

**TRANSCALARITY AND TRANSTEMPORALITY:  
AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF SELECT  
WORKS OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE,  
BUCHI EMECHETA AND FLORA NWAPA**

*Thesis submitted to the  
University of Calicut for the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy in  
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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that no changes were recommended to be made by the adjudicators of the thesis submitted by Ms. M.P.Reshma, titled **“Transculturality And Transtemporality : An Intersectional Analysis of Select Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa”**. The contents in the thesis and the soft copy are one and the same.



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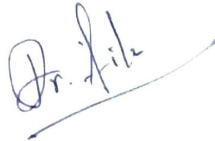
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## Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Transcality And Transtemporality: An Intersectional Analysis of Select Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa**” submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a work of bonafide research carried out by M. P. Reshma under my supervision, and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.



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## Declaration

I, M. P. Reshma, hereby declare that the thesis titled “Transcendence And Transtemporality: An Intersectional Analysis of Select Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa” is a bonafide research carried out by me, under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Nila N. and it has not previously formed the basis for any award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Place: Palakkad  
Date:



**M P Reshma**

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“Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge.”

**Audre Lorde**

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*Dedicated to*  
*My Parents*  
*(Amma & Appu)*





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## Preface

This thesis titled “Transcality And Transtemporality: An Intersectional Analysis of Select Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa” is a study of experiences of social discriminations through intersectional methodologies. There is a step-by-step evaluation of the three generations of Nigerian writers in English, through the study of select works of representative novelists, from each generation.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is chosen to represent the third and contemporary generation and her novel *Americanah* forms the basis for the first intersectional study. The second generation is represented by Buchi Emecheta and her novel *Second Class Citizen* is chosen for evaluation. The first generation is represented by Flora Nwapa and her novel *Women are Different* forms the final study of intersectional analysis. The thesis begins with the intersectional analysis of the third generation so as to make the study contemporary and immediate. MLA (Eighth Edition) has been used to document this thesis.

The theoretical analysis rests on the contributions of Kimberly Crenshaw who coined the term ‘intersectionality’ and thereby opened up vistas of possibilities for interrogations on experiences. There are three methodologies of intersectional analysis employed to effectively unearth the network of social discriminations that are plaguing the communities represented in each novel. The methodologies devised by Nira Yuval- Davis, Leslie McCall, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge have been adopted to study the chosen novels through intersectionality. The thesis exemplifies transcality and transtemporality in form, through the analysis of both

native and migrant spaces from the standpoints of three different generations occupying three distinct time periods. The other two methodologies are Leslie McCall's intracategorical complexity and Collins and Bilge's six core analytic tools of intersectionality. Both these methodologies form the content chapters that inform upon the evolution of identities and social categories as overlapping and simultaneous occurrences.

The second Chapter titled "Third Generation: Intersectionality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*" involves a dual analysis of the novel *Americanah* using both intracategorical complexity and six core analytic tools of intersectionality. *Americanah* informs upon the pressing issues of migrant problems and identity crisis, evolving through the mutations of different social categories like gender, race and class. The postcolonial Nigerian citizen has transcended onto become a transnational individual, a hybrid ethnic and migrant global citizen. The issues of race and gender are analysed at intersections with simultaneous geographic locations to understand the nuances of social discrimination as a cultural practise. The six core analytic tools of intersectionality, further provide a yardstick analysis of the novel and informs upon its current relevance.

The third chapter titled "Second Generation: Intersectionality in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*" involves the study of the postcolonial Nigerian citizen who also migrates to the west to become the resident from a former colony. The novel represents the early transitions of the Nigerian citizens into migrant 'outsiders' in the west. The female migrant experience becomes the focal point of the novel due to its multilevel representations of racialised, gendered and classist interpretations. Patriarchy intensifies through geographical locations, the shift of

which further deepens social discriminations through additions of race, class and other such categories into the discriminatory equations. The dual intersectional analysis through intracategorical complexity and six core analytic tools of intersectionality, provides a kaleidoscopic view of the many elements of social categorisation that conjoin to form experiences of discrimination. The analytic tools of intersectionality, also accentuates the pockets of power politics that drives experiences of discriminations. The fourth chapter titled “First Generation: Intersectionality in Flora Nwapa’s *Women Are Different*” showcases the study of Nigerian citizens’ transcendence from colonial subjects to postcolonial agents. They are caught in the turbulence of independence and the consequent process of nation building, which cascades into violent coups. The dual intersectional methodologies thus excavate into the inception of Nigeria as a nation and lays bare the social categories at play then. Intersections of geographic location with gender and political turbulence forms the first intracategorical complexity analysis. The consequent six core analytic tools of intersectionality undertake a deeper dive into the ontological constructions of the Nigerian society.

