the region, such as *A Imprensa, Publicador Maranhense, O Jardim dos Maranhenses, A Verdadeira Marmota, Porto Livre, Semanário Maranhense, Almanaque das Memórias Brasileiras, O Domingo, O País*, etc. It was in these periodicals, literary or not, that Maria Firmina published most of her poems and tales, of which the best known is "*A Escrava",* published in 1887 (SILVA, 2009).(KRACHENSKI, 2018, p. 52)

Besides being an anti-slavery activist and teacher, Firmina also created the first Brazilian school in which children of both sexes studied together (KRACHENSKI, 2018, p. 53). Also, *Ursula* was the first novel written by a Black Brazilian woman. The novel itself was a typical romantic narrative, whose main characters were white, but bought important

[8] It was a contest to be able to teach as public teacher

secondary characters and had deep criticism to the institution of slavery (KRACHENSKI, 2018, p. 9).Firmina's life and career are examples of the 'new womanhood' proposed by Angela Davis (1985, p. 9) - previously mentioned on the past chapter and soon to be further explored on the analysis of the literary corpora. It means that Black women's lives are constantly built on the struggling for their community. Firmina's life is the perpetration of a "(…) legacy of hard work, perseverance and self-reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and insistence on sexual equality – in short, a legacy spelling out standards for a new womanhood." (DAVIS, 1985, p. 9).

Esperança Garcia and Firmina dos Reis can be considered foremothers of the production by Black Brazilian women in national literature, opening up a path where we entered to speak up about ourselves and our communities, the struggles we lived - and still live - and to disrupt the stereotypical narrative that White Brazilian writers created about Afro-Brazillian people. Both Garcia and Firmina's posture on their written production corroborate with Davis' ideas of this new womanhood. Sousa (2019, p. 108) on a 2019 article about Black Brazilian women and their literary production also agrees with that; stating that Literature produced by these women were always used as a political space to denounce and a powerful weapon against slavery and racism (SOUSA, 2019, p. 113).

Through the centuries, Black Brazilian men and women kept using literature to state the importance of the African communities on the construction of this country, fighting against the eugenic mentality of Brazilian society. Black Brazilian women also presented other representations of Black women, fighting the hegemonic narrative that presented Black women as overly sexual, exotic, demoniac and savage (SOUSA, 2019, p. 115).

Throughout literary history, some important initiatives were fundamental to stimulate Black Brazilian Literature to flourish, helping Afro-Brazilians in building their own spaces of expressions where our voices were fully appreciated and could also be spread inside our own community. One of them was the creation of *Cadernos Negros* ("Black Notebooks"); a literary collection periodically published at national level, with writings of Black Brazilian people. It was created in 1978 by the Quilombo Movement of São Paulo (SOUZA, LIMA, 2006, p. 15). This initiative helped to shape and to change the literary landscape, providing a space where Black Brazilian voices could be fully acknowledged. The "Black Notebooks" was also very meaningful for Black Brazilian women. One of the most remarkable voices of contemporary Brazilian literature emerged through this initiative. Maria Conceição Evaristo

de Brito is a Black Brazilian woman born in Belo Horizonte, in the state of Minas Gerais. She started publishing in the Black Notebooks in the 1990s. Following the example of Firmina dos Reis, Evaristo is engaged with the struggle for Afro-Brazilian rights and against racism, sexism, classism and social injustice in multiple ways. She is a doctor by the Universidade Federal Fluminense and she engages in activities in academic environment as well as actively takes part on the struggle of social movements, and constantly participates as an international speaker on events on countries such as United States and Austria (PALMEIRA, 2009, p. 124-125). When declaring her thoughts about Black Brazilian women and the act of writing, Evaristo states:

> In the case of [writing as] an act undertaken by Black women, who historically transit in different cultural spaces dominated by the culture of elites, writing acquires a sense of insubordination. Insubordination that can often show in a writing that violates the "Standard Norms" of the language, as it shows in Carolina Maria de Jesus, as well as the content of the written material.(EVARISTO, 2007, in ALEXANDRE, 2007, p. 16, 21).[9]

Stating that writing is an act of insubordination reinforces the political role of written production made by Black Brazilian women. Evaristo coined the word "*escrevivência*" to express the production by Black women in Brazil, being a neologism from the words "*escrever*" (to write) and "*vivência*" (to experience), meaning that Black Brazilian literary production is a place where the writing articulates the experiences of Afro-Brazilian community (including our daily challenge and struggles) in Brazil. The author also refers to another important voice in our national literary legacy, Carolina Maria de Jesus. De Jesús was another Minas Gerais-born Black woman who became widely known in Brazil during the 1960s, when her book *Quarto de Despejo* ("Dump Room") was nationally published

[9] Translated by the author of this thesis

(MACHADO, 2006, p. 105). Carolina de Jesus lived in extremely poor social conditions, she never had access to complete formal education, meaning that her knowledge over the grammatical rules of Portuguese language was limited and her mistakes are not hidden or manipulated on her literary expression (MACHADO, 2006, p. 105). That is what Evaristo refers to as an insubordinate act, since her book was translated in 14 different languages and de Jesus' written production is a brilliant one, that she cultivated for more than fifteen years (MACHADO, 2006, p. 105). Carolina de Jesus' productions show the reality of racism, poverty and hunger that plagued our country during the XXth century in the Brazilian dictatorship. Her written legacy is permeated by what Conceição Evaristo baptized as "escrevivência".

This overview of literary production made by Black Brazilian people and Black Brazilian women specifically helps us to have a better understanding regarding Ana Maria Gonçalves' historical predecessors, influences and work. Gonçalves is also a Minas Gerais-born woman who currently lives in Bahia, she started producing in 2002, year of publication of her first book. Her literary stardom came in 2006, when she published the book selected for this research *Um defeito de cor*, a bio fictional historical novel narrating the lifetime of a enslaved African woman called Kehinde and her brutal crossing from Dahome to Brazil, as well as her return to Africa as an adult. Kehinde's life is one of movement and displacement where she acknowledges the formation of Brazilian society, also participating in important political movements and constantly resisting the brutality of slavery and racism, permeated by movement and displacement in a intercontinental level. Kehinde's identity is also profoundly affected by displacement, something that will be more carefully addressed in the next parts of this research.

Kehinde's journey also is one expression of insubordination and self-discovery, which was somehow also Gonçalves' life journey. Unlike Adichie who openly embraces Nigerian historical roots and identities as a writer and on her work, through the character of Ifemelu, Gonçalves' path led her to discover her own blackness and politically relocate her identity. It can be a confusing concept for international readers, even an absurd idea: not knowing you are Black, when racism is a global phenomenon within most of late capitalist (and some non-capitalist) societies. But as it was previously explained through Abdias do Nascimento's analysis, Brazil was founded on the fallacious concept of 'racial democracy', which places the European heritage as the positive and the dominant one as well as the trial to erase ethnic identities (including also Indigenous Brazilian peoples' identities and Asians ones as well) to

create a ‘Brazilianness’ that is ‘above race’. This difficult and particular context influences mixed-race people to see themselves closer to whiteness. Gonçalves is a light-skinned Black woman and that explains why writing *Um defeito de cor* was also her own self-discovery journey.

> That was when I realized that this search [Kehinde’s] was a search for my own identity. I didn't consider myself Black, I had never thought about this question of identity before. I come from a poor family, my mother was a seamstress, my father started his life as an assistant bricklayer, (...); I remember that when I was in school, my father was finishing high school, he returned to study later. My family is a very mixed-race family, and this issue [of identity] had never ocurred to us, especially, because when belonging to a certain social and cultural class,it whitens us. So, I think I was not treated as Black, therefore I did not see myself as Black, I understood my identity as mixed-race.(GONÇALVES, 2017, in OLIVEIRA, HÜLSENDEGER, MOREIRA, 2018)

Gonçalves’ words exemplify how the idea of racial democracy affects mixed-race families in Brazil and how it separates us from getting in touch with our historical past. I must add to Nascimento’s analysis that racial democracy ideology has also an important role within Brazilian capitalism, in the sense that it avoids a real discussion about the connection between class and race. Also, Brazilian elites mostly descend genealogically from the Portuguese colonizers and by painting a positive image of the colonizers, Freyre - and the other sociologists that shared this ideology - also shielded the national white elite. Discussing race in Brazil leads directly to discussion of social questions such as class, wealth distribution and educational access amongst Brazilians. Racial democracy is synonym with class democracy -

when you think how Freyre & co positionate the miscegenation process as a way of 'surpassing' slavery and the massacre of the originary indigenous people in our territory, it means that all other questions related to these erased violences were too solved. This is clearly shown in how Freyre celebrates the Portuguese colonizer's performance on the invaded territory through the word '*lusotropicalismo*' (lusotropicalism), that Nascimento defines as Freyre's narrative to justify the Portuguese history and violence in Brazil. It was Freyre's national version of Manifest Destiny (an European doctrine which stated that white Europeans were 'inevitably fated' to 'save' the 'rest' of the world by bringing them 'civilization').

This brief-yet-complex overview of Brazilian history, social formation and the literature produced by Black Brazilians (and specifically Black Brazilian women) serves as a theoretical and historical background to analyze *Um defeito de cor* ("A Trouble of Color"). Brazilian history is different from the Nigerian one previously presented because Brazilians are plagued by living in a society which created a whole social, theoretical, political and material apparatus to try to make them forget how the country was formed. The national Afro-diasporic communities are even more painfully crossed by this trial of erasure and silencing, facing a daily life of violence and genocide. Nigerians were also brutally changed by slavery and colonization, but being within their own territory allowed them to keep a connection to the past. This is true even when they are not home, living their own 'particular diasporas', as it happens to Ifemelu as an immigrant in the United States in *Americanah*.

This capacity of carrying home inside oneself is something that both Kehinde and Ifemelu do and that will be central to this research in the following chapters. Yet, their own journeys are marked by displacement and the inevitable internal shifting that comes with it. Similarly, both Brazil and Nigeria have - in different and particular proportions - to face the consequences of movements from historical changes related to racial formation, social justice and climatic problems on their societies in order to become nations that can provide the full rights to their citizens. This is what Lelia González baptizes as 'becoming a nation'. Likewise, Kehinde and Ifemelu face challenges, displacements and hardships while becoming politically aware Black women, using their own identities and subjectivities to articulate themselves socially. When they do, they create a different future, resisting the oppressions imposed by society. We could call this the creation and exercise of the 'new womanhood' (DAVIS, 1985, p. 6). Not only do they have to rearticulate in the face of displacement, However, they adapt their entire social context, personal connections and political situations to themselves and their own agency, searching for a home, transforming this search for belonging into a political

event-movement. Bearing these perspectives in mind, the next session will deal with another woman who also embarked on this search for herself and the creation of her own home: Maya Angelou on her biographic narrative *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1968), just as we will talk about the bittersweet country in which she was born, United States of America.

2.2. A Country that Does Not Love Black People Back: African American Political and Literary Resistance in the United States

Similar to Brazil, the U.S. history and the country's creation was marked by colonization and European violence. The United States' national identity is profoundly tied to the English settlement in North America. It was marked by the genocide of Native American populations, the implementation of slavery of African peoples as well as a violent segregation and restrictions against Asian immigrants.

The United States' equivalent of the racial democracy ideology is the Anglo-Saxon myth (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 26). This mythical narrative was brought from Europe and became a pillar part of the process of colonization when the English colonizers arrived in North America, bringing their Puritanism. It was a religious expression from Christianism that helped to 'set the tone' of their journey in what they called 'New World'. This 'Anglo-Saxon myth' (also referred as 'Manifest Destiny') is a fictional narrative of a common past of glory for whites which justify their 'right' to interfere in the rest of the world (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 4). The scholar (1981, p. 4) refers to this as a fictional and intentional political creation because scientific studies have proved that Caucasian peoples are composed by several groups with a diverse range of ethnic origins. This, thus, obliterates the possibility of a 'shared past' for white people.

This myth can be traced to the collected stories registered from many different German peoples, which later settled in England. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote that the social groups of German peoples inhabited prosperous and peaceful communities, and this prosperity was based on the prohibition of mixing races and the love for the individual's rights. This view was later used on political moments of England's history, for example when historians, under the control of Henry VIII, used Tacitus' ideas to legitimize his rupture with

the Catholic Church (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 12). It emerged again as a political discourse during the enterprise of British colonizations. It was weaponized as an indisputable argument for British ‘superior purity’ in relation to 'dominated' peoples, justifying, therefore the rights to conquer and to ravish them:

> (…) To Englishmen blacks were heathen, savage, and "beastly." Blacks were not simply regarded as debased because they were slaves: they were also enslaved because of what was regarded as their different and debased nature. There is considerable evidence that by the end of the colonial era the Enlightenment view of innate human equality was being challenged on a practical level in the American colonies. Whites, by the very laws they passed and the attitudes they assumed, placed blacks on a different human level.(...) While the presence of large numbers of blacks made Americans particularly receptive to arguments defending innate differences between races, the American Indian was of more direct relevance for the development of an ideology of American expansion. If the Americans were a providential people destined to regenerate the other peoples of the world, then the American Indians became the first test. They occupied the land which Jefferson intended to transform into an empire for liberty.(HORSMAN, 1981, p. 113-116)

The Anglo-Saxon myth constitutes a political, ideological and material force used to create a hegemonic public identity that was a cornerstone to impose and to naturalize violence against oppressed social groups during the colonial period. This myth was reinforced and

intertwined to Puritan religion, which result in the idea that the U.S. was a 'chosen land' meant, like the homeland of the colonizers, to become a new imperial global force with the 'mission' of conquering the world (HORSMAN, 1981, p. 85). But this was often challenged by the political articulation of Black people and Native Americans.

This relation has always been a violent clash between oppressed and hegemonic social groups. The hegemonic identity in the U.S. as a nation belongs to white and Puritan settlers - and their offspring. The oppressed social groups were, at first, Native and African American peoples, that historically carry a legacy of fighting against social marginalization and segregation imposed by the colonizers, and later also receiving social groups as Latin American and Asian immigrants, which were and are - with Natie Americans and Blacks - socially marginalized, oppressed and erased in the U.S. history. It is important to highlight that, unlike Brazil - where miscegenation was ideologically placed in a positive way to be seen as a 'cure' to all the processes of colonial violence -, the mixing of races did not become a common social trait for most part of the U.S. history, something that has been changing on the late decades in the country.

Regarding the history of Black community in the United States, it also has a very different configuration when compared to Brazil, since they are a demographic minority (due to processes of genocide and oppressions related to the institution of slavery). But regardless of numbers related to demographic formation, the history of Black people in the U.S. is - like it is in Brazil and in post-invaded Nigeria - a history of resistance and political struggle. Despite the difficulties to trace the origins of U.S. enslaved peoples, it is believed that most slaves that arrived on the country came from Senegal, Gambia, Guine-Bissau and West Central Africa (Angola, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon), also, there were several slaves from Ghana and the Ivory Coast, also from Nigeria and Cameroon[10]. This shows a wide diversity of ethnic African groups; Senegal has the Halpulaarens, Sérères, Diolas, Manjaques, the Mancagnes, the Bandials, the Karones and the Balantes and the Mandingue[11]s, having nine native ethnic groups (subdivided into specific ethnic groups). It states a multiplicity of possible ethnic origins for U.S.-born Afro-diasporic people. These enslaved people were, like in Brazil, a core part for the construction of the nation.

[10] Source: https://www.history.com/news/what-part-of-africa-did-most-slaves-come-from

[11] Source: https://www.bouelmogdad.com/ethnic-groups-and-religions/?lang=en/

According to Cedric Robison on his book *Black Movements in America* (1997), the necessity of economic success to foster political autonomy - focusing on overcoming the Britanic domination - allowed the institution of slavery to spread across the British colony (1997, p.3). African people and their descent were found in the colony as slaves, servants or free men (ROBINSON, 1997, p. 2). He states that "Resistance among the slave[s] (...) assumed various appearances: appeals to the courts, physical violence, flight, and rebelliousness." (ROBINSON, 1997, p. 8). This was a reaction to the state laws on the colony - and after, in the new-born independent country - against slaves and their rights. Robison states that the British colonizers used "the rule of law" (later the Juridic U.S. system) to curtail the access of African Americans to basic human rights and opportunities. The birth of the U.S. as an independent nation was marked by a conflict amongst the Black community: Fighting for a possibly tyrannic nation or trying to believe that they would get access to freedom when the new country was born? (ROBINSON, 1997, p. 20). The result was split; nearly 5000 Black subjects engaged in the fight for national liberation, but others - named Black Loyalists - sided with the British army, just like some Native American nations did (ROBINSON, 1997, p. 20). This unexpected alliance was not out of love for the British administration, but because these groups envisioned the new nation as a politically imperial force and tyrannic society (ROBINSON, 1997, p. 20).

The United States became an independent nation in July, 4, 1776. In 1861, Black people kept resisting against slavery, since their condition was not changed with the creation of the nation. Robinson (1997, p. 29) states that the repression against Blacks was the cause of the "young republic's deepest moral crisis". As a result, the U.S. started their civil war in 1861. On one side, there were the - generally - more industrial states that stood as favorable to the abolition of slavery (the ones in the North, known as the Union states) and on the other side there was the states that openly opposed to the abbolition of slavery (the ones in the South known as the Confederate states, whose economy was mostly based on cotton plantations and depended directly of slave working force).

This social tension resulted in political insubordination of Blacks. They defied the white supremacist "rule of the law". They kept building independent paths to escape slavery, such as building strong connections among themselves:

> Tubman, (...), was the truly larger-than-life figure, born in 1820 or 1821 in Maryland. Small of stature, Tubman was yet a massive presence in the Black liberation struggle. Her own escape from slavery had been exhilarating: “I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person now I was free. There was such a glory over everything, the sun comes like gold through the trees." Before the Civil War, Tubman conducted nineteen "trains" out of the South, freeing some 300 slaves (ROBINSON, 1997, p. 30)

Robinson (1997, p. 30) highlights Tubman and the political resistance of Black women within the fight against slavery, something that is an omnipresent fact since the U.S. colonial period. Angela Davis (1985) also defines Tubman as “(...) an exceptional individual” (1985, p. 27). Tubman helped hundreds of people to escape their captivity and her bravery, strength and determination resonate the behavior of most Black women in the enslaved condition, not as a passive and docile subjects, but active social members of their communities, profoundly engaged on finding a way out of the inhuman condition that Blacks had been submitted ever since the colonial period in the country - which, I must add, repeated itself in others contexts like the Brazilian colonial history as well.

Davis (1985, p. 34) dives into Tubman’s exceptionality to frame a portrait of Black women in U.S. early history and their individual agency as well as their social commitment to their fight for freedom:

> Whatever the standards used to judge her—Black or white, male or female—Harriet Tubman was indeed an exceptional individual. But from another vantage point, what she did was simply to express in her own way the spirit of strength and perseverance which so many other women of her

> race had acquired. This bears repeating: Black women were equal to their men in the oppressions they suffered; they were their men's social equals within the slave community; and they resisted slavery with a passion equal to their men's. This was one of the greatest ironies of the slave system, for in subjecting women to the most ruthless exploitation conceivable, exploitation which knew no sex distinctions, the groundwork was created not only for Black women to assert their equality through their social relations, but also to express it through their acts of resistance. This must have been a terrifying revelation for the slave owners, for it seems that they were trying to break this chain of equality through the especially brutal repression they reserved for the women.(DAVIS, 1985, p. 34)

In the extract above, Davis (1985, p. 26) also mentions the important historical fact about Harriet Tubman: She is the only woman in U.S. history to have led tropes into the battlefield, during the Civil War, while also sustaining a ferocious opposition against slavery. Davis highlights Black women's political activism from Tubman's example and shows how both Black men and women were equals on the oppressions they faced. They were equal matches in the struggle against the oppressions they faced. The scholar also mentions that this fierce and indomitable political role by Black women scared the elite and slave masters, since Black women had to bear the burden of the forced labor and dehumanizing conditions that their male peers faced as well. But as women they also faced sexual violence and all other kind of gender and sex-related abuse as rape, sexual exploration, objetification, bearing the bastard children of their captors - as a result of assault and violence. They also witnessed the restless and brutal attack on their offspring. Bearing these multiple violence during different historical times and national contexts all over the world, Black women still resisted and flourished.

This resistance was carried on also in the cultural expressions, which is the focus of this research, specifically in the literary expressions by African American women throughout U.S. history. Like it was done to understand Chimamanda Adichie and Ana Maria Gonçalves' historical influences and previous formation, I will further explore the literary legacy of Black women in the context of the United States and how it influenced Maya Angelou and her work selected for this research, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*. The work is a novelized reconstruction of Angelou's years in several different African countries, when she decided to return looking for a place where she could belong.

This search for belonging and a desperate trial of keeping the connection to their homeland - as Angelou did - was the first driving force that set African American women toward producing literature and other artistic expressions. Foster and Davis (2009, p. 15) define early Black women's literary production in the British colony as a "difficult miracle". According to them, this impulse toward telling stories, singing lullabies and creating poetry came ever since the violent passage those African peoples faced. Both scholars also argue against the common sense discourse that African American cultural expressions before the Civil War were solely oral. According to them although the conditions were dehumanizing to these women, they were able to create powerful expressions, a true miracle in the midst of chaos. The scholars contend that "Before the United States came into being, African American women were publishing literature in a variety of genres (...)" (FOSTER, DAVIS, 2009, p. 15). This asserts that the literary production by African American women is also an important historical register of memory of the creation of the United States as a nation. This is ratified by the fact that the first written register by an African American woman known in history is a ballad named "Bars Fight", dating back to 1746. The work narrates a fight between the colonizer and Native Americans. Foster and Davis (2009, p. 15-16) also relate this act of narrating history as connected to a social figure present in several African societies, the griot, who has a guardian mission of keeping a society's memories alive through storytelling, similar also to the previously mentioned Nigerian Big Mother, which is an ancient female storyteller present in several places in the country.(EMBLETON, 2019, p. 16).

An important name for Black women's legacy in the U.S. literature was Phillis Wheatley, who was able to study English and Latin, literature, history and theology (FOSTER, DAVIS, 2019, p. 16). Wheatley was a 8 years old child when she was kidnapped from her homeland in West Africa and enslaved in the U.S., but despite the unfortunate conditions, she published her first poem at the age of twelve, in a completely foreign language

she just learned. Her writing was skilled and she dominated several classical models of Ancient Greek poetry, getting to be published by several newspapers across the colonies and later publishing her own book, in 1773, *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* (FOSTER, DAVIS, 2009, p. 16). Like Firmina dos Reis in Brazil, Weathley was a Black woman pioneering on literature. Her contribution and legacy are of an enormous importance, since she brought African American literary production to the public society in the colony, starting a tradition of publishing Black women even in a racist society (FOSTER, DAVIS, 2009, p. 16).

Another important name to African American women literary legacy is Sojourner Truth. As Foster and Davis (2009, p. 17) remembers us, Truth was an illiterate enslaved woman, but her oratory and political articulation made her nationally famous, she got published with the help of an white editor in 1850 with her autobiographical book *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. Moody (2009, p. 119) contends that the publishing of Truth's narrative publicly changed the debate about the institution of slavery, bringing for the first time in the country a nationally acknowledged Black woman's perpective on the subject. Just like Conceição Evaristo stated about Black women's literature in Brazil, we also see the political engagement of women like Phillis Wheatley (who wrote several poems about the experience of being African and enslaved in the U.S.) and Sojourner Truth engaging on producing a politically aware literary work.

Truth also contributed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, like Firmina dos Reis did in Brazil. Her 1851 speech *Ain't I a Woman?* was a central piece on the struggle for the female's right to vote (FOSTER, DAVIS, 2009, p. 17). Both women have shown what Angela Davis (1985, p. 65) baptized as "Black women's solidarity with the new cause", this cause in question being the struggle for female liberation and social rights that was emerging in the colonies. As the scholar states, Black women knew that this cause could benefit them, since they were willing to be freed "(...) from racist oppressions, but also from sexist domination" (DAVIS, 1985, p. 65). The speech's title question became one of the most important slogans on the women's liberation movement in the XIXth century. Truth created the piece during a women's convention in Akron, Ohio, as an answer to male supremacists that claimed that women's 'natural fragility' was a synonym of inferiority and that would be a reason to forbid them the right to vote (DAVIS, 1985, p. 65). Like Truth's speech and Firmina dos Reis' gender-integrated school show, Black women were engaged in the struggle against

racism and slavery as well as engaged in the fight against patriarchy since the beginning of the national history of their respective countries.

Like Chimamanda Adichie and Ana Maria Gonçalves, Maya Angelou is a brilliant heir to this legacy that encompasses the activist political struggle of African diasporic women through literature. This was related to an attempt of keeping their ancestor's cultural and social roots and organization alive, like the griots did in the history of several African societies. Born in 1928, Angelou lived 90 years and witnessed several moments in the history of the U.S., including the legal segregation laws known as Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement for social rights and reparations for the African American community. Angelou lived an extraordinary life, despite the difficulties she faced, becoming actively engaged in the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. and in the independence process in the African countries, living in countries like Egypt and Ghana. She was a multi-skilled artist, being also a dancer and later one of the most prolific writers in her country's history, transitioning amongst several different genres.

Like Adichie, Gonçalves, Sojourner Truth and Phillis Wheatley, Angelou's production carried the fingerprint of Black women's writing: the translation in to literature of personal experiences on the daily resistance against racism and sexism (what Evaristo baptized as "escrevivencia", the act of writing what one lives). With this was the political engagement on the fighting against these oppressions. Dana Williams (2009, 71) adds another layer of literary richness to Angelou's vast legacy: the exploration of the self, with "(...) its desires, its longing, its aspirations, and its possibilities" (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 71). The scholar explains that this feature was not a phenomenon restricted to Maya Angelou, but that the generation of contemporary African American women that emerged after the Civil Rights "(...) blossomed in their aggressive pursuit of their inquiries into black womanhood" (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 71).

This generation of contemporary Black women in the U.S. produced a diverse literary legacy during the mid and late parts of the past century. Williams (2009, p. 71) reported that their production was a direct result of the movements in the Black community: 1960s-1970s and the ideology of "Black is beautiful" that predominated on African American community inspired the production of these women. However, their production was not just a blind adoption of these ideologies, as these writers also criticized the reproduction of ideas and behaviors of white communities. Williams (2009, p. 71) exemplifies through Toni Morrison's

book *The Bluest Eye* (1970), in which the search for a white-based ideal of beauty destroys the main character. Williams points this out as Toni Morrison's criticism toward the reproduction of white ideals as standar reference that still remained even with the "Black is beautiful" ideology (WILLIAMS, 2009. p. 73).

The mid 1970s deepened this critical evaluation of African American communities by Black women writers, bringing an interesting turn to their literary works on the revolt of the female Black characters against their communities. Williams mentions Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) and Morrison's *Sula* (1973) as two examples of such narrative. The latter brings Sula, the main character, as a sexually uninhibited woman who rejects motherhood and cheats her best friend by having sex with her husband (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 71). As a result for all these deviant behaviors, Sula is ostracized by her own community (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 71). This rebellion could be seen as a criticism to the African American community's reproduction of sexism. The late 1970s and the 1980s brought to African American women's literature another important theme, with the exploration of the *self*: A "desire for mental and spiritual healing" (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 75), which lead to two narrative strategies: rescuing "(...) the ancestral matriarchal past to help heal the contemporary woman (...)" (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 75) and "(...) using historical narratives to question both history and its relationship to the present (...)" (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 75). It led to narratives where the main characters were enslaved women like in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1976) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The 1980s kept this search for healing alive, but without focusing as much in slavery and privileging contemporary experiences as a means for healing (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 77).

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986) is a mix of these different trends in African American women's literature. Angelou opens the book and keeps constantly alive her search for a place to call home, desiring the healing that other writers sought during the late 1970s and the 1980s, as well as the opportunity to explore her own self and to live new experiences outside the racist U.S. society. It is also a product of Angelou's innovative writing styles that she used to create her autobiography series, shifting effortlessly amongst different literary genres and mixing them in her work (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 84-85). It also relates to a rich debate about the creation of the self in autobiography genres, which will be discussed in chapter VI.

Like Gonçalves' self-discovery journey through Kehinde's in *Um defeito de cor* ("A Trouble of Color) (2006), Angelou's narrative in *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*

(1986) is also a very intimist exploration of a personal journey through the writer's experiences in different African countries and her continuous quest for belonging. Angelou displays several emotions and situations on her writing as this quest shows itself to be more complicated than she expected, as the cherished and idealized notion of returning to the 'lost homeland' turns to be also an endurance of displacement and facing the obstacles of being immigrant and foreign in a place she first thought would embrace her regardless of her identity as a U.S. born Black woman. The richness and further details of this journey will be further explored on the analytical chapters of this research.

2.3. Their Traveling Shoes: An Intercontinental Diasporic Conversation amongst Adichie, Gonçalves and Angelou

Although the *corpora* of this research is focused in the main characters, it is important to discuss the contexts of production of these three works, as well as the three important Black women authors that created them. These women's lives were profoundly impacted by colonialism in the African continent and its direct subproducts: the African diaspora and the process of enslavement of African peoples. Regardless of the immeasurable violence inflicted to our predecessors, Adichie, Gonçalves and Angelou perpetuate a legacy of cultural and political resistance created by Black women since the first of our African ancestors was dragged out of her homeland. They also alive keep memories, traditions, beliefs, religions and artistic expressions from social groups from Africa that suffered under slavery, the European plunder and generations of being deprived of acessing our historical past, in what is perhaps the greatest project of violence, genocide and historical erasure in the history of humankind.

