

INTERSUBJECTIVE FAILURE AND QUEST FOR MUTUAL RECOGNITION: A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF *THIS HOUSE OF CLAY* AND *WATER* BY MANSAB AND *AMERICANAH* BY NGOZI

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how intersubjective failure and the quest for mutual recognition impact the psychological growth of the characters in the novels, This House of Clay and Water by Faiqa Mansab, and Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Jessica Benjamin's psychoanalytical theory of intersubjectivity and mutual recognition has been used as a theoretical framework to uncover the psychological depth of the characters' experiences. Moreover, the researchers have also examined how the dominant ideologies integrated into the texts cause hinderance to the development of genuine intersubjective relations. Using a psychoanalytic framework, it has been analyzed how characters in said texts struggle for acknowledgment, belonging, and selfhood by transcending the complementary relations through shared third and moral third. In This House of Clay and Water, the protagonist's emotional isolation shows patriarchal misrecognition, but her bond with a transgender gives an exceptional moment of mutual recognition. In Americanah, the protagonist's blog becomes a powerful space where she engages with intersubjectivity. The findings suggest that the lack of intersubjectivity and mutual recognition leads to isolation, alienation, and existential pessimism.

Key words: Intersubjectivity, mutual recognition, intersubjective third, This House of Clay and Water, Americanah, Psycho-analytic study

1. Introduction

Intersubjectivity is a philosophical term that was first introduced by a German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1931) in his book Fifth Cartesian Meditation. He asserts that intersubjectivity challenges the traditional concept of objectivity by emphasizing the role of social interactions and group practices in shaping our understanding of objective world (Husserl, 1931). In the field of psychoanalysis, Stolorow and his associates are known for introducing intersubjectivity. They have explained intersubjectivity as a psychological phenomenon that arise from the interplay between subjective worlds rather than isolated internal mechanism (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). An American psychoanalyst, Jessica Benjamin, interprets intersubjectivity as a capacity for mutually recognizing one another (Benjamin, 1988; Noor et al., 2022).

The objective of this study is to explore the lack of intersubjectivity and mutual recognition in *This House of Clay and Water*, and *Americanah* through the lens of Jessica Benjamin's psychoanalytical theory of intersubjectivity and mutual recognition and its psychological influences on the lives of the main characters in these novels. In this study emphasis is placed on how the characters in these two novels quest for intersubjectivity and mutual recognition through creating shared third and moral third (Younis et al., 2025).

The novel, *This House of Clay and Water* (2017) is written by Pakistani contemporary novelist, Faiqa Mansab. She is known for her bold writing discussing the social taboos. Her works are mainly on patriarchy, search for identity and questioning the dominant ideologies that hinder genuine interpersonal relationships. Her debut novel, *This House of Clay and Water*

revolve around the intersecting lives of three characters, Nida, Sasha and Bhangi. Nida is married to a politician Saqib who embodies all the qualities of domineering husband. Their relationship lacks mutual recognition. Nida is always in search of peace and struggle with a deep sense of loneliness and confusion. She puts her maximum efforts to keep her in-laws happy but she fails in each attempt. She roams about in Lahore. She meets Sasha and Bhangi at shrine of Datta Sahib. Sasha is a fashionable lady who has illicit relations with other men to fulfil her material desires that her husband can't afford. In the end of the novel. Sasha becomes a devoted wife and mother after the rape of her daughter. Bhangi is another character in the novel who is portrayed with deep emotions that shows his intense need to be recognized, loved, and accepted. Nida and Bhangi, two marginalized people, come together and share a genuine connection that transcends traditions and social boundaries. But this sensitive relationship also collapses due to patriarchy, gender norms and societal pressure that forces Saqib to kill Bhangi. As a revolt, Nida leaves her husband and starts living in a graveyard where her daughter and Bhangi lie.

Americanah (2013) is another thought-provoking novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It is about migration, racism, identity conflict, and the quest for restoring one's identity. The novel reveals how racism faced by African Americans has deep repercussions in the individual's internal world. The novel grapples with the problem of recognizing and claiming one's own subjectivity which cannot be attained independently of one's own social environment. The whole story revolves around two young Nigerians, Ifemelu and Obinze who fall in love with each other. Both are fascinated by American dream and wants to migrate to America in search of better job opportunities. But due to some reason Obinze is moving to UK. They both face racism. Ifemelu is judged by her skin color. She must straighten her hair for job opportunities. But instead of remaining silent, she starts blogging. It becomes a platform where she speaks about race, cultural and gender discrimination. Her relationship with Curt and Blaine is shaped by emotional breakdowns and internal struggles. The most important part of *Americanah* is the reunion of Ifemelu and Obinze in Nigeria. The novel does not show a clear ending. Obinze is still married to Kosi and has a daughter. But it gives a possibility that Obinze and Ifemelu will find a way to be together inspite of societal pressures.