The conclusion focuses on the urgency to recognize and reset the practises of social discriminations. While condemning the single axis analysis that previously informed on gender or race discriminations, the focus is on simultaneity of social categories in producing subaltern identities through the various parallel alliances of power structures. With the world going through unforeseen circumstances of a pandemic crisis, this thesis concludes with the relevance of intersectionality in today’s desperate times.



## Chapter I

### Introduction

Gender is about race is about class is about sexuality is about age is about nationality is about an entire range of social relations.

Weston

The inclination to treat race and gender as mutually disjoint categories has had problematic consequences since the inception of feminist thinking and anti-racist protests. Black feminist criticism is a direct consequence of this inability to acknowledge heterogeneity. The single axis framework reflexive of anti-racist laws or feminist theory fails to include the complexities inherent in experiences, which is mandatory for the effective compilation of anti-discriminatory laws. This single axis analysis, hence does grave injustice to the study of experience, by distorting it into homogeneity, through the imposing of its own theoretical limitations on to the analysis. Consequently, this prompts the idea that the concept of social inequality is just a single categorical disadvantage.

To quote Chandra Mohanty, “The assumption [is] that categories of race and class have to be invisible for gender to be visible” (107). Racial inequality was seldom a factor in the discourse of first wave feminism. The second wave of feminism saw the alienation of Black women from the mainstream revolutions. This exclusion of Black and Coloured female experiences prompted the inclusion of social locations and group memberships as a paradigm for identity analysis. Hence, the third wave redressed many issues through the inclusion of aspects like race,

class, sexual orientation, and gender identity into the feminist movements. This movement is thus the direct consequence of Black feminist responses.

Even though historically it is difficult to trace out the origin of intersectionality, the concept has been around as is evident from the many Black protest discourses right from the days of slavery. Intersectionality can be traced back to various historical Black revolts against racism and sexism. Black women, right from the times of slavery have voiced their protests against the combined acts of violence and discriminations that they are routinely subjected to. Women like Sojourner Truth, Mary Church Terrell, and Anna Julia Cooper have all predated Kimberly Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality by at least a century, by speaking out their experiences of being Black and of being women. Thus, the idea of intersectionality was doing rounds long before the term itself was coined. Sojourner Truth in her famous 1851 speech titled "Ain't I a Woman?" brought in intersectionality by speaking on her femininity and racialized self as a slave (McKissack and McKissack). Anna Cooper's *A Voice from the South* published in 1892, talks on how Black women become significant in social changes and about the simultaneity of the gender issues and the race issues pertinent in Black women's lives (Cooper). Intersectionality can also be attributed to the Combahee River Collective of the 1970s where the members vouched for simultaneity in experiences. The women of Combahee River Collective invoked an in-depth perception of the African American experience by the simultaneous inclusion of race, class, gender and sexuality as a process of their resisting oppression. In fact, American history finds expressions of such metaphors like 'the veil' or 'double consciousness'



suggested by W.E. B DuBois which were prevalent in the 1950s and 60s. DuBois's *Souls of Black Folk* explains the curious circumstances of the African Americans in the United States, and he uses concepts like 'the veil' and 'double consciousness' to explain these conditions (Du Bois). Segregation of African Americans from white Americans made the whites totally unaware of the social circumstances of the African Americans. Hence, segregation has pushed the fellow African Americans to exist behind a veil that is hidden from the views of most of the white people. The African Americans, however, get glimpses of the social dynamics of the white world, where they work as domestic helps and this infuse them with a double consciousness that of being both Americans and African Americans.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the arrival of the concept of intersectionality as a sociological paradigm, due to the direct influence of multiracial feminist discourses. Revisionist feminist theory has a direct bearing upon intersectionality due to the challenge that it posits to the concept of gender as the primary determining factor in women's lives. The failure of white feminism to conjure up adequate perception about coloured women, paved the way for an alternate mode of thinking that delegated gender as but one category in the interlinked systems of power politics. Thus, the idea of women as a homogenous category sharing similar life situations was rejected and a more vibrant approach was adapted to the issue of female identity and experiences. The problems faced by poor Black women from lower class are different from those faced by women from the middle class, which again, drastically varies from the issues faced by disabled women. Hence 'simultaneity' became an indispensable concept to the analysis of social

discrimination since women were experiencing oppressions and exploitations because of the simultaneous interventions of race, gender, class, ability, sexuality and so on. The 1980s saw various discourses in the antiracist feminist protests taking up the language of intersectionality. The study of the presence of intersectionality in the roots of discourses by Black, Chicana and other women of colour are imperative to understand the essence of the concept.