The similarities amongst the three authors do not erase the specificity of each national context they are inserted. Brazil, Nigeria and the U.S. might be similar in the reproduction of structural racism, However, the way each country created a national narrative to reproduce this complex social phenomena differs from one nation to the other. Nigeria is a British-created state whose previous history includes a huge social and ethnic diversity from native African people, that have received influences from Asian peoples due to the historic Trans-Saharan trade (which is ratified by the huge political influence of Islam in the history of Nigerian people). A recent example of how violent (and still present) this random creation of a State - based solely on the colonizer's perspectives - and tyrannical rule on the African

territory is the riot against the SARS. This acronym stands for Special Anti-Robbery Squad which was supposed to be a security unity to combat criminality, but instead turns out to be a state militia that ravages and brutalizes Nigerian citizens for random acts such as the fact they are using dreadlocks in their hairs (ADICHIE, 2020). Chimamanda Adichie recently denounced this fact publicly in her text: "Nigeria is Murdering Its Citizens" (2020). The SARS example shows how colonialism is still alive and violently active in Africa.

Adichie's position in the text acknowledges the brutality and brings back the memory of colonialism, which, as it was previously discussed, is a common theme in Nigerian literature. But Brazil brings a different perspective on how complicated and more subtle structural racism can be in a society that often tries to erase the brutal memory of its historical past. Lately, the country's structural racism has been a worldwide news across the world, for example when a Black man, named João Alberto was beaten up to death in a unity of the Carrefour supermarket in Porto Alegre, in the South part of the country. But this is a recent perspective. A text by Edward Telles (2003) helps to enlighten this difference a bit further

> (...). Today, Brazilians often pride themselves on their history of miscegenation and continue to have rates of intermarriage that are far greater than those of the United States.
>
> Miscegenation and intermarriage suggest fluid race relations and, unlike the United States or South Africa, there were no racially-specific laws or policies, such as on segregation or apartheid, throughout the twentieth century. For these reasons, Brazilians thought of their country as a "racial democracy" from as early as the 1930s until recent years. They believed that racism and racial discrimination were minimal or non-existent in Brazilian society in contrast to the other multiracial societies in the world. A relatively narrow view of discrimination previously recognized only explicit

> manifestations of racism or race-based laws as discriminatory, thus only countries like South Africa and the United States were seen as truly racist. Moreover, there was little formal discussion of race in Brazilian society, while other societies were thought to be obsessed with race and racial difference.(TELLES, 2003,p. 25)

I highlight that the referred that this miscegenation, as Abdias do Nascimento reminds us, is a product of slavery and the rape of both African and Native Brazilian women. However, the structural use of Freyre's "racial democracy" ideology and the lack of explicit legal laws to segregate people based on their race really gave to Brazilians the sense that they lived in a country where racism had been overcome, and it was used by the Brazilian propaganda during the past century. Despite that authors as the aforementioned González and Nascimento and the Black Brazilian Movements - with the monumental original political resistance in Brazil, that of the indigenous Brazilians against the colonizer - have always been denouncing the "Brazilian racism" and all its subtle and clever structural, symbolic and material ways to harm Afro-Brazilian, indigenous people and dark-skinned mixed race people. On this wise Ana Maria Gonçalves' literary production serves us as a historical reminder of the violent past that fostered the creation of our nation.

Adichie brings on a always fresh and painful memory of colonialism to the Nigerian peoples in her literary production. Gonçalves opens up a vivid and pulsating wound of Brazilian historical past in hers, one that the national discourses still try to deny. On her turn, Angelou brings the memory of segregation laws, racist brutality and the sense of displacement and rejection that the Black community still feels in the U.S., leading her - and many people from her generation - 'back' to African soil, in search of belonging and healing.

These complex national contexts and their specificity coexist with common themes amongst the authors' working themes also present on their main characters' journeys: Displacement and traveling, search for belonging, political engagement, self-exploration and adaptation question regarding personal and social changes related to race, gender and class. These issues will be explored in detail in subsequent chapters.

Just as important as the national contexts, literary legacies of each country and the discussion of the themes shared by the authors is exploring the political theoretical tradition of Black women in the academic and activist worlds as well as the background research legacy in Black women's literature, which are the themes of the next parts of this chapter, and that will also be cornerstones elements to the further analysis of each work selected on this research.

2.4. The transnational cultural legacy of Black and African Feminisms in activism and academia:

"How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?"

Maria Stewart - 1831

The history of Black women in the African continent after European colonial invasion and the diaspora is a continuous and contingent political history of resistance. This is profoundly intertwined with the brutal capture and all the violence suffered by our ancestors. Black Feminism is one of the expressions of this resistance and it has played an important history in fighting against multiple oppressions suffered by Black people in general, and by Black women in particular. But it is not the only expression, since there is also Africana womanism created by Clenora Hudson-Weems, an epistemological and activist perspective more aligned with African epistemologies. It frames the diasporic identities in a different way, focusing on the cultural roots of ethnic groups. In Brazil, an important representative of this "school of thought" is Katiuscia Ribeiro. Black feminism and Africana womanism are not antagonists to each other. They are different and equally valuable ways to fight against systemic oppressions and the repressive and violent world created by white colonizers.

When it comes to Black feminist thought and activism, perhaps the best known names are from United States-born Black women from the past century. They are indeed fundamental thinkers and activists that have waged worldwide known battles - as did Angela Davis when she was facing the state of California, fighting a death-penalty charge - and

inspired generations of younger Black people. I will start this historical investigation through these important U.S. thinkers and their contributions, including also the intersectional approach within Black feminism in the United States, but I will also dive into Nigerian feminist movement and the Black Brazilian feminism as well, both equally important and fundamental in their countries.

This section's epigraph is drawn from the second edition of Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) *Black Feminist Thought - Knowledge, Counsciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. This work is a seminal piece central to the understanding of how Black feminist thought was constituted in the United States and which politics it stands for. Maria Stewart was the first recorded public speaker that had a discourse - and left a significant legacy of political propaganda - toward the construction of a Black women's political project (COLLINS, 2000, p. 2). Collins points Stewart and her contemporary fellow Black women as intellectuals that "(...) have laid a vital analytical foundation for a distinctive standpoint on self, community, and society and, in doing so, created a multifaceted, African-American women's intellectual tradition" (COLLINS, 2000, p. 3). Collins also explains that this tradition has been victim of a trial of erasure since dominant forces can more easily oppress and explore peoples when they make them believe they do not possess means or tools for their liberation (COLLINS, 2000, p. 3). Collins also explains how the oppressions suffered by Black women in the U.S. context has been influenced by different factors and how it influenced the subsequent relations and activism they managed to create:

> The vast majority of African-American women were brought to the United States to work as slaves in a situation of oppressions. Oppressions describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppressions in the United States. However, the convergence of race, class, and gender oppressions characteristic of

> U.S. slavery shaped all subsequent relationships that women of African descent had within Black American families and communities, with employers, and among one another. It also created the political context for Black women's intellectual work. (COLLINS, 2000, p. 4).

When stating the complex construction of the oppressions faced by Black women in the national context of the United States, Collins articulates different social conditions that are related to these subject's in a intertwined way, thus expanding the dimensions of the struggle waged by Black women against a social system that has created several layers of obstacles for their emancipation. Collins defines that "African-American women's oppressions has encompassed three interdependent dimensions" (2000, p. 4), which are: the economic/labour dimension, the political one and the symbolic/discursive dimension. Collins highlights the marginalization of Black women in the U.S. through the fact that Black women were kept on low-paying jobs even after slavery was abolished, what led to a marginalized social condition of impoverishment and lack of opportunities to do intellectual work (COLLINS, 2000, p. 4).

The second dimension of Black women's oppressions in the U.S. is the denial of political rights and privileges extended to white male citizens in the country (COLLINS, 2000, p. 4). She mentions that Black women were denied the right to vote, possibility of having an active political life in institutional/state 'democratic' practices and that the public education and the access to literacy was denied to slaves, and that Black women rarely were able to have access quality education (COLLINS, 2000, p. 4). The scholar also contends that the hegemonic national ideology in the U.S. naturalized Black women's subalternization, perpetuating stereotypical views such as the ideas of Black women as animalized creatures, as violent people, as cognitively uncapable, as extremely sexualized, amongst other violent representations that have become a norm in hegemonic U.S. culture for centuries after slavery was abolished (COLLINS, 2000, p. 4).

According to the author, this set of concepts works as a "(...) seamless web of economy, politics, and ideology function as a highly effective system of social control designed to keep African-American women in an assigned, subordinate place." (COLLINS, 2000, p.4). She points out that even though Black women have always managed to revolt

against oppressions, this system has elevated white, male and capitalist centered ideals to become hegemonic, consequently fostering the oppressions of marginalized groups and sustaining the power of dominant groups. The author also shows that feminism has been central on criticizing such hegemony, but it has too ignored the dimension of race and, therefore, helped to silence African American, Native American, Latino and Asian American women (COLLINS, 2000, p.4). In comparison; "(...) Black women intellectuals have long expressed a distinctive African-influenced and feminist sensibility about how race and class intersect in structuring gender (...)" (COLLINS, 2000, p.4). This intersection structuration amongst oppressions is a fundamental approach to the Black feminist perspective, as "(...) race, class, gender, and sexuality constitute mutually constructing systems of oppressions (...)" (COLLINS, 2000, p. 227).

According to her the intersectional approach offers two important possibilities: The first one is to understand Black women's experiences in a new light (COLLINS, 2000, p. 227). It offers a different understanding of the condition of African American women when it comes to domestic work and prostitution, as well as the portrayal of Black women's sexual life as deviant (COLLINS, 2000, p. 227). Another important possibility from the intersectional approach is to connect with other social groups, even in transnational contexts (COLLINS, 2000, p. 227). Considering that this academic work is a transnational literary research, intersectionality is a core element to enable a better understanding of the analysis of the selected *corpora*. But intersectionality does not function alone according to Black feminism in the U.S. Another contingent concept is the idea of "matrix of domination".

According to Collins, it refers to the "(...) overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained." (COLLINS, 2000, p. 228). Collins mentions Angela Davis as a reference when the latter urges the successful Black women to consider, with gender and race, the class dimension of oppressions on a "(...) global matrix of domination (...)" (COLLINS, 2000, p. 228). Collins proposes that this concept might be a transnational one, linking the struggle of Black women all over the world:

> All contexts of domination incorporate some combination of intersecting oppressions, (...). For example, as Senegalese feminists (Imam et al. 1997), Black American feminists (Guy-Sheftall

> 1995b), and Black British feminists (Mirza 1997) all point out, social institutions in Senegal, the United States, and the United Kingdom reflect intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality.Yet social relations within these three nation-states differ: Domination is structured differently in Senegal, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Thus, regardless of how any given matrix is actually organized either across time or from society to society, the concept of a matrix of domination encapsulates the universality of intersecting oppressions as organized through diverse local realities.(COLLINS, 2000, p. 228)

I might add as a Brazilian researcher that Collins' proposal of universality can be problematic, considering the asymmetric relations of power and economic influence amongst the different countries, which also relate in the influence and global predominance of academic ideas. I would adapt this word using the idea of a plural and common repetition of patterns of these intersecting oppressions in transnational contexts. This intersectional approach to transnationality also helps to envisage, rediscuss and constitute global bounds and alliances amongst women, mainly the racialized ones. It brings to the forefront of the global fights against social injustice subjects that "(...) are not just "theorizing" about oppressions; their theory emerges from within the practical terrain of activism." (COLLINS, 2000, p. 232). Collins highlights that Black women play a central role in this fighting due to "(...) the peculiar combination of the legacy of African cultures, a history of racial oppressions organized via slavery, colonialism, and imperialism," (COLLINS, 2000, p. 232). This struggle has become more active and interconnected when it comes to the alliances amongst Black activists in the different countries in these last years due to "(...) an emerging global racism that, assisted by modern technology, moves across national borders with dizzying speed (...)." (COLLINS, 2000, p. 232). Another important pattern that happens in transnational context in the lives of Black women is the extreme social vulnerability faced by this social group in the United States, which repeats itself in Brazil, and resonate with the extreme poverty faced by

women in the African continent and the sub-developed condition of the continent itself (COLLINS, 2000, p. 232). These factors lead to diasporic African women turning out to be active subjects in the feminist struggle for women's rights worlwide, "(...) but [African diasporic women] do so through particular Black diasporic experiences characterized by substantial heterogeneity." (COLLINS, 2000, p. 232).

The complex process of comprehending intersectionality shows how the construction of modern societies in most part of the world is profoundly related to colonialism, slavery and the still present consequences of these processes. Black feminism works as a weapon to fight against social injustice, to denounce the intersection of oppressions and to actively connect with different oppressed groups in a global context. It must be said again that African diasporic women do not limit their activism to the academic world. They are often also socially engaged subjects, for example , Angela Davis is an important cornerstone thinker for the U.S. Black feminist movement, but she has also been a political activist pursued by the U.S. government and faced a historical trial in 1972. In Brazil, the deceased councilwoman Marielle Franco is an example of this dual life of academy and activism. Franco was killed in 2018 in a brutal murder still unsolved. She was a sociologist and her academic work was dedicated to investigate the public security policies of the Brazilian state toward the favelas and its populations in Rio de Janeiro (2014). In 2016, she was elected to her term as the fifth most voted councilwoman in her city. Despite Franco's brutal demise, her legacy is alive through the Instituto Marielle Franco and her history and trajectory inspired several Black women to become candidates in the 2020 year election for municipal roles in Brazil. This historical turn of events after Franco's death in Brazil was recorded in a documentary called *Sementes: Mulheres Negras no Poder* ("Seeds: Black Women in State Power", 2019).

Franco's election and legacy are, likewise, results of a historical process of struggle by the Black Brazilian feminist movement and the struggle of Afro-Brazilian women since their forced arrival here during slavery. Black Brazilian feminism is a strong social movement that has its origin on the struggles against slavery and that has also been influenced and influencing the U.S. Black feminist movement.

Image 2 - Lélia González and Angela Davis together in the United States in 1984.

Image 2 brings two of the most important Black feminist thinkers, González and Davis together. The image serves to show the connection that both movements have managed to build, in a transnational context alliance forged to fight the systemic and interconnected oppressions they face.

González is one of the most important names in Brazilian Black feminism. Her text "*Por um feminismo afro-latino americano*" ("In defense of an African-Latin Feminism", 1988) is a key text for us to comprehend the trajectory, difference and social goals of Brazilian Black feminism. González uses this text to contextualize the specificities of Brazilian society in Latin America, focusing on race, class and gender. She mentions the fact that Brazilian racial formation is marked by a eugenistic project of whitening the population that generated a mass of miscegenated men and women (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 13). González also contends how feminism was important in Brazil to frame the sexual working division and to frame gender oppressions in the country. But she criticizes the fact that Brazilian and Latin American feminists ignored the racial question in such a miscegenated society with such a brutal colonial past. González brings to the center of our historical formation the sexual

violence and material exploration of diasporic African women and indigenous Brazilian women (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 13).

She also contends that the obliteration of the racial discussion in Brazilian feminism limited it to be focused more on white women's question rather than the Black, mixed race and indigenous Brazilian women, which are most part of the population in the country. Thus, where the tradition of feminism had begun, in Brazil, to add the dimension of the sexual division within the exploratory structure of capitalism, mainly after 1950, González adds the racial issue and the intersection between these two factors (CARDOSO, 2014). González does not strictly speak only about black women, using instead the expression "(...) women who pay a very high price for not being white." (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 14), thus encompassing the racial multiplicity of women existing in the country, both black women of African origin and ancestry, as well as indigenous, yellow (or Asian-Brazilian) women of the working class coming from Asian immigrants in the century XX, as well as encompassing the realities of mixed-race or miscegenated women, coming from mixed origins between indigenous, black, yellow and / or white. González understood the positions of these women as subjects with racialized bodies and belonging to a large Brazilian working class. However, as a politically active subject in feminist circles and a student of feminist theory in Brazilian lands, the author was precise in expressing the erasure of these women's existence within feminism as a socio-political movement in a Latin American country.

Thus, González denounces what she calls "racism by exclusion" (1988, p. 13). Believing that the dimensions of structural oppressions such as sex/gender, race and class are separated, feminist movements in Brazil and the Americas promote an erasure of the agendas of racialized women in the working class, which correspond to the vast majority of Latin American countries. As a researcher, I would like to add another dimension to González's analysis; by excluding the agendas of racialized women from the working class, feminism absents itself from the social and political spaces in which these subjects circulate.Realizing how much the contemporary dilemmas of Brazil are already present in González's texts written almost thirty-five years ago shows us the currentness of the author's writings and the urgency to rediscover her texts and bring them not only as a theoretical contribution, but also as a compass to face oppressive forces in the current situation Brazil lives.

The scholar claims that only a feminism made by these racialized women - whose communities developed several political tactics of resistance throughout the brutal process of

colonization - can solve the feminist dilemma in Brazil. Like Collins did, González also postulated the idea of a Afro-Latin feminism from a transnational perspective.. She mentions the initiatives of diasporic African women in the continent in countries such as Peru and Nicaragua. She also mentions the U.S. Black feminist movement as a reference of coalition and organization to inspire feminists in Brazil and all over Latin America. González text is a central piece to understand the context and specificity of Black Brazilian feminism.

Pereira (2013, p. 4) helps locating the birth of Brazilian Black feminism as result of observation and criticism of political agendas on Brazilian society that erased Black women. Women like Lélia González, Zelia Amador de Deus, Sueli Carneiro, Fátima Oliveira, Edna Roland, Matilde Ribeiro, Wânia Sant'Anna, Fernanda Lopes, Luiza Bairros and Jurema Werneck developed their own political thought departing from their ancestors' legacies of resistance. They also came from multiples theoretical backgrounds such as marxism, feminism and pan-africanism (PEREIRA, 2013, p.4). They developed their thoughts around multiple subjects from structural themes to personal relations, always analyzing the multiple oppressions that Black Brazilian women suffered (PEREIRA, 2013, p. 4). Their legacy and activism was present in the academic field as well as out of it.

The creation of Brazilian Black feminism is likewise the history of Brazilian Black women trying to organize themselves inside National Brazilian organizations that fought for Black people rights (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 55). According to the scholar Damasco (2009) the fight of Brazilian black women for an unified representation, in Brazilian contemporary history, that could match and hear their claims comes from the 1920s when Brazilian Black press and Brazilians organizations in defense of the national Black communities emerged. In 1928, the Frente Negra Brasileira (Brazilian Black Front) was founded. Black women were active in this new organization, creating their own subgroups, However, they were kept at marginal positions and never achieved the leading roles in the Front (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 55). The Front became a political party, but it ended in 1937. During the year 1945, the Black press flourished again and new cultural and political organizations were created. Black women also took part in this process, an example of that is the creation of the *Conselho Nacional de Mulheres Negras* (Black Women National Council), a subgroup of the *Teatro Negro Brasileiro* (Black Brazilian Theater) organization. In their foundational text, the Council stated that it was their goal to fight for the integration of Black women in Brazilian society, also providing access to culture, education and adequate jobs (DAMASCO, 2009, p.

58). The Council also focused on protecting and educating Black children (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 58).

After 1964, Brazil suffered a military coup d'etát, which dismantled most of the social movements' organizations. They came back in full force 1974, when the army started to lose political force and Brazilian society started to head to the end of this authoritarian regime (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 58). In 1978, Brazilian society saw the birth of the *Movimento Negro Unificado Contra Discriminação Racial* (Black Unified Movement Against Racial Discrimination), an organization that had Lelia González as one of its founders. A new generation of Black activists emerged, coming from the national middle class and possessing educational formation on Brazilian public Universities (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 60). As a result, the Brazilian Black Unified Movement had a political alignment toward the left/progressist side of Brazilian politics and it was also in tune with the claims made by the U.S. Civil Rights movements, being influenced by names like Malcolm X and Marthin Luther King Jr. The 1980s and 1990s saw the ending of the military regime in Brazil, and the Black Unified Movement fought to put the racial question inside the plan of political parties from Brazilian left, even achieving the election of some of the Movement's activists for example Abdias do Nascimento, Benedita da Silva and Carlos Alberto Caó (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 63).

Black women were present in all the organizations in defense of Black people in Brazilian history, as engaged subjects, founders, educators, political activists as well as occupying several other roles (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 64). However, they were constantly marginalized inside these organizations and kept away from leading positions. These women were always criticizing two main issues they faced: The difference of their position in relation to the Black men's one in these political spaces and the exclusion of gender debate and its connection to racism (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 64). Luiza Barros claimed that Black men fought the domination of Black women in their speech, but not in their lives' practices (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 64).

An example of this internal tension was the question of Black women's reproductive rights. Black men inside the Black Unified Movement claimed that it was Black women's political obligation to generate children, whistle Black women from *Geledes* (an non-governmental organization) claimed that the question should be debated regarding Black women's desire and agency and they were favorable to the legal regulation of the practice to avoid it was practiced in a criminal way against Brazilian Black women (DAMASCO, 2009,

p. 66). The fact that the gender debate was disregarded and that the organizations often diminished them led Black Brazilian women activists to start organizing and creating their own independent political initiatives, giving birth to what we know as Brazilian Black feminist organizations.

Mainly during the 1990s these women started creating organizations like *Nzinga - Coletivo de Mulheres Negras* (*Nzinga - Black Women Collective*), founded by Lelia González (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 68). Sueli Carneiro created *Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra* (Geledes - Black Women's Institute), providing health treatments for Black women. Jurema Werneck created the non-governmental organization *Criola* (Creole), also looking to protect Black women's health and to fight against mass sterilization (DAMASCO, 2009, p. 69). In 1988, these women articulate the *I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras* (I National Meeting of Brazilian Black Women), in response to the fact that their political questions were not contemplated by the Latin American and Brazilian feminist events. From this moment on, Brazilian Black feminism grew in an important political force in Brazilian society regarding the fight for Black women and the Black population as a whole, also encompassing the defense of other social groups for example Brazilian indigenous populations and the lesbian, gays, queer, trans people and sexually non-alligned subjects in Brazil, as well as oposing to the conservative and racists forces in Brazilian society.

Coming back to Africa, Nigerian women's movement, and Nigerian feminism play an important social role in this society and its struggle against colonialism and its consequences. It is important to highlight that discussing the term "feminism" in African countries is different from discussing them in diasporic African nations such as the U.S. and Brazil. There is a current discussion of feminism being "un-African", which leads several scholars to prefer using the term "Nigerian women's movement". As the author Zubia Willmann states on the paper "Is feminism un-African? Do we need to talk about African feminism in plural?" (2015):

> Another reason for believing that feminism was not applicable to Africa was because western feminists placed the inequalities between sexes and the impact of patriarchal power as the most important factor in analysing the position of

> women. Categories such as race or class were believed to be secondary to gender inequalities. (PEREIRA Bruno, 2006, Oyewumi, 1997) This methodology omits the claim of many feminists in Africa that colonialism created or constructed new gender dynamics in African societies. There are those that believe that gender was a colonial imposition, and that African societies were not patriarchal. (Lugones, 2010, Oyewumi, 1997) However, research has shown the existence of gender as a way of division of labour and structuring societies since several tens of thousands of years (Balme and Bowdler, 2006 in Connell, 2015) Colonialism may have messed with the gender relations, but it did not create it. A part of that is the violence against indigenous women, as well as the land seizures from the indigenous population by colonisers. The redistribution of land and other resources resulted in the loss of the relative autonomy and power that women enjoyed. (Kandiyoti, 2007, Bennett, 2010) (WILLMANN, 2015, p. 6)

Zubia Willmann shows us an important debate around the question of how African societies relate to and think about western feminism and vice versa, which are the critics and the views from one side about the other. Willmann also mentions the criticism of African female scholars such as Mangena, which focused on how white western feminists tend to have a colonial and racist gaze about African societies (2015, p. 6). Another important issue mentioned on the quotation above is the fact that when white western feminists place patriarchy as the center of all oppressions, they ignore how colonialism has impacted Africa and its peoples (WILLMANN, 2015, p. 6). There is also the question of “feminism” as a western concept, what led some scholars to adapt it to the idea of Africana womanism, which would be more connected to African ontologies and epistemologies, Mekgwe (2008, p. 20

apud WILLMANN, 2015, p. 7) claims it as separated from African feminism, white feminism and Black feminism as well due to having a specific agenda for women of African descent.

However, there are scholars that defend the idea of African feminisms, arguing that there is no contradiction on being a feminist African woman. As it was previously shown in the beggining of this chapter, Chimamanda Adichie is herself a self-declared feminist, and this rendered her a global acknowledgment and the possibility of becoming a multimedia artist. Similarly, Maduganu (2016) writes in defense of the Nigerian feminism, arguing that other so-called women's movements are disorganized and often without clear political purposes, even aligning themselves with misogynistic ideas simply because these are culturally accepted as 'tradition'. The scholar mentions the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), an organization created in 1958, the first known movement organized by women in the country, but that is also partially in line with male supremacy (MADUGANU, 2016, p. 666). The scholar also mentions some activists in Nigeria which get to label themselves as feminists only in events related to gender discussion, but do not declare themselves as feminists for general audiences and do not align themselves with feminist core values, principles and practices (MADUGANU, 2016, p. 666). She mentions that the first self-declared organization in Nigeria that was created with a public feminist agenda and fearless of holding into the title of feminist was the Women In Nigeria (WIN) organization, created in 1983 (MADUGANU, 2016, p.667). The scholar clarifies that the organization was opened to any person, female or not, that wished to be part of it, but conditioned to agreeing with WIN's Constitution, which was based in social justice and gender equality from a feminist perspective (MADUGANU, 2016, p. 667).

According to her, the organization contributed to social justice in Nigeria and to the expansion of feminism on a transnational scale: "(...) WIN engaged in research, policy advocacy and activism aimed at transforming the conditions under which women and other under privileged classes in Nigeria lived."(MADUGANU, 2016, p. 667). Nkama (2019, p.1) also contends the importance of WIN; according to this scholar, the creation of WIN was an important political weapon for Nigeria women to fight for their right to vote in a irregular election, that tried to deprive women from their right to participate in this political process, during the Second Nigerian Republic; the scholar also claims that feminism has been an important tool for Muslim Nigerian women to speak out against multiple oppressions (NKAMA, 2019, p. 2).

As a further reinforcing of the historical importance of the movement in Nigeria mapping of the feminist trajectory in the country, there is an important document about the political impact of feminism in Nigerian society, a project entitled *Analysis of the History, Organisations and Challenges of Feminism in Nigeria* (2011) written by Mariam Marwa Abdul, Olayinka Adeleke, Olajumoke Adeyeye, Adenike Babalola, Emilia Eyo, Maryam Tauhida Ibrahim, Monica Voke-Ighorodje and Martha Onose, cofinanced by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development and executed by *Fundación Mujeres*. According to this group of scholars, WIN and other feminists organizations with women's movements have played a central role in guaranteeing the achieving of social justice and political development in contemporary Nigeria. Some of their most important contributions are the changes in Nigerian laws and public policies regarding the interests of Nigerian women, the defense of girls and the struggle to assure their access to education, the fight of expanding adult literacy amongst Nigerian women, the debate of gender differences in Nigerian society and the empowerment of Nigerian women in achieving better jobs and social recognition in their country, amongst other important contributions (ABDUL, ADELEKE, ADEYEYE, BABALOLA, EYO, IBRAHIM, VOKE-IGHORODJE, ONOSE, 2011, p. 17-22).

Considering all this background and the debate around whether or not feminism is 'adequate' to African women, Adichie positioning herself as a public Nigerian feminist comes to be a political act. This decision acknowledges the history of women in the territory and the importance of feminism to it, contributing to their struggle for liberation. Similarly to Black feminisms in the U.S. and in Brazil, Nigerian feminists do search to build their own feminist practice that acknowledges the intersection amongst class, race and gender and that does not ignore the effects of colonialism. Like the Black feminists in the U.S. and Brazil, Nigerian feminists are also active in academia, debating and defending their political project. Nigerian feminists are building a political and social movement for the liberation of women that respect their needs and the history of their country.

After this overview of Black and African feminisms in the three countries (Brazil, the U.S. and Nigeria), we can discuss some common patterns of thought and political organization that repeat in the three different social and historical contexts. One of them is the search to build a feminism practice that answers the social needs of Black and African women, regarding the multiple oppressions they face. We have seen that these native and diasporic African women are truly engaged in building a social movement and an academic,

political and scientific legacy to help fight the oppressions that their communities experience, in national and transnational contexts. It is also noteworthy the fact that the political and academic militancy of Black and African women intellectuals can hardly be separated, since they strive to build theories that work as answers to social problems. Furthermore, the idea of intersectionality through debating oppressions as social forces that work together is omnipresent in the production and struggle of African and Afro-diasporic women. With it, the recovery of memory, the rescuing of the history of the resistance of our ancestors, the struggle and coalition between oppressed peoples and the trial of building a counter-discourse and a new political project for the societies in which these women live are fundamental characteristics present in the African and Afro-diasporic feminisms in these three countries.

CHAPTER THREE
"DAUGHTERS OF AFRICA": A POLITICAL CULTURE OF EMOTIONS FOR IFEMELU, KEHINDE AND MAYA THROUGH AMEFRICANITY

This chapter starts the analysis of this research's *corpora*. As previously explained, the selected *corpora* are the three main characters from *Americanah* (2013), *Um defeito de cor* (A Trouble of Color, 2006) and *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986).

As an international student in the U.S., Ifemelu reads that "Nigerian women came to America and became wild. (…) Brainwashed by the West" (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 11). This was a comment on her personal blog, which works as a safe space for her to share her experience as an immigrant

Kehinde is an early 19th century enslaved African woman whose first notion of self is being *ibeji* (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 8). This word designates a spiritual concept from Yoruba spiritual ontology: she learns that she is not just herself, but, instead, her own existence is shared with her twin sister and her community.

Maya is a late 20th century African American woman, addressed here as a fictionalized self of the political activist and artist Maya Angelou. She was engaged on looking for a place to call her own, leaving the United States and going to the African continent longing for home.

The initial analyses of these three characters are the main focus of this chapter. They have many common experiences due to their race, class and sex, however, the historical chronology and individual differences amongst them are also worth investigating. Yet, interconnecting their journeys could be an interesting approach to analyze how the Americas and Africa are entangled. It helps rethink our history as Black people, rebuilding it as one of a gendered diaspora.

