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"Revisiting Digital Algorithms and Gendered Narratives in Virtual Spaces: A Study of Adichie's *Americanah*"

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In her writings, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie looks at race, gender, and class as an uncomfortable subject to ignore. As a Nigerian author, she keeps highlighting how people of color survive these stereotypes. In her novel *Americanah*, she is defying and challenging these social norms, speaking and confronting sexism, race, and gender obscenely.

She through the blog of Ifemelu, which is too sharp, loud, and honest in the novel, allows the cracks of racism to be visible. Race dominates the novel, gendered in hair, sex, and shame. The endless sensation of being stared at, evaluated, and modified made Ifemelu write in the novel because silence meant more powerlessness and subjugation. As it has been demonstrated in the novel, Black women are taught early on to be nice, be grateful, and quiet, but she insists on being loud in a consistent fashion. The blog is her disorderly protest in fury and sanity.

She refers to things that people commonly deny to see, whether it's a slight insult or a casual cruelty that smiles and sneaks up. The bodies of the black women in the novel are shown as a resistance against stereotypical gaze where they are viewed as unexplored hypersexual entities, surveyed everywhere at work, in bedrooms, and of course, in the mirrors as well. Assimilation is sold as freedom and Blackness is commoditized, packaged and white comforted.

Thus, this paper focusing on *Americanah*, through the life of Ifemelu suggests how narrating a story through digital Algorithms in Virtual Spaces could be a form of resistance challenging race and patriarchy.

Key words: Race, Black women, Blog, Subjugation, Patriarchy, Assimilation, Virtual Spaces.

Born in Enugu, Nigeria, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is the fifth out of her six siblings in an Igbo household. She grew up in Enugu State's university town of Nsukka with her family. Adichie's mother, Mrs. Grace Ifeoma (1942–2021), was the first woman appointed as registrar of the University of Nigeria, and her dad, James Nwoye Adichie (1932–2020), was a statistics lecturer there when she was a youngster. Later, in her piece *Notes on Grief* (2021), Adichie detailed her mother's grieving journey.

During the Biafran Civil War, her family lost almost everything, including her paternal and maternal grandfathers. Abba in Anambra State is the location of their ancestral village. Her subsequent work, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), a feminist romantic tale set amid the war, was impacted by the horrific realities of the war.

Adichie was a standout student at the University of Nigeria Secondary School in Nsukka, where she won multiple Accolades for her Intellectual merit and was regarded as one of the smartest kids. As a young girl, she started creating tales initially inspired by British children's books, especially those by Enid Blyton. She first read African literature at the age of eleven, including *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1958) and *The African Child* by Camara Laye (1953). After discovering that what she wrote might represent African reality as opposed to European theories, she subsequently characterized studying them as an important moment in her life.

Adichie spent an entire year and a half Learning Therapeutics and Apothecary at the University of Nigeria after finishing her elementary and secondary schooling. She said in an interview that she got accepted as she was one of the most talented learners, but she soon came to the conclusion that she wasn't interested in working as a doctor, saying that doing so would've made her "an unhappy doctor." Writing as well as reading fiction was her real

passion. She was offered as an editor of *The Compass*, a publication published by Catholic medical students, while she was a student. Before departing Nigeria to join Drexel University in Philadelphia to explore communications, she released an assortment of poems in 1997 called *Decisions*.

Her debut play, *For Love of Biafra* (1998), which examined the Nigerian Civil War, was published the following year. This was the first time she had creatively dealt with the Biafran conflict, which had killed both of her grandfathers. Adichie attended Drexel for two years before shifting to Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) and moving to Connecticut to live with her sister, Ijeoma. In 2001, she acquired a summa cum laude degree, majoring in communication and minoring in political science. She started writing *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) in her final year, and it was published in 2003. The book centres on fifteen-year-old Igbo girl Kambili as she navigates life under her strict, Catholic, authoritarian father.