In the traditional system of evaluating social discriminations, the weight tips in favour of the pronounced categories within the oppressed. Crenshaw talks about how in racial discrimination, the case is viewed from the perspective of class privileged Blacks and sex discrimination cases focuses on the experiences of both race and class privileged women, thus propounding more bias. These strengthen the subtle sources of discrimination by focusing on the most privileged members of the marginalised community. Thus, racism will focus on the experiences of Black men and sexism will be reduced to the experiences of white women. “Even within the women’s movement, we have had to fight, and still do, for that very visibility which also renders us most vulnerable, our Blackness” (Lorde 42). Thus, Black women rejected these monolithic tendencies of antiracist feminist discourses and began embracing a more multidimensional approach towards identity and social discriminations. The arrival of intersectionality, according to bell hooks, has delegated the place of gender as the primary category in analysing female experiences. In fact, hooks calls it as ‘White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy’ that generates these interlinked systems of power hierarchies. Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989 coined this heterogeneous approach as ‘intersectionality’. “Because the

intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing” 140).

When Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionality’ in 1989, she was aiming to better explain the oppression of the African American women. She introduced the term as a legal concept in her paper titled "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" written for the University of Chicago Legal Forum. She analyses three discriminatory suits filed by Black women against corporate employers and observes how the law protects Black women only as much as where their experience coincides with Black men or white women. Focusing on the Black women experiences, Crenshaw establishes how the US antidiscrimination laws are inadequate to understand and redress the Black women’s experiences of discriminations. Crenshaw uses the analogy of a traffic intersection to explain the Black female situation. Discrimination is compared to the traffic in an intersection, with cars travelling in all four directions. An accident at such an intersection, may be the result of cars travelling from every direction. Crenshaw compares this situation to that of the Black woman’s, who is harmed because of her position and the injury can be due to both sexism and racism. However, much like an accident, it is not always possible to reconstruct a traumatic experience. All that remains of that injury are the skid marks of vehicles going crisscross and the efforts to determine which vehicle caused the most harm, becomes futile.

Crenshaw thus argues for a revision of legal concepts, through intersectionality, to better equip the system to redress the historical and structural discriminations happening to Black and Coloured women. In fact, intersectionality was suggested as a remedy for the political and theoretical limitations of feminist and antiracist theories and policies. Leslie McCall regards intersectionality as the “most important contribution that women’s studies has made so far” (McCall 1771). Patricia Hill Collins’s theory on the interlinked cultural patterns of oppression bound together by the intersectional systems of society like race, gender and class, brought intersectionality into the discussions of the general feminist parlance. Intersectionality has been effective since the 1980s and more so due to its remedial methodologies that describe gender or race as but one contributing factor amidst many, to the social matrix of discriminations. “Debates on ‘intersections’ force an awareness of the social divisions that are thought of as enduring, as against those that are seen as simply old and settled ...” (McLaughlin 62). Further, intersectionality also brings to the forefront the multiple catalysts that combine to form social identities like sexual orientation, age, caste, ability and so on. Patricia Hill Collins in her seminal text *Black Feminist Thought* has taken the application further to include all the coloured women.

However, intersectionality is not a solely western concept. “Intersectionality as an analytic tool is neither confined to nations of North America and Europe nor is it a new phenomenon. People in the Global South have used intersectionality as an analytic tool, often without naming it as such” (Collins and Bilge 15). Savitribai Phule (1831-1897) is an apt example for practising intersectionality in colonial

India. Phule is considered as a first-generation feminist and Deepa Sarma in her article titled “Six Reasons Every Indian Feminist Must Remember Savitribai Phule” suggests,

Here's why you should know more about her. She got intersectionality. Savitribai along with her husband Jyotirao was a staunch advocate of anti-caste ideology and women's rights. The Phules' vision of social equality included fighting against the subjugation of women, and they also stood for Adivasis and Muslims. She organized a barbers' strike against shaving the heads of Hindu widows, fought for widow remarriage and in 1853, started a shelter for pregnant widows. Other welfare programmes she was involved with alongside Jyotirao include opening schools for workers and rural people, and providing famine relief through 52 food centers that also operated as boarding schools. She also cared for those affected by famine and plague, and died in 1897 after contracting plague from her patients. (Sarma)

Phule's political activism was ubiquitous with intersecting categories of social divisions like caste, religion, gender and class. Hence, the core idea of intersectionality is to address the many social divisions as mutually interconnected structures of discrimination.