This chapter will aim at an integrated investigation amongst the three fictional women. It will be divided in two first sections. The first will complement the previously explored theoretical background, debating emotions and politics Then, the last sections will be each dedicated to a closer individual analysis of the characters.

Analyzing these three novels and their protagonists can allow us to build a transnational literary network. This requires us to think about politics not just as an abstract and repressive structure. These women's history shows that making politics is a daily construction. Their narratives show us the possibility of building a new world, through a *new womanhood* (DAVIS, 1981, p. 9).

3.0 – A cultural politics of Black women's emotions and subjectivities

According to Sara Ahmed on her seminal work *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), "Emotion is the feeling of bodily change" (2004, p. 5). According to her emotions are also connected to synesthesia and cognition. Drawing the debate from Aristotle and Darwin to Descartes and Sartre, Ahmed specifies the many perceptions about the place of emotion on our behavior and its social role. She also defines that her proposal is to study how emotions circulate amongst bodies and set up their relations. That is done through the example of how national British propaganda appeals to the feeling of 'official citizens' as defining who is "us" (the nation) *versus* "them" (the immigrants, the racialized ones, the others) (AHMED, 2004, p. 1).

When framing the diverse experiences of diasporic Black women in the discourses and practices from the colonizers, our place is always of objects. We have been considered subhuman species, lingering between animal and thing, as pointed by Audre Lorde (1984). Similarly, as Ahmed asserts, emotions are strongly viewed as second classes responses (2004, p. 5), belonging to the reign of animalistic/primitive responses and non-rational domains and creatures. Therefore, if there is something that the Western mind has connected to Black women is emotion. Also, any place that is attributed to us is through the *emotional* response we provoke, rather than any other significant characteristic.

As an explicit example of that, Ifemelu's white boyfriend, Chuck, says that he has fall in love with her because of her laughter;

> Her laugh was so vibrant, shoulders shaking, chest heaving; it was the laugh of a woman who, when she laughed, really laughed. Sometimes

> when they were alone and she laughed, he would say teasingly, "That's what got me. And you know what I thought? If she laughs like that, I wonder how she does *other things*." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 142)

Chuck exemplifies what Ahmed explains as the creation of an otherized body that belongs to the realm of emotions. Ifemelu's appealed to his instinct through a simple laughter, while she was working, babysitting a child. Perhaps, if it was a white body, Chuck would not have thought of "*other things*" from a simple laughter.

Chuck's affection for Ifemelu is heavily tied to the Freudian logics of loving, reinforcing her place as an object and endorsing a narcissistic behavior of possession on her body. According to the scholar, while debating and criticizing the Freudian perspective, love is a powerful political tool and an important referential for all subjects, since a young age (AHMED, 2004, p. 126). Thus, she establishes "(…) the distinction between self-love and object love, which can also be described in terms of a distinction between identification (love as being) and idealization (love as having)" (126 2004). Ahmed criticizes the heterosexual logic of Freudian postulations about love, in which the search for love outside the ego turns out to be a pursuit for self-affirmation, based on narcissism and objectification, classifying as pathology anything outside this logic (AHMED, 2004, p. 128). Chuck's relation to Ifemelu is an example of this problematic perspective of love:

> Ifemelu looked at Curt's pale hair and pale skin, the rust-colored moles on his back, the fine sprinkle of golden chest hair, and thought how strongly, at this moment, she disagreed with Wambui.
>
> "You are so sexy," she said.
>
> "You are *sexier*."

> He told her he had never been so attracted to a woman before, had never seen a body so beautiful, her perfect breasts, her perfect butt. It amused her, that he considered a perfect butt what Obinze called a flat ass, and she thought her breasts were ordinary big breasts, already with a downward slope. But his words pleased her, like an unnecessary lavish gift. He wanted to suck her finger, to lick honey from her nipple, to smear ice cream on her belly, as though it was not enough simply to lie bare skin to bare skin.
>
> Later, when he wanted to do impersonations—"How about you be Foxy Brown," he said—she thought it endearing, his ability to act, to lose himself so completely in character, and she played along, humoring him, pleased by his pleasure, although it puzzled her that this could be so exciting to him. (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 145-146)

The selected quotation illustrates what Ahmed classifies as objectification of affection toward women. Several of Chuck's behavior toward Ifemelu's body shows a fetishist tendency while interacting with his lover. This fetishizing process explicitly comes up with the necessity to "(…) lick honey from her nipple, to smear ice cream from her belly (…)" (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 145), where Ifemelu's body is not just to be sexually taken, but literally consumed as food, as product within a "heterosexual economy" (AHMED, 2004, p. 127) whose root is colonial relations and the hyper-objectification of Black women's bodies.

Chuck's food-based fetishism on Ifemelu can also be related to the life of the main character from *Um defeito de Cor* (A Trouble of Color) (2004) by Anna Maria Gonçalves. Kehinde's experience as an African child finding out about slave trade also involves the mythology of white people carnally consuming Black bodies:

> Uidá whites were not just travelers; most lived in the city or in the neighborhood and had a lot of money. It was a big mess when they went shopping, because everyone wanted to sell to them,(...). They did not walk alone, they always had some Black servants with them. These servants, sooner or later, according to Akin, would become sheep abroad. I looked at them and thought they were no different from us, that they didn't look like sheep, but Akin confirmed that, in some way that he didn't know how, the Blacks who went abroad turned into sheep, and they were roasted and eaten like sheep, a meat that white people very much appreciated.. (GONÇALVES, 2004, p. 17-18)

Ifemelu and Kehinde are historically and geographically widely separated, just like their creators. Although that, the body fetishism and objectification that Kehinde knew back on the apex of slave trade still resonates on Ifemelu's life while she makes sex with a white person. That is a moment where the common experience amongst them, the body objectification (Kehinde is later sold as a slave), allows us to think about the colonial construction of a cultural politics toward Black women's subjectivity and emotion. We were placed as objects, from body to mind, either as food to be devoured or object to be sold. The next section of this chapter will be dedicated to thinking about amefricanity and a "new womanhood" as possibilities for an authentic and politicized cultural politics made by Black women themselves.

3.1.– Amefricanity*:* Weaving subjectivities, emotions and political resistance on Black women's narratives

Thinking about how the subjectivities and emotions of Black women are central to the construction of new political perspectives help us to imagine new paradigms of living and building resistance against oppressions. This section of the chapter will be dedicated to the concept created by Lélia González, amefricanity. As previously explained, González (1983, p.. 76) sets the category of amefricanity as a political category to build an unified ethnical identity, which is connected to the politicals concepts of Panafricanism, Aime Cesaire's "*Négritude"* idea and Afrocentrism (GONZÁLEZ, 1983, p. 76). Amefricanity is a result from this intense epistemological construction that allows us to further investigate cultural expressions – and their historical and cultural roles – from the viewpoint of diasporic African centered perspectives.

Also, according to her, the methodological importance of this category is that it allows us to think about Amefrica instead of America (1983, p. 76). Thus, she is setting a reframing of history that rescues the construction of the Americas under the influence of diasporic African communities and by the native indigenous communities that lived here before the European invasions ravished the continents (GONZÁLEZ, 1983, p. 76). González is strongly influenced by the scholar Molefi Asante, whom proposed the concept of afrocentricity. This would be a new methodological and epistemological approach that centered on Black experiences and lives to propose ideas and to change philosophy, also serving as a way to fight back racism and the central political role of white/European views over all other perspectives (ASANTE, 2009).

During this analytical chapter, I propose to think about amefricanity also as a methodological frame to debate the construction of subjectivities through emotion and experiences. This would be presented on the narratives of Adichie, Gonçalves and Angelou as Black diasporic women whose writing create characters that encompass and translate different historical moments. Moreover, we should also think how their individual lives are connected to living resistance and standing against structural violence.

3.2.– Writing and affection as resistance: Ifemelu's *Raceteenth*, interpersonal affection and her diasporic journey

The beginning of Ifemelu's narrative on *Americanah* shows her as a young blogger and student at Princenton University getting ready to go back to her homeland, Nigeria.

Remarkably, Ifemelu's lifestyle blog becomes an important part of the narrative, as it is her vehicle to analyze the United States as a non-American Black woman. More than just a social media resource that connects her to her readers, I understand the blog as a central part on the construction of Ifemelu's amefricanity, where she frames her emotions and impressions of this foreign country that has a violent history toward Black people.

> (…) "I write a lifestyle blog," because saying "I write an anonymous blog called Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black" would make them uncomfortable. She had said it, though, a few times. Once to a dreadlocked white man who sat next to her on the train, his hair like old twine ropes that ended in a blond fuzz, his tattered shirt worn with enough piety to convince her that he was a social warrior and might make a good guest blogger. "Race is totally overhyped these days, black people need to get over themselves, it's all about class now, the haves and the have-nots," he told her evenly, and she used it as the opening sentence of a post titled "Not All Dreadlocked White American Guys Are Down."
>
> Then there was the man from Ohio, who was squeezed next to her on a flight. A middle manager, she was sure, from his boxy suit and contrast collar. He wanted to know what she meant by "lifestyle blog," and she told him, expecting him to become reserved, or to end the conversation by saying something defensively bland like "The only race that matters is the human race." But he said, "Ever write about adoption? Nobody wants black babies in this

> country, and I don't mean biracial, I mean black. Even the black families don't want them."
>
> He told her that he and his wife had adopted a black child and their neighbors looked at them as though they had chosen to become martyrs for a dubious cause. Her blog post about him, "Badly-Dressed White Middle Managers from Ohio Are Not Always What You Think," had received the highest number of comments for that month. She still wondered if he had read it. She hoped so. Often, she would sit in cafés, or airports, or train stations, watching strangers, imagining their lives, and wondering which of them were likely to have read her blog. (ADICHIE, 2013, ps. 8-9)

Notwithstanding, Ifemelu choses to stop updating her blog, it has an important role throughout the narrative. The blog is Ifemelu's safe space to express her own views and experiences in a foreign country. The blog also helps her to connect with readers and to expose her analysis of the U.S. society to a worldwide audience. On the excerpt above, these two encounters are registered on her blog and they also help her to cope with the new reality she is immerged. Her guess on the dreadlocked white man was wrong, because it was based on general ideas. Likewise, the white manager from Ohio proved to be more socially aware than Ifemelu had previously expected. The blog is, then, also a place where she can articulate her feelings and shape her own thoughts about people and social experiences. Sara Ahmed proposes something similar, when discussing feminism and emotions: "Feminist therapy and consciousness-raising groups allowed women to make connections between their experiences and feelings in order to examine how such feelings were implicated in structural relations of power." (2004, p. 172). Similarly, *Raceteenth* allows Ifemelu to find a place for herself where she can make connections on the depths of her subjectivity and associate them with the afro-diasporical context that she is currently living.

Another important moment that contends how the blog plays a central role on helping Ifemelu to deal with her diasporic condition is when she finds out that she could be depressive:

> "We're late already, get dressed," Ginika said, firmly, authoritatively, with no room for dissent. Ifemelu pulled on a pair of jeans. She felt Ginika watching her. In the car, Ginika's rock music filled the silence between them. They were on Lancaster Avenue, just about to cross over from West Philadelphia, with boarded-up buildings and hamburger wrappers strewn around, and into the spotless, tree-filled suburbs of the Main Line, when Ginika said, "I think you're suffering from depression.".
>
> Ifemelu shook her head and turned to the window. Depression was what happened to Americans, with their self-absolving need to turn everything into an illness. She was not suffering from depression; she was merely a little tired and a little slow. "I don't have depression," she said. Years later, she would blog about this: "On the Subject of Non- American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know." A Congolese woman wrote a long comment in response: She had moved to Virginia from Kinshasa and, months into her first semester of college, begun to feel dizzy in the morning, her heart pounding as though in flight from her, her stomach fraught with nausea, her fingers tingling. She went to see a doctor. And even though she checked "yes" to all the symptoms on the card the

> doctor gave her, she refused to accept the diagnosis of panic attacks because panic attacks happened only to Americans. Nobody in Kinshasa had panic attacks. It was not even that it was called by another name, it was simply not called at all. Did things begin to exist only when they were named?
>
> "Ifem, this is something a lot of people go through, and I know it's not been easy for you adjusting to a new place and still not having a job. We don't talk about things like depression in Nigeria but it's real. You should see somebody at the health center. There's always therapists." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 119)

The moment that Ginika tells Ifemelu that she could be mentally ill changes the narrative. Ifemelu is forced to face the effects of the violence that she has endured as African and Black woman on the United States; she is led to face the consequences of it on herself, on her psyche. The fact that there was no much awareness of the Mental Health debate on other African countries make it harder for her to accept it. During this moment, the blog is an important tool for her to articulate her emotions and to question the lack of debate about mental health on African societies, which connects her to the Congolese woman that has been through a similar process. That moment of debating on the blog can be read as a moment where Ifemelu builds her amefricanity through being an agent over her own subjectivity, emotion and mental condition while connecting with other women. Then, the act of writing as resistance becomes also a medium for self-exploration, raising awareness and creating a network of solidarity through social media. The debate about Ifemelu's blog will be further expanded in chapter five. The relationship with her friend Ginika is likewise central, since it is due to this external intervention that Ifemelu comes to face the truth about her mental condition and manages to start taking action to change her situation. The narrative asserts, then, the importance of a network of affection to change the condition of the subject,

highlighting the importance of interpersonal relations. An important relation that helps Ifemelu's amefricanity to thrive is her friendship with Ginika.

Ginika is Ifemelu's close friend from Nigeria. She is also a Black woman, and her personality is opposed to Ifemelu in many ways. Despite that, her friendship is a cornerstone for the main character. Ginika goes to the United States to help Ifemelu. Besides helping Ifemelu whilst she struggles to accept her mental condition, Ginika also helps her to get a job. Their bounding and mutual support can be described as the feminist politics as proposed by Ahmed (2004, p. 172), whereas the different experiences of women, primarily driven by pain and anger, originate supportive relations and pro-active groups (2004, p. 172). With *Raceteenth,* Ginika's support and friendship is a fundamental part of Ifemelu's life that gives new meaning to her amefricanity and that helps her to reconnect with herself during difficult moments.

While proposing a politics of emotion from Ifemelu's journey, we can address to her amefricanity as its expression. It is also a peculiar one. Unlike Maya, who travels to Africa "searching for home", Ifemelu is born on Nigeria. But her personal diaspora during her life journey brings her to the United States. This new displacement makes her something else. She is not just a Nigerian woman anymore, she has become a "non-American Black woman" away from her own homeland. Finding her new self and creating strategies to live on such a violent country politicizes this experience of personal diaspora, allowing us to use González and Ahmed's concepts – intertwined – to address to the set of emotions, experiences and strategies embodied during Ifemelu's journey to become a transnational subject building her own emotional and cultural politics. Ifemelu's journey "(…) reanimates the relation between the subject and a collective." (AHMED, 2004, p. 171). This relation will be further explored on the fifth chapter.

3.3.– " 'Kehinde' is for the sacred, 'Luiza' is for the whites": Amefricanity and the "New Womanhood" on Kehinde's journey.

Ifemelu and Kehinde's journey are separated by many centuries. Yet, both of them are Black women outside their original homelands. Kehinde has also become something else, even though her path is much more painful than Ifemelu's. However, her way to resist and to become a political subject is also another expression of amefricanity. It represents a *praxis* of

a politics of emotion that rises against established structures and embodied thoughts (AHMED, 2004, p. 174).

According to Angela Davis in her seminal work *Women, Race and Class* (1981), the role and the study of female subjects during the capture and the violence of the forced diaspora was ignored by most of the 20th century scholarship on slavery and the survival of Black communities (1981, p. 9). Davis opposes to this approach, because according to her a "(…) lesson can be gleaned from the slave era which will shed light upon Black women's and all women's current battle for emancipation." (1981, p. 9). The scholar makes a historical overview of the condition of the female slave on the United States, which can be surely applied to other countries whose history was marked by slaved trade. Davis contends that Black women were denied the narrative of "feminility", since it was the compulsory work that defined them socially (1981, p. 9), they were abnormal beings because they did not fit on the narrative of "(…) nurturing mothers and gentle companions and housekeepers for their husbands (…)" (DAVIS, 1981, p. 9). The basic condition of slavery was to classify that whole group of human beings as non-human, which led both male and female enslaved subjects to be treated as chattel, "Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labor-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as slaveholders were concerned." (DAVIS, 1981, p. 9).

Then, the condition of the slave woman was a peculiar one; she experienced a cruel equality that was based on genderless labor exploitation, whereas, also, she was subjected to violence that could be done only because of her condition as woman. Davis (1981, p. 9-10) explains that rape was a basic tool to the slave based economy, since the growth of population would provide the enhancing of the production. This peculiar place also fuelled the making of another way of being female on the Black communities:

> If Black women bore the terrible burden of equality in oppressions, if they enjoyed equality with their men in their domestic environment, then they also asserted their equality aggressively in challenging the inhuman institution of slavery. They resisted the sexual assaults of white men, defended their families and participated in work

> stoppages and revolts. As Herbert Aptheker points out in his pioneering work American Negro Slave Revolts, they poisoned their masters, committed other acts of sabotage and, like their men, joined maroon communities and frequently fled northward to freedom. From the numerous accounts of the violent repression overseers inflicted on women, it must be inferred that she who passively accepted her lot as a slave was the exception rather than the rule. (DAVIS, 1981, p. 16-17)

The political commitment and awareness that these women have developed and learned to articulate in defense of them and their communities originate this non subaltern emancipated new beings. Davis systematizes how the material conditions of oppressions and repression gave birth to a "new womanhood". According to her it would be based on "(…) a legacy of hard work, perseverance and self-reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and insistence on sexual equality—in short, a legacy spelling out standards for a new womanhood." (DAVIS, 1981, p. 22).

Throughout a selected part of Kehinde's narrative, I investigate the constitution of this "new womandhood", based on direct political action, resistance and survival, proposed by Davis as entagled with the politics of emotion of Gonzale's *Amefricanity*. Therefore, using Ahmed's proposal of emotion as politically material through individual and their relations, I aim to investigate how Kehinde's journey can be an enlightening tool to explore these concepts and to articulate them together.

Kehinde's path from Africa to Brazil can be read as an epitome for the origins of amefricanity. She starts to narrate her journey as a young girl on Savalu. The opening scene brings a brutal memory: The rape of her mother, herself and her twin sister and the killing of her little brother, Kokumo. From that moment, we learn that, from her early age, her existence as a female subject is shaped by learning to resist to violence (in this case, male violence, since it was soldiers that attacked her family). Dúrójaiyé, her grandmother, takes her and her twin sister, Taiwo, to Uida, so they can restart they loss.

Taiwo and Dúrójaiyé are part of an important network of affection and support that guides Kehinde's existence. She learns with them the meaning of daily caring and the traditional meanings and ways of living of their people. They give her a sense of belonging, ancestral memory and love that teaches her the mechanisms she needs to survive the brutal violence of the diaspora, which happens to them later on the narrative.

> My grandmother was born in Abome, the capital of the kingdom of Dahome, or Dan-home, where the king ruled from the house seated on Dan's entrails. She said that this is a very old story, from the time when men still respected the trees. King Abaka went to ask neighbor Dan for a piece of land to increase his kingdom, (...) Dan reluctantly gave the land. (...) when Abaka asked for another piece to build a castle, Dan was angry and replied that Abaka could build the castle on his belly, as he would not give any more land. Angry at the ill-mannered response, King Abaka killed Dan and, over the entrails scattered on the floor, erected a sumptuous palace. From these; the great empire of the Yoruba people began. Dan is also the name of the sacred serpent, but this is another story (...), now I need to talk about a time that started much later, when the persecution of the monster king Adandozan forced my grandmother to leave Abome, moving to Savalu. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 8-9)

Kehinde's memories matches Angela Davis proposal about the power of rescuing the histories of the enslaved ones (1981, p. 9). When Kehinde tells us the history of Dúrójaiyé, she also rescues the memory of the Yoruba people and the historical recent past of her grandmother's life during the brutal government of King Adandozan. He was the elder son of

Agonglo, the eighth king of Dahomey. According to the researcher Ana Lucia Araujo (2012), Adandozan was known from early age as a cruel person. He was a brutal ruler bearing "(…) the reputation of the cruellest king in Dahomean history" (ARAUJO, 2012, p. 5). Also, he started the tradition of selling his own subjects, the Dahomean people, to the Portuguese slave traders. Adandozan sent to slavery his step mother and his younger brother.

The political context of Dúrójaiyé's past is mentioned again just much later on the narrative, the "persecution of the monster king Andandozan" refers to the king's politics of hunting and enslaving the Dahomeans. From this brief first mention, we can already notice that the shadow of slavery and the fear of internal politics that supported the trading were an intergerational fear and trauma on Kehinde's family. It also helps us to stand up against the mythology of a "dreamland Africa", a narrative – strongly spread and held during pan africanism – that the "mother continent" would be an idyllic place, something that even Maya Angelou believed when she tried to "return" to her roots in *All God's Childrn Need Traveling Shoes*. It also supports the idea that besides the intercontinental enslavement, the fear of the trading also caused internal changes on the social and demographic configurations of the continent. Moreover, Adandozan's legacy of cruelty stresses the existence of a patriarchal tradition of power that oppressed the poor, the women and other marginalized social groups. Of course, this violence has also its gendered implications since Kehinde and other women's lives were profoundly impacted by it.

The power of Dúrójaiyé's historical memories and its influence on Kehinde can also be a feature of her own amefricanity. During the enslavement and after she was freed, the teachings of her grandmother kept Kehinde's energy and strength in order to survive and fight back the brutality of slavery. There are two moments during Kehinde and Taiwo's rapture and their crossing that show how these familiar bounds of affection were cornerstones for the survival of the narrator.

> At that moment, many memories of Savalu arose in my memory, because none of that would have happened if we did not left there, (...) as we walked toward the boarding place, her voice grew clearer, until finally I could see her, my grandmother. Taiwo and I tried to run toward her,

However, the rope around our neck pulled us back. She then threw herself in front of a white man who was watching the boarding, and who was neither of the two who had arrived with the ship, and begged him to let us go with her. The white man pushed my grandmother away with his foot and soon other men grabbed her, while she screamed, asking them to let her go, since we couldn't stay.

(...).

My grandmother was then called close to them and started talking and gesturing, pointing to the Ibêjis and me and Taiwo, then showed the soles of her feet, opened her fingers, raised her arms, jumped, opened her mouth and showed the teeth. (...) but all that was what one of the guards asked her to do, at the behest of the white man, he must have liked it, because he nodded and my grandmother ran toward us. At the time, we didn't even think straight, because we were too happy to see her, However, then I feared for her fate.

She, without any bravery, said that she would go with us wherever we went, and we said that we were all going to become sheep abroad. She said that, if this was the case, she would also come, because the only thing that was left on this land for her was gathered there. It was the three of us and the Ibêjis. She wanted to protest when one of the guards took the statue of Ibêjis from her hands.(...) Tanisha warned that it was no use, while they were already making us into the water. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 23 24)

The excerpt above shows that Dúrójaiyé's love for Kehinde and Taiwo made her abandon her freedom to surrender herself to slavery together with them, sailing to the unknown. The moment of their union is also marked by Dúrójaiyé's strong religious faith – present since the first moments of the narrative –; through the Ibeji. These are twin children-Orishas from Yoruba deities' pantheon. These statues are the path that connects the family during the violence of the rapture. The white captors manage to steal the Ibeji statue away; However, the meaning of their deity accompanies and sustains these subjects. They become a symbolic and ontological connection that helps to face the dehumanizing conditions of slavery.

This is the reason that Kehinde's amefricanity is strongly linked and based on the religious tradition she inherits from her grandmother. The Yoruba Orishas are not a mere sentimental memory; they are ontological and epistemological beings that constitute a fundamental part of Kehinde's existence as human being. We could say that Kehinde's religion is a tool of survivor as much as the blog is a safe space for Ifemelu to express herself as a Nigerian woman in foreign lands. Ifemelu's virtual writing has a much contemporary appeal, since she establishes a network through social media. Kehinde's religion works – firstly – in a particular level, but later it helps her to keep the memory of her family alive, even after they pass, and it also works to help her to connect with other enslaved subjects during her journey. Both writing and religious practice become a tool of survival and resistance against colonial violence in order to recreate – and to politicize – their subjectivity. This results in Ifemelu using her political awareness to spread social debates on her blog, and the religious faith helps Kehinde to connect with other people, keeping alive her own self-consciousness. This would later help her to be a politically active subject.

This is shown on Kehinde's connection to Agontime, an older African woman who knew Kehinde's grandmother:

> Before we left, Nega Florinda approached her and the two greeted each other with longing, and I was surprised when Agontimé recognized me as a descendant of someone she knew. When I spoke of my grandmother and her death, she greeted my grandmother's vodum in me. She said that I had

the blood of a great woman, someone she had admired and that had been very important to her. She also told me not to worry, because I would also find my way in that land. One day, I would visit her in São Luís, at Casa das Minas.

She completed saying that even if I did not follow the religion of the voduns, she would like to tell me about what we had left in Dahomey. Then she gave me a beautiful statue of Oshun, similar to the one my grandmother had in Savalu. She said she was the goddess of fertility, of prosperity. And my ideas and actions would find fertile ground to grow victorious. And that at some point, (...) in an important moment (...) Oshun would help me.

The return to Itaparica was quiet, calm, although in the late afternoon the city was busier. There were many people on the streets, almost all of them Black. They gathered for drumming and dancing or to play capoeira.(...). The history of Agontimé made me sure that my situation would not remain as it was (...), that I would be free and help my people.

Like Agontimé, I would find a way to do it, even though I was not a queen. I didn't know how or what to do, but I had faith in Ibêjis, in Shango and, especially, in my Oshun. But I also remembered Nana, about whom my grandmother always spoke.

It had been a long time since I had felt Taiwo's presence as strongly as it did that day on the boat, in the middle of the sea. The sea into which her

> body had been buried, it was the same one presented her before my eyes (...). As in a dream, I saw Taiwo walking on the water, happy, almost dancing. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 84)

Here, the concepts of amefricanity by the Brazilian González and the "new womanhood" as proposed by U.S. scholar Angela Davis are entangled. Kehinde meets Agontimé, an enslaved woman who was sold by king Andonzan. She was the former widow queen of Dahomey. This meeting resonates powerfully on Kehinde, since she gets to know more about the historical past of her grandmother. Also, through the journey of queen Agontimé (who escaped, lived in quilombos and fought to establish the Dahomean religion on Brazil), Kehinde remembers Dúrójaiyé's experiences and teachings.

These women, their lives and spiritual guidance help Kehinde to create a personal strength that stimulate her to resist domination and find hope to help her own people. Thinking about expanding González's concept, as previously proposed, I would frame this political use of emotion shaped by memory and affection as an expressions of amefricanity. It helps Kehinde to manage the violence and dehumanization that she has been facing since her family was kidnaped. Altogether, the capacity to resist and to turn pain into action would be an expression of Davis' "new womanhood". It is further reinforced in Kehinde's decision of helping her own people somehow, as queen Agontimé did. Besides, the sovereign's life stresses the womanhood proposed on Davis' postulation, since her resistance started during the political relations in Dahomey, and the violence that led her to end up as a slave was set in motion by a male member of the Dahomean royal family (king Adandozan). Agontimé's existence as a politically resistant subject is also an expression of cultural politics of emotion by Black women;

> One can reflect on the role of emotions in the politicisation of subjects. (...) Such emotional journeys are bound up with politicisation, in a way that reanimates the relation between the subject and a collective. However, they are bound up with that politicisation in a mediated rather than immediate way. (AHMED, 2004, p. 171)

Ahmed establishes the discussion of the political role of emotions and its connection with feminism, in this quotation. Notwithstanding I ought be careful while entering a debate

whereas it is appropriate or not to place Agontimé under the sigil of feminist – in a historical and afrocentric perspective –, there is no doubt that her emotions held an important place on leading her to act in defiance of the Dahomean patriarchal oppressive structure. They also helped her to resist the white and patriarchal violence of slavery.

> From Bahia to Maranhão, Agontimé walked through forests, lived in quilombos and toured villages. She was always waiting for a contact from their vodum, always attentive to any sign. Until, one night, she asked to land on a farm called Paradise, where there was a party (...). Tired of walking, she sat by a river, and she was watching people dancing and singing from a distance when she realized that someone was walking along the river's edge, and recognized the wanderer as her vodum. When she remembered the recommendation never to look at him, she greeted him with her eyes lowered and he rewarded her by indicating the way forward and the place where she should build her temple and establish her people's home, the Casa das Minas. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 86)

Even suffering violence from her own family, Agontimé did not give up what she believed – her religion and its emotional value. Similar to Kehinde's process of politicization and constitution of amefricanity, the queen had a deep connection to her religious tradition, which helped her to not surrender the multiple aggression she faced. As Ahmed discusses (2004, p. 171), religion holds a major place in the mediation and politicization of emotion and taking of action by Black women.