Her beginnings were characterized by accolades: her story *You in America* (2006) was shortlisted for the Caine Prize, and she shared first place in the BBC Short Story Competition in 2002 with *That Harmattan Morning* (2002). She was the Awardee of the 2003 O. Henry Prize for *The American Embassy* (2003) and the 2002–2003 David T. Wong International Short Story Prize for *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). *Purple Hibiscus* was the recipient of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book in 2005 as well as the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award for Best Debut Fiction in 2004. In addition, it made the Booker Prize long list and the Orange Prize shortlist in 2004. Her literary idol, Achebe, loved the work, and she often mentioned his 1964 book *Arrow of God* (1964) as her favourite.

Adichie graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a Master of Arts in Creative Writing (M.A. in Creative Writing) in 2004. She was a Princeton University Hodder Fellow from 2005 to 2006. She continued to publish articles and pieces in Granta, The New Yorker, The Guardian, and The Washington Post while enrolling in Yale University's master's degree in African history in the fall of 2006. Her pieces criticized Nigerian injustice and ecclesiastical deception, whilst her stories explored topics ranging from the Biafran War to modern-day Nigeria.

Half of a Yellow Sun, her subsequent book, focused on English and Nigerian people during the Biafran War. The volume received great praise; it was put forward for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and gained the 2007 Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction. Additionally, it was commercially successful, particularly in the UK, solidifying Adichie's standing as a significant figure in African literature.

After earning her Yale degree in May 2008, Adichie relocated to Columbia, Maryland. She was conferred a MacArthur Fellowship, a $500,000 "genius grant," in September of that year. She released a collection of short fiction entitled *The Thing Around Your Neck* in 2009 that tackled issues like immigration, homosexuality, and religion.

Her third book, *Americanah* (2013), examined what it means to be a Black African in America and was partially inspired by her personal experiences. Adichie clarified that while race wasn't a defining factor for her in Nigeria, it became an inevitable reality throughout America.

In order to better establish herself as an influential thinker, Adichie pursued her studies, receiving fellowships at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute from 2011 to 2012. She has been extremely vocal regarding issues related to social justice, feminist thought, and spirituality. She called Christianity not a women-friendly

institution and denounced its role in defending women's subjugation during a Georgetown University event in 2017.

Additionally, she has been outspoken in her advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights in Africa. She referred to Nigeria's 2014 anti-homosexuality statute as unconstitutional and a strange Priority for a country dealing with many serious problems, noting that the law is unfair because consenting homosexual behavior between adults is not illegal. In 2019, she lamented the passing of a dear companion, Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina.

Similar to the majority of African authors, like Chris Abani, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and many more, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was initially inspired by Chinua Achebe. Adichie was influenced by the representation of her own experiences in his 1958 book *Things Fall Apart*, which she read when she was ten years old. The first postcolonial masterpiece that has influenced most Black African authors in Africa and the diaspora is Chinua Achebe's debut novel.

Adichie released a drama, *For Love of Biafra*, in 1998, and a book of poems, *Decisions*, in 1997. Composed when Adichie Held a senior position in college in Connecticut, her short tale *My Mother, the Crazy African* (2000) investigates the issues that come up at moments when a person is presented with the dilemma of two distinct societies that are fundamentally opposed. The traditional Nigerian society has distinct gender roles; however, in America, younger people are less constrained, and gender roles are more flexible. The main character, Ralindu, has to deal with this since she was brought up in Philadelphia, Concurrent with her parents being raised in Nigeria. Adichie delves deeply into gender norms and customs and the issues that may arise as a result.

Her short story *That Harmattan Morning* was chosen as a joint recipient of the 2002 BBC World Service Short Story Award, and she received a nomination for the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2002 for her work *You in America* (2006). She received the PEN Centre Award, also known as the David T. Wong International Short Story Prize, in 2003. Additionally, *Zoetrope: All-Story* and *Topic Magazine* ("BBC News") featured her pieces.