Intersectionality has thus decentred the subject of antiracist feminist discourses and has made it possible for the inclusion of all women from heterogeneous backgrounds. It has brought to the table, the routine violence that shapes the lives of women and has embraced the politicisation of their experiences.

The very anti-slavery struggles and women suffrage movements resonate with the interconnections of race, gender, sexuality and class. Consequently, intersectionality gained prominence by its very method of decentring the white 'normative' subject of feminism.

Such decentring activities scaled new heights when fuelled by political energies generated by the social movements of the second half of the last century--anti-colonial movements for independence, Civil Rights and the Black Power movements, the Peace movement, student protests and the Workers' movements, the Women's Movement or the Gay and Lesbian Movement. (Brah and Phoenix 78)

The fourth wave is still enroute to manifesting. However female issues are a huge part of public discourse now, more than ever, gaining far reaching attention and coverage. Issues like sexual abuse, 'slut-shaming', body shaming and gender stereotyping are now part of wide social discussions. These issues prompt an intersectional understanding of the female circumstances, which evolve out of a number of simultaneous reasons at play.

Intersectionality evolved into a theoretical framework for application and analysis of social discrimination through the efforts and analysis of many scholars and theoreticians. There are mainly four analytic benefits attributed to intersectionality as a research methodology and they are "simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility and inclusivity" (Carastathis 5). Instead of using an analytic category to study oppression, that favours the dominant and ignores the rest, intersectionality calls for a multiple analytic approach that are operational and viable in theorising

lived experiences and identities. Hence intersectional methodology works on simultaneity of analysis and experiences through its analysis of structural complexities. In spite of the availability of different methodologies to analyse social inequality, intersectionality scores on account of its better prospects for considering complexities. A consequence of simultaneity and complexity in methodology also ensures the irreducibility of experiences into monolithic categories. Inclusivity means a theoretical paradigm that does not subscribe to elitism, white solipsism, heteronormativity, ableism and such essentialist notions of social discriminations. Intersectionality in its essence is a methodology that is aimed towards the inclusivity of all through its multifaceted approach to identity and experience.

Crenshaw identified three aspects of intersectionality in her 1991 essay “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color” that explains the experiences of Black women. The three formulated aspects are as follows; structural intersectionality, which deals with the ways Black women experiences gender violence like rape and domestic abuse; political intersectionality which deals with the tendencies of legal policies to overlook the Black female situations and, representational intersectionality wherein the representations of Black women in popular culture are studied.

Patricia Hill Collins has also framed intersectionality as a theoretical tool. Collins enlists three branches of intersectionality. Their focus of study includes, issues and conflicts within intersectionality and strategies that perpetuate social inequality in social institutions. Critical praxis that determines social justice also forms the basis of study. Thus, Collins introduced the notion of parallel interlocking

system of oppression to illustrate the experiences of marginalised population. She describes intersectionality as, a means to understand the complexities of the world. The social and political lives are constructed of multiple factors that shape the experiences. These factors work in mutual cognition. Experiences attain meaning through the simultaneous function of many factors. Hence, social inequality in people's lives is shaped through organisations of power, present in a society. Single axis analysis of social divisions, will not bring out the finer nuances of this power politics. Be it race or gender, it is through intersectionality that the finer categories of power politics can be truly understood.

### **Intersectionality as a Core Analytical Tool**

Patricia Hill Collins' definition of intersectionality is from a utility point of view, where in intersectionality can be used to bridge the finer gaps in the understanding of social discriminations. Her framework of intersectionality as an analytic tool helps in dispensing the difficulties in evaluating complex experiences of social disadvantages. Thus, when it came to African-American women, their need to find new methodologies to describe and define their life experiences, called out for expert analytic solutions. Using intersectionality enables the understanding of the historical positioning of African-American women and there by prompts a kaleidoscopic viewing of their present. Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, put forth six core ideas of intersectionality that work as six core analytic tools. These six core ideas or yardsticks aid in the deciphering of complex experiences where, otherwise, the finer nuances of discriminations escape analysis through single axis categorisation. The six core analytic tools of intersectionality are:



### 1) Social Inequality

One of the prime focuses of intersectionality is social inequality, without which the whole purpose of intersectional analysis would fall flat. In fact, intersectionality is an end product of the deep-rooted concerns of people towards the existent social inequalities. Intersectionality provides a multidimensional view to the experiences of social discriminations; where in new perspectives become possible. This multidimensional view gives the study an extraordinary vantage point where in the interconnections between different social factors emerge to reveal the complete web of social inequality.