Other important character on the novel that resembles Agontimé and her journey is Nega Florinda. She is a storyteller devoted to the the Dahomean Voodoo practices, just like

Dúrójaiyé. She is the one who helps Kehinde getting statues of the Orishas that her grandmother taught her to worship. Also, Florinda highlights the necessity of explaining and standing against the homogenization of African religions, mainly when it comes to its diversity:

> Nega Florinda said she already knew that I needed to talk to her and that I could help. I told her how I got there and she said that this was already a sign that the Voduns and Orishas were with me, even though at the moment I could not worship them as they deserved. If I had survived it was because there was an important mission to do. She was also a jeje, captured in Ardra more than sixty years before, living as a free woman for over thirty years.
>
> In Dahome, she had become a voduno (Voduno or vodúnsi: name given to priestesses fasts in the cult of Dãnh-gbi, the Great Serpent). Like my grandmother before she was expelled from the court of Abomé. She also said that she should know almost all the voduns that my grandmother knew and that she could even tell me about them, but it wouldn't do much good because they were from Africa, they were not yet settled in Brazil, they had stayed there. (...)
>
> (...) In Brazil, the cult of Orishas was too strong even for the great power that the voduns had. She also said that I could use the Orishas to worship some voduns, because in Bahia, Mawu, Khebiosô, Legba, Anyi-ewo, Loko, Hoho, Saponan and Wu were worshiped, respectively, as Olorum, Shango, tlegbá, Oshun, Iroco, Ibêjis,

> Xaponã and Olokum. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 50)

As the excerpt above shows, the expertise of Florinda and her devotion resemble Agontime's faith. The queen and Florinda both share what Ahmed (2004) classifies as a mediated politicization through religion. It is important to explain that we cannot reduce religion as solely a political vehicle to African people and their descendants on the Diasporas, since it has a much broader meaning. "Religion" has an actual central ontological and epistemological role in African's societies, being cornerstone also to shape individual identities. But in diaspora, this devotion has an imminent political nature, since it helped the diasporic Black subjects to organize themselves and to preserve their own sense of identity. It helped to endure life despite of the colonizer's horrific behaviors and the slaves' non-human conditions of living.

Both Agontimé and Florinda live religion as a way to preserve their individual and social identities. It becomes what drives them to resist, helping them to become political agents within their communities. This is related to Sara Ahmed's proposal that "(…) emotions circulate between bodies, (…) they 'stick' as well as move." (AHMED, 2004, p. 4). Agontimé and Florinda's sharing of their religious beliefs with younger people turns out to be an important way of keeping affective memory and the positive emotions that they feel for their homeland alive. It moves them into creating safe spaces for worshipping their Gods, thus creating a sense of belonging and identity that resonates in the struggle against slavery. This is highlighted also when the enslaved people decided to create new families (since their original ones were either left on Africa or separated throughout the crossing), they choose their new relatives according to the Orisha that people shared in common (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 73).

Another important feature of Kehinde's amefricanity is the fact that she goes through the process of formal schooling, with her younger slave master. The moment marks the first time she meets a schooled Black person. Fatumbi is a Black man who has no fear of talking to white society:

> The Black man was called Fatumbi. He was very tall, thin and formal, possessing a seriousness that

> made people afraid to approachhim. The day after his arrival, the classes for the little girl Maria Clara began. She had to learn at least letters and numbers, in the books and notebooks that were hastily fetched in the capital. They also bought ink, feather and other accessories for the little girl, and a blackboard where Fatumbi was writing what she needed to copy. Classes were held in the library, which was behind one of the doors in the huge hall, one that I had never seen open before. I was happy to be able to attend the classes as a companion for the little girl, and I tried to take advantage of the opportunity as well. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 56)

Kehinde's meeting with another Black person who is schooled is a turning point for her. She gets the opportunity to access the colonizer's system of symbolic power. Fatumbi's behavior has shown to her that subalternization is imposed rather than a natural feature. The fact that he welcomes Kehinde in the home schooling process is pivotal moment for her. From Fatumbi's education she is capable of articulate herself on the colonizer's knowledge and later it allows her to become an engaged agent of resistance. Accessing literacy allowed Kehinde to comprehend the political discussions that white people hadd on the master's house, about Brazil's independence and the abolition of slavery (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 98). Later, after she moves to the capital with the widow of her former master, Kehinde joins Fatumbi again. The same man that taught her to read also introduced her to the world of political activities. That is the foreshadowing of an important event. Due to Fatumbi's teaching, Kehinde revolted against her condition and later this led her to join the Malê Revolt[12] – which recalls Sara Ahmed's statement that emotions are mediated and that they move us (2004, p. 171).

> For, as I have already argued, emotions are what move us, and how we are moved involves

[12] This was a revolt organized by African Muslims against slavery in the capital of Bahia, Brazil, in 1835.

> interpretations of sensations and feelings not only in the sense that we interpret what we feel, but also in that what we feel might be dependent on past interpretations that are not necessarily made by us, but that come before us. Focusing on emotions as mediated rather than immediate reminds us that knowledge cannot be separated from the bodily world of feeling and sensation; knowledge is bound up with what makes us sweat, shudder, tremble, all those feelings that are crucially felt on the bodily surface, the skin surface where we touch and are touched by the world. (AHMED, 2004, p. 171)

Ahmed's connection of the bodily reactions, the emotions and the moving into action is omnipresent on Kehinde's trajectory and the constitution of her amefricanity. Ever since the brutal crossing from Africa to Brazil, she went through dehumanizing punishments as a child slave and later she was raped by her slave master, whom had been sexually abusing her and other women for a long time. Her ancestral memory of Africa and Fatumbi's education provided her ways to preserve her sense of being human and helped her to create her meanings into political resistance:

> I found the subject interesting even though I did not understand it, as it was as if the arguments they used against Portuguese domination were also valid against the domination they had over us, the slaves. The same freedom that they wanted to govern their own country, we wanted for our lives. The exploitation was the same and even more inhumane because it was about lives and not just about paying taxes and occupying political posts. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 99)

The previous excerpt is one of her thoughts while listening to the conversations on the Master's house. This movement was the one known as "*Revolta dos Malês*", which was organized by African Muslims against white dominance. They sought to take over Bahia and end slavery. Kehinde engaged in political action through her contact with Fatumbi. Her role was carrying messages to help the rebels, while she worked selling things through the city:

> All the money that the Muslims earned selling cigars was used to organize the revolt. At that moment they were committed to buying the freedom letters from some slaves who would play an important role. Alufá Licutan was the one they wanted to free with urgency, However, the owner refused to sell him, (...). Several Arabic schools had been set up, the most important one was in Mestre Dandará's store. As I learned when I gave in to curiosity, all correspondence they exchanged was written in Arabic characters.
>
> I had to confess to Fatumbi that I opened one of the messages that I had to transport around the city, wrapped in cigars (...). I wanted to know everything that was going on, and I recognized the writing that I had seen in books, but that was a little different. (...)
>
> Even if those cigars fell into the wrong hands, it would be very difficult to decipher the message they carried. To find out what was written, only knowing Arabic and Hausa, which was almost limited to Muslim Hausa. (...)
>
> When Fatumbi had time to talk to me about the organization, I was amazed at their intelligence. I

> wanted to participate even more. But he did not allow it, saying that the important thing at that time was not a person doing many things, because it could attract attention to themselves, but rather having the largest number of people to share the work between them, and that this would also be important on the day the fight.
>
> I wanted to know how and where the fight would take place and he said he hoped that it wouldn't even happen, that by the appointed day they would have managed to gather so many people that the police would not be able to defend themselves and would hand over Bahia without any resistance. However, they were also preparing for the armed struggle, a function of Mussé and Umaru, who were gradually getting weapons and finding ways to hide them in the various shops and houses occupied by Muslims. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 310-316)

Kehinde's willingness to collaborate with the revolt shows how her thoughts and feelings from her bodily world experience turned her into a politically active subject. This behavior of engaging in collective care and social change became later a fundamental part of her ameficranity. As the previous excerpt show, she was not willing to just be an ignorant volunteer, but she also tried to read the messages sent by the Muslim rebels. And she was also willing to know where the confrontation with the white repressive forces would take place.

She also wanted to have more active participation and responsibilities within the organization of the revolt, which resounds with Angela Davis' statement that Black women who accepted slavery in a passive state of behavior were the exception rather than the rule (1983, p. 22), since, according to the philosopher, Black women were motivated by "(…) their passionate abhorrence of slavery (…) driven by their concrete experiences as slaves" (DAVIS, 1983, p. 22).

Kehinde's amefricanity is aligned to Sara Ahmed's proposal of emotions as vehicles of mediation that move subjects and relations. Having her body violated multiple times during the abyssal brutality of slavery, Kehinde experienced several traumas and hard emotions that did not drive her into accepting her condition, but rather have turned her into a subject willing to be part of a process of change with other people who shared her same goals. Therefore, that is what Kehinde's amefricanity stands for throughout the narrative: The creation of this new womanhood based on political resistance and the conscious choice of not accepting things as they are. Through her emotions, her affective memories and the multiple networks of support and caring that she found amongst her equals, Kehinde chooses to subvert the order that violently destroyed everything she had known and loved. Kehinde's amefricanity stands for a choice that almost all Black women take: Not accepting the colonizer's world, but rather we are creating a new reality. One in which all worlds are possible.

3.4.– Belonging: Maya's return and the search for home on *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986)

Both Kehinde and Ifemelu move outside Africa to live in a context of diaspora. Their amefricanity and their way of being politically involved and engaged have to do also with a search for a place to belong, even in contexts of personal isolation and brutal structural violence. Maya Angelou's biographical book *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* follows the same quest, but it makes the reverse path. The book tells us the years that Maya spent – together with her son, Guy – living on several African countries, amongst them Egypt and Ghana. As a Black family settling in West Africa, the first impressions were that "(…) for the first time in our lives the color of our skin was accepted as correct and normal." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 7).

Angelou's decision of leaving the United States relates to her commitment as an activist associated with Pan Africanism. The Pan Africanist Movement was an "(…) educational, political, and cultural movement which had a lasting impact on the liberation of people of African descent, in the continent of Africa and the Diaspora." (MALISA, NHENGEZE, 2018, p. 1). The movement originated on the universities spread across the African continent as its political quest was uniting Africa. It also aimed to stimulate the independence of African countries and the effective psychological and economic emancipation of its peoples (MALISA, NHENGEZE, 2018, p. 2). Angelou was actively participant in pan-africanist

groups and shared their ideas, while she was also married to an anti-apartheid activist (MALISA, NHENGEZE, 2018, p. 8).

Her years in Africa made her fully conscious of the possibility of living in a world where being Black was not a problem; "Her experiences in Ghana gave her a taste of living in a place where racism was not the norm, where Blacks were not subjected to violence" (MALISA, NHENGEZE, 2018, p. 9). Malcolm X persuaded her to fight for Black people's liberation back in America and she eventually decided to go back to the United States to fight alongside the Civil Rights movement (MALISA, NHENGEZE, 2018, p. 9).

This research's goal is to rethink Maya Angelou's narrative through bell hooks' concepts of belonging and articulate how this is connected to Davis' new womanhood and González's amefricanity. I will start the analysis of Maya's experience by addressing to bell hooks' book *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009). The scholar states: "I have yearned to find my place in this world, to have a sense of homecoming, a sense of being wedded to a place." (HOOKS, 2009, p. 2).

Similarly, Angelou is also on this quest for belonging to a place while returning to Africa: "We had come home, and if home was not what we had expected, never mind, our need for belonging allowed us to ignore the obvious and to create real places or even illusory places, befitting our imagination." (Angelou 17 2009). Both share this feeling that they want to settle somewhere, find a place where they can create a safe world to live in. Discussing what would this homecoming be, hooks defines that it would be a place where she could be safe and welcomed to walk, do daily activities and establishing connection with people, creating "(…) a place of freedom." (HOOKS, 2009, p. 2).

The search for a place to belong made hooks review her childhood, analyzing her personal and structural traumas as a Black woman that was raised on the southern part of the United States (HOOKS, 2009, p. 19). According to the scholar, she was in a pursuit of healing herself in searching for being whole.

> Making the connections between geographical location and psychological states of being was useful for me. It empowered me to recognize the serious dysfunctional aspect of the southern

> world I was raised in, the ways internalized racism affected our emotional intelligence, our emotional life and yet it also revealed the positive aspects of my upbringing, the strategies of resistance that were life-enhancing. Certainly racial separatism, in conjunction with resistance to racism and white supremacy, empowered non-conforming black folks to create a sub-culture based on oppositional values. (HOOKS, 2009, p. 19).

According to hooks, her own homecoming was a mental process of facing and healing from several traumas, confronting her family's positive and negative aspects, reframing her personal history in broader social, historical and geographical dimensions while also connecting with ancestral memories and traumas. Therefore, this sense of belonging is not limited to an acceptable and loving external environment, but profoundly related to an internal resolution of the psychological and biopolitical conflicts caused by slavery, racism, gender oppressions and poverty, that are shared amongst most of African diasporic subjects and communities. This viewpoint can allow us to think of Angelou's years on Africa under a new perspective.

The return to Africa was central point of the Pan-Africanist project to the people of the diaspora. It was often understood, at the time, by scholars and activists as a solution to the condition of suffering that Black people lived. Angelou's experiences both show us this ideal and it shows us other side of it.

> Our people had always longed for home. For centuries we had sung about a place not built with hands, where the streets were paved with gold, and were washed with honey and milk. There the saints would march around wearing white robes and jeweled crowns. There, at last, we would

> study war no more and, more important, no one would wage war against us again.
>
> The old Black deacons, ushers, mothers of the church and junior choirs only partially meant heaven as that desired destination. In the yearning, heaven and Africa were inextricably combined. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 18)

Angelou shows the idealization of the African continent as heaven, the so awaited homecoming for Black people. It would be a restoration, a return; it would reinstate the history of African people from the brutality of slavery. There were some political initiatives that engaged money and material resources to accomplish this dream for Black people: The Liberia Exodus Arkansas Colony (from 1877-1880), which was a movement constituted by South American Black people exhausted by the failure of the Reconstruction politics of Arkansas (these were public policies adopted by the local government to try to integrate Black people on the U.S. society) (BARNES, 2004, p. 13). Also, the Garveyist/Back to Africa movement was heavily influenced by the rhetoric of Africa as the Promised Land.

Marcus Garvey was an early 20th century Black activist that created the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which professed the ideals of ethnical purity and the need of the diasporic Black communities to go back to Africa and make an economically autonomous and politically independent nation on their original continent (SINGH, 2004, p. 20). Both initiatives somehow share what hooks (2009, p. 2) addresses as the need to have "(…) a sense of homeplace (…)".

Marcus Garvey had relevant impact on the United States and his ideas became influential and shaped the rhetoric of part of the Black Movement activism during the late 20th century, from the Rastafari movement to the Black Power (SINGH, 2004, p. 21). It is possible that Angelou was also influenced by his ideas when she became an activist and decided to move to Cairo, and, later, Ghana. There is no doubt of how important Garvey's contributions were to the history of diasporic Black people. However, the process of making home on this research will be done also through acknowledging hooks' contribution where she defines that the internal homecoming is a fundamental part of being connected to a place.

This research acknowledges the process of belonging as healing from trauma and making home within oneself. It is related to finding “A Place Where The Soul Can Rest” (HOOKS, 2009, p. 143).

Angelou’s feelings while living on Cairo, Ghana and other African countries were mixed between experiencing acceptance of living amongst people who looked like her and being disregarded as a non-African Black person, which made her feel constantly as a foreign and a stranger.

> Our people for over three hundred years had been made so useful, a bloody war had been fought and lost, rather than have our usefulness brought to an end. Since we were descendants of African slaves torn from the land, we reasoned we wouldn’t have to earn the right to return, yet we wouldn’t be so arrogant as to take anything for granted. We would work and produce, then snuggle down into Africa as a baby nuzzles in a mother’s arms.
>
> I was soon swept into an adoration for Ghana as a young girl falls in love, heedless and with slight chance of ending the emotion requited
>
> (…)
>
> And now, less than one hundred years after slavery was abolished, some descendants of those early slaves taken from Africa, returned, weighted with a heavy hope, to a continent which they could not remember, to a home which had shamefully little memory of them. Which one of us could know that years of bondage, brutalities, the mixture of other bloods, customs and languages had transformed us into an

> unrecognizable tribe? Of course, we knew that we were mostly unwanted in the land of our birth and saw promise on our ancestral continent. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 22-23)

The impossibility of feeling totally wedded to her ancestral continent is a shadow that lingers over Angelou's narrative from her arrival to her eventual departure to the United States. She does feel safer and enchanted by Ghana, Cairo and other African countries, However, the fact that Angelou does not deal with her previous traumas seem to be always between her and achieving the feeling of belonging. Angelou learns to love and to value the important political advances made by African countries and their then recent experiences of struggle for political independence.

Nevertheless, the violence and the internal suffering caused on the United States were bigger than her trial to move away from it through her return to Africa. Angelou's emotions are fundamental for her to start question the 'dreamland' that she had previously idealized, Maya's narrative can be connected to Ahmed's statement of how bodily sensations and experiences shape our internal landscapes and it also ultimately influences our actions (2004, p. 171). Also, some strong beliefs held by Garvey – the racial purity and the need of a homogenous unity – and the Pan-Africanist are questioned by her on the excerpt above, since she thinks that Black people might be now an "unrecognizable tribe" due to miscegenation and to the brutality they have been through on the foreign lands. It would make it impossible to restore the dreamland she had grown up dreaming about:

> I lay on my bed drinking for myself and for all the nameless orphans of Africa who had been shunted around the world.
>
> I drank and admitted to a boundless envy of those who remained on the continent, out of fortune or perdy. Their countries had been exploited and their cultures had been discredited by colonialism. Nonetheless, they could reect

> through their priests and chiefs on centuries of continuity. The lowliest could call the name of ancestors who lived centuries earlier. The land upon which they lived had been in their people's possession beyond remembered time. Despite political bondage and economic exploitation, they had retained an ineradicable innocence.
>
> I doubted if I, or any Black from the diaspora, could really return to Africa. We wore skeletons of old despair like necklaces, heralding our arrival, and we were branded with cynicism. In America we danced, laughed, procreated; we became lawyers, judges, legislators, teachers, doctors, and preachers, but as always, under our glorious costumes we carried the badge of a barbarous history sewn to our dark skins. It had often been said that Black people were childish, but in America we had matured without ever experiencing the true abandon of adolescence. Those actions which appeared to be childish most often were exhibitions of bravado, not unlike humming a jazz tune while walking into a gathering of the Ku Klux Klan. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 77-78)

This excerpt shows how Angelou aligns with hooks. Even if the physical return to the 'original land' was made, the internal dimension of it, healing from trauma and violence was not accomplished. The expressions such as "unrecognizable tribe" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 23) and the metaphor of wearing "(…) skeletons of old despair like necklaces (…)"(ANGELOU, 1986, p. 78) show us how the narrator was split on her geographical location and her psychological state while living outside the United States. Angelou's salvation was attached – on the beginning of the book – to the return to the African continent. Surprisingly, the

narrative changes it. Slowly, mainly through the contact with other Black people from the U.S., Angelou has to confront her own internal conflicts and the geopolitical struggles that her community is facing back on the United States.

This also relates with an insight that grows within Maya throughout her story, and that eventually leads her to leave Ghana. Her personal expression of amefricanity changes from the necessity of creating home literally on African soil to the idea that Africa remained within her ancestors and herself. This memory is not necessarily an essentialist belonging, but rather a network of resistance, support, affection and engagement with the traditional past and the important values held by the diasporic Black communities.

This feeling, Angelou's own amefricanity, also moves her into political action, resonating with Davis' proposal of this new womanhood. She previously had been an active support of Marthin Luther King, believing that his pro-peace politics would be the solution for the racial conflict in America; "After all, when I worked for him, I had been deluded into agreeing with Reverend King that love would cure America of its pathological illnesses, that indeed our struggle for equal rights would redeem the country's baleful history" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 119). Later, the failure of King and his project made her rejecting and trying to erase this part of her political activism, while in Ghana, fearing to be dismissed by her radical friends (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 119). It is Malcolm X's words that touches Angelou's feeling and helps her to decide going back to the United States. Malcolm was a "(…) big brother advisor, suggesting that it was time for me to come home. "The country needs you. Our people need you. (…) you should all come home. You have seen Africa, bring it home and teach our people about the homeland." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 136). This statement brings a call for political action to Maya and her friends that accompanied Malcolm during his visit while on Ghana, and it also expands the concept of home, align itself with hooks ideas of geographical location and psychological state of mind.

Malcolm establishes home as both the United States ("The country needs you. (…) you should all come home") and Africa ("You have seen Africa, bring it home and teach our people about the homeland") as 'home', which fits hooks' ideas that dealing with the internal damages and healing subjects can help us to create environments of peace, respect and safety, shaping homecoming (HOOKS, 2009, p. 143).

The expansion of Angelou's amefricanity allows her to reshape the idea of home, the need to belong. It weds perfectly hooks' ideas of home being both an internal and an external

creation, coming from healing, understanding and shaping political action and collective engagement.

> If the heart of Africa still remained allusive, my search for it had brought me closer to understanding myself and other human beings. The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned. It impels mighty ambitions and dangerous capers. We amass great fortunes at the cost of our souls, or risk our lives in drug dens from London's Soho, to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. We shout in Baptist churches, wear yarmulkes and wigs and argue even the tiniest points in the Torah, or worship the sun and refuse to kill cows for the starving. Hoping that by doing these things, home will find us acceptable or failing that, that we will forget our awful yearning for it.
>
> (...)
>
> There was much to cry for, much to mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live. We had crossed the unknowable oceans in chains and had written its mystery into "Deep River, my home is over Jordan." Through the centuries of despair and dislocation, we had been creative, because we faced down death by daring to hope. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 189-199)

Angelou's creation of home and belonging has to do with her amefricanity. Unlike Kehinde and Ifemelu, her first movement is the choice of returning to Africa seeking to restore her sense of humanity. An expansion of this quest brings her the awareness that homecoming and healing are inextricably connected. Her amefricanity conjuncts the renewing of her political activism and brings her back to the United States. Angelou embodies, then, both hooks and Malcolm X's ideas that home is multiple. It is the African memory within them perpetuated through the network of support build to resist the violence of the diaspora. Home is also the act of fighting for the sake of their community in a violent and segregator country. Homecoming means forcing the unavoidable change that will allow humanity to know the radical equality necessary to achieve harmony and respect amongst ourselves.

3.5.– "Daring to Hope": Amefricanity and the New Womanhood on Ifemelu, Kehinde and Maya

Throughout this first part of the analysis, we have been exploring three different characters and their journeys. *Americanah* (2013) brings a fictional narrative to explore the displacing of a young Nigerian woman studying abroad on the United States. *Um defeito de cor* (2006) is a fictionalized biography that explores the brutal coming of a young enslaved girl to Brazil, during the 19th century. *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986) is a biographical narrative of Maya Angelou's years on the African continent and her eventual return to the United States with a renewed sense of home.

As explored in chapter two, the three literary works come from specific contexts and different national backgrounds. Although that, there are plenty of experiences shared amongst the three characters in the narratives that allow us to identify the intersections of their narratives, and – ultimately – of Black women as a group submitted to a certain kind of repression and violent situations.

It is necessary to highlight from the analysis that all the suffering from oppressions does not forbid the characters of standing against it, ultimately reinforcing Angela Davis statement that the Black enslaved women build and spread a "(…) a legacy of hard work, perseverance

and self-reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and insistence on sexual equality." (DAVIS, 1981, p. 22). Also, as I propose that this "new womanhood" is the material political praxis of these Black women, I highlight the expansion of González's political cultural category of amefricanity (1988). Framing it alongside the perspective of Sara Ahmed's cultural politics of emotion,

I expand Lélia González's original concept to debate the subjectivity of Black women as a political tool to change their reality. Then, we can think now of amefricanity as a group-designed concept to reframe the collective experiences of Black diasporic people in America (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 78), but also as a concept that can debate the individual living and its relation to communitarian resistance through the articulation of subjectivity, emotion, consciousness and, ultimately, political action. Connecting both Gonzaléz and Davis concepts is also a political move to reinstate a necessary bridge and a conceptual and intellectual coalition that will allow Black people and our necessary allies to understand the history of both continent, we can rethink the Americas not as a result of colonization, but instead as a social place shaped by our creativity and resistance, and we can reframe Africa not as our 'dreamland', but as the source of ancestor memory and different epistemological and ontological parameters that can help humanity to overcome the crisis that the white and colonialist capitalism has thrown all of us in.

Through that we can dare to hope that a new world is possible, the world that Kehinde, Maya and Ifemelu ultimately fought for during their narrative. Following the analysis, the three next chapters will specifically analyze each character in detail, and the final chapter will bring an overview of the works altogether and how the characters changes happened through the narratives.

CHAPTER IV
"'KEHINDE' IS FOR THE SACRED": ANALYZING KEHINDE (*UM DEFEITO DE COR*)

> "My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are *cultural artefacts* of a particular kind."
>
> Benedict Anderson – Imagined Communities

4.0. Kehinde and The Discursive (Re)Birth of a Nation: A Foreword

This chapter's epigraph comes from Benedict Anderson's seminal work *Imagined Communities* (1983). This is perhaps the best known work from the field of studies about nationalism, and its popularity comes from Anderson's powerful tackling of the creation of nations and nationalism as cultural artifacts (1983, p. 4). He proposes nations as imagined political communities (1983, p. 5-6) whose emotional attachment comes from the creation of tradition; its continuity based in the creation of social, cultural and historical common discourses (ANDERSON, 1983, p. 5-6). Kehinde and her narrative can also be a mean to rethink Brazilian national identity. On this wise , Santos (2016) proposes that Kehinde's narrative in *Um defeito de cor* (A Trouble of Color, 2006) offers new possibilities to rethink Brazilian national formation. According to the scholar, the character and her trajectory are an epitome of Brazilian history from a new discursive perspective. This perspective is the one of Black women. Thus, Santos proposes that Kehinde symbolizes the collective struggle for emancipation by Brazilian Black women (SANTOS, 2016, p. 163).

Discussing together both Santos and Anderson's ideas, we can place *Um defeito de cor* as a redefinition of national discourse, challenging the traditional definitions of Brazilian identity. This is done through centering the perspective on Brazilian Black women as narrators of the 'birth' of the nation. Santos (2016, p. 167-168) contends that the consequences of changing perspectives is defying foundational narratives of Brazilian identity and 'recreating' the past from the present.

Therefore, Gonçalves' novel presents a reconstruction of national memory and history similar to González's proposal of amefricanity as a political and cultural category to rethink the history of the Americas and national history. Kehinde's trajectory brings important element of Black women's struggles to resist colonial dominance, thus challenging stereotypical myths and urging for a historical revisionism of our national memory (SANTOS, 2016, p. 170). Santos (2016, p. 170) also argues that *Um defeito de cor* (2006) proves that contemporary Brazilian literature is a prosperous cultural space to discuss history and to change canonical cultural perspectives.

Therefore, this chapter will proceed with the critical exploration of the character through the previously presented theoretical framework. Now I am also emphasizing the perspective of recreating – or reframing – national discourse, as well as collective social memory, in Brazil.

Through Kehinde, the nation can be born-again.

4.1.Becoming amefricana: Analyzing Kehinde

4.1.1. Osun as Orisha head[13] and political guide: Kehinde's amefricanity through her connection with the divine:

As previously discussed, González's concept of amefricanity postulates a political and cultural category that allows us to rethink the historical formation of the Americas. Ana Maria Gonçalves' book offers us plenty of opportunities to do so. A central element to be reframed in this analysis is religion and its political, social and emotional meaning for enslaved African peoples in the diaspora.

During the process of colonization, Christianism has played an important role in controlling and dominating non-white Brazilian populations. On the other hand, African and Afro-Brazilian religions have been responsible for political resistance and creating communities for enslaved and diasporic African peoples. This feature has been briefly explored in chapter three and it will be further investigated in this section, through the analysis of the presence of the Orisha Osun. Osun is an Yoruba deity often referred as "river goddess" or "African Venus", which are "(…) ethnocentric and reductive views"(MURPHY,

[13] "Orisha head" is an expression in English to designate which Orisha 'commands' your destiny.

SANFORD, 2001, p. 2). These views show how 'westernized' are the interpretations of the religious deities brought to Brazil, as well as it shows the limited understanding that the colonizers had about the relationship between Africans and their religions.

Murphy and Sanford (2001, p. 2) state that Osun is a central and powerful force in Yoruba thought and practice. Her power is a multidimensional one, conveying features of "(….) political, economic, divinatory, maternal, natural, therapeutic" natures (MURPHY, SANFORD, 2001, p.2). Osun has her multiple powers expressed in the features to which she is associated: love, health, wealth, love, fertility, but also death, fury, strength and sorcery (MURPHY, SANFORD, 2001, p. 7).

Regarding Kehinde's journey, Osun is an omnipresent force and She is a fundamental element to define the identity of the character. After arriving in Brazil, Kehinde soon knows that her head (*orí*) belonged to Osun: "(…)when I talked to Rosa Mina, I heard that I had a very visible and powerful Osun on my head, whom I should honor, thank and ask for protection"(GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 74). In Yoruba cosmology, *orí* is a polysemic metaphysical concept that means the "(…) bearer of a person's destiny" (GBADEGESIN, 2004, p. 314). The word is literally translated as "head" and some associate it to a "spiritual head" (OFUASIA, 2016, p. 186). Then, when discovering which Orisha would guide her, Kehinde sees herself as associated to Osun in a spiritual and epistemological way. After this revelation, Kehind searches for the help of a woman named Policarpa. This woman was born near the Osun River and she tells Kehinde more about the deity. Policarpa tells her that Osun is the mother of sorcery and lady of the birds (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 74). She also tells Kehinde of one event told on Yoruba tradition about Osun's vengeance against the male Orishas. The male deities used to reunite to decide and organizing things, However, they excluded their female counterparts. As revenge, Osun stopped fertility and prosperity on earth (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 74). The male Orishas had to beg for Osun to come to their reunions and when her fury was calmed, the world turned again to its normality (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 74).

This history narrated to Kehinde and her connections to the goddess resonate in the character's political engagement – and personal behavior – during several moments in the narrative:

> I asked her to speak to Belchior so he could introduce me to the Muslims, and she replied that she couldn't, that they didn't speak to any woman who wasn't theirs, just with men. But I was neither a woman nor a daughter of no one, no one's mother, and if so, they could talk to me.
>
> I don't know if Belchior came to comment on anything, but from that day on I always we managed to pass by the Muslims when we were all gathered in the yard after work, and greeted saying "salamaleco". In the beginning they lowered the heads and didn't answer, until I decided to invent that I had a message from Fatumbi. They looked to me and I told them that they didn't need to worry, that they didn't have to ask permission from nobody to talk to me, because nobody was responsible for me. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 85).