Her first book, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), was widely praised by critics and won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (2005). It was nominated for the prestigious Orange Prize for Fiction (2004). A lengthy passage from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* opens the book.

Half of a Yellow Sun (2006), her second book, unfolds before and during the Nigerian Civil War and is titled after the flag of the short-lived republic of Biafra. The book won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction. Later, Biyi Bandele turned it into a movie, which was released in 2014 and starred Thandiwe Newton and Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Twelve narratives that delve into the connections involving men and women, youngsters and their parents, and Africa and America at large make up Adichie's third work, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009).

She has, through her writings, been highly praised, critics are fond of her, and readers are following her with great admiration, but this acceptance is weird because the readers recollect what had happened to the women prior to her who wrote about women and advocated their parts. Zora Neale Hurston was suspected, Michelle Wallace was raped, and Alice Walker was found guilty of betrayal within the Black communities. They are charged with sexism and internal harm and are recompensed publicly and loudly. Their level of honesty was seen as a threat.

Adichie is also straightforward, insensitive, and at times unsympathetic and unforgiving, but the backlash is not as powerful as priors; in contrast, she is more gradual and confined. The paper employs the reception theory to suggest that the success of Adichie is not merely a reaction, but a voice of resistance. Her work comes at a time when the audience is better prepared to listen, to hear criticism without being defensive. Here, digital culture assists, and Adichie is put next to other former Black women writers.

Therefore, this paper challenges the readers' preparation not only regarding the diaspora but also about the social, digital, and emotional dimensions of the new era. The main character of the book, Ifemelu, is a person who quits Nigeria and comes to America, where nothing suits her in the same manner in this new land. She

comes to this new world, and her language, the fashion of her hair, and above all, the race became the question of her identity. She finds this out gradually everywhere she goes, be it in classes, in job interviews, or even in her mirror. “their countenances obfuscated with the vibe of individuals facing an incredible ancestral misfortune” (290).

Central to *Americanah* is the concept of a digital diaspora in which individuals assemble across the boundary in screens, cables and networks. It is significant that Ifemelu does not simply live online; but she constructs herself there. Her blog, “Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” allows her to talk and think aloud, attempts to chronicle her day to day living in a foreign country with the emphasis on race, hair, love and exhaustion.

Online spaces trace how this digital engagement upsets as well as perpetuates diasporic awareness. It makes race, gender, and class more blurred, and sometimes even more pronounced. Reading it through the perspective of digital diaspora and patriarchal narration, *Americanah* is not merely about cross-national mobility, but it also focuses on the price of dislocation one has to pay.

The term digital diaspora points at a highly modern state of affairs in which though individuals may be distributed across states, nevertheless, they converge in the cyberspace, where they monitor and exchange the boundaries that are once substituted. These online technologies do not simply bridge; rather, they redefine the belonging. Therefore, in such international and transnational feminist thinking, the question of the gender, global, political, and economic frameworks becomes a powerful space where communal bonds are challenged and reformed.

The online worlds such as blogs, comment threads, and online confessions whereby identity is experimented with, removed, and reconfigured. Such spaces become communal, provisional, sensitive, noisy and, at times, chaotic. The blog of Ifemelu is not a theory that is polished; it is an opinion, an anger, and sometimes even a humour, that works. In this case, the street and home are not the only places where diaspora can be experienced. It is experienced online in the form of typed, posted, shared, and misread narratives. There is no such thing as stable identity. The digital does not only mirror migrant experience; it actively constructs it in an unequal way in real time. It is a circumstance that determines whose anger will be accepted and whose will be repressed.

This conflict is particularly acute in *Americanah.* The media of the Internet works in both directions simultaneously. It provides bonding and sexual closeness and yet, creates an alienation, odd intimacy that does not necessarily bridge the gap.