### 2) Power

Intersectional analysis devoid of power becomes incomplete. Power is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon in intersectional analysis. It exists in people's lives through mutually interconnected systems. "Moreover, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, nation, and religion, among others, constitute interlocking, mutually constructing or intersecting systems of power" (Collins and Bilge 38). Hence power exists through mutually complementing structures of discrimination. Power relations attain meaning through the interlocked categories of racism and sexism and such discriminatory systems that determine the reality through their cohesive existence.

### 3) Relationality

Relationality refers to the development of coalitions through experience amongst social divisions. This idea of connectedness is important in analysing

experiences. The relationality of multiple identities within a social structure of power or relationality of the interconnectedness of race, class, gender and so on to generate inequality, confirms the indispensability of relationality in addressing injustice. Relationality does not subscribe to binary oppositions, like either/or; rather it embraces the differences. Relationality does not compartmentalise experiences in terms of race or gender, rather it strives to find interconnections that fuels discriminations. This furthers the possibility of dialogues and analysis. Relationality is thus primary in the analysis of power politics since power is best constituted through the interconnections of different factors and power is never static.

#### 4) Social Context

Social context determines power relations. Experiences need contextualisation to be studied for its inherent social inequality, power relations and relationality. Placing the context of an experience enables the use of intersectionality as an analytic tool. Intersectionality being multidimensional, seeks to reveal the different perspectives and interpretations doing the rounds. In fact, it is the context that makes multidimensionality possible in intersectional analysis.

#### 5) Complexity

Complexity defines an experience that is muddled in social inequality, power, relationality and context. Complexity dwells within intersectional analysis, because of its multifaceted nature. Experience is complex and multidimensional, which makes complexity an indispensable part of intersectionality.

## 6) Social Justice

Justice will remain elusive in societies wherein differences are dealt with as a condition for discrimination. However, the path to justice is ridden with complexities and one that remains the prime objective of all intersectional analysis. However, intersectionality in itself does not beckon social justice, but intersectional analysis is almost always undertaken with the aim to seek justice. It is driven by the notion of justice as central to life experiences rather than as a peripheral quality.

Intersectional core analytic tools, hence, involves the application of these standards of measurements to the experience in question. However, not all of these six core pointers need to be involved in the analysis, as per Patricia Hill Collins and Silma Birge. In fact, they can be used in different permutations and combinations to analyse the experience in question.

Leslie McCall is another sought after name in intersectional analysis. McCall describes three types of methodological complexities: intercategorical, intracategorical and anticategorical. McCall focuses on the complexity of multidimensional analysis, which if excluded fractures the end result. Hence methodologies that include complexities are preferred over those that are simplistic or limiting. Intersectionality responds to differences of perception through different methodologies that enable different understandings. The complexities are formulated through their approach to categories.

**Anticategorical complexity**

This method focuses on the overlapping tendencies of social life that is ridden with complexities. Hence this methodology deconstructs categories and deals with experiences and structures as fluidic and overflowing with multiple perceptions. Inherent to this methodology is the view that social categories are arbitrary constructions of language and history and has absolutely no bearing on the experiences or situations of people. Therefore, categorising will merely simplify and dilute the connotations and implications of lived experiences within a power structure. Further, this methodology concentrates on the interaction of different categories as the source of oppression and therefore, suggests a dismantling of these categories as a solution for long-standing power hierarchies. Social life is a complex phenomenon and therefore, this approach negates the process of boxing up experiences into fine categories. Thus, the dismantling of categories is almost always taken as an undoing of social inequalities in itself. This methodology gains momentum in its very refusal to categorise and there by homogenise experiences, which is in fact the primary objective of intersectionality itself. A prospect of social change is devised through the deconstruction of categories, since categorisation can be perceived as a process of discriminating. Of the three methodologies devised by McCall, this approach satisfies the need for complexity in analysis.