Although these two novels are from different backgrounds, they present same characters who are marginalized or silenced by society and family. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it emphasizes the ethical dimensions of human relationships.

2. Literature Review

The topic intersubjectivity and mutual recognition has received significant interest and considerable interaction in academic literature. Many researchers have discussed their novels through the lens of Benjamin's theory. The literature review of the study consists of two parts. The first part is related to studies that have utilized Benjamin's theory to analyze their novels, while the second part discusses the scholarly articles on *This House of Clay and Water*, and *Americanah*.

Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity has been utilized in much research including Cassandra Fettes' article, *The Continual Search for Sisterhood: Narcissism, Projection and Intersubjective Disruption in Toni Morrison's Sula and Feministic Communities* (2016). Through this theoretical framework, the researcher presents the critical analysis of female relationships in Morrison's novel *Sula*. In this paper, the researcher examines the complexities of the psychological growth of the characters Nel and Sula. She asserts that their inability to sustain a meaningful companionship into adulthood is embedded in societal factors that hinder their

ability for intersubjectivity. She asserts that Intersubjectivity which refers to seeing oneself and others as separate and distinct subjects is important for sustaining healthy relationships. However, in Sula Morrison has portrayed a man- controlled and racist society that hinders this recognition. It leads to narcissistic misrecognition and idealization between Sula and Nel. The researcher starts her analysis by outlining the initial friendship between Nel and Sula. The shared experience of loneliness and oppression brings them together. Both girls are affected by emotional distance as Sula's father is missing and Nel's mother is emotionally repressive. As such they find relief in each other's friendship. The researcher notes that their friendship is characterized by 'merged attachments' proposed by psychoanalytic feminists Eichenbaum and Orbach (1988). The author emphasizes that this act of betrayal becomes a source of conflict when reality disrupts their idealization which they have for one another. Their inability to see each other as separate subjects becomes a root cause of their conflict. The researcher places Nel and Sula's relationship in the larger framework of racism and patriarchy. She claims that these societal issues prevent them from recognizing each other as subjects (Fetters, 2016).

The researcher has also compared the character's struggles and current feminist discourses about solidarity among women. She criticizes the notion of 'sisterhood', which often minimizes the differences among women, arguing that such idealizations can mark the complexities of personal experiences. The researcher has also explored how the relationship between Nel and Sula is affected by maternal relationships. She asserts how Helene Wright imposes rigid expectations on her daughter Nel that suppress her individuality. It also affects her ability for mutual recognition with Sula. Contrary to this, Sula's mother exhibits a different kind of neglect rather than strict control. The researcher highlights that these maternal dynamics hinder their capacity to form deep adult relationships with one another. Moreover, the researcher identifies 'Narcissistic misrecognition' as an important aspect of Sula. She emphasizes that both Nel and Sula cannot see each other as separate subjects but rather project their desires onto one another. As a result, their friendship eventually breaks. The author asserts that these issues are prevalent in many female friendships portrayed in literature. This paper offers a deeper comprehension of female relationships in feministic literature by analyzing how these dynamics manifest between Nel and Sula. However, there are some. Limitations within Fetter's study. Postcolonial theory or intersectionality could be used in this research. By expanding the scope of analysis beyond Sula, researchers can further analyze how themes of betrayal, Identity, and recognition appear in many narratives (Fetters, 2016). In another study, *Positioned Between Limits and Desire: National Reality vs. National Romance in Mal de Amores*, Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity has been used in the context of the Mexican Revolution. Seminet (2007) has critically evaluated Angeles Mastretta's novel *Mal de Amores* as a modifying story within Latin American fundamental romance, which typically employs romantic and familial allegories that mirror the nation to reinforce patriarchal norms. The focus of the novel is Emilia's struggle toward female self-actualization and a quest for personal pleasure in the face of national upheavals. Emilia shows an independent female subjectivity. She rejects the societal norms that portray women as objectified characters whose sole responsibility is to serve their men. But Emilia's decisions particularly her love triangle with two men- Daniel and Antonio- subvert the conventional romance by addressing the patriarchal notion that a woman depends on a paternal figure for safety or social worth. Nation romances traditionally pair a heroic male figure with a submissive female partner (Seminet, 2007).