The main character of the novel, Ifemelu, resorts to her blog to communicate and to describe the diaspora as an experience. Her posts communicate to an unknown, which seems like a small digital diaspora network. Blog, “Observations of a Non-American Black of the African American Expat”, serves as commentary as well as a kind of narrative space, a place where narratives are collected. This is in line with the notion of narrative nations. Blogs and other scattered subjects shared narratives, which transcend space, geography, and culture. Ifemelu writes herself across the borders of Nigeria and America back and forth. In doing so, she reveals how digital platforms can affirm identity while simultaneously expose the loneliness and the dislocation that defines diasporic life and connection.

Her blog isn’t just words. It’s a home, a place where Ifemelu talks about herself, about America, and about being seen, being judged, breaking the boxes people put her in, stereotypes and preconceptions. The blog is more than a personal space. It’s a stage, a “third space, something private, yet everyone can peek, an identity shows itself here, layered, messy, intimate and public. One can’t just look at it and smile. Race, gender and class, they all overlap and intertwine, and in this, a transnational feminist lens helps because this space isn’t free from power. Even online, the world’s hierarchies sneak in as they shape lives, especially women’s lives

from the Global South. Thus, resistance takes its form, which is subtle in the form of a comment, a post, or a story. These spaces are able to repeat the identical power they struggle with.

However, they are also capable of establishing solidarity, common culture, and established bonds. In the blog of Ifemelu disputes emerge and divisions are created. Nevertheless, there remains intercultural camaraderie and understanding. It is possible with the help of this digital media that social, personal, and cultural collision form a diasporic identity which is continuously flowing and shifting with each comment count. It depicts online spaces to be cluttered and complex. They construct certain world views and demolish others. Digital diasporas lens assists us in observing this. They gave voices to those who have been overlooked, places to speak, a space for transformation and character development and redefinment that bind the old world to the new.

There are two worlds: the offline and the online virtual space, and in the novel they both collide and overlap at the same time. In her offline world, she's often misunderstood and oversimplified, where people miss the layers and depth of not just her identity but of many back African residing there. However, in her online virtual space, it's different, she talks, shares, and connects. Her posts are full of personal experiences as well as social commentary, political content, and cultural arguments. Her readers counter and question her to rework the genre of expatriate stories making it messy, real and alive. Thus, Adichie demonstrates the collision and the contradiction between the self; the one that is present on the screen and the self that one leads.

Multicultural individuals are familiar with this conflict of balancing between oneself and other people. Posts become discussions and discussions become a debate which sometimes remains political in nature. In the novel Obinze and his intimacy makes it even more complicated. Love here does not get rid of gendered power games. Their chats on the internet turn into a theater of war; distance, power, and all are mediated by tech. In online virtual mediums, she is alone as well as a member of a crowd. Her identity is distributed and refolds and does not only mirror reality, but it modifies it as well. The online spaces turn into the arenas of endless transformation, of debate and self-reflection. The small blogs create great revolutions. Feminist connectivity lifts the ivory towers and dusty villages and intellectuals converse against day-to-day struggles.

The psychological stress that Adichie displays is all the little rules and pressures. The trifecta of race, gender, and class invokes colonialist gender stereotypes, national identity, and policies. They determine the body of women, their decisions and their voices. Her blog turns out to be a platform on which politics and emotional suffering collide. The digital stories distort identity and bend it to continents. Ifemelu kills her suffering, her astute insights and makes it a platform. Her blog is not just words. It is the popular anger, an exposure to racial and cultural discrimination. People read, respond, argue, agree and disagree. Every comment adds a layer and every post becomes a mirror. She also retaliates against those Eurocentric portrayals of Africa. They are too basic, too petite, and she demonstrates strength, toughness and existence outside the conformist typecast. Thus, the digital space enhances the voices and questions of diaspora, opposes, and reinvents the conventions. So, the study isn't just theory; rather, it talks to the real and global identities of digital diasporas, feminist studies, and migration studies. The internet isn't neutral; rather, it can liberate or reinforce the old hierarchies that need to look closer as how does tech shapes politics, communities, and its people.

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