On the excerpt above, Kehinde's behavior defies religious and social rules that constrained gender interactions, just like Osun did with the male Orishas. Not accepting the fact that the African Muslim would not talk to her, she managed to talk to them. It is also noticeable how she disassociated herself from any male authority, emphasizing that she was responsible for herself. Kehinde's subversion of gender barriers and the denial to constraints related to her condition as women are also features that are constantly present on many of the tales related Osun in Yoruba religious practice. Osun's rebellion against the male Orishas and Kehinde's rebellious behavior (that led her to force the communicative barriers of African Muslims) also indicate a womanhood that is detached from perspectives of submission. The decision to rebellion and to talk indicates a social behavior toward active agency and fighting to have a vigorous social voice. This contact with the Muslims – and Fatumbi – led Kehinde to become an active plotter on their revolt.

The fact that Kehinde defines herself – at this point of the narrative – as no one's daughter, wife or mother also emphasizes the characteristic of her personality as an active person, independent in relation to male authority, even in the context of slavery. This trait of her personality can be related to her Orisha head, since Osun is a central agent on the genesis stories of Yoruba people, in direct opposition to genesis stories in Bible, solely focused on male authority (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. viii).

Osun plays a major role on Yoruba religion, often being related to the centrality of female existence to society. This is reproduced on Kehinde's life and thought since her adolescence when she states that she wanted to have a big vulva like Osun (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 85). This is a recurrent thought and Osun is a constant positive reference for Kehinde during puberty. When relating her beauty standards and sexual awakening to the Orisha – and therefore understanding it as positive and powerful – , Kehinde steps away from the colonizer's perspectives on gender and power relations. It can be said that Osun is an important constitutive of Kehinde's womanhood. Functioning as a positive external reference, Osun becomes a powerful force to which Kehinde constantly connects in several moments. Through learning about Osun and starting to worship her, Kehinde's self-confidence grows. Also, as a sovereign female deity, Osun is an authority figure to Kehinde, a counter-point to the colonizer's male centered and patriarchal religion and world view.

As the narrative develops, this connection gets deeper. Kehinde gets the revelation – from a Babalaô[14] – that she would face many harsh moments and challenges during her life. She is advised to keep fighting and to have faith, especially in Osun (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 200). She follows this advice and gets results from it. In a particular moment Kehinde finds gold and precious jewelry inside of the Osun statue she had gained from queen Agontime:

> When I went to pick up Osun, I looked at the ground around me and it was covered with dust gold that had fallen from inside the wooden statue. I noticed it better and realized that her vulva had increased in size and showed a great gash. It was from there that the dust was dripping. I arrived with her near the window, where it was

[14] A title, in Afro-Brazilian religions, that could be associated to the one of priest.

> clearer, and realized that there was still much more in there. I forced the opening a little and the statue broke in half, showing a real fortune. Powdered gold and nuggets, and many other stones of varied, bright, small colors, looking like transparent glass, occupied the crack in the statue, which was large. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 222)

This moment has a powerful symbolic meaning. Osun is also the Orisha that 'rules' prosperity and wealth (MURPHY, SANFORD, 2001, p. 2) as well as fertility. During this passage, these distinct features are metaphorically and physically embodied by Osun's statue which had in its inside these valuable stones. From these stones, Kehinde is able to get the money she needed to buy her own freedom. By such concatenation of events, Osun is symbolically responsible for Kehinde's freedom. This adds another layer of importance to the Orisha in Kehinde's life. Kehinde thanks the Orisha by constructing to her an altar near the beach (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 226).

Kehinde's devotion to Osun is based on keeping the ritual and offerings to the Orisha constantly. Kehinde often narrates how she built something for Osun or offered her something or baptized something in honor to her. This dynamic of devotion can be traced back to the original cult dedicated to the deity. In the Osun festival, celebrated in the Osun River, the most important authority figures from the Òsogbo, Yoruba and other peoples sacrifice and make several offering to Osun (OLUPONA, 2001, p. 57). Kehinde's devotional offerings also keep alive the tradition of this ritual, notwithstanding she is in a diasporic condition.

Kehinde's rituals and offerings to Osun perpetuate the Orisha's presence in the narrative and on the character's life, from the beginning to the end of the story. Through that, Osun becomes a major force in the plot. She arrives to Kehinde's life on her childhood becoming a female reference and a connection to the character's past and personal memories from her homeland. Through the development of the plot, the influence of the Orisha in Kehinde's destiny and behavior grows exponentially. Kehinde herself presents behaviors that can be directly traced to Osun's stories from the Yoruba oral tradition. Osun becomes a central influence on Kehinde's personality and the Orisha directly influences her personal life by 'giving' her symbolically the means to achieve her freedom.

Thus, this connection to Osun and the relation Kehinde maintains with the deity show how central religious expressions are for African peoples. Oyeronke Olajubu explains that further. According to the scholar; “any attempt to separate culture and religion among the Yoruba will therefore be futile” (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. 2). Olajubu explains that to the Yoruba people, religion and culture are intrinsically intertwined and “(…) nothing lies outside the scope of religion. Religion permeates every aspect of Yoruba living, be it governance, economics, or medicine.” (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. 2). The omnipresence of Osun in Kehinde’s life and their relation proves that, since Osun is a symbolic and material source of strength for the character beyond the field of religious devotion, influencing all of her path since she arrives in Brazil.

Considering the previously exposed theories, especially Sarah Amed’s one, I also propose that Osun is an emotional driving force in Kehinde’s life. Similarly to Osun’s central role in Yoruba society, the deity does not limit her role in the narrative to a religious reference in Kehinde’s trajectory. Through the plot, Osun becomes a manifestation of power that directly moves the main character into change and action. This is consonant with Ahmed’s proposal about emotions and their cultural and social roles:

> Emotions are after all moving, even if they do not simply move between us. We should note that the word ‘emotion’ comes from the Latin, *emovere*, referring to ‘to move, to move out’. Of course, emotions are not only about movement, they are also about attachments or about what connects us to this or that. The relationship between movement and attachment is instructive. What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the ‘where’ of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others. (AHMED, 2004, p. 11)

As a manifestation of emotional power, and consonant with Ahmed's ideas exposed on the excerpt above, Osun leads Kehinde to move in several moments, on internal changes and social processes. Osun guides Kehinde into her transformation from child to the discovery of her womanhood, symbolizing a positive reference of femininity to her. Osun's statue given to Kehinde by queen Agontime marks a turning point on the narrative when the character consciously decide to follow the sovereign example and fight against slavery. Later, the same statue of Osun offers the material conditions for Kehinde to buy her freedom. Both on the intimate level and on the material realm, Osun changes Kehinde through the narrative, moving her out of the condition of enslaved child into a powerful and prosperous free merchant woman. Also, on the dimension of attachment, Osun reminds Kehinde of her grandmother, even the statue she receives from queen Agontime relates to the one that Dúrójaiyé had in Savalu (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 84). Osun is both movement and attachment, being a political force that urges Kehinde to fight as well as reminds her of her origins and the ones she lost.

The idea of Osun as a moving force from Ahmed's perspective is also aligned with Olajubu's explanation about the central role and social power of women in Yoruba society, where they are also central driving forces (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. 71). Also the scholar contends that several of the narratives related to Osun are cultural allegories that express and reinforce the centrality of women as social moving forces in Yoruba society (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. 72).

The importance of Osun and female subjects on Yoruba society resonates also with González's postulation about the resistance of amefrican women in the social formation of contemporary Brazilian society. This comes from the text "*As amefricanas do Brasil e sua militância*" (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 343), where she adds another lawyer to the political and cultural category of amefricanity. This lawyer is the fundamental importance of Brazilian Black women as "(…) active participants in all movements that fought for resistance and freedom in national known history." (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 343).

Concatenating Ahmed and González's concepts (as well as Olajubu's perspectives on Yorubá society), we can see that Osun constitutes a fundamental part for the construction of Kehinde's personality and political engagement.

Thus, Osun presents herself as part of Kehinde's amefricanity. The Orisha shows herself as a force of movement, political power and a place of affection and memory. Osun is also an epistemological, ontological and metaphysical link of Kehinde to basic cultural values of African society, which are manifested through devotion to Orisha.

In such a way, this is not restricted to Kehinde on an individual level. Religion has a central role in the construction of the political revolt of the enslaved ones in the narrative and in Brazilian history (as well as globally in the diaspora). In the next section, I will explore the place of religion as a shared cultural and political force during the Malê Revolt, in which Kehinde actively participates.

4.1.2. The Malê Revolt, Kehinde's role and Religion as a Driving Force of Social Upraise

This section will be dedicated to further expand the analysis about Kehinde's participation in the Malê Revolt (1835). Searching for a detailed understanding of this process, this part of the analysis will focus on the role of religion as social force that creates community and fosters changing, as well as Kehinde's role in the process and how she built important connections through the interactions with other plotters of the revolt.

Before addressing the analysis itself, I must explain the context of the enslaved diasporic Africans devoted to Islam. According to Reis (2003, p. 159), in the beginning of the 19th century, Bahia was the territory in the Americas that had the biggest concentration of enslaved African Muslims. This was due to the expansion of Islam in Western Africa, mainly amongst Africans from Hausa states such as those from the ethnic groups known as the Kano, the Gobir, the Katsina, and others (REIS, 2002, p. 159). These African Muslims were not extraordinary exceptions because, as it was explained in the second chapter, Islam has a long history of presence in African continent (FALOLA, HEATON, 2008). Thus, it affected the social and historical events in diasporic contexts as well.

Regarding the Malê Revolt, the bodies of deceased rebels were found wearing typical Muslim clothes, symbols and inscriptions related to the sacred book of Islam (the Qu'ran) (REIS, 2002, p. 158), which reinstates the importance of African Muslims in the organization of the revolt:

> Despite being supported by non-African Muslims, who also joined the struggle, the Malês were responsible for planning and mobilizing the rebels. During their meetings (...) they mixed conspiracy, prayers and classes in which they recited, memorized and wrote passages from the Qu'ran, the holy book of Islam. The uprising itself was scheduled to happen at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, the month of Muslim fasting. The Malês went to the streets to wage war using a white abadá, a type of nightgown, in addition to carrying protective amulets around their neck and in their pockets, which were paper copies of prayers and passages from the Qu'ran folded and tucked in leather or cloth bags. These amulets were made by Muslim teachers, many of them leaders of the revolt, who gave their followers their blessings and the certainty of victory.
>
> Aware that they constituted a minority in the African community of Bahia, whose composition was of slaves and freedmen from different ethnic and religious groups, the Malês did not hesitate to invite non-Muslim slaves to the uprising. On this wise , ethnic identity and solidarity were another mobilizing factor in the Revolt. (REIS, 2002, p. 5)

This excerpt shows how the Islamic faith was central for the political articulation made by the African Muslims. Besides further reinforcing the cultural bonds amongst Muslim African slaves, the cultural and symbolic apparatus of Islam became objects of symbolic resistance against slavery. It is necessary to state that, like in Yoruba society (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. 72), Islamic societies have a deep connection to their religious systems as it

permeates their daily lives and the economic, cultural and social spheres. Thus, Islam was also a fundamental driving force to the Muslim rebels in Bahia, as it set them in movement toward an ideal of freedom.

The solidarity that came from ethnic identity is also an important factor in the revolt. Non-Muslim enslaved Africans decided to join the Islamic rally against colonialism due to their common goal of defeating slavery. Taking the perspective of Ahmed's proposal of emotions as cultural shared forces that move communities and individuals, in the Malê Revolt, religion had this moving function as did ethnic solidarity too. This is further reinforced by the fact that the rebels had a political plan following the possible success of the revolt, which was not just a 'spontaneous' attack on the colonizer (REIS, 2003, p. 20).

It is also noticeable that despite devotes of Islam and of African religions had their differences; there were some common elements amongst them. These are highlighted by Kehinde:

> "(…) I told him that Friday was the day dedicated to Oxalá and he told me he knew it, that there were several other coincidences amongst the people of Allah and the ones of Oxalá, as the use of the white color.(...) there was a lot of similarity between the two religions. Even some of the most powerful alufás[15], despite the prohibition to deal with these things, invoked aligenum, geniuses or diabolical spirits, who could be called upon to do good or evil, which to me was very similar to the cult of Exu. The alufás they also had large magic books written in red ink made with blood from ram, with powerful idams. It was what they called magic, that taught how to make it rain by saying just one word, or to make obis appear where

[15]It refers to African Muslims religious leaders from Northwest Africa. Also used in some Afro-Brazilian religions as an honorific.

> before there was only wind." (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 313).

It is possible that some of these similarities mentioned on the excerpt had risen out of the adaptation of Islamic faith to the African continent (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 313). It could also have deepened the connection amongst the Muslim rebels and the non-Muslim allies, thus reinforcing their common goals through the similarities of their religions. Regardless of the reasons, Kehinde states that Islam is closer to her and to the other enslaved and freed Africans in Bahia than the colonizer's religion, in the sense that Islam fostered a sense of community and a political path toward liberation which was not present in the colonizer's religion.

Regarding Kehinde's trajectory during the revolt, it was a central moment to her, helping to shape her political agency. As exposed in the past chapter, Kehinde was a messenger carrying secret messages for the plotters. It was her teacher, Fatumbi, who helped her to participate in the revolt. As the narrative develops, Kehinde's participation in the political scheming also grows. This growth is also related to the network of relations that she builds as she gets more involved with the political schemes of the African Muslims.

Fatumbi is a crucial relation in this process. This character has an enormous influence on Kehinde's life. During his childhood, he taught her and he also provided materials for her to keep studying and learning how to read and to write in Portuguese (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 64). As a Muslim African, he was the one who introduced the religion to Kehinde (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 111). Later, he was the one responsible to introduce her to the political life of the African Muslims in Bahia.

This relationship between Kehinde and Fatumbi constitutes a significant affective bond for her, since her childhood. It is a fraternal love, in which Fatumbi plays the role of a respectable and trustable male figure to her. There is a direct connection between the importance of this relation and Kehinde's decision to join the Muslim African revolt. This can be understood through Sarah Ahmed's proposition (2004, p. 124) about the importance of love and bounding in relation to ideal: "(…) love becomes a way of bonding with others in relation to an ideal, which takes shape as an effect of such bonding. Love is crucial to how individuals become aligned with collectives through their identification with an idea (…)".

Fatumbi and Kehinde's affectional attachment results in Kehinde's engagement with the revolt, reinforcing Ahmed's proposal. It is also through the contact and closeness with Fatumbi that Kehinde starts to actually pay attention the African Muslims, instead of only addressing to their strangeness. It is from this contact that she notices in Fatumbi's community a diverse behavior in relation to slavery and a different belief system from the ones she knew:

> The four [African Muslims] formed a strange group, (...). With the exception of Fatumbi, they wore abadás, also carrying a beard trimmed to mark only the tip of the chin. They spoke quietly even when they seemed to talk about banal or funny matters, perhaps due to being used to matters so important that they should remain secret between them.
>
> (...)
>
> They knew that they were also different in the way act and think, and they were persecuted for it. In relation to the other blacks, they had the reputation of snobs and sorcerers, of people who they thought they were superior. I admired them exactly for that, because they didn't feel inferior to no one, not even the owners, and they thought that they had to obey solely one lord, that was Allah. Because of this, they were also not favored by the slave owners, because they did not submit easily. Many revolts that wanted to free Blacks from slavery had already been organized by them, which made them very closely watched. That same day, when we left the store, I saw that Fatumbi took from his finger a ring that they all

> wore and hid it (...).(GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 165).

Kehinde's observation toward Fatumbi's social group helped her to discover new social dynamics and to shape her own behavior. She emphasizes their political unruliness in relation to slave-owners, which is a fundamental element in their decision to fight for freedom through social upraise. She also constantly highlights the religious features of this social group that are central to create a sense of community – for example , the typical clothes ("*abadás*"), the gatherings to pray together, the symbols (the ring that Fatumbi and his fellows carried, etc).

It is also important to highlight that Fatumbi's community had risen against slavery even before the revolt. As Kehinde mentions, it generated a political persecution against them. But this retaliation from the colonizer did not weak their bond as a community, causing the opposite effect of bringing them together even more, as they reveal to Kehinde in one conversation: "[as] (...) their religion (...) was very persecuted, they ended up coming together and meeting in the few places where they could practice it." (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 169).

Kehinde gets to know more about their political actions in these moments when she is with Fatumbi and she gets to interact with him and his companions:

> I wanted to know the reason for this persecution and Fatumbi said it was because of a rebellion that took place sometime before, in which most of the prisoners were Muslims, including the organizers.
>
> (...)
>
> I wanted to know more, However, they must have thought they had said too much and changed the subject, wanting to know everything that had happened to me. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 169)

Those simple moments of bonding help her to further understand more about the social dynamics of this community. Through that, she slowly gathers elements that match her own ideals and needs, further reinforcing the connection with Fatumbi and his group. This results in Kehinde's ultimate alliance to them and her commitment to the revolt.

Fatumbi and Kehinde's bonding is not constituted only by these political conversations, but mainly by his unconditional love and support for her since Kehinde's early days in Brazil, as well as his support for her and her actions. Fatumbi and his social group of African Muslims help Kehinde to build a school with a local priest, to teach Black and poor white children how to read and write (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 185-186). Fatumbi really engages on this project, managing to get financial and material support from his peers, and later he also starts teaching in the school, also helping Kehinde to become a teacher (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 186). He also becomes a partner to Kehinde's bakery, which helped her to guarantee her financial independence (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 234).

Due to this connection, Fatumbi becomes a reference of affection and security for Kehinde. This leads her to support him as well, which later results in her active participation in the revolt:

> On Friday, Fatumbi showed up early at the store and asked if I could make a big favor to him. Even if I couldn't, I would find a way, (...), because I felt very indebted. He looked worried and was quieter than usual, preferring to go up to my room where we talked more easily.
>
> He said that he could tell me what it was about, but for my safety he preferred that I did not know, and gave me a note that should be given to a man named Manuel Calafate, who lived in the second floor of Ladeira da Praça, near Lar and Igreja Nossa Lady of Guadalupe.

> Of course, on the way I couldn't stand my curiosity and opened the note, but it didn't help, because it was written in Arabic, with the drawings that represented the letters that only the Muslims understood. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 232).

This event marks the first moment in the narrative in which Kehinde takes part on the African Muslims political plotting, even if unknowingly. This risky act was taken mainly on the feeling of affection and mutual support to Fatumbi. After this, Kehinde becomes a messenger to the African Muslims. Kehinde got profoundly involved with the political plotting of the African Muslims and she was eager to contribute more: "When Fatumbi had time to talk to me about the organization, I was amazed at their intelligence. I wanted to participate even more." (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 310). However, Fatumbi did not allow her to have more functions on the process because he feared for her safety and thought it could bring undesired attention to them (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 310).

In the day of the confrontation, Kehinde's engagement led her to participate directly during the attack in the streets, despite the fact that she feared for her loved ones:

> All of us were dressed in Muslim clothes (...). Edum and I were the only women in the group. We didn't put the cap on, but we tied a white scarf to the head. Fatumbi said that the clothes also served to make us look alike, which made it difficult for authorities to recognize us (...) That was the practical part, because, for them, what mattered was to be dressed in their party clothes, the big party they would celebrate to Allah.
>
> Gradually more people were appearing and with them came the news of how things were happening in different parts of the city. A Nagô

named Eusébio had just arrived from Santo Amaro and said that Master Ahuna and Master Dandará were already in São Salvador and they had sent word that everything was as scheduled, that some blacks would arrive from Reconcavo and others would wait there. (...)

Manoel Calafate distributed the weapons that would fit each one. Even though I never shot, I caught a new parnaíba, but I didn't even have time to get used to it, because soon we had to put the weapons aside to say a prayer. That day, the Muslims obeyed all prayer times, and Mala Abubakar wanted to command the last two. Only me, Edum and four others were not Muslims, but out of respect, and because we were feeling part of those people, we repeated their gestures and phrases. (...) while I did that, I thought about my orixás, my voduns, in my ancestors and, despite speaking a strange language, I was sure they understood me.

After Mala Abubakar finished the prayers, some people started distributing food. I had eaten some fruits offered by Belchior, However, the Muslims were fasting because of Ramadan. I asked if that wasn't going to make them weak for the fight and Belchior said no, that sacrifice and faith always strengthened them. And that's what the mala Abubakar said that there was no better date to transform São Salvador into a new Mecca, the new land of Allah, and during the Saturday, while we were preparing, many people walked the streets visiting shops and houses, farms, houses

> of commerce and corners, inviting blacks to join the fight. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 330)

There are many important parts on this excerpt. As it was mentioned by Reis (2003), Kehinde narrates how the rebels were wearing typical clothes with which they went to the streets. Fatumbi points out the practical part of this choice: wearing the same clothes would confuse the authorities. Kehinde highlights the symbolic part of this gesture: The celebration to Allah. The feeling of devotion, hope and exultation is also noted in the narrative.

Reinforcing Ahmed's idea of social ties for love and affection as a source of connection to a political ideal, non-African Muslims also take part in the rites for Allah. Kehinde uses this moment to connect with her own spirit guides. In this point in the narrative, the transcendence of religious differences happens due to a common ideal: the struggle for freedom. Kehinde tells the reader that it reinforces the bond between them.

The character feels welcomed and belonging to that group. This leads her to pick up a gun, even without knowing how to use it. Other symbolic and important moment happens when they share the meal, while African Muslims are fasting. It indicates a communal congregation which is bigger than the internal differences amongst the different African ethnic groups in the revolt.

During the day of the revolt, Kehinde stays in the store that belonged to one of the rebels. She goes out in the streets with a group of rebels, they face an urban police patrol having an intense fight, where Kehinde watches her rebel mates being killed by the officers (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 334). Even during this delicate moment, Fatumbi stays by her side and helps her to survive (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 334).

The revolt quickly escalates and the rebels manage to bring chaos to the city. However, the result of the fight is unfavorable to them; due to have being betrayed. The colonizer’s troops knew about their plan and killed most of the participants in the social uprising (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 337). Kehinde narrates this moment as a traumatic occasion, in which she remembers the violence against her family in Savalu. The character is paralyzed during the fight and ends up being rescued by another rebel, who helps her to escape. On the way, she meets Fatumbi, who does not accompany her on the flight, deciding to stay to sacrifice himself (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 337).

The conclusion of the revolt process is frustrating for Kehinde. But her evolution as a social subject and politically active person is remarkable. The development of bonds of affection with people from different social circles results in maturation and learning, which changes her behavior profoundly. Her relation to Fatumbi is a fundamental element, their bonding growing from personal to political level.

Concluding the analysis, we can see that religion and affection play a central role in the political articulation of oppressed communities in the history of Brazil, as evidenced by Kehinde's narrative about the revolt of enslaved African Muslims in Bahia in the 19th century. In the subhuman condition in which African groups lived in Brazil, personal ties were forms of survival and political resistance, through which it was possible to foster social struggle. Religion played an important role as a place to preserve memory, identity and community creation. This makes religion an interpersonal locus of struggle against oppressions. Similarly to Osun's role in Kehinde's life, Islam was a pivotal force to drive African Muslims to rise against their oppressors, also offering other social references beyond the colonizer's ones and to organize interpersonally toward a common goal. In the particular case of the Malê Revolt, members of African religions and Islam managed to align themselves toward a common goal. The search for freedom and the belief that Africans should have their dignity respected united devotees.

Focusing particularly on Kehinde, the bond with Fatumbi led her to meet a different community, expand her social connections and have more agency in the social organization in which she was inserted. Without the Muslim teacher, Kehinde would not have access to formal education and would not have known his social group. All the interactions and activities carried out by her during the revolt affected her greatly, helping her to mature and to learn about the social structures in which she lived.

All of this reinforces Ahmed's ideas of the cultural politics of emotion, as well as the role of emotion as driving forces. It also indicates to us Kehinde's own political culture of emotion, or amefricanity. As it was exposed in this analysis, Kehinde's amefricanity is composed by religion and relationships as political powers that helped her on her journey.

Combined with the analysis about the role of religion and friendship under Ahmed's perspectives, I am also going to address González's ideas (1988) about the importance of Black women in Brazil's social organization. Kehinde's trajectory as a rebel with the African Muslims relates to González's postulation about Black women being fundamental to fight

against oppressions. According to her, it is due to the fact that Black women as a social group carry the burden of economic exploitation with racial and sexual subjugation (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 367). Similar to Davis' proposal of a 'new womanhood', González states that bearing these multiple struggles have forged Black women as active subjects in the political organization against structural violence (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 368).

Kehinde's role in the revolt proves this, as she manages to articulate her different social roles to help the rebels. Through her sales activity, she carries messages, while also using the resources of Muslim Africans to help her community. This brings us to the topic of analysis, which is about Kehinde as an agent of social organization, in her different economic and cultural roles.

4.1.3. Kehinde and a politics of affectionate solidarity and change as an expression of the 'new womanhood':

As it was previously shown through the perspectives of González, Davis, Collins, hooks and other authors formerly mentioned, it is a common ground on Black feminism the idea of Black women as active social agents in the fight against slavery as well as fundamental subjects regarding the social organization of their communities. González emphasizes this social agency as fundamental part of Black women's role in Brazilian society (GONZÁLEZ, 1988, p. 368). Thus, this section will explore how it unveils in Kehinde's journey, throughout the character herself and other Black women in her life. Beforehand, this research has focused on the analysis of her political involvement with the Malê Revolt. Henceforth, I will explore how it is manifested in the coming from Africa to Brazil, as well as on her early year as an enslaved child. Moreover, I will focus too in Kehinde's role as a teacher to Black and poor white children, plus analyzing her role as an independent merchant in her early days in Salvador.

An important characteristic of Black women's social engagement is how it is related to African societies and their cultural ordainment. González highlights this (1988, p. 368), contending that "(...) women has social roles as important as those of men. In some cases, even political power was shared with them". González's statement can also be related to Olajubu's explanations about the religious importance of women, and how Osun exerts a

crucial influence on other Orishas and in human life and social structures, and many of her accounts are cultural allegories for the centrality of women in Yoruba society (OLAJUBU, 2003, p. 72).

Debating cultural ancestral memory and the role of women in African society connects to Angela Davis' proposal of Black women as representing a 'new womanhood' (1981, p. 9). As contribution to further expands this debate I intend also to analyze how the network of support, the political meaning of emotions and the ancestral connection to religion are components of this womanhood, through Kehinde's experiences. I will address how Kehinde's relations with other women and her social engagement produces a politics of "affectionate solidarity" as proposed by Ahmed (2004, p. 139-140), which constitutes a central part of constructing a politically aware womanhood, which constitutes a shared legacy amongst Black women as a social group (DAVIS, 1981, p. 34).

Since her birth in Savalu, women are a fundamental part of Kehinde's development as a person. Her first memories are about her mother and her twin sister, Taiwo, and how they were close and dear to her. Likewise, her grandmother is an essential person in her life. It is Dúrójaiyé who take cares of both Taiwo and Kehinde, after their mother and brother die. From queen Agontime, Kehinde remembers the history of her grandmother's escaping from king Andandozan's tyranny. As it was shown in chapter three, Dúrójayé's life shows that African women endured gender oppressions even before the enslavement in the diaspora. Kehinde's grandmother transmits to her a legacy of resistance and fighting to preserve religious practices and cultural memory, also setting an example on confronting the patriarchal powers.

During their passage from Uidá to Brazil, Taiwo and Dúrójayé die due to the spread of diseases in the slave ship. In the moments before her death, Dúrójayé talks to Kehinde about her religious practices and memories:

> For two days she told me about the voduns, the names she could remember, the stories, the importance of worshiping and respecting our ancestors. But she said that if we didn't invite them and made home for them in the foreign

> lands, they wouldn't go there. So, even if I didn't worship the voduns, she said I should never forget about our Africa, our mother, Nana, Sango, the Ibêjis, Osun, the power birds and plants, the obedience and respect for the elderly, our cults and traditions.
>
> My grandmother died a few hours after she finished telling me all of this, turning into fish food with Taiwo. (...) the worst of all the sensations, even if I don't know what it meant, it was to be a ship lost in the sea (...). I wasn't in my land anymore, I no longer had my family, I was going to a place that I did not know, (...). Tanisha said that I could always count on her, that I could see her as a mother, grandmother and sister (...).(GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 36)

Dúrójayé's death was a moment when Kehinde was taught about the religious and social beliefs that her grandmother lived for. This perpetuation of memory through oral tradition is a characteristic of Black women's cultural production in the diaspora and, as it was explored in chapter two, it is related to African traditions such as the griot and the Nigerian female storyteller known as the Big Mother.

Thus, in her final moments, Dúrójayé manages to keep tradition alive and urges Kehinde to perpetuate it as her ancestors did. It has a huge meaning for Kehinde, as she keeps up with this promise through worshiping the Orisha, which leads her to discover her connection to Osun. Consequently, this moment influences Kehinde's political actions. Then, we can understand Kehinde's commitment to tradition and social change as a symbolic way to honor her grandmother's life, furthermore continuing an intergerational tradition of social struggle on behalf of preserving ancestral cultural values, which Dúrójayé did when escaping king Andanzodan's persecution.

Henceforth, Kehinde's womanhood also resembles and shares her grandmother's cultural heritage. Hence, their shared commitment to fight back any possible form of subjugation aligns with Davis' proposal of standards for a 'new womanhood' based on "(…) hard work, perseverance and self-reliance, a legacy of tenacity, resistance and insistence on sexual equality (…)" (DAVIS, 1981, p. 34).