It symbolizes the nation or land as an objectified space to be ruled and cultivated, as suggested by Doris Sommer. However, in this novel, Emilia actively participates in her own life and paves her path in politics and personal relationships. The researcher has employed Jessica Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity to analyze how Emilia and her relationships exhibit intersubjective dynamics that foster mutual recognition and female autonomy. The most important component of relationships, according to Jessica Benjamin, is mutual recognition. It is a journey in which both individuals accept each other as a distinct, fully developed subject instead of an object to be idealized and manipulated. In *Mal de Amores* this theme is portrayed through Emilia's relationship with her romantic partners. In this relationship, she enjoys respect and independence that allows for both empathy and self-assertion (Seminet, 2007).

In Benjamin's opinion, the mutual recognition Emilia seeks is a type of healthy subjectivity. People need to live freely without oppression or dominance. Emilia's choice to have two lovers instead of only one challenges the traditional male-female relationship in Mexican society which fails to fully recognize women as subjects. Emilia displays how her self-worth is neither affected by nor determined by her male partners by demonstrating her longing for independence and her love for both Daniel and Antonio, who each complement distinct aspects of her personality. Further, the researcher has also employed Benjamin's idea of recognition and destruction to analyze Emilia's relationships. It is the process by which one person undermines the perceived domination of another, permitting both parties to see each other as distinct autonomous entities. The researcher also highlights the role of Emilia's parents in the development of her personality as an independent woman free from the cultural norm of subservience. Their marriage exhibits the harmony of mutual recognition and open communication which contrasts sharply with the traditional pairing of an authoritarian father and submissive mother. Emilia is capable of creating a sense of independence in her relationships as Diego demonstrates a partnership that acknowledges her wife's autonomy and aspirations. Owing to this unconventional family structure, Emilia transcends the rigid norms that portray women as passive objects in Mexican culture. Although Seminet's analysis is thorough it has some limitations. It presents female subjectivity in the Mexican context, a comparative approach including other Latin American nations could enhance the study. Moreover, the researcher employs a feminist and psychoanalytic framework which may limit analysis by ignoring the consequences of class and socioeconomic circumstances on gender dynamics. The Sauri family's middle-class status provides Emilia the opportunity to get the education she requires to challenge traditional expectations, but not all Mexican women possess the same luxury. Future study that goes beyond the Mexican context and considers socio economic factors into account could contribute to a better understanding of female subjectivity in diverse cultures.

The novel, *This House of Clay and Water* has been analyzed through different theoretical frameworks. The researchers Amna Saeed (2021), and Aiman Rehman (2021) have analyzed Nida's feelings of a dissatisfaction, existential crisis, and alienation through the lens of the Existentialist feminism proposed by de Beauvoir's in her work, *The second sex* (2009). Moreover, the researchers have also analyzed the role of her husband in creating the emotional state of alienation. The researchers have utilized Beauvoir's ideas about how females are treated as others while men have absolute power on female other. Beauvoir asserts while highlighting the concept of othering women that it is our civilization that has created a figure called feminine, which is intermediate between male and eunuch. Beauvoir is of the opinion that the only way of acceptance for women in society is 'marriage' and a married woman is just treated like a doll

devoid of freedom, and even not consider herself as an autonomous being. This study highlights that it is the patriarchal society that brings meaninglessness into women's lives, ultimately leading to alienation and frustration. Further, the researchers highlight that it is the responsibility of husband to help her attain her actualization (Khan & Abid, 2015).

Nimra Ijaz (2024) has applied Lacan's psychoanalytical theory to analyze the psychological impact of alienation and shattered self on the formation of one's identity in *This House of Clay and Water*. The researcher has applied Lacanian the mirror stage, the symbolic, and real to show the social struggles of marginalized people and the psychological tension resulting from this struggle. These stages play a crucial role in shaping one's identity (Ahmad et al., 2022; Amjad et al., 2021). In the mirror stage, the subject identifies oneself with an external image and develops a fragmented sense of oneself (Lacan, 2014). This stage is reflected in Bhanggi's struggle to make sense of the difference between her inner reality and how society sees him. The real stage is defined as an unachievable image the subject wishes to have. It can be seen in Nida's quest for independence, and emotional fulfillment. Further, the researcher highlights how marginalized people face hurdles from the symbolic order that represents societal standards and expectations. This study finds out that Nida, Sahsa and Bhanggi experiences in search of a place in symbolic orders.