**Intercategorical complexity**

This methodology involves the analysis of existing categories to study the relationship between different structures that generate power equation. This process also includes the changing dynamics within these systems and documents inequality

as a part of the social transactions occurring within a system. This is a categorical approach towards inequalities persistent in a society. The focus of this methodology is the imbalance in power dynamics between different categories. The focus is on the relationship between the categories and not the categories itself. The flux inherent in the nature of relationships that these categories engage in becomes the essence of this methodology. Hence, proponents of this methodology study the change occurring in such systemic interactions over a period of time, to understand the social dynamics of inequality. Thus, this approach expects an understanding of various categories at play and also an expertise in the process of documenting these interactions over a period of time. This methodology is criticised often for its predictability, since the process of analysis is not unique and is also a part of the other two methodologies.

### **Intracategorical complexity**

This methodology conceptually falls in between the first two methodologies. Like the anticategorical methodology, intracategorical analysis rejects and questions categories but also makes use of them strategically and, like intercategorical methodology, it analyses the inherent flux between these categories that result in social discriminations. This methodology questions the boundaries that determine categories and also critically analyses these very categories. Being at the midpoint of the other two methodologies, intracategorical complexity could be called as a methodology that more or less addresses the shortcomings of the other two modes of analysis. This methodology also questions the boundaries, that are a part of the other two methodologies. However, there is not a total negation of

categories in this methodology; rather, there is an understanding of its relevance in the process of analysing experiences. This methodology is adept in analysing human experiences that cross over boundaries and thereby falls into the intersections of overlapping constructed categories. Intracategorical approach is at times criticised for being centred on the marginalised experiences like that of women of colour or queer. However, this approach is best suited for raising awareness about the social discrimination that emanates from different power relations. This also furthers a micro level analysis of social inequalities that generate visibility and also makes social justice, possible. “That is, since symbolic violence and material inequalities are rooted in relationships that are defined by race, class, sexuality, and gender, the project of deconstructing the normative assumptions of these categories contributes to the possibility of positive social change” (McCall 1777).

However, not all research methodologies can be classified into any of these three approaches. In fact, methodologies can overlap and cross over into different modes of analysis. According to Leslie McCall, all the three methodologies are representatives of the contemporary intersectional approaches and different methodologies produce different kinds of knowledge. Thus, a broader range of methodologies are required to decipher the issues falling under the spectrum of intersectionality.

McCall’s aim at devising these three methodologies is to only increase the area of research on intersectionality. Many feminist researchers employ intracategorical methodology in their research analysis in the hope of seeking social change. “The point is that many feminist researchers employ this type of analysis

because of their belief in its radical potential to alter social practices—to free individuals and social groups from the normative fix of a hegemonic order and to enable a politics that is at once more complex and inclusive” (1777).

There are various other methodologies too that are very much part of research activities on intersectionality. Nira Yuval-Davis in her essay “Situated Intersectionality and Social Inequality” talks about situated intersectionality as,

Given its multiple and multi-disciplinarian history, intersectionality is not a unified body of theory but more a range of theoretical and conceptual tools. As such, however, it is similar to all other major theoretical perspectives that have been developed by more than one theorist or space/time context, from Marxism to Neo-Liberalism to feminism, let alone sociology. This does not mean that we cannot debate what should be the right theoretical framing using intersectionality for particular analytical and political purposes. I call my particular version of intersectionality theory “situated intersectionality”, which is quite different from some of the other versions of intersectionality that have been popularized. (N. Y.- Davis, “Situated Intersectionality” 93)

Davis in this essay claims to have started developing this analysis in the 1980s much before Crenshaw’s invention of the term ‘intersectionality’ itself. Davis suggests the expansion of the application of the theory to include all people and not just the marginalised women to whom this analysis is historically linked to. For the purpose of avoiding essentialism and exclusions, Davis proposes this sort of an all-inclusive strategy because the essence of intersectionality, according to Davis rests in Stratification theory, and deals with differently ranked locations of individuals

and social groups on society's network of power categories. Davis regards intersectionality as the most effective method to the sociological study of stratification because of its quality of not reducing the complexity of power division into a single categorical social division like class, which is the customary clause in stratification theories.

Nira Yuval-Davis emphasizes on the social positioning of the subject and the researcher, as vital to the functioning of the intersectional methodology. She talks about how "Situated gaze, Situated knowledge and Situated imagination construct differently the ways we see the world" (94). Davis advocates for Situated intersectionality, which "...is highly sensitive to the geographical, social and temporal locations of the particular individual or collective social actors examined by it, contested, shifting and multiple as they usually are" (95). Transcality, translocality and transtemporality are terms brought into intersectional analysis by Davis, to devise a strategy that is contemporary and all inclusive.