During her passage, Tanisha is another important woman who helps Kehinde, becoming a parental figure after the deaths of her sister and grandmother. Tanisha meets Kehinde in Uidá, when both are sold to come to Brazil. She stays with her and helps her during the loss of her family. Tanisha and Kehinde are separated when they arrive to the Frade's Island, in Bahia, their first stop before heading to Salvador. But from Tanisha, Kehinde chooses her Brazilian name, Luiza; "Tanisha had told me the name given to her, Luísa, and that was the one I adopted. For whites I was Luísa, Luísa Gama, but I always considered myself Kehinde." (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 43). Hence, her new name was a way to honor and to preserve the memory of Tanisha, who helped Kehinde in the difficult process of arriving in a foreign land.

Another important woman on Kehinde's life is Esméria, an older enslaved African woman who works at the Master House. She is the one who helps the girl when she first arrives, giving her clothes, food and water, also helping her to learn how to talk Portuguese. Esméria plays a role of teacher to Kehinde. She is the first to explain to the girl the meaning of slavery, also being the one to enlighten Kehinde on the master and slave power dynamics, as well as explaining the differences between the Master House and the senzala, the space where the enslaved lived. Just like Tanisha, Esméria becomes a parental figure in Kehinde's life, helping her from her childhood until she has grown up. Like Fatumbi, both women represent love and security, generating positive feelings in Kehinde even in such adverse conditions.

Altogether with them, there is Nega Florinda. As previously mentioned, Florinda is a priestess, like Dúrójayé and Agontimé. She is a freed African and her presence and storytelling are important cultural memories to Kehinde:

> Nega Florinda was one of the oldest people on the island, she has lived there since she arrived

> from Africa, still a young girl, and she had been free for so long that no one alive remembered her as a slave. She was very old and seemed to know all the stories in the world, since the world existed, as she said. (...)
>
> I was a little scared the first time I saw Nega Florinda approach the balcony where I was with the little lady Maria Clara. (...) she looked like one of the *egunguns* (*egunguns*: "skeleton", spirit of the ancestors, *egum*), which I had seen once strolling through the streets of Uidá. She was short and walked hunched over, her steps quick to compensate for her short legs, and she wore a solid colored gown that went down to her feet, with a cloth-a-costa thrown over the right shoulder and, in one hand, a fabric bag, where she kept the money or gifts she received for her stories. (...) it was interesting to see how Nega was told us the stories, clapping rhythmically before starting and during the narration, changing the force and the speed of the clapping, to help in the 'climate' of the story. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 50)

As Kehinde highlights, Florinda was an older African woman with a remarkable ability to storytelling. Kehinde's comparison of Florinda to the spiritual entity attributes metaphysical and ancestral features to the character. Later, Kehinde discovers her background as a priestess to the Voduns, like her grandmother. It is Florinda who helps Kehinde to get the ibêji symbols; "Nega Florinda appeared and (...) gave me a package with the pendant that every ibêji who survives the death of the other must use to conserve their souls" (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 55). Florinda also discusses the Orisha worshipping and the African cults with Kehinde, being a major help for the girl's pursue of keeping her cultural and

spiritual memories alive. The comparison to her grandmother is also constant in Kehinde's thoughts about Florinda, meaning that Florinda became a parental figure and an important spiritual reference. Florinda is also responsible for introducing Kehinde to queen Agontimé, taking the girl to São Salvador so she could meet an important person (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 79). With Agontimé, Florinda tells Kehinde that she had a mission in her life, related to the liberation of Black people, which creates in Kehinde the purpose of getting her emancipation (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 93).

These women's relations and affection toward Kehinde help her to survive, to thrive and to engage in her own personal political mission. This mission would be achieving freedom and helping her community. Thus, we can think of Black women's network of mutual support and affection as a source for a politics of "affectionate solidarity" as proposed by Ahmed:

> (…) it is our relation to particular others that gives life meaning and direction, and can give us the feeling of there being somebody and something to live for. A politics of love is necessary in the sense that how one loves matters; it has effects on the texture of everyday life and on the intimate 'withness' of social relations. Whilst I do think politics might be about finding another way of loving others by inhabiting loves that do not speak their name, I would be wary of any assumption that love 'makes' politics and decides what form such politics might take..
>
> (…)
>
> But in the resistance to speaking in the name of love, in the recognition that we do not simply act out of love, and in the understanding that love comes with conditions however unconditional it might feel, we can find perhaps a different kind

> of line or connection between the others we care for, and the world to which we want to give shape. Perhaps love might come to matter as a way of describing the very affect of solidarity with others in the work that is done to create a different world. Or as Jodi Dean puts it: (…) 'the kind of solidarity that grows out of intimate relationships of love and friendship' (Dean 1996: 17).(AHMED, 2004, p. 139-141).

The scholar discusses in this excerpt the necessity of a "politics of love", nevertheless arguing that acts based purely on love are not enough to change and to shape political reality. Thus, Ahmed proposes a more consistent view on this "politics of love", which would be a politics of action based on affect and solidarity, that are central to intimate relationships. This politics of affective solidarity would be a more effective political practice to act upon the world. Kehinde's relations to the Black women in her life constitute a suitable example of this political affective solidarity. They are moved by love, but the vital power of these relations lies in how these women's acts, words, caring and trajectories influence Kehinde until she can become an agent of social change, interfering directly in the structural reality in which she is inserted. These social connections, with (the previously analyzed) Fatumbi's friendship, show the potential of emotions as driving influences for change as well as cornerstone forces for social organization.

A direct result of Kehinde's engagement as a product of this affective solidarity politics is shown when she joins Father Heinz to create a school to teach enslaved Black children. As Fatumbi, Florinda and others helped her; Kehinde decides to try to motivate families and students, stimulating them so that they could believe in the potential of education. Heinz and Kehinde hoped to create "(...) a school that would teach them not only to read and write, but also to play and to believe in the hope of being someone, despite the conditions in which they lived." (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 186). Accessing education helped her gaining her freedom, thus, Kehinde wanted to share this knowledge with her peers.

Despite their noble intentions, they are surprised with resistance from the community of enslaved people, which did not believe in the value of education. As a result, Kehinde starts

to reinforce the connection between her success as a merchant and her access to education, which helps them to get more students. Moreover, they start to provide food for children, with the classes, which encouraged students to come (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 186). As mentioned in the past section, Fatumbi offers great assistance to them, as a teacher in the school and provider of material resources for the school;

> In addition to money, the Muslims also donated many old slates, which no longer served for the study of the Qu'ran (...), but that were still in excellent state to be used in class. Fatumbi made all the lesson plans and still managed to improvise notebooks with sheets of paper glued together, and the kids loved it. (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 186).

Fatumbi's contribution provided means for the school to improve its services. This stimulates more children to attend and, consequently, Kehinde also starts teaching. This is a blissful outcome of her efforts and it strengths her belief in education as a mean for social transformation.

Another important process that Kehinde gets involved in and that he can then use to help her community is selling cookies. Kehinde starts selling them independently on the streets (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 157), struggling to get customers. But as she persists in this process, her products get successful. To be able to sell them while she was still enslaved, Kehinde invents a story of a false "sinhá", supposedly the owner of the profits. As a result, she manages to expand her business and starts a bakery, supported by her lover Alberto and Fatumbi (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 233).

When she manages to open the bakery, using the name of Alberto (her white lover), she hires two black employees, Jongo and Adriano (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 238). She also hires two freed black women, Clarice and Lourdes (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 245). Thus, on her early career as a merchant, Kehinde becomes an entrepreneur who generates opportunities for freed Black people (GONÇALVES, 2006, p.245). When business comes into crisis, after a

period of prosperity, Alberto suggests firing two new employees, Clarice's daughters, but Kehinde avoids this, negotiating with them to pay them half the salary (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 273).

Throughout her early days in Salvador, we observe Kehinde acting to generate opportunities for her peers. It is also evident the devotion to Osun as connected to the flourishing of her business, since this Orisha also relates to prosperity (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 245). Later, Kehinde becomes a really rich woman due to her finantial success, and she even becomes a slave owner (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 273). This process shows the complexity of Kehinde's identity (GONÇALVES, 2006, p. 406). Her contact with whiteness and social ascension deeply affect her behavior, this will be further analyzed on the seventh chapter. But as this chapter focuses on her early days as she struggles to get free from slavery, we notice that her concern with caring for her peers and helping her community are omnipresent in her actions. Kehinde's early days show an accurate example of a new womanhood.

4.2.Final Thoughts: Kehinde's amefricanity, Black women's role in national history and a shifting *mestiza* consciounsess

The analysis made in this chapter regarding mainly Kehinde's days in Salvador, after she gains her freedom, her engagement with the revolt of Muslim Africans and the construction of important bonds of affection show another viewpoint on the role of Black women in the construction of the country, as previously mentioned by Santos (2016).

In such a way, it was observed that cultural memory, religious ancestry, social networks of support and affection were central in the construction of Kehinde's amefricanity. The analysis apply to the chosen literary corpus addressed in this chapter, but it also applies to the creation of Brazilian national identity.

The question of creation takes us back to Osun. Osun is Kehinde's Orisha head. Osun is responsible for creation, fertility and life. Applying the Yoruba logic, Osun and Kehinde are metaphors for the creation of this country, which was also born from Black women.

Analyzing the history of Black women does not mean solely discussing social and racial identities. Rather, it also means debating the central role of a social group without vital

to the creation of Brazil as a nation, likewise allowing us to exercise an amefrican thought by rethinking the history of the Americas as proposed by González (1988).

Another important perspective to debate is Kehinde's change of identity. During the narrative, she evolves from an enslaved child named Kehinde to an entrepreneur (and free) Black woman known as Luiza, later becoming a rich woman herself and an owner of slaves. According to Côrtes (2010), Kehinde represents a diasporic consciousness, mainly on her return to Africa as a grown up woman. This research analysis was mainly focused on the early years of Kehinde's life, when she arrived here, but later she returns to Africa.

When returning, she has a though time adapting herself to her original homeland. Côrtes attributes that to her condition as a diasporic subject with a multiple consciousness. This comes from Kehinde's experience, that Côrtes (2010, p. 47) defines as "hybrid and mixed, but real and potentially transformative". Back to Uidá as an adult, Kehinde misses Bahia. She also has now a new 'Brazilianness' added to her 'Africaness', she is truly an Amefrican woman.

Côrtes defines Kehinde's new and final condition of a hybrid subject as a new diasporic self-perception that can "(…) act on the problems related to cultural boundaries and, in a performative attitude, relativizing hegemonic values and promoting new perspectives (…)" (CÔRTES, 2010, p. 89). This definition can definitely be connected to the *mestiza* consciousness as proposed by Glória Anzaldua (1987). Anzaldua's ideas propose that there are subjects that inhabit multiple worlds and they cannot become solely one thing, choosing to belong just to one category. It is this multiple, mixed identity that gives them the power to become agents to construct different realities.

Kehinde's journey is a perfect example for that, since she becomes an amalgamation of several worlds. Also, she ends up overcoming the tragic destiny of death and submission, instead living an intense life full of joys and political struggle to make a better world for herself and others like her.

Kehinde is an Amefrican and *mestiza* woman that helps to shed light in new ways to understand Brazilian history and its national identity and to see the potential of these mixed, hybrid subjects.

The mestizas can build up a better world and rewrite history, altogether.

CHAPTER V
"NIGERIA WOMEN GO TO THE U.S. AND BECOME WILD": ANALYZING IFEMELU (*AMERICANAH*)

> One of the things that I find interesting, and that is one of the reasons why I wrote *Americanah* is the question of what home means, and whether, when you leave home, if you can go back.
>
> Chimamanda Adichie

5.0.The Politics of Homecoming: Initial Thoughts in Ifemelu, displacement and home

This chapter's epigraph comes from a 2015 interview from author Chimamanda Adichie when she is discussing *Americanah* (2013). Creating a narrative about an immigrant – and her return to her homeland after ten years – implies a discussion of home. As previously presented in the introduction and in chapter three as well, the theoretical framework of this research relies on bell hook's ideas about home, from the author's work *Belonging – a Culture of Place* (2009). Like *Americanah* does, hooks' book discusses the meaning of home, from a Black feminist perspective, also developing the discussion into the political meaning of belonging to a community, redefining the idea of home.

Another important theme is the question of displacement, which is associated to debating mobility and traveling. As previously discussed through the ideas of Crasswell (1999), Smith (2001) and Al-Daraiseh (2012), the experience of displacement is necessarily crossed by race, gender and class, amongst other factors. Departing from their perspectives, it can be said that Black women's displacement is also a process of moving and facing different social oppressions in different geopolitical realities.

Using these theoretical views and following Lugones' methodology as proposed in the introductory chapter, it is interesting to build a connection amongst the different characters analyzed in this research. We can do that observing that in Kehinde and Ifemelu's experiences. Both are African women that go under processes of displacement and later return to their homeland.

There are several social and historical differences in the conditions in which these women live their transcontinental dislocation, but nevertheless they face racism, sexism and struggle to redefine their identity while undergoing a number of changes. Kehinde and Ifemelu represent "(…) the embodied-sentient, living and breathing, thinking and feeling subjects who are intersectionality's empirical subjects (…)" (LEWIS, 2013, p. 888). It means that, although being fictional characters, they stand symbolically as allegories for the experiences of Black women and their living embodiment of displacement since the first of us was kidnaped from Africa.

Relating this to the debate about creating home and displacement, it can be said that regardless of the conditions, Black women face hardships when adapting and trying to create a sense of home anywhere. This difficult can be understood when we understand bell hooks' concept about 'true home' as "(…) the place — any place — where growth is nurtured, where there is constancy." (HOOKS, 2009, p. 203). Since Black women are constantly facing violence and multiple expressions of intersectional oppressions, it is difficult for them to feel welcomed and nurtured even in their original communities.

Concerning Ifemelu's narrative as an immigrant, she embodies this challenge of finding – or creating – a true home. Nwanyanwu (2017, p. 387) argues that the displacement resulting from migration is consequence of colonialism's malfunction. According to her, migration means navigating "(…) across socio-spatial thresholds, is also a movement across historical spaces; one leaves the baggage of one history behind (…) in order to enter another dimension of history" (NWANYANWU, 2017, p. 391). Hence, according to the scholar the subject that experiences such displacement has a hybrid and fractured identity (NWANYANWU, 2017, p. 387).

Deepening the debate about displacement, mobility and traveling and the social markers that cross these experiences, Nwanyanwu shows that Adichie's *Americanah* presents an African-centered view on the social marginalization of migrant subjects (NWANYANWU, 2017, p. 390). It also shows the construction of transnational social networks and personal traumas in the process of immigration, exemplified by the author when Ifemelu has to give up her birth name for a fake ID so she could work (NWANYANWU, 2017, p. 390). In a similar way, Kehinde had to become Luíza in order to adapt to a new reality. The experience of giving up their real identities – to perform socially as someone else – appears in both

narratives. In a world that forces Black women to give up their own selves, making home becomes a larger-than-life enterprise.

Considering this discussion, I will further analyze Ifemelu's experiences according to hooks' ideas of creating a home, which she addresses as homecoming. Also, considering the proposed objective of expanding the political and cultural category of amefricanity, I am going to connect Ifemelu's journey to the creation of a political culture of emotion that relates to expressing her subjectivity as a means of resistance. Additionally, I will address the hybridity of Ifemelu's identity when she returns to Lagos, under Anzaldúa's idea of a *mestiza* consciousness.

5.1. To become wild: Analyzing Ifemelu

5.1.1. Homecoming, belonging and moving back:

The beginning of *Americanah* presents us a conflicted Ifemelu braiding her hair for a return to her home in Lagos, Nigerias. After thirteen years in the U.S., Ifemelu had finished a fellowship in Princeton and ended her relationship with Blaine. She prepared herself to return to her birthplace. Ifemelu's characterization in this initial moment brings us a person who is anxious, hopeful and fearful about her return to Lagos.

This starting point of Ifemelu's journey can be related to what hooks defines as "(…) the connections between geographical location and psychological states (…)" (2009, p. 30). In Ifemelu's case as an immigrant, the imminent return and the beginning of a new cycle – that converge with the return to her homeland –, unsettle her feelings. With the uncertainty about the changes that Nigeria had been through, this moment also starts to bring her questions about her own identity and how living in America for so long had changed her

:

> "You stay in America fifteen years and you just go back to work?"
>
> Aisha smirked. "You can stay there?"

> Aisha reminded her of what Aunty Uju had said, when she finally accepted that Ifemelu was serious about moving back—*Will you be able to cope?*—and the suggestion, that she was somehow irrevocably altered by America, had grown thorns on her skin.(ADICHIE, 2013, p. 17)

The context of this conversation is Ifemelu talking to a woman who is braiding her hair. The woman is called Aisha, also an African immigrant, from Senegal. She acts in disbelief when Ifemelu tells her that she decided to move back to Nigeria. Aisha's behavior reminds Ifemelu of her family's disbelief that she was going to adapt, meaning that they did not believe she was going to succeed in living in Nigeria again. Besides her aunt Uju, her parents also could not believe that she was going to be successful in her adaptation (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 17-18). These first moments also indicate how Ifemelu seems to nurture this fear of not being accepted, fearing that living in the United States could have disrupted her identity thus forbidding her of belonging to her homeplace again.

The apparent disbelief of her closest family members reinforce the anxiety Ifemelu feels about her return. According to hooks, it can be explained due to the fact that homecoming is related to belong and to be cared for by family and community. When discussing her own return to her homeland, the scholar contends: "(…) Ultimately, I wanted to return to the place where I had felt myself to be part of a culture of belonging — to a place where I could feel at home, a landscape of memory, thought, and imagination."(HOOKS, 2009, p. 45). Ifemelu understands her family's skepticism as a sign of rejection, further deepening her sense of inner estrangement. Her aunt and her parents' doubts could be an alert that she could not able to cope, meaning that she was forever torn apart from her cultural origins, ultimately unable to belong.

These doubts and questionings are not because her family was consciously hostile to her, but because "(…) For the emigrants, America signifies choice or living, whereas Africa represents choicelessness" (NWANYANWU, 2017, p. 397). This is further reinforced in this excerpt:

> "You are closing your blog and selling your condo to go back to Lagos and work for a magazine that doesn't pay that well," Aunty Uju had said and then repeated herself, as though to make Ifemelu see the gravity of her own foolishness. Only her old friend in Lagos, Ranyinudo, had made her return seem normal. "Lagos is now full of American returnees, so you better come back and join them. Every day you see them carrying a bottle of water as if they will die of heat if they are not drinking water every minute," Ranyinudo said. They had kept in touch, she and Ranyinudo, throughout the years. (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 17)

Uju's reaction shows clearly how Ifemelu's choice seemed foolish to her family. They considered her living in the U.S. a proof of success. Considering hooks' discussion about homecoming, it adds a political lawyer to the discussion: Which places are socially regarded as good places for one to live, to create a home and why. Adding Nwanyanwu's thoughts on migration, Ifemelu's family questioning her decision of returning to Lagos denotes a symbolic power conflict amongst "(…) a periphery and a dominant metropolitan centre" (NWANYANWU, 2017, p. 397). Naturally, being the dominant part of the conflict – even if the person endures traumas, feelings of otherness and social marginalization – becomes a sign of victory in one's life. In opposition to this, there is Ifemelu's best friend Ranyiudo who told Ifemelu there were many people like her in Nigeria, migrants returned from the U.S. that decided to live in Lagos.

Therefore, Ifemelu's decision of returning to Lagos destabilizes the logic of this conflict, further reinforcing that her subjective choices also impact and change geopolitical dynamics. Then, from the start, Ifemelu's return to Lagos can be read as a political decision as well as a personal one. It also means that her process of homecoming is opposed to what social norms – and her closest people – expected of her.

5.1.2. Ifemelu's Family and Homecoming: Internal Healing as Part of a Political Culture of emotions for Black Women

According to hooks (2009, p. 220), "To fully belong anywhere, one must understand the ground of one's being. And that understanding invariably returns one to childhood.". Thus, the process of homecoming and creating a place where one can belong involves a process of searching for healing from internal wounds; some of these lead us back to childhood. Through this idea, the scholar defines the process of homecoming as dialectic; it is related to social, familiar and communal issues as well as an internal journey of exploring and dealing with internal traumas.

This is also present on Ifemelu's journey. Some of her estrangements are related to two pivotal figures in her life: Her Aunt Uju and her mother. These women are references for her and they shape her behavior and relationships. But some of the dynamics and actions of these women were troubling to the young Ifemelu. The process of going back to Nigeria also involves healing from questions of her childhood, some of which are related to these women. Moreover, associating it to Ahmed's (2004) proposal of emotions as driving forces, this section will further explore how Ifemelu's healing process constitutes an important action on the narrative, thus offering another dimension on a cultural politics of emotions for Black women.

Ifemelu's mother first appears in the narrative as example of beauty and power: "Ifemelu had grown up in the shadow of her mother's hair. It was black-black (…), and, when finally released from pink plastic rollers, sprang free and full, flowing down her back like a celebration. Her father called it a crown of glory." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 17). Ifemelu tried to imitate her mother's beautiful hair in childhood. Her mother's beauty was a positive reference for her as a child. It changes when her mother becomes a member of a radical Christian church, which profoundly changes Ifemelu's familiar dynamics:

> When her mother came back inside, Ifemelu backed away, but her mother hugged her close. "I am saved," she said. "Mrs. Ojo ministered to me this afternoon during the children's break and I received Christ. Old things have passed away and

all things have become new. Praise God. On Sunday we will start going to Revival Saints. It is a Bible-believing church and a living church, not like St. Dominic's." Her mother's words were not hers. She spoke them too rigidly, with a demeanor that belonged to someone else. Even her voice, usually high-pitched and feminine, had deepened and curdled. That afternoon, Ifemelu watched her mother's essence take flight. Before, her mother said the rosary once in a while, crossed herself before she ate, wore pretty images of saints around her neck, sang Latin songs and laughed when Ifemelu's father teased her about her terrible pronunciation. She laughed, too, whenever he said, "I am an agnostic respecter of religion," and she would tell him how lucky he was to be married to her, because even though he went to church only for weddings and funerals, he would get into heaven on the wings of her faith. But, after that afternoon, her God changed. He became exacting. Relaxed hair offended Him. Dancing offended Him. She bartered with Him, offering starvation in exchange for prosperity, for a job promotion, for good health. She fasted herself bone-thin: dry fasts on weekends, and on weekdays, only water until evening. Ifemelu's father followed her with anxious eyes, urging her to eat a little more, to fast a little less, and he always spoke carefully, so that she would not call him the devil's agent and ignore him, as she had done with a cousin who was staying with them. "I am fasting for your father's conversion," she told Ifemelu often. For months, the air in their flat was like cracked glass. Everyone tiptoed around her

> mother, who had become a stranger, thin and knuckly and severe. Ifemelu worried that she would, one day, simply snap into two and die. (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 34)

Her mother's conversion is a traumatic event for Ifemelu. It shifts the person she knew into a fanatic that tries to impose religion on the other members of the family. This radical version of Christianism rips off the essence of Ifemelu's mother. The past ordinary activities of her mother turned into offensive actions against an intolerant god. Ifemelu's traumatic event involving her mother's religious choices recalls us of hooks discussion of how she had to heal herself from the damages coming from Christian principles and how they affected her family: "The fundamentalist Christian patriarchal power that determined the public world of the State in my native place was mirrored in the structure of my primary family life and family values." (HOOKS, 2009, p. 30). In Ifemelu's experience the Christian patriarchal power also influences and traumatizes her, turning her mother into a fanatic. It deeply impacts Ifemelu's personal development, mainly on the aspect of her sexual awakening as a teenager, which she cannot share with her mother due to her fanatical beliefs.

Regarding the portrayal of Ifemelu's mother faith, it is also Adichie's criticism to Nigerian Pentecostal movement. According to Tunca (2013, p. 66), the Nigerian feminist has been vocal about her discordance to this trend of Christianism in Nigeria. Tunca argues that Adichie's portrayal of Christianity seems to be a criticism toward the social role of religion, in Negeria, as a mere repressor of social and metaphysical anxieties (TUNCA, 2013, p. 50). According to her, Ifemelu's mother falls into a "vicious cycle" seduced by "(…) emphatic promises of prosperity thrive precisely because of the dismal economic situation that results from corruption and nepotism." (TUNCA, 2013, p. 66). It results in unhealthy familiar dynamics that leads even Ifemelu's father (an agnostic) to abandon his own beliefs, giving into his wife's religious creed (TUNCA, 2013, p. 66).

Adichie and hooks present critics to the role of Christianism as an alienating and tyrannical social force. It impacts Ifemelu's life, mainly in the disruption of her familiar dynamics. Her mother later changes her church, going to a series of different churches until she finds one in which she settles; this church is shown as being less toxic than the first one. After some time, Ifemelu is described as indifferent from her mother's religion and even

seeing it as somehow positive after the initial shock (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 36). Yet all the descriptions regarding Ifemelu's conception about her mother's religions shows a general feeling of exasperation and displeasure, from both Ifemelu and her father, for being coerced into adopting her mother's religious habits;

> "Every morning, she woke the household up for prayers, (…) Ifemelu's father once said the prayers were delusional battles with imaginary traducers, yet he insisted that Ifemelu always wake up early to pray. "It keeps your mother happy," he told her." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 36).

Ifemelu coped with her mother's religious rituals to keep harmony in the household, as did her father. But this dissatisfaction turns into conflict, as Ifemelu grows into a teenager. In one occasion, she refuses to obey Sister Ibinabo, who told her to join a group to help decorating the church for a party. Ifemelu refuses saying that the church was built in "dirty money" and that it was full of corrupted men (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 41). It causes a conflict, and Ifemelu's mother tells her: "The devil is using you. You have to pray about this. Do not judge. Leave the judging to God!" (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 41). She also accuses Ifemelu of being a mischief-maker, displaying an anti-feminine behavior: "Why must this girl be a troublemaker? I have been saying it since, that it would be better if she was a boy, behaving like this." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 41). Just like in hooks' testimony about the traumatic results that Christianism inflicted to her and her family and community, Ifemelu lives a lot of distressing situations due to her mother's faith.

This internal familiar conflict relates to Ifemelu's process of homecoming. The more shattered her relations to her family were, the more she dreamed and idealized about America (ADICHIE, 2013 p. 122). These dysfunctional relations also made her afraid of not succeeding to adapt when she decided to return (ADICHIE, 2013 p. 17). Thus, when deciding to return and readapting to Lagos, Ifemelu has to challenge herself to heal from these experiences, which matches hooks proposition of healing as a core part of homecoming (HOOKS, 2009).

This healing comes in a multitude of empiric details that are shown to us in the narrative; the perception of how she missed her parent's house and her mother's food, the welcoming and caring from her childhood neighbors, the walking through the city and adpting into the Nigerian urban organization and style, so different from the one she learnt to appreciate in the United States (ADICHIE, 2013 p. 277-288). She also learns to rebuild her relations to her parents and other close relatives, as well as she manages to rebuild the friendships that she left in Nigeria in the past (ADICHIE, 2013 p. 288). Hence, the success of healing emotional traumas and rebuilding the meaning that Lagos has to her are central into Ifemelu's homecoming. Consequently, bearing in mind the ideas of hooks and Ahmed, we can associate healing as a core process for Ifemelu's politics of emotion.

Other important part of this inner journey of cure has to do with successfully reestablishing her relationship with Obinze, her childhood love. When it comes to sexual and romantic relationships, there is another woman in the family that helped to shape Ifemelu's behavior. This woman is Aunt Uju, who is an antithesis for Ifemelu's mother deeply religious manners;

> (…) Aunty Uju was different. (...)
>
> According to the family legend, Ifemelu had been a surly three-year-old who screamed if a stranger came close, However, the first time she saw Aunty Uju, thirteen and pimply faced, Ifemelu walked over and climbed into her lap and stayed there. She did not know if this had happened, or had merely become true from being told over and over again, a charmed tale of the beginning of their closeness. It was Aunty Uju who sewed Ifemelu's little-girl dresses and, as Ifemelu got older, they would pore over fashion magazines, choosing styles together. Aunty Uju taught her to mash an avocado and spread it on her face, to dissolve Robb in hot water and place her face over the steam, to dry a pimple with toothpaste.

> Aunty Uju brought her James Hadley Chase novels wrapped in newspaper to hide the near-naked women on the cover, hot-stretched her hair when she got lice from the neighbors, talked her through her □rst menstrual period, supplementing her mother's lecture that was full of biblical quotes about virtue but lacked useful details about cramps and pads. When Ifemelu met Obinze, she told Aunty Uju that she had met the love of her life, and Aunty Uju told her to let him kiss and touch but not to let him put it inside. (ADICHIE, 2013 p. 41-42).

Uju was another role model for Ifemelu. She was a college student, in the way to become a young doctor. She also was the one who intellectually stimulated her niece into non-religious cultural content, also encouraging Ifemelu to search for college education and move to the United States. As it is shown in the excerpt above, it is Aunt Uju who mediates the process of Ifemelu's first period, also helping her with her sexual awakening. Uju balances the excessive religiousness of Ifemelu's mother, allowing the girl to have a more independent female behavior to be inspired in her development process. Despite all these positive aspect of their relations, Uju's romantic relationships were unhealthy and this also influences Ifemelu.

Aunt Uju's relationship with a political Nigerian figure named as 'the General' is a central issue in the family. Due to the family's religion, Ifemelu's mother tells the neighbors that Uju has a 'mentor'. She uses the word to ease the nature of their relationship, since the General is a married man (ADICHIE, 2013 p. 36). The General exerts a role of authority in Uju's life, saying that he wants to "take care of her" (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 38). As their 'love story' develops, Uju becomes more and more dependent on him, letting him guide her professional decisions and provide her with material resources. It slowly changes the perception that Ifemelu had about her aunt, turning Uju into a dependent woman, opposed to the independence she inspired to Ifemelu early in the narrative.

Later, in Ifemelu's adult life, she also develops relationships based on interest and with men that seem to exert a role of authority. These men are Curt and Blaine. According to Scarsini (2017, p. 48), Curt's whiteness, its related privileges and his social status as a rich man are important factors in the attraction that Ifemelu feels for him. It means that the possibility of changing her social status and having access to a better social condition attracted Ifemelu to him. Blaine also exerts a position of authority in a material and in political and ideological dimensions, trying to turn Ifemelu into a social justice activist (SCARSINI, 2017, p. 39).