Americanah by Ngozi has also been explored from various perspectives by researchers. Sharjeel Ahmad (2022) has conducted a diasporic study of *Americanah*, demystifying the turmoil of cultural identity and racial politics. The theoretical framework that has been utilized is Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity and Diaspora (1990) and Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's Critical Race Theory (2017). Critical Race theory illuminates the cultural conflicts between the host and local cultures of immigrants around the world. This theory questions the dominant ideology of racism Ifemelu, the protagonist of the novel, in America faces racism. She does not fit in American culture she feels disgusted because of her black color and African identity (Khan, 2013). The researcher has explored this racial discrimination faced by African in America through the character of Ifemelu. Further, this study highlights the conflicts between two cultures and how violence is created (Khan & Akram, 2024).

Another researcher, Melsew Hargus (2022) has addressed three concepts in his study to address the central themes in the novel. These are narrative levels, the relationship between them and their function. The researcher has utilized Genele's theory of narratives as a framework to discuss how the author uses blogs to convey the themes of the novels to the reader. These two novels have been explored from different perspectives (Khan, Fatima & Malik, 2020). None of the researchers focused on intersubjectivity and mutual recognition. The study has explored the lack of intersubjectivity and its consequences. Moreover, blogs have been studied as a Moral third inviting the white readers to ethically ponder over the issues of race and to bridge the gap between two cultures.

3. Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature involving the close reading of the texts. The researcher has analyzed texts, *This House of Clay and Water* by Faiqa Mansab and *Americanah* by Ngozi with the framework of Jessica Benjamin's Psychoanalytical theory of Intersubjectivity and Mutual Recognition. This theory emphasizes that human subject develops in and through relationship to others. It explains the psychological development and the capacity that emerges during the interaction of the self and the other (Benjamin, 1988). Even in explaining the self alone, the intersubjective theory examines the loneliness of oneself by placing it in relationship

with others rather than in isolation. For Benjamin (1988), intrapsychic and intersubjective theory are the complementary ways of understanding the psyche of an individual.

The basic concept of intersubjective theory is the need for recognition. Recognition is not just an act of one's confirming response but also how we recognize ourselves in that response. It means that others must be recognized as independent subjects to fully experience his or her own subjectivity in the presence of others. Benjamin (1988) refers to it as mutual recognition, where each one recognizes the other person's separateness and as well as share like feelings and intentions. But to recognize others as independent beings is problematic for oneself. To understand it Benjamin (1988) first discusses the paradoxical nature of the relationship between the self and others. Benjamin has called this relationship paradoxical because while asserting one's absolute independence the self is dependent on others to recognize its absoluteness. Benjamin has taken this concept from Hegel's formulation of the problem of recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807,1953) in which he discusses the master slave dialectic. Hegel proposed that the struggle between asserting oneself and recognizing the other results in insolvable conflict. However, Benjamin disagrees with Hegel on this point. She asserts that this conflict can be resolved by sustaining the tension between asserting one's own agency and recognizing the other as an independent subject. For Benjamin by sustaining this tension mutual recognition is possible because in that "the subject accepts the premise that others are separate but nonetheless share like feelings and intentions" (Benjamin, 1988, p.53).