There are still numerous types of methodologies constructed by researchers to better address and redress the complex phenomenon of identity and social inequality. Some authors like Walby speak on additional complexities involved with intersectionality. These are part of the multidimensional identities that are part of the various systems of inequality. Authors like Rodriguez and Halvino also speak on the focus on simultaneity of these interconnected systems of oppression.

Intersectionality as a practice can be put to use in various fields like healthcare, politics, education, sports and so on to determine the faction of disadvantage that makes people vulnerable. Since the analysis is based on



Standpoint theory, which centralises on the individual perception about an experience, it enables multidimensionality and rejects essentialism.

The intersections model has a hard time with contradictions or hard-nosed questions. It portrays all axes as equivalent, all lines coming together, all of the time. Could it be that stories do a better job than geometric models of conveying how race, class, gender, sexuality, and the like come alive?

Embedded in stories are particular *renditions* of gender that are already raced and classed, renditions that show people in action, chasing down the curveballs that identity throws their way. The moral of the stories? Gender may assume a million shapes, but it is never just gender. (Weston 16)

Today, there are millions of women suffering from poverty, diseases, sexual exploitation, and existing as refugees, as migrants and as undocumented workers, all over the world. Feminism today, is in an endeavour to incorporate the experiences of these marginalised and suffering women, whose identity and experiences are much more complicated than the homogenous global sisterhood circulated through western feminism. Black feminist politics emerges at this juncture of dissociation from mainstream feminism. “As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face” (Smith 12).

The west is thus a steaming pot of feminist politics, where forced migrations and otherwise, brought in women from various races. For these women, breaking the race and gender barriers have been a constant struggle. These conflicts have always been part of the literary milieu of writers from Third world nations.

While discussing about the Third world writers, Nigerian literature has a huge caucus of writers who find inspiration from their migratory experiences to the west. These experiences form a bridge between their native and immigrant self and their intersectional experiences are wrought with cultural and racial conflicts. In the last five decades of its inception, Nigerian literature has had an extensive expansion. The 1986 Nobel Prize for literature, awarded to Professor Wole Soyinka is testimony to the global appeal and readership for Nigerian literature.

Nigerian literature in English was born out of racial and ethnic conflicts against the colonial heritage. Nigeria, like other African nations is caught between two worlds of colonialism and western education, and traditional customs and beliefs. Thus, Nigeria is exposed to many western philosophies and ideas due to this historical conundrum called colonialism. The stages of development of Nigerian literature in English, reflects the development trajectory of the people of Nigeria itself (Arayela). Colonialism ensured that the native culture and languages, take a backseat and a superimposition of the colonial system came into place.

From the fore-going, one observes that the beginnings of Nigerian Literature were not spontaneous; rather, various historical facts culminated to its build-up. No doubt, the invasion of the colonies by the colonial masters, and their aversion for the African culture, brought about a situation whereby the Africans were made to believe that anything brought by the Europeans was superior to those that were not 'Europeanized'. (Arayela 30)

Hence, at its inception, Nigerian Literature in English is mostly a reflection of this painful transition, which the society was undergoing. Many factors

contributed to the origin of Nigerian Literature in English. Colonialism is one of the reasons, and, nationalism born out of the demand for independence is another reason for the birth of Nigerian Literature in English. A flourishing literary culture centred on universities also aided in the rise of Nigerian Literature in English. In fact, the first generation of literary writers, critics and theatre artists were born out of university campuses like Ibadan. Nationalism endeavoured to thwart the racial superiority of European writings and encouraged the native writers to take pride in their culture. Thus, literature and nationalism became mutually complementary, feeding on/from each other for self- promotion. The Nigerian writer in English is thus a cultural hybrid, caught at the vortex of a native oral tradition and a colonial legacy. The native writer is exposed to foreign ideas and cultural values and the "... educated African looked up to the 'white man' as the model of civilization and the standard bearer of modern existence" (Gbileeka 49). This made European literature the standard of acceptance and of never-ending value, for writers in Nigeria and in the rest of the African continent. For Europeans, their literature was also a weapon for colonising, what they deemed as the uncivilised and unenlightened people of the 'Dark Continent'. The people of Africa were regarded as beasts in dire need of the finesse of the European culture, which was used as an excuse for colonialism and colonial literature was a prime tool in this process of 'civilising and humanising' the Africans. This historical conundrum resulted in a process of turbulence for all the African colonies, aspiring to be independent nations. After the Second World War, there was a huge outcry from the African colonies, including Nigeria, for independence from the colonial masters. Thus, a sense of nationalism started to evolve from this demand for freedom.