The authority that they exerted in Ifemelu resembles the General's authority in Uju's life. Even if they did not provided for her as the General did for her Aunt, they had a similar symbolic power in her life. This is shown in what Scarsini (2017, p. 48) defines as Curt's "neo-colonial arousal" for Ifemelu, into which he gets her to submit to his fantasies of exotic sex. In Blaine's case, his position as a university professor becomes a reference of power to her and the possibility of expanding her social circle and knowledge about the academic world (HIDALGO, 2015, p. 19).

When it comes to healing from these relationships, it happens when Ifemelu meets Obinze again. Obinze is her first love and they end their relationship when Ifemelu moves to the U.S. When she decides returning to Lagos, Ifemelu starts talking to Obinze again. Throughout this contact, both have to change themselves and overcome obstacles so they can be together. This process is also part of Ifemelu's healing and homecoming.

Concluding, we can see that Ifemelu's dysfunctional family relations and behavior were part of her estrangement with her home. In order to belong again, she rebuilds these connections and learns new ways of living old relationships. It converges with chapter two's exposition of the trend in Black women's writing during the 80s regarding the search for an internal healing (WILLIAMS, 2009, p. 77). Thus, it can be said that healing in order to fully belong – and thus creating home – is a fundamental part of Ifemelu's journey, constituting a central process in her personal politics of emotion and in her homecoming to Nigeria.

5.1.3. Writing as resistance: Ifemelu's blog as a feminist political space

This section will further deep the previous analysis in chapter three of Ifemelu's blog as a central part of her personal resistance to the traumatic events she experiences as a Nigerian in America. As shown in chapter two, writing has been an important tool for Black women's political and cultural resistance. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu has writing as an essential political space to narrate her experience as an African and immigrant woman in the U.S. society. Black women's experiences and Ifemelu's blog connect to Sarah Ahmed's discussion about feminist politics and emotions, as well as feminist practices to change the reality we live:

> Feminist anger involves a reading of the world, a reading of how, for example, gender hierarchy is implicated in other forms of power relations, including race, class and sexuality, or how gender norms regulate bodies and spaces. Anger against objects or events, directed against this or that, moves feminism into a bigger critique of 'what is', as a critique that loses an object, and opens itself up to possibilities that cannot be simply located or found in the present. (AHMED, 2004, p. 176)

Through anger, feminists are moved to action, according to the scholar. But anger is just one of the many emotions (amongst them; wonder, hope, sadness), which are part of feminist politics (AHMED, 2004). Thus emotions mediated Ifemelu's experiences as an immigrant and her decision to create the blog is a result of this process. Then, the blog becomes a space that mediates "(…) the relation between affect and structure, or between emotion and politics in a way that undoes the separation of the individual from others." (AHMED, 2004, p. 174). It is not just the medium in which she shares her perception about the U.S. society (thus changing the dynamics of being an otherized foreign judged by a metropolitan Western society, in the blog she is the anonymous judger and analyst of the U.S. social dysfunctions), but also creating a channel of communication amongst herself and readers on a global scale.

Converging with the idea of the blog as a politicized emotional and critical space, Ndaka (2017) also contends that Ifemelu's blog is a space to un-write silence. It is a "(…)a space that transcends the circumscribed nature of interracial relations and dialogues (…)" (NDAKA, 2017, p. 101), thus creating a way to express "(…) heterogeneity and polyvocality, (…) [offering] an alternative politics of inhabiting racially and patriarchally hierarchized foreign spaces." (NDAKA, 2017, p. 101).

Ifemelu's blog is entitled *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black"* (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 8). She often describes it simply as 'lifestyle blog' in face to face conversations, because, according to her, telling people the title of the blog would "(…) make them uncomfortable." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 8). Ifemelu's perception about her blog's title as unsettling to people shows how emotions mediate the process of creating, talking about and producing the blog. The simple fact that she thinks of the title as distressing tells how emotions intermediate the debate about race and social (in)justice in the U.S. society. According to Sarah Ahmed;

> Through emotions, the past persists on the surface of bodies. Emotions show us how histories stay alive, even when they are not consciously remembered; how histories of colonialism, slavery, and violence shape lives and worlds in the present. The time of emotion is not always about the past, and how it sticks. Emotions also open up futures, in the ways they involve different orientations to others. It takes time to know what we can do with emotion. Of course, we are not just talking about emotions when we talk about emotions. The objects of emotions slide and stick and they join the intimate histories of bodies, with the public domain of justice and injustice. Justice is not simply a feeling. And feelings are not always just. But justice involves feelings, which move us across the surfaces of the

> world, creating ripples in the intimate contours of our lives. (AHMED, 2004, p. 202)

Ahmed's proposal of emotion as connections to historical past and how it affects society is linked to Ifemelu's discomfort of exposing her blog's title to strangers. She thinks that her blog's title would make U.S. natives uncomfortable because it would remind them that their nation still has a lot of racial and social issues to deal with in its contemporary times. Ndaka (2017) expose such feeling of discomfort through analyzing the first mentioned encounter in which Ifemelu debated her blog with a white person in the narrative. Ifemelu remembers this encounter, which was a conversation with a white man whose appearance was an archetype of "social warrior", but when he listens to Ifemelu talking about her blog, he quickly dismisses the debate about race as "overhyped" (NDAKA, 2017, p. 105). Ndaka also contends that this answer "(…) reductively divorces race from class—trivialises and invalidates Ifemelu's lived experiences of racial exclusions" (NDAKA, 2017, p. 105). Thus simply mentioning the title of her blog already evokes difficult emotions, reinforcing Ahmed's claims in the excerpt above, in which emotions have a political role in relation to history and social memory.

Ndaka also contends that the format of blog posts in the middle of a novel are an innovative way to make social commentary; "The blog posts act as narrative breaks, punctuating the overall narration with pithy and incisive commentary on racism and its pathologies." (NDAKA, 2017, p. 115). The scholar also contends that through inserting the blog's post in the middle of the narrative, Adichie uses creative writing to further expand her social commentary on the U.S. society and contextualizes Ifemelu's traumas and experiences directly to the social structures of the country (NDAKA, 2017, p. 115).

The post where Ifemelu discusses the "Blackness" attributed to non-American Blacks in the U.S. shows how this mediation of Ifemelu's emotion and social debate happens in the narrative:

> **To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby**

Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So what if you weren't "black" in your country? You're in America now. We all have our moments of initiation into the Society of Former Negroes. Mine was in a class in undergrad when I was asked to give the black perspective, only I had no idea what that was. So I just made something up. And admit it—you say "I'm not black" only because you know black is at the bottom of America's race ladder.

And you want none of that. Don't deny now. What if being black had all the privileges of being white? Would you still say "Don't call me black, I'm from Trinidad"? I didn't think so. So you're black, baby. And here's the deal with becoming black: You must show that you are offended when such words as "watermelon" or "tar baby" are used in jokes, even if you don't know what the hell is being talked about—and since you are a Non-American Black, the chances are that you won't know. (In undergrad a white classmate asks if I like watermelon, I say yes, and another classmate says, Oh my God that is so racist, and I'm confused. "Wait, how?"). You must nod back when a black person nods at you in a heavily white area. It is called the black nod. It is a way for black people to say "You are not alone, I am here too." In describing black women you admire, always use the word "STRONG" because that is what black women are supposed

to be in America. If you are a woman, please do not speak your mind as you are used to doing in your country. Because in America, strong-minded black women are SCARY. And if you are a man, be hyper-mellow, never get too excited, or somebody will worry that you're about to pull a gun. When you watch television and hear that a "racist slur" was used, you must immediately become offended. Even though you are thinking "But why won't they tell me exactly what was said?" Even though you would like to be able to decide for yourself how offended to be, or whether to be offended at all, you must nevertheless be very offended.

When a crime is reported, pray that it was not committed by a black person, and if it turns out to have been committed by a black person, stay well away from the crime area for weeks, or you might be stopped for having the profile. If a black cashier gives poor service to the non-black person in front of you, compliment that person's shoes or something, to make up for the bad service, because you're just as guilty for the cashier's crimes. If you are in an Ivy League college and a Young Republican tells you that you got in only because of Affirmative Action, do not whip out your perfect grades from high school. Instead, gently point out that the biggest beneficiaries of Affirmative Action are white women. If you go to eat in a restaurant, please tip generously. Otherwise the next black person who comes in will get awful service, because waiters groan when they get a black table. You see, black

> people have a gene that makes them not tip, so please overpower that gene. If you're telling a non-black person about something racist that happened to you, make sure you are not bitter. Don't complain. Be forgiving. If possible, make it funny. Most of all, do not be angry. Black people are not supposed to be angry about racism. Otherwise you get no sympathy. This applies only for white liberals, by the way. Don't even bother telling a white conservative about anything racist that happened to you. Because the conservative will tell you that YOU are the real racist and your mouth will hang open in confusion.(ADICHIE, 2013, p. 162-163)

I want to highlight that the blog post is reproduced here in its full original version. It is my political choice to reproduce the full post, as I could not make myself select specifics parts to quote and this part is a central social commentary in the book as well as a pivotal moment for Ifemelu's debate about race regarding her own personal experience and the structures of the U.S. society.

There are many elements to be discussed about this excerpt. I would like to highlight the specificity of how the U.S. racial structures affected Ifemelu and how it changed her identity. While analyzing this, I will explore how emotions move Ifemelu as she becomes Black in the U.S. society, as well as how emotions mediate the collective experiences of Black people in the U.S. social contexts.

Her introductory statement and opening paragraphs focus on non-American (meaning non U.S. natives) Blacks that deny their coming to Blackness in the U.S. Ifemelu shows a criticism to this posture, arguing that if being Black had the privileges of being white, they would accept this identity. Ifemelu criticism comes with her own narrative of how she became Black in the U.S. She narrates how she was 'initiated' to Blackness on an undergrad class when someone asked her for a "Black perspective" and she was confused about what it could mean. It is shown that the first emotion that Ifemelu feels about her "Blackness" is confusion.

It is like a whole other condition was added to her humanity and she is suddenly belonging to a social identity that is strange to her and that carries a communal meaning and a political epistemology with it. But as the text in her blog's post develops she seems to become acquainted with this identity, mainly through 'decoding' which are the cultural codes that are negatives and how to act when they surface in social interactions. These social norms amongst Black people are contemporary cultural reminders of how U.S. history and the negative feelings that it invokes "(…) stay alive, even when they are not consciously remembered; how histories of colonialism, slavery, and violence shape lives and worlds in the present." (AHMED, 2004, p. 202).

Ifemelu also explains an 'emotional social code' for Black people. It is mostly about what Black people are not allowed to do or to feel in order to be accepted in the U.S. society. Mostly she emphasizes how being angry and getting too excited are 'forbidden' for Blacks, otherwise they will not be welcomed. Excited Black men are understood by the U.S. society as a potential treat and Black women that voice their opinion are frightening. Therefore, Blacks in the U.S. must behave in an abnormally passivity when dealing with racist violence, and even reduce it to minor events so they can be socially acknowledged, according to Ifemelu's experiences.

She also explains that being Black is also sharing communal actions of caring, like supporting another Black person by greeting them in the street. It means also means tipping waiters so other Black costumers will be treated adequately in a restaurant. These small acts of caring can be related to Ahmed's proposal (2004) of a politics of affective solidarity.

Ifemelu explains that fear seems to be a general feeling of the U.S. society about Black people (as in the example of the scary Black women, as well the excited Black men) as much as it is a constant feeling of Black people themselves (as she explains when she says that Black people must be cautious to approach a crime scene, if it was committed by a Black person, to avoid being profiled by the authorities). On the subject of the affective politics of fear, Ahmed contends:

> The fear announces itself through an ontological statement, a statement a self makes of itself and to itself – 'I'm frightened.' Such statements of

> fear tell the other that they are the 'cause' of fear, in a way that is personal: 'Now they were beginning to be afraid of me.' As such the fear signified through language and by the white body does not simply begin and end there: rather the fear works through and on the bodies of those who are transformed into its subjects, as well as its objects. The black body is drawn tighter; it is not just the smile that becomes tighter, and is eventually impossible, However, the black body itself becomes enclosed by the fear, and comes to feel that fear as its own, such that it is felt as an impossible or inhabitable body. In this way, fear does not simply come from within and then move outwards toward objects and others (the white child who feels afraid of the black man); rather, fear works to secure the relationship between those bodies; it brings them together and moves them apart through the shudders that are felt on the skin, on the surface that surfaces through the encounter. (AHMED, 2004, p. 202).

As it is shown in Ifemelu's post, Ahmed explains that fear is an "ontological statement", whose social role is to its subjects and its objects. As Ahmed further explains the white body becomes the ones who fear and the Black bodies are the ones to be feared, and this dynamics is reproduced on Ifemelu's experiences. The scholar dives into how these politics of fear are translated in the materiality of social life, through segregation, racist violence and dehumanization of Black subjects (AHMED, 2004, p. 202). Ahmed also emphasizes that the politics of fear constructed by society is internalized by Black subjects, causing a constant state of distress. Then, according to her, fear is a social and material paradigm that establishes and defines relations amongst bodies.

In Ifemelu's process of becoming Black, this is true. She is not just an Igbo and Nigerian woman, now she has to deal with all the cultural and social norms of Blackness, learning how to navigate through it and dealing with all the changes that it causes to her personality and life. Her blog plays a central role in allowing her to reorganize her perceptions about Blackness, "becoming" Black and understanding the U.S. society. It is a place where she can, anonymously, share her perspectives with the world.

Ifemelu's posts are the social space where she can disrupt the social and racial hierarchies in which she is exposed in her daily life. It is her personal cosmos, which allows her to articulate her emotions, thoughts and social commentaries about the U.S. It also provides her an audience that interacts with her and shares or questions her perspectives, further helping her in understanding and articulating what she has been through as an immigrant. The blog also means bonding with other people, even if anonymously

It is on her blog that Ifemelu talks about her depression, starting a discussion about mental health amongst non-Americans immigrants and different cultural perceptions about this issue. Ifemelu's initial refuse in accepting that she was depressed due to attributing the condition to Americans and their "(…)self-absolving need to turn everything into an illness." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 119). As analyzed in chapter three, Ginika's friendship with Ifemelu helps her to understand and to deal with her condition. Later, the she creates a post about it entitled "On the Subject of Non-American Blacks Suffering from Illnesses Whose Names They Refuse to Know." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 119). It brings up a reader with a similar experience: She had been experiencing panic attacks, but refused to accept it, even after she was diagnosed by a doctor. Similarly to Ifemelu, her refusal was "(…) because panic attacks happened only to Americans. Nobody in Kinshasa had panic attacks. It was not even that it was called by another name, it was simply not called at all." (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 119).

This moment shows how Ifemelu's experiences and her decision to share it on the blog helped her to bond with people. This is reinforced by the growth of the blog's popularity; "The blog had unveiled itself and shed its milk teeth; by turns, it surprised her, pleased her, left her behind. Its readers increased, by the thousands from all over the world, (…)"(ADICHIE, 2013, p. 221). This popularity later originated a network of assistance in her life; "E-mails came from readers who wanted to support the blog. Support. (…). So she put up a link to her PayPal account. Credits appeared, (...). It began to appear every month, anonymously, as regular as a paycheck, (…)"(ADICHIE, 2013, p. 221) The blog's role in the

construction of a network of help for the character is also a practical form of the affective solidary politics proposed by Ahmed (2004). It also converges with the scholar's ideas on the construction of a "feminist pedagogy" (AHMED, 2004, p. 181) based of an affective opening up toward working together in order to change society, also "(…) claiming space through 'affective bonds'(…)"(AHMED, 2004, p. 184).

In conclusion, *Raceteenth* becomes a key part of Ifemelu's life as well as a central narrative resource to articulate the social criticism about the U.S. society. Converging with Ndaka's proposal (2017), this analysis reinforces that the blog is not just an escape for Ifemelu's harsh reality. Rather, it functions as the character's active creation of a medium that can disturb the social, racial and cultural hierarchies of the U.S., allowing Ifemelu to restructure her identity while also becoming an active agent on the subject of analyzing the U.S. society.

5.2.Final Thoughts on Becoming "Americanah" and making home – Ifemelu's identity as *mestiza* and amefrican woman and the politics of homecoming:

'Americanah' is a term Nigerians use to describe their fellow countrymen that go to the U.S. and return with "(…) with odd affectations (…)". It represents a mockery and a criticism to Nigerians that assimilate U.S. identity as if it was better than the Nigerian one. According to Ranyiudo, one of Ifemelu's closest contacts in Lagos, her friend comes back as an 'Americanah'(ADICHIE, 2013, p. 277). Her "initiation to Blackness" (ADICHIE, 2013, p. 162) and the many years in the U.S. as an immigrant change Ifemelu's identity. This change produces a new identity which mixes her Igbo ethnicity, Nigerian national identity and Africaness with her 'Americanah' facet. This hybrid self has been subject of many analysis on the academic production about the book and Chimamanda Adichie's literary work.

In this research, I propose to approach Ifemelu's mixed identity under the perspective of *m*estiza consciousness by Glória Anzaldúa (1987), a *Chicana* scholar. Glória Anzaldúa theoretical production comes from a very peculiar place. This place is crossed, like its author, with multiple borders: the physical, the spiritual and the psychological ones (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 3). The physical frontier was the restrictive geopolitical border between Texas and the southeastern United States and Mexico. The border manifested itself in the author's attempt to rescue Gods and Goddesses worshiped by people who inhabited Mexican soil before the colonial invasion of Colombo, coexisting with a religious syncretism that arose from contact with the colonizer. The psychological border was manifested in the multiple

identities that Anzaldúa carried; as a mixed-race woman, as a (raised in an environment hostile to her sexuality) and as a working-class woman.

The scholar produced the concept of mestiza consciousness as a way to articulate the multiplicity of conditions that crossed her. Anzaldúa's proposal of a lawyered consciousness incorporates the idea that different realities can be incorporated by people, forming substantially new hybrid subjects. Like Ifemelu, these versatile subjects no longer fit between the alternation of being one or another, However, they become something new, also producing new meanings in the worlds they inhabit.

Anzaldúa's proposal leads us back to Lelia Gonzalez's amefricanity. Anzaldúa talks about hybrid subjects produced by the encounter of different worlds and González aims to change the perspective that we use to frame these worlds. One of the purposes of this research is to expand the category of amefricanity so it can also encompass the politics of emotion by Black women. In Ifemelu's case she becomes Black and an amefrican woman. Her amefricanity is different from Kehinde, because she is not in Latin America, but she becomes part of a diasporic communal struggle against racism and her personal sense of self is forever changed by being immerged in this diasporic reality, as it was analyzed in chapter three.

Then, Ifemelu's personal politics of emotion as a Black woman – her amefricanity – is expressed through the reframing of self from displacement. She becomes amefricana and *mestiza*, with being African and Igbo. This internal restructuring that Ifemelu goes through her journey is also related to her politics of homecoming. It means that she has to learn about herself and her home again, facing hardships abroad as a immigrant, also managing to heal from the wounds of her past, so she can create her own home in Lagos.

In conclusion, Ifemelu's politics of homecoming mean to discover a new *mestiza* and amefrican identity – handling all the cultural, social and internal changes of her own politics of emotions – while also understanding that home is within oneself, as much as it is outside us.

CHAPTER VI
"MY HOME IS OVER JORDAN": ANALYZING MAYA (*ALL GOD'S CHILDREN NEED TRAVELING SHOES*)

Be me a Pharaoh
Build me high pyramids of stone and question
See me the Nile
at twilight
and jaguars moving to
the slow cool draught.
Swim me Congo
Hear me the tails of alligators
flapping waves that reach
a yester shore.
Swing me vines, beyond that baobab tree,
and talk me chief
Sing me birds
flash color lightening through bright green leaves.
Taste me fruit
its juice free-falling from
a mother tree.
Know me
Africa.

For Us, Who Dare Not Dare - Maya Angelou

6.0.Initial Thoughts: A Brief Discussion on the Creation of the Self in Autobiographies, Autofiction and Writing The Self:

As it was explained in the introductory chapter and in the second one, this chapter will address the genre of Maya Angelou's autobiographical work selected for this research. I will start the discussion with a perspective from the *Writing the Self – Essays on Autobiographies and Autofiction* (SHANDS, MEYERS, MIKRUT, PATTANAIK, 2015):

> Recent discussions of autobiographical writing have led to a pléthora of new terms such as autographies, autre-biographies, nouvelle autobiography, autofiction, faction, égolittérature, circonfession. For some, autofiction is either a simple model of the autobiographical pact (Lejeune) with a marked psychoanalytic inflection (Doubrovsky), or the latest form of the autobiographical novel (Gasparini), for others, an intergeneric practice which is already ancient, and which can be taken as an arch-genre including the form of an autobiographical novel, but not limited in possibilities. Based on the work of Lucian, Vincent Colonna describes different autofictional categories such as fantastic autofiction that transfigures the existence and identity of the writer "in an unreal story, indifferent to likelihood" (75) and biographical autofiction, in which the author fantasizes about his existence rom actual data, remaining closer to reality and crediting his text with a less subjective truth" (93)(...). Life is regarded as raw material which should provide a specific form: this work of the self, about the self is about inventing oneself through exercises in subjectivity. (SHANDS, MEYERS, MIKRUT, PATTANAIK, 2015, p. 26).

As the scholars expose, the autobiography genre is surrounded by academic debate, which has recently produced a series of new terminologies. The excerpt above focuses on the debate of autobiography and autofiction. There is no unanimity about whether these terms can

be regarded as synonyms or if they are merely related. However, there seems to be a common ground about their connection and, despite the different perspectives, apparently what differs amongst them is the degrees of liberty for self-creation, in which some scholars argue that autofiction offers more freedom for the writers than the autobiographical genre.

Other questions that emerge, in the debate about autobiography and autofiction, are the reliability of the narrator, the difference amongst fact and fiction. It is also questioned the narrative's performativity and how the different exercises of subjectivity's expression impact the narratives (SHANDS, MEYERS, MIKRUT, PATTANAIK, 2015, p. 8). There are no closed answers or definite truths about these questions, leaving it to be constantly revisited by academia and writers in general.

Therefore, regarding the presented background and this research, I will consider autofiction and autobiography as synonyms. And, as one of the focuses of the research is the political meaning of Black women's identities and subjectivities, I will consider the narrator of *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986) as an adapted self of its author, Maya Angelou. When discussing this narrator I will address her as Maya and when talking about the author of the book, I will address her as Angelou. The next section will analyze in detail the genre of the autobiography in Angelou's literary legacy with her quest of home.

6.1. Angelou, Memory and The Search for Home:

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986) is part of Angelou's autobiographical series, composed by seven works. It is the fifth one, after *The Heart of a Woman* (1981) and followed by *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002). *All God's Children…* focuses on her years away from the United States, when she lived in several African countries, but most of the narrative is set in Ghana.

According to Roscan (2019, p. 143), Angelou's autobiographical works descend from African American tradition of writing the self through slave narratives. These narratives blended together "(…) history, politics, autobiography and literature.". Following this trend, Angelou "(…) offers an honest incursion into the American culture and history with all its practices, beliefs and contradictions. Her narrative invites for active participation, expects to trigger a reaction in the behavior of the reader (…)" (ROSCAN, 2019, p. 144). Thus, the scholar contends that Angelou subverts a white literary tradition of the 19th and 20th century

regarding the autobiography genre as dedicated to show "good lives" (ROSCAN, 2019, p. 143). Angelou as shifted the perspectives and created works that served as a political medium for Black women's debates about social issues (ROSCAN, 2019, p. 144).

Then *All God's Children…* also offers this perspective of social criticism through a Black women's narrative voice that Angelou has created on her other works. But specifically it delves into her quest for home and for a place to belong. On this wise, Angelou's departure to Africa is a criticism to the U.S. as well. The narrative's exploration of her displacement talks about the places that she lives and discovers as it also explores the bittersweet feelings about her homeland.

To this extent, Angelou's ontological search for a place that accepts her willingly can be related to hooks (2009, p. 2-3) debate about the search for a place to belong and how this is related to the politics of race and class. As it was explored in Kehinde and Ifemelu's analysis, the creation and the change of one's own subjectivity is intrinsic to this process.

Recollecting the debate from the third chapter, the African American community in the 20th century was deeply influenced by the Pan Africanist movement, it explains Angelou's choice of trying to create home in African countries. The Pan Africanist ideals helped to shape a romanticized perspective of Africa as "(…) a place not built by human hands, with streets of gold, abundant in milk and honey,(...) and paradisiacal destiny, [where] there would be no more war against blacks (…)" (RODRIGUES, SALGUEIRO, 2015, p. 37-38). It was an adaptation of the Promised Land for diasporic Black communities.

Then, Heaven and Africa became synonyms to Angelou and many of her fellow activists and artists friends (RODRIGUES, SALGUEIRO, 2015, p. 38). It was with this perspective of creating a home in paradise, that Angelou starts her search. However, the truly provocative aspect of Maya's homecoming process in the narrative is how this process is subverted. Thus, the following sections will explore Maya's homecoming and, similarly of what happened to Ifemelu, also her amefricanity and the *mestiza* consciousness that resulted from this journey.

6.2. Her Traveling Shoes: Analyzing Maya

6.2.1. "The streets were paved with gold": 'Mother Africa' under a 'returned' Black woman's gaze in her search for homecoming

The beginning of Maya's journey is marked by joy. A feeling of happiness and acceptance is shared with the readers; "We were Black Americans in West Africa, where for the first time in our lives the color of our skin was accepted as correct and normal." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 7). The feeling of being welcomed establishes a sense of contentment on Angelou and her son, Guy. Concomitantly, it also shows that in the United States their skin – and themselves – was not accepted. The narrative develops, delving into that cheerfulness; "(…) I was on my way to another adventure. The future was plump with promise. (…). We looked at the Ghanaian streets and laughed. We listened to the melodious languages and laughed.(…)" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 7).

Maya's first exploration of the Ghanaian streets with her son Guy and their joy for being able to merely walk and see people that look like themselves can be directly connected to hooks' proposals of what being at home means; "I need to live where I can walk. (…). Walking, I will establish my presence, as one who is claiming the earth, creating a sense of belonging, a culture of place." (HOOKS, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, the beginning of Maya's journey shows someone who is thriving in, apparently, being accepted, eager to belong, to make a home in the 'motherland'.

But this feeling starts to change somehow sooner than Maya could expect. As soon as she decided to stay in Ghana, she develops a relationship with other U.S.-born Blacks that decided to "return" to Africa, which she baptizes as "Revolutionaries Returnees" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 21). This groups is presented as overly excited with Ghana, and its capital Accra, but Maya acknowledges that they pretended not to notice the unpleasant aspects of the place so it would not "get on the way" to their so enthusiastic homecoming;

> Each person had brought to Africa varying talents, energies, vigor, youth and terrible yearnings to be accepted. On Julian's side porch during warm black nights, our voices were raised in attempts to best each other in lambasting America and extolling Africa.(...)
>
> We did not discuss the open gutters along the streets of Accra, the shacks of corrugated iron in

> certain neighborhoods, dirty beaches and voracious mosquitoes. And under no circumstances did we mention our disillusionment at being overlooked by the Ghanaians.
>
> We had come home, and if home was not what we had expected, never mind, our need for belonging allowed us to ignore the obvious and to create real places or even illusory places, befitting our imagination. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 21-22)

Likewise, this excerpt marks an initial disruption of Maya's emotional state of being accepted and welcomed. She had expected a homecoming which was based on feelings of devotion and idealization and the first cracks on this idea caused her to be frustrated, but she – and her group of friends – could not consciously acknowledge that. They thought that all they had to do was ignore this uneasiness and create real or imaginary places to belong in Accra. They also believed that they would be fully accepted after they proved themselves to be useful for the natives of the continent; "We had little doubt about our likability. After the Africans got to know us their liking would swiftly follow. We didn't question if we would be useful." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 22). This usefulness was tied to becoming productive and generating benefits for the continent; "We would work and produce, then snuggle down into Africa as a baby nuzzles in a mother's arms." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 22). These ideas of being accepted through being utile can be interpreted as 'defense mechanisms' against the awareness of their foreignness. This need to be useful was connected to the subtle fear of being rejected again in Ghana and in Africa, as they were in the United States. Also, the idea of comparing Africa to a mother emphasizes the romanticism of the 'motherland' ideology regarding the continent.

Then, despite of these unconscious and hidden apprehensions, Maya manages to "fall in love with Ghana" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 22). This love is justified by U.S. Black people's longing for home;

> Our people had always longed for home. For centuries we had sung about a place not built with hands, where the streets were paved with gold, and were washed with honey and milk. There the saints would march around wearing white robes and jeweled crowns. There, at last, we would study war no more and, more important, no one would wage war against us again.
>
> The old Black deacons, ushers, mothers of the church and junior choirs only partially meant heaven as that desired destination. In the yearning, heaven and Africa were inextricably combined. And now, less than one hundred years after slavery was abolished, some descendants of those early slaves taken from Africa, returned, weighted with a heavy hope, to a continent which they could not remember, to a home which had shamefully little memory of them.
>
> Which one of us could know that years of bondage, brutalities, the mixture of other bloods, customs and languages had transformed us into an unrecognizable tribe? Of course, we knew that we were mostly unwanted in the land of our birth and saw promise on our ancestral continent. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 22)

As it was previously mentioned, Maya's desire to belong came from an idealization of Africa. According to her it would be an idyllic place, and it would be a place that would offer peace, no more war on Black people. The return seemed to be promising, yet Maya acknowledges that the home they longed with such a despair "(…) had shamefully little memory of them." and that they could have become an "(…) unrecognizable tribe" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 22). Regardless of of this, there seemed to be more expectations of

belonging and being accepted in the ancestral land than in the United States. Then, even with the initial discomfort related to the disturbance of the idealized perspectives about the 'mother continent', Maya was delighted by Ghana.