For Benjamin (2009) the breakdown of the tension between asserting one's own agency and requiring the other happens repeatedly. It is replaced by reciprocal lack of complementary relations or split complementarity. By split complementarity Benjamin means polarization of positions as suggested by Hegel like be recognized or be the one recognizing, life or death. It can be observed in our daily interactions where we see the other through the lens of split complementarity like doer or done to, victim or victimizer. In these relationships there is a split between me and you and kind of 'twoness' can be observed. There are only two options either submit to their demands or resist them. Benjamin (2007) says that the possible way to come out of this complementary relationship is through the space of thirdness. Thirdness is that quality of mental space that creates intersubjective relatedness Benjamin has used various terms to describe thirdness. Out of which moral third and shared third have been utilized in this study. Moral third refers to values rules and principles of interaction that we rely upon in our effort to create and restore the space for each partner in the dyad to engage in thinking, feeling, acting or responding rather than merely reacting (Benjamin, 2009). The most important part of the moral third is an expectation that breakdown will happen and it can lead to failure. This expectation also includes the breakdowns in relationships that hinder mutual recognition can be addressed, acknowledged and then repaired or mourned. She asserts that taking responsibility is most significant for attaining moral third. By responsibility Benjamin means first acknowledging that one has contributed in intersubjective process and secondly, accepting that the self has also contributed in failure of relationships. It helps oneself to transcend the complementary relation of doer and done too. Thirdness enables the subject to hear multiple voices, the ability to hear one's own voice without cancelling the other out and shared third is an intersubjective space in which one feels like lost in co-created rhythm keeping their subjective awareness outside of this co-created rhythm (Benjamin, 2004).

To sum up whether it is moral third, shared third, or symbolic third, they all provide a space where each individual recognizes others subjectivity by negotiating the shared reality,

differences or past traumas or harms that have been done, to create empathy and attunement which further leads to mutual recognition. And it is the main focus of this study. The researcher has utilized these concepts of intersubjectivity, mutual recognition, and intersubjective third to analyze patriarchy and racism in *This House of Clay and Water* and *Americanah* respectively.

4. Textual Analysis:

4.1 *This House of Clay and Water*:

This House of Clay and Water reveals the inner emotional struggles of Nida and Bhanggi to be acknowledged as subject, having their own feelings and emotion rather than mere puppets in the hands of their worldly owners. It aligns with Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity and mutual recognition that emphasizes that our connections with others impact our sense of self. She highlights the importance of mutually recognizing each other as independent human beings with their own feelings and perception. When it fails, the relationship is transformed into complementary relationship where one is doer and the other is done to, shaped by dominance emotional distance, or forced submission. Benjamin has also introduced the concept of intersubjective third, where each person in a dyad recognizes, and understands each other as separate person without any dominance. It permits people to connect with equality without losing one's own self-Emotional and psychological dynamics portrayed in the novels highlights that the struggles of protagonists are not just personal, they are shaped by a society that deny accepting them as subjects. Their identities are constructed through dominant ideologies. Benjamin's theory helps us to understand the gender roles, power structure, and emotions specially in patriarchal societies where women, and marginalized individuals are not accepted as equal subject. They are eliminated from social circles. In male dominated society, marginalized people like women and transgenders are stuck in a situation where personal desires and emotions are suppressed, and other people control them.

This House of Clay and Water reveals that cultural traditions, and religious beliefs further strengthen fixed gender roles. In Pakistan's postcolonial society, it is very difficult for women and queer individuals to find mutual recognition in their rigid male dominating society (Ramzan & Javaid, 2025; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023; Bhutto & Ramzan, 2021). Nida is expected to be obedient daughter-in-law, placing aside her own dreams and wishes. This lack of intersubjectivity causes her to lose her sense of self. Bhanggi is another character in the novel who is a transgender. He is always treated as an inferior person rather than as an individual with his own feelings, and identity. This lack of recognition makes him silent. Benjamin's theory highlights how these characters' identities are shaped, suppressed, or healed through interpersonal relationships. She asserts that mutual recognition can help suppressed people to rediscover their identity (Akhlaq, Khan & Sikander, 2024).

Nida, the protagonist of this novel, is always in search of peace. She experiences in herself a constant struggle, *A part of me was constantly struggling against the knowledge that my life was a spectacle, bare and vulnerable like a book without its spine and cover, its page loose and exposed* (Mansab, 2017, p.22). Although she is married to a privileged man Saqib, she always feels a deep sense of loneliness and emotionally emptiness. There is no emotional intimacy in their married life. According to the researcher, the relationship between Nida and her husband lack intersubjectivity. As Nida says, *Sometimes I forget I had to control my emotions and thoughts in his presence. Our marriage wrinkled with silence and smelling stale.....Saqib and I were both committed to this cure; conjoined, complicit, coexisting* (p.38).

Nida's husband treats her like an object having no emotions and feelings. She submitted to the demands of her in laws. It reflects the complementary relations that Benjamin criticizes. Nida's desire for mutual recognition shows human beings' want for a relationship in which individuals feel equality instead of domination.

Another marginalized character in the novel is Bhanggi who does not fit into society's male and female divisions. Consequently, he feels isolation, rejection and invisibility. His journey shows the deep pain for not being accepted because of his gender, *I am destined to die a little every day. Every time I realize I cannot love or be loved I die a little* (p.98). Since his birth, his intersex body is considered a source of embarrassment in the eyes of society. He is viewed as an object, rejected by society. Bhanggi has a deep desire for recognition and acceptance and above all to be loved by someone, who accepts him with his intersex body. Bhanggi and Nida, both marginalized and oppressed individuals, come close and share a genuine intimacy that transcends gender roles and social boundaries. This intersubjective moment highlights the restoration of dignity and self-worth. He feels acknowledged by the society that once rejected him. With Bhanggi Nida feels, *I could share my thoughts with him. I could be myself with this hermaphrodite* (p.139). Through Bhanggi Nida attempts to regain control of her body and emotions by transcending the object position. This reflects the desire for shared third where partners share feelings and intensions. Her relationship with Bhanggi is not materialistic. It is a spiritual relationship as she says, *In our aloneness, our souls had found each other. That was all. How silly to call it anything less* (p.243). Their relationship is an example of resistance against the power structures and dominant ideologies. Their relationship is considered unethical and poses threat to patriarchy. External pressures break down this fragile relationship. This breakdown of intersubjective relations symbolizes the conflict between the desire for genuine connection and the unfair social roles that control these marginalized people. Women and queer individuals are controlled and objectified by patriarchal structure Mansab has also uncovered the religious ideology that is used to control marginalized people ignoring their rights that are mentioned in our religion. Nida says, *A few misogynists to rules them all, and in the darkness bind them using and abusing religions for control had become a habit for men* (p.41). Saqib tries to control Nida by reciting some verses from the Holy Quran. But Nida also spotlights on the rights of women by saying that our religion has also given right to women and they can walk away from this marriage if their husbands are denying their rights. The novel's tragic ending illustrates how society is controlled by strict cultural roles and patriarchy. Nida and Bhanggi struggle to escape from these rigid cultural norms. Benjamin's theory highlights that the male dominated societies make it hard for people to respect and consider each other equally. However, this novel also shows hope through Nida and Bhanggi's intersubjective relation. The story encourages us to imagine a world beyond control where people can interact freely and equally.

4.2 *Americanah*:

The novel *Americanah* by Ngozi reflects the profound psychological and emotional struggles of Ifemelu and Obinze, to be acknowledged as subject, whose lives transform after their migration. They strive to gain mutual recognition, an innate desire to be acknowledged as an independent person. Benjamin's theory is best suited to comprehend these emotional struggles and inner conflicts. Intersubjective theory emphasizes a meaningful connection that emerges between two people who mutually recognize each other as separate individuals with their own feelings and intentions. According to Benjamin, the joy of intersubjective attunement is that others can share my feelings. (Benjamin, 1990). In Nigeria, the relationship between Ifemelu and

Obinze clearly illustrates the intersubjective relationship that Benjamin emphasizes. They share equal power and mentally and emotionally understand each other. Their relationship is not affected by race, class, and gender discrimination. Ifemelu says, *He made her like herself with him, she was at ease, her skin felt as though it was her right size* (Adichie, 2013, p.61). But in America, she faces racism. She does not fit in the system marked by racism, gender oppression, and class discrimination. She is judged by her skin color. She is dehumanized and gradually reduced to racial and cultural stereotypes. She fails to maintain her intersubjectivity in a different world that does not accept her as an individual. She quests for true relationship in America where she can be truly recognized. Her decision to stop straightening her hair is act an to reclaim her sense of self. She says, *Relaxing your hair is like being in prison you're cage in your hair rules you* (p. 208).

Her relationship with Curt, who is a rich white man, also lacks mutual understanding. Apparently, they are happy couple but inwardly she feels emotional breakdown and internal struggles. As she says, *She had not entirely believed herself with him happy, handsome Curt, with his ability to twist life into the shapes he wanted* (p. 287). With Blaine, an intellectual American Black, she does not feel free to express her true self. She feels, *there was a cement in her soul* (p.6). On the other hand, Obinze is also objectified in U.K. He is treated as an immigrant rather than an independent person. He is not judged by his abilities. He feels, *A thing without breath and mind. A thing* (p.279).