Maya's enchantment with Ghana also had to do with her own childhood memories and longings, as well as with the affective memories related to her family;

> I was captured by the Ghanaian people. Their skins were the colors of my childhood cravings: peanut butter, licorice, chocolate and caramel. Theirs was the laughter of home, quick and without artifice. The erect and graceful walk of the women reminded me of my Arkansas grandmother, Sunday-hatted, on her way to church. I listened to men talk, and whether or not I understood their meaning, there was a melody as familiar as sweet potato pie, reminding me of my Uncle Tommy Baxter in Santa Monica, California. So I had finally come home. The prodigal child, having strayed, been stolen or sold from the land of her fathers, having squandered her mother's gifts and having laid down in cruel gutters, had at last arisen and directed herself back to the welcoming arms of the family where she would be bathed, clothed with fine raiment and seated at the welcoming table. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 23-24).

The association between the people of Ghana and her close family members only reinforces Maya's idealization regarding Africa. If people there were so similar to her loved ones, they would receive her and love her equally, on her mind. At the end of excerpt, this is

shown through her yearning to be cared for and loved so many years after being stolen from what should have been her home.

This hope of being accepted and welcomed is similarly shown in the way some returnees expected to be received by the native Ghanaians in Accra; with "(...) customs agents to embrace them, porters to shout—“welcome,” (...), smiling officials would cover them in ribbons and clasp them to their breasts with tearful sincerity"(ANGELOU, 1986, p. 24). Maya and the other returnees wanted to be celebrated, hoping to get love and affection from the Ghanaians, as if that would justify their existence and erase the violence and the feeling of being unwanted in their land of birth. But, in contrast, they seemed to be overlooked by them and it caused a deception in many of them, those reluctant in accepting and dealing with it.

So, it is shown that in the beginning of Maya's journey, she is a person who is passionate about her new whereabouts and absolutely certain that she would find her home in Africa. Gradually, it changes. Her love for Ghana for filling the voids and pains of her childhood lives with the disappointment of not being as welcomed as she wished. Despite this, the need to feel at home makes her ignore the frustrations to stay in Ghana and strive to prove useful so that she could be loved and accepted.

Maya’s conflicted emotions and her desire to construct home in Ghana are related to hooks’ ideas of homecoming and to the importance of homeplace in Black people’s history. According to hooks (1990, p. 83), creating home was a radical act for Black people in the United States. It would be the “(…) one site where one could freely construct the issue of humanization, where one could resist.” (HOOKS, 1990, p. 383).

The scholar explains that this place of belonging would be a place of personal restoration, a space to create a private culture of ‘rehumanization’, where Black people be subjects instead of objects (HOOKS, 1990, p. 383). In Maya’s case, yearning for Africa to be this place meant to detach herself from her land of birth, where she and her loved ones were brutalized and violated. The United States meant a place of aggression and as a means of resistance, creating home away from it would fully restore her humanity and her sense of belonging.

Yet, reality disturbs Maya’s plans. As she exposes to us, there were many changes in the diasporic African communities since we were taken away from the ancestral land. Even if

Ghana has an enchanting people and the anticolonial politics of Kwame Nkrumah were stimulating for her, it was not enough to provide Maya's homecoming.

Rather than just feeling estranged to Ghana, Maya was subalternized as a returnee. She had to work the double to afford her living in Accra (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 24) Likewise, she is mistreated in a restaurant and in one of her job interview, in both occasions by native Ghanaians (ANGELOU, 1986).

There is a discussion amongst Maya and a native Ghanaian receptionist that turns out to be particularly hurtful for Maya. Both women have a discussion over the fact that Maya did not know who she was meant to talk to and the receptionist refused to help her locating the person;

> I persisted, "Well, who should I see?"
>
> She looked up from the page and smiled patronizingly. "You should see who you want to see. Who do you want to see?" She knew herself to be a cat and I was a wounded bird. I decided to remove myself from her grasp. I leaned forward and imitating her accent. I said, "You silly ass, you can take a flying leap and go straight to hell."
>
> Her smile never changed. "American Negroes are always crude." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 38)

This moment is infuriating for Maya. It leaves her filled with rage against the woman for the fact that she patronized her and that she mocked and offended Maya and her fellow-countryman. It leaves a feeling of bitterness in Maya toward the native Ghanaians; "The receptionist and I could have been sisters, or in fact, might be cousins far removed. Yet her scorn was no different from the supercilious rejections of Whites in the United States." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 39). The issues that divide this "unrecognizable tribe" surface before Maya's eyes in her discussion with the receptionist. The arrogant answer from the native

woman diminishing Maya and her group showed her that maybe the feelings of adoration and bonding that the U.S. Black yearned to receive from the Ghanaians were not mutual.

Other situation that bothered her was when she went to the hair saloon so she could get a 'native-like' hairstyle and the hairdresser gives her a horrible hairdo as a supposedly innocent mockery. Maya understood it as message about faking cultural belonging from the woman "For some unknown reason the beautician had chosen to teach me a lesson on the foolishness of trying to "go native."." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 40). Nonetheless the interaction is not as hostile as it was with the receptionist, Maya is not delighted either with the woman's behavior; "She said, "I will come again in two weeks. Oh, how I like to laugh with you." I didn't want to wonder whether she was sincere, but I noticed that I hadn't laughed even once." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 41).

These two moments are important for Maya starting to sober up her state of mind regarding Ghanaians and Ghana. She starts to notice that there were differences and that it was not for the fact that she was a returnee that it would guarantee her the achieving of her homecoming. The fantasy of the motherland starts to melt, making her more aware of the fact that her 'foreignness' was not going to disappear simply because she looked like Ghanaians and longed for their acceptance.

By the middle of the book, Maya's yearning for belonging had sobered up and her own experiences of estrangement with natives have rendered her new perspectives of the idealized homecoming and return to Africa;

> I lay on my bed drinking for myself and for all the nameless orphans of Africa who had been shunted around the world. I drank and admitted to a boundless envy of those who remained on the continent, out of fortune or perfidy. Their countries had been exploited and their cultures had been discredited by colonialism.
>
> Nonetheless, they could recollect through their priests and chiefs on centuries of continuity. The lowliest could call the name of ancestors who

> lived centuries earlier. The land upon which they lived had been in their people's possession beyond remembered time. Despite political bondage and economic exploitation, they had retained an ineradicable innocence.
>
> I doubted if I, or any Black from the diaspora, could really return to Africa. We wore skeletons of old despair like necklaces, heralding our arrival, and we were branded with cynicism. In America we danced, laughed, procreated; we became lawyers, judges, legislators, teachers, doctors, and preachers, but as always, under our glorious costumes we carried the badge of a barbarous history sewn to our dark skins. It had often been said that Black people were childish, but in America we had matured without ever experiencing the true abandon of adolescence. Those actions which appeared to be childish most often were exhibitions of bravado, not unlike humming a jazz tune while walking into a gathering of the Ku Klux Klan. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 77-78)

This excerpt shows the complex conclusion of Maya's process of undoing the idealization she had created about Africa and Ghana. As an Afro-diasporic woman, she realizes that her homecoming in Africa as she previously dreamed is impossible. She also establishes the differences amongst African natives and diasporic Blacks, which is related also to belonging.

According to Maya's perception the natives of African soil that managed to remain in their homeland have faced the hardships of the colonialism in the country. Nevertheless, they preserved a sense of communal belonging and cultural sharing that allowed them to recall

their memory and to connect to their ancestor's histories, something that U.S. Blacks did not have.

The condition of the diasporic U.S. Black community is one of being twice displaced; unwanted by America and not being able to truly return to Africa. Despite having the capacity of thriving in multiple careers and occupying important places in the U.S. society, the U.S. Blacks would always be pursued by a history of violence and social neglect by their own country.

This moment shows us a rather hopelessness from Maya, as she sees herself and her equals as twice displaced, despised by their land of birth and unable to reconnect with their ancestor's home. In this moment, Maya sees themselves as truly orphans, forbid to make home in any place. That is a result of how brutal the awareness of the fact that simply return to Africa would not solve all her life's problems and that it would not end her feeling of not having a home in the world. Later, I will also explore how this moment means the birth of Maya's *mestiza* consciousness and an important part of her amefricanity. These ideas are not final for her, because this viewpoint undergoes a process of transformation.

This perception changes through her social connections and many events, mainly political and social ones. The next sections will analyze how the politics of affective solidarity and political activism play a central role in reshaping Maya's ideas of homecoming.

6.2.2. Community and resistance: A returnee's social network of affective solidarity, healing and the multiple meanings of home

According to bell hooks, social connections are a central part of Black people's resistance against oppressions since colonization. The human capacity to connect with other people and to create community stands, for her, as an essential part of fighting against repressive forces (HOOKS, 2009, p. 29). This idea relates to Ahmed's proposal of a politics of affective solidarity, which was explored in Kehinde and Ifemelu's analysis. Recalling this discussion, it was shown that the social network of support that these women created became a central part of their struggle to survive. It also helped to transform themselves into active political subjects.

In Maya's journey, it also happens. In the past chapter, it was mentioned the group that she baptized as "Revolutionary Returnees". They were important connections to her to keep contact with people with the same background as her and they also assisted her in a difficult time, when her son was at the hospital due to a car accident. The head of the group of returnees was Julian a man that was very important to Maya as her friend and as someone who had many social connections in Accra. In the aftermath of Guy's accident, he presents Maya to a Ghanaian woman called Efua, who helped Maya in her emotional crisis during Guy's hospital internment.

> Efua put her hand on my cheek and repeated, "Sister, you have need of a Sister friend because you need to weep, and you need someone to watch you while you weep." Her gestures and voice were mesmerizing. I began to cry. She stroked my face. (…)
>
> (…)
>
> "Now, Sister, you must eat. Eat and drink. Replenish yourself." She called her chaufeur, and we were taken to her home.
>
> She was a poet, playwright, teacher, and the head of Ghana's National Theatre. We talked in the car of Shakespeare, Langston Hughes, Alexander Pope and Sheridan. We agreed that art was the power of life and despite the years of ill-treatment Black artists were among its most glorious blossoms.
>
> (…)
>
> "Sister, you are not alone. I, myself, will be at the hospital tomorrow. Your son is now my son. He

> has two mothers in this place." She put her hand on my face again. "Sister, exercise patience. Try."
>
> When the driver stopped at the hospital, I felt cool and refreshed as if I had just gone swimming in Bethesda's pool, and many of my cares had been washed away in its healing water. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 15-16)

The excerpt above shows Efua and Maya's first encounter. They are introduced through Julian, who told Maya that she needed another woman's support in the difficult moment she was going through. It was a very emotional first meeting and Maya felt the welcoming of the Ghanaian woman as an act of compassion, which allowed her to let her emotions run freely with Efua. The woman was an important cultural figure in Ghana and by sharing some of Maya's artistic interest, they could connect deeply. Efua takes Maya to her home and introduces the newcomer to her family and staff, offering her a meal. This moment holds an important meaning in Maya's heart. It makes her feel loved and cared for, in a moment of sadness.

In the ending of the excerpt, Maya compares her moments with Efua as a process of healing. That is similar to hooks' idea of healing as a collective process for the black people in diaspora, mediated through interpersonal integration (HOOKS, 2009, p. 47). In view of that, Efua represents the power of connection and its healing at this moment of Maya's journey in Accra. Besides healing, the connection amongst the women also evokes Ahmed's statement on the power of bonding; "Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground." (AHMED, 2004, p. 189). Efua's empathy toward Maya acknowledges their common grounds; Blackness, womanhood and motherhood. Thus, Maya feels accepted and thrives in the other woman's kindness. This moment shifts her posture regarding Guy's condition and it also helps her to be more open to other people, allowing her to develop a broader social circle.

Other important women in Maya's journey in Ghana are Alicia and Vicki, with whom she later shares a house. They became her most intimate contacts and they also help her to

notice that she was not the only one who was feeling rejected in Ghana (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 32). Both women were activists like Maya and she constantly highlights their intelligence and how their fierceness and support were important for her to feel less rejected in Ghana (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 32). Similarly to Kehinde's connection to Nega Florinda and queen Agontime or Ifemelu's friendship with Ginika, Alicia and Vicki build up with Maya a politics of affective solidarity that helps each one to resist the difficulties of displacement.

Both Alice and Vicki are the first people Maya wants to see when she gets a proposal for a romantic date (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 65). They are also part of her closest social cycle that engage with political questions and that help her to go back to the United States (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 109). Throughout the narrative, their roles as emotional connections grow. As does Maya's attachment to them. They influence her perspectives about homecoming and about their own estrangement to Ghana. Maya's sense of community is built through Vicki and Alice, with other Returnees and Ghanaian friends, like Efua. Similar to Ifemelu's friendships in Lagos when she returns, they share a healing process which leads Maya to decide to return to her land of birth. The connection amongst Maya and the important women in her life that help her to overcome difficulties can be regarded as an expression of the new womanhood due to its interpersonal and social aspect, since these women are Maya's friends and partner on her actions to fight against oppressed, fitting the aforementioned definition proposed by Davis (1985).

Last, but not least there is Maya's son, Guy. He is a central person in her life and journey and he illustrates how the meaning of home, for her is also attached to people;

> I had lived with family until my son was born in my sixteenth year. When he was two months old and perched on my left hip, we left my mother's house and together, save for one year when I was touring, we had been each other's home and center for seventeen years. He could die if he wanted to and go to wherever dead folks go, but I, I would be left without a home. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 9)

This citation illustrates the depth of the relation amongst them. Beyond familiar ties or the common sense idea of motherly love, Guy represented huge part of Maya's life, even on challenging times like when she left her mother's house. Through bonding and sharing a life together for seventeen years, Maya and Guy became homes for one another. It meant that the feeling of belonging and safety was not dependent upon a specific place, but rather it was related to be able to have the company and the presence of the other. It explains why Guy's accident led Maya to be in such a state of despair.

The idea of people being a part of creating a sense of home can be expanded to Maya's social connections in Ghana. They meant home for her when she felt estranged. Through this sense of belonging to her fellow U.S. Black friends, Maya could come to understand how much she missed the United States and it made her go back. Then, it can be said that home becomes a word with multiple meaning for Maya. It is a physical place, but it is also the solidarity and caring of the ones she love, which ultimately help her to heal and, later, to truly belong.

6.2.3. "You have seen Africa, bring it home and teach our people about the homeland.": Politicization through emotions and Maya's homecoming

Ahmed (2004, p. 171) proposes that "(…) emotional journeys are bound up with politicisation, in a way that reanimates the relation between the subject and a collective.". Accordingly, Maya's homecoming is also an emotional journey marked by such politicization. Two central figures in this process are Kwame Nkrumah and Malcolm X. The former shows Maya new possibilities for political futures through Ghana's experience of independence and the latter is the one that asks Maya to go back to the United States.

Nkrumah is an important and omnipresent figure in Maya's narrative. Despite of never directly appearing, his ideas, his beliefs in the independence of Ghana and in the emancipation of the African continent are a fuel of optimism for Maya's spirit;

> The citizens were engaged in their own concerns. They were busy adoring their flag, their five-

> year-old independence from Britain and their president. Journalists, using a beautiful language created by wedding English words to an African syntax, described their leader as "Kwame Nkrumah, man who surpasses man, iron which cuts iron." Orators, sounding more like Baptist southern preachers than they knew, spoke of Ghana, the jewel of Africa leading the entire continent from colonialism to full independence by the grace of Nkrumah and God, in that order. When Nkrumah ordered the nation to detribalize, the Fanti, Twi, Ashanti, Ga and Ewe clans began busily dismantling formations which had been constructed centuries earlier by their forefathers. Having the responsibility of building a modern country, while worshipping traditional ways and gods, consumed enormous energies. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 24).

In this passage, Maya highlights how Ghanaians were in love with their independence and with their leader, Nkrumah. He was seen as a political force whose audacity was capable to turn Ghana in the leader of the emancipation of the whole continent. It is also noticeable how Maya relates the Ghanaians journalist's accents and speeches to those of Baptist southern preachers, thus establishing an affective connection amongst Ghana and the United States.

She also emphasizes how Ghana sought to handle tradition and modernity, in order to fully become a modern and independent nation. Nkrumah was the one leading this process. He fosters national union through political unity. But he also becomes a figure of affection. The power of his presence in itself grows into an emotional driving force for Maya and her friends.

This is reinforced by an important characteristic of Nkrumah. It was the fact that he cherished and welcomed diasporic Blacks, something that was also very important for Maya and her friends;

> The shared joy was traceable to President Nkrumah, who had encouraged his people to cherish their African personality. (…): "For too long in our history Africa has spoken through the voice of others. Now what I have called the African Personality in international affairs will have a chance of making its proper impact and will let the world know it through the voices of its sons." When he declared that West Indians and Black Americans were among Africa's great gifts to the world, the immigrant community gleamed with gratitude.
>
> For the first time in our lives, or the lives of our remembered families, we were welcomed by a president. We lived under laws constructed by Blacks, and if we violated those laws we were held responsible by Blacks. For the first time, we could not lay any social unhappiness or personal failure at the door of color prejudice.
>
> We shadowed Nkrumah's every move, and read carefully his speeches, committing the more eloquent passages to memory. We recounted good gossip about him, loving his name (…).(ANGELOU, 1986, p.79-80).

In the passage above, we see why Nkrumah becomes such an important figure in the narrative. More than just being a political reference, the president of Ghana becomes a symbol of welcoming and affection through his acceptance and love for the diasporic African community from the United States.

This is not enough for Maya to find her home in Ghana, However, the experience of being in the country during Nkrumah's rule affected Maya deeply in an emotional level. It helped her to rethink possibilities and define new political ideologies. The construction of Ghana as an independent nation under the leadership of a fearless politician makes her believe in the black people's capacity for reorganization and autonomy. This goes beyond political issues; Nkrumah also rescues the ontologies and epistemologies of the native peoples of Ghana as central to the country's national project. Nkrumah restores strength and hope to her. These feelings are developed throughout the narrative.

Even if her homecoming takes her away from Ghana and back to her homeland, she does not abandon the affection toward Nkrumah's figure. His actions and leadership brings her positive emotions and help her to get involved again with political affairs. After getting frustrated for working for Marthin Luther King and watching his politics of peace failing, Maya had been away from political activism for a while (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 120). But under Nkrumah and the Ghanaian experience, she goes back to participating in protests against racism and to political activism (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 120). Nkrumah's influence also paves the way to her homecoming, as the urge to fight for her people in the U.S. grows as she observes Ghana's experience.

In this wise, another central figure in the politicization of Maya's homecoming is Malcolm X. He decides to travel to African countries and he goes to Ghana. Malcolm is a personality that brings a lot of emotion and intensity to Maya's narrative: "Malcolm X was America's Molotov cocktail" (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 126). This mighty introduction already shows how he, like Nkrumah, evokes emotion and political devotion on Maya and everyone that meets him in Ghana. She defines him as the direct opposition to Dr. Marthin Luther King's non-violent politics, and even though many people were scared to assume their sympathy for such a controversial person, many loved him in silence; "He had been the stalking horse for the timid who openly denied him but took him, like a forbidden god, into their most secret hearts, there to adore him." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 126).

It is Malcolm who exposes the calamity of the situation of U.S. Blacks to Maya and her friends (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 126). He talks about the need of denouncing the violence of racism in the U.S. to the world (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 126). Malcolm's speeches about the condition of Black people in the U.S. are deeply touching for Maya, reshaping her perspectives about her connection to her birthplace (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 135). Malcolm's

notions and plans seduce Maya, the Ghanaians and the reader. He is a magnetic power and his words evoke emotions and reactions on Maya. Consequently, Malcolm embodies Ahmed's idea (2004) of emotion as a driving force.

Malcolm represents the incarnation of many emotions; revolt, hope, anger and desire to change. He seems to be conscious of that, and it shows on his own self-definition; "I am neither a fanatic nor a dreamer. I am a Black man who loves justice and loves his people." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 136). To Maya, his presence means receiving a call for action back in the United States.

Malcolm directly asks Maya and her friends to go back to their land of birth to help their community; "(…), he was a big brother advisor, suggesting that it was time for me to come home. "The country needs you. Our people need you. (…). You have seen Africa, bring it home and teach our people about the homeland."." (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 136). Malcolm seems to change the feelings of hope that Maya had under Nkrumah's influence, transforming it into the necessity of going back to change the reality of Black people in the United States. I emphasize also how he addresses Africa as "homeland" and the U.S. as "home", thus establishing an everlasting connection to their ancestral roots, but acknowledging the idea of being at home somewhere else in their diasporic condition. This idea also affects Maya profoundly. After Malcolm's visit to Ghana, Maya decides to return to the United States.

Thus, Malcolm and Nkrumah are essential for Maya's return to activism and to change her perspective about the meaning of home. This can be related to bell hooks idea of creating home as a radical and political act for Black women (HOOKS, 1990, p. 383). Nonetheless political activism is just one dimension of politics, it becomes a central aspect for Maya's journey and it influences directly her decision of going back to the U.S. Therefore, Maya's homecoming acquires a "subversive value" (HOOKS, 1990, p. 386), imbued with "political commitment" (HOOKS, 1990, p. 386).

6.3. Final Thoughts – "I knew that Africa had creolized me": Maya as a *mestiza*-minded and amefrican woman

Maya changes deeply on her journey, as did Ifemelu and Kehinde. She becomes the embodiment of multiple meaning and a subject formed by the arranging of multiple identities, as well as affected by numerous experiences.

Her dream of Africa as a maternal idealized homeland falls apart and when she realizes this, she also has to face the contradictory nature of being a diasporic person of African descent. This moment is a sad one for her, and she thinks of herself as “orphan of Africa” (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 77-78).

However, the change of this feeling happens through the affective solidarity that she shares with her son and her friends, as well as the many events that she lives in Ghana. From this despair and sadness of realizing the impossibility of the “return”, arises the amefrican and *mestiza*-minded Maya. Like Kehinde and Ifemelu, she realizes her role in the diasporic African struggle for freedom and political emancipation, which renders her as an amefrican woman. This helps her to create her own politics of emotion, which helps her to decide to return to the U.S.. This is her amefricanity. The profound change and the embodying the conjunction of multiple worlds in Maya express the *mestiza* consciousness, as proposed by Anzaldúa (1983).

This new identity provides her the awareness of the necessity of her return. Maya’s arrival on the United States is not narrated in the book. But this part is just the result of her process of homecoming. Similarly to Ifemelu, the internal vicissitudes and the changes on her subjectivity are the core elements of this process for Maya.

Her new *mestiza* and amefrican identity paves her way home, outside and inside herself.

CHAPTER VII
"THE BORDER THAT CROSSED US":

FINAL THOUGHTS ON KEHINDE, IFEMELU AND MAYA'S PRILGRIMAGES

This final chapter aims to analyze the common elements in Kehinde, Ifemelu and Maya, as well as it will discuss the perspectives on transnational literary research on Black women's literary production.

Regarding the initial research questions, this chapter presents some answers; the works and the analysis show that Black women's subjectivities and political positioning are profoundly related to displacement, race, gender and class. These new diasporic identities enabled these female characters' to change and influence their social environments. The intersectional debate, Black feminism and decolonial theories in Literary Studies are central to a critical investigation of these experiences. It is possible and necessary to investigate under the critical lens of gender studies the African decolonization, the diaspora and its historical context.

Furthermore, I will detail other specific conclusions from the analysis;

7.1.Amefricanity

It was proposed in the introductory part of this research that the political and cultural category of amefricanity, created by Lelia González, would be used in the analysis and, later, expanded. Amefricanity is a theoretical concept whose intention was to change the perspective of the historical and social formation of the Americas, departing from the political resistance of Black people and native communities and their struggle against colonialism and oppressions.

This research brings another dimension to González's proposal. Amefricanity becomes also synonym with the cultural politics of emotion for Black women in their multiple expressions of resistance against colonialism from slavery to the contemporary times. It gains, then, a subjective and individual dimension, politicizing our particular internal aspects and the interpersonal interactions of Black women. Uniting these categories is a way to further contribute to the theoretical legacy of González to be integrated in contemporary feminist

research and to provide ideas for other Black scholars to adopt her concepts on their researches.

Concerning the analysis of the *corpora*, amefricanity was a central part for the framing of Kehinde's narrative and a useful way to rethink the history of the creation of Brazil as a nation. The amefricanity of Kehinde's narrative comes on the individual resources she uses to keep herself alive and active in her social reality as well as in the collective acts of resistance that she takes part.

In Ifemelu's narrative, the fact that she manages to create a virtual space – her blog – to analyze the U.S. society, where she bounds with other people and becomes an agent in her social reality, that represents her amefricanity. The act of disrupting social and racial hierarchies and becoming a political voice as a "third world" subject in a huge metropolitan nation is consonant with González's proposal of switching narrative and subverting colonial divisions of power.

Maya's amefricanity comes in a similar way. Through the political engagement with the social changes in Ghana and her decision to return to her homeland to help her people organize after living under Nkrumah's rule, she also breaks a cycle of colonial hegemony. Her amefricanity is deeply African-based and it also builds affective integrational connections among the U.S. and our African 'homeland'.

In each character's case, this amefricanity changes somehow. It is another dimension on the expansion of González's concept. The amefricanity I propose as an expression of Black women's political culture of emotion – and its social effects – must be heterogeneous and adaptable to each different situation. It is consonant to González's perspective of the plurality of our people in diaspora and the multiplicity of racial and social groups that formed the Americas.

7.2.Black women's Narratives and New Womanhood

Another important concept for this research was the new womanhood, as proposed by Angela Davis (1985). The concept is proposed by her as a way to articulate the legacy of political struggle inherited and perpetuated by Black women as a social group. In this research, as previously mentioned, it differs from amefricanity. The former relates specifically

to the social organization of Black women and its political impact, while the latter works as a broader political and cultural ontology to rethink history and society in the Americas.

In the three characters' narrative, the new womanhood is present on their posture and in the women surrounding them. Kehinde lives her new womanhood through her connection to Osun and in the relation of support with other women in her life, which ultimately result in the struggle against colonialism, as in queen Agontime's history. Ifemelu shows this new womanhood through her connections to the lives of her Aunt Uju, Ginika and most of her closest female friends in Lagos, that help her to acclimate herself back to Nigeria and to better understand her country again. In Maya's case, her connection to Efua, Vicki and Alicia have radical implications on her life, as their friendship is personal, but also political.

Then, all these women's narratives manifest in the literary dimension a symbolic representation of the political resistance waged by Black women since the first of us arrived here in the Americas, centuries ago.

7.3.*Mestiza* Consciousness and Homecoming

Anzaldúa and bell hook's concepts are interconnected in the research. They are contiguous in the sense that the three narratives were selected by their common element: Displacement and the search for home in Black women's literary production. What was found throughout the analysis is that Black women are a heterogeneous social group that suffer multiple oppressions and that are often dislocated in their social realities due to the violence that they sufeer. Then, creating home becomes a radical decision (HOOKS, 1990).

But in Ifemelu, Kehinde and Maya's journey, there are multiple displacements. Both Kehinde and Ifemelu are African women that later return to their native lands and both feel deeply dislocated, because they have changed profoundly while away from home. Maya is a diasporic woman who goes to Africa believing it would be her ultimate home. It was not. But Africa changed her as the Americas changed Ifemelu and Kehinde.

As they become the association of multiple worlds and hybrid subjects, their experience align with Anzáldua's proposition of *mestiza* consciousness. None of them has lost anything; they have acquired different knowledges, customs, beliefs and experiences that turn them into even more powerful social agents that they were on the beginning of their

narratives. Their homecoming happens through adjusting to this new consciousness, with healing from trauma and pain they have faced.

Their *mestiza* consciousness allows them to find home within and outside themselves.

7.4.Final Remarks:

I will start this last section by quoting Maya on her experience about searching for home:

> I had seen the African moon grow red as fire over the black hills at Aburi and listened to African priests implore God in rhythm and voices which carried me back to Calvary Baptist Church in San Francisco. If the heart of Africa still remained allusive, my search for it had brought me closer to understanding myself and other human beings.
>
> The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned. It impels mighty ambitions and dangerous capers. We amass great fortunes at the cost of our souls, or risk our lives in drug dens from London's Soho, to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. We shout in Baptist churches, wear yarmulkes and wigs and argue even the tiniest points in the Torah, or worship the sun and refuse to kill cows for the starving. Hoping that by doing these things, home will find us acceptable or failing that, that we will forget our awful yearning for it. (ANGELOU, 1986, p. 189).

This research talks about this yearning for home that humans have, from the perspective of Black women. As an academic text, it meant to analyze the political and social dimension of this search. And to Black women, it means to deal with centuries of multiple violence. It means to become an active subject to change one's reality. Our homecoming is a political process directly related to change the social reality of violence against Black people and other social groups that are historically subalternized. Black women's search for home becomes intertwined with the change of social reality and with the subversion of oppressive structures of power. It is also about healing and accepting the multiplicity of identities that can live within one person.

This research aimed to be a contribution to transnational literary research about Black women's cultural productions. I hope that this research will inspire other scholars to come up with similar ideas. I also hope that this research will reinforce the political connections amongst Brazil, Nigeria, Ghana and the United States, so we can see that our histories and struggles are related.

I would like to stimulate future researchers to engage in intercontinental explorations as the one I have done. I would like to emphasize that Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* is not a popular work amongst scholars, but it offers important reflections and could be further analyzed in other perspectives.

Last, but not least, this research is a product of my own displacement. It is the product of five years away from my homeland, Belem do Pará. I finish it in my childhood home, the place where I was born and lived most of my life. This research was also my place of healing. It was a place where I could learn and deal with my maternal ancestor's history and to also to accept my own *mestiza* condition.

I would like to say that I did not come here alone. My ancestors and my Orisa heads, Osun and Oya, came with me so I could finish this work.

And now I am home and home is the best place to be.

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