Ifemelu and Obinze's reunion in Nigeria is an important part of *Americanah*. She finds an emotional attachment to him which she misses in America. In the novel Ifemelu's journey is about discovering her sense of self. True belonging happens when people challenge the power systems and accept mutual understanding. In America Ifemelu starts blogging titled *Raceteenth, or various observations about Negroes* (Asghar& Khan, 2024). It provides her with a platform where she speaks openly about race, gender, and cultural discrimination. Ifemelu's blogs are the clear illustration of moral third. It refers to the acknowledgment of the harm that has been done to the intersubjective relations leading to spilt complementarity. It offers to take the ethical responsibility that one has contributed in creating intersubjective relations. Through blogs, Ifemelu demands ethical recognition from white readers by deconstructing the dominant ideology of racism. White Americans deny the existence of racism. They consider racism as non-American's own of creation of mind that no more exists in physical world. In her blogs, she demonstrates how racial identity is constructed through dominant American ideologies and highlights the psychological and relational harm resulting from racism.

In the blog, *To My Fellow Non American Blacks: In America you are Black, Baby*, she addresses the non-American Blacks who dislike being called Black by white Americans. She urges them not to deny that you are Black. *You say, I'm not Black only because you know black is at the bottom of America's race ladder* (pp. 220-221). Further highlighting the atrocities of racism, she says whenever crime is done, pray that it is not a black person and keep yourself away from the crime place for many days, otherwise you will be held responsible for the crime. Moreover, Ifemelu suggests Black people not to say anything racist that happened to you and if you want then not to say in bitter tone otherwise you will not get sympathy from white Americans (Khan, Ramzan & Jamil, 2021).

'Don't complain, Be forgiving.... Black people are not supposed to be angry about racism' (p. 221). This blog reveals how dominant ideologies are constructed through culture and institutions. Black people are not recognized as individuals having their emotions and identity

but by imposed identities tied to history of segregation. *In America, you don't get to decide what race you are. It is decided for you* (p.33). The language used in this blog shows authoritarian power of Americans. It reveals how white and black are spilt into binary relations of doer and done to. It exposes the disruptions in relationality resulting from racial ideology highlighting the failure of intersubjectivity.

Benjamin's Morals third indicate ethical position that emerges from negotiating harm and the possibilities of repair. These blog are not just accusing white readers but also educating them to move from denial to ethical engagement through creating Moral Third. According to the researcher through blogs, Ifemelu restore mutual recognition with her blogs readers. Blogs constructs a third space that transcends accusation and denial to acknowledge the harms done by denying racism and offers a space to white readers to listen, reflect and grow in empathy.

In another blog, *Badly Dressed White Middle Managers form Ohio Are Not Always What you think* provides a rare moment of intersubjectivity between Ifemelu and white man. He adopted a black baby and had neighbours looked at like he had chosen to become martyrs for a dubious cause (p.5). Ifemelu opens up a new space through this white man, acknowledge the racial harms, for ethical negotiation and recognition. *Sometimes people just want to feel heard. Here's to possibilities of friendship and connection and understanding* (p. 325). Her blogs become an intersubjective site of repair, where the past can be acknowledged and new possibilities of relational ethics emerge (Abbas, Khan & Tabassum, 2023).

5. Conclusion

The researchers have analyzed *This House of Clay and Water* by Mansab, and *Americanah* by Ngozi to highlight the emotional and psychological impacts of lack or presence of intersubjectivity and specifically her concept of intersubjective third. The researchers have found that intersubjectivity and mutual recognition are essential for psychological well-being of an individual as well as their sense of self. *In This House of Clay and Water*, Nida suppresses her true desires and identity due to patriarchal society, that restricts female voice. Nida's connection with Bhangi, a marginalized intersex character, signifies a rare moment of intersubjective recognition, because both individuals are able to see and accept each other beyond any societal label. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu faces racism. She does not fit in the system marked by racism, gender oppression, and class discrimination. However, rather than remaining voiceless, she creates a blog where she reclaims her voice. Ifemelu creates a shared space, just like intersubjective third, where both Black and White can participate in honest reflection without any domination.

This study highlights that recognition is not just an emotional need but also an existential and psychological need. When people are denied, they suffer deep emotional harm. While when they are recognized as independent subjects, they find strength, healing and sometimes transformation. This study has contributed to psychological studies by providing framework to reflect more deeply on ethics of seeing, hearing and truly recognizing one another.

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