Writing in English is also a way of writing back to the coloniser. A typical example is Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) wherein through a rich amalgamation of mythology and folklore, Tutuola performs the art of a traditional story-teller. This is the first Nigerian novel in English, to garner international acclaim and it is sourced from Yoruba folklore. Though Tutuola's work fell short in terms of the European standards, essentially for not complying with the Queen's English, the novel remains pivotal to the birth of Nigerian Literature in English. In 1958 Chinua Achebe published *Things Fall Apart* and it is still regarded as a landmark in Nigerian literature and as one of the finest novels of twentieth century.

Establishment of the University College at Ibadan in 1948 is a crucial moment in Nigerian literary history. This institution played an important role in producing the trail blazers of Nigerian literature. Many amongst the first generation of Nigerian writers in English were from Ibadan. Writers like Flora Nwapa, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Bekederemo-Clark, Christopher Okigbo, and Ola Rotimi are, to name a few, the progenies of Ibadan. Their writings though, framed on the western style, spoke about their native culture and tradition. Since this generation of writers occupied before or after independence, their literary discourses revolved around correcting the misrepresentations of Nigerians and Africans. They resorted to rewriting the western stereotypes of the natives and worked to create a native identity wrought with pride and nationalism. A few examples of such gross stereotyped Africans are portrayed in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson and African Witch*, Rider Haggard's *She, King Solomon's Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*, and so on. Thematically first generation writers

wrote on cultural otherness, restoration of identity, encounters between native indigenous culture and foreign European culture, the conflict between rural and urban life, while the call for ending of colonialism resonated throughout every work. These writers celebrated the pre-colonial Nigerian societies, almost romanticising under the inspiration of the Negritude movement. After the departure of the colonialists, this group of writers were preoccupied with concerns within themselves set in the task of nation building.

The first generation of Nigerian writers are marked by their nationalistic spirit. Cultural conflict is a constant theme in their writings. Thus, liberation from the colonial forces is a driving subject and they remained preoccupied with the creation of an independent nation. This group of writers were often criticised by their successors for their pessimistic undertones. The birth of the new nation had nothing of the grandeur or beauty that was promised to the Nigerian people. The political conundrum that ensued independence, culminated in civil wars. This clearly influenced the writings of all the first generation writers and they hoped for a saviour to rescue their nation through their literature. Thus, they created protagonists as messiahs, who redeem their country from the perils of corruption and despotism.

Some of the finest Nigerian writers and their works are as follows: J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's *Song of a Goat* (1961) and *The Raft* (1964), and his poems like *Casualties* (1970). Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forest* (1960), *The Interpreters* (1965), *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), and *Madmen and Specialists* (1970) and his poems like *Poems from Prison* (1969); Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths with Path of Thunder* (1971); Mabel Segun's *My Father's Daughter* (1965). Novels like Chinua

Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964) and *A Man of The People* (1966); M. Aluko's *One Man, One Matchet* (1964) and *Kinsman and Foreman* (1966); Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961).

The female writers belonging to the first generation are as follows: Adaora Lily Ulasi's *Many Thing You No Understand* (1970) and *Many Thing Begin for Change* (1971); Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) and *The Great Pond* (1969) and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and *Idu* (1970) and so on. Flora Nwapa is regarded as the mother of modern African literature and she remains a forerunner to the rich tradition of Nigerian female writers.

The successors of the first generation were a disillusioned group of writers. They were the left overs of the disappointment of the first generation, over the creation of the independent nation. The second generation was disillusioned on account of the failures of their predecessors to free themselves from the colonial masters and further they were disappointed by the neo-colonialism that presented itself through native political leaderships. Thus, the white masters had, in fact merely metamorphosed into black masters. The Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970 made lasting mark on their psyche and though on the global level, these writers talked about negritude and regained pride; at home, they were still fighting to free their nation. This generation included writers like Buchi Emecheta, Femi Osofisan, Olu Obafemi, Niyi Osundare, Bode Sowande, Festus Iyayi, Kole Omotosho and many others. These writers diverged from their predecessors in their style and content. Though they were heavily influenced by western models, the second generation writers did not shy away from experimenting with their traditional modes

of storytelling. Thus, the crux of their works was largely rooted in the native soil, addressing pressing issues at home like political instability, corruption or native customs. This generation is also notable for its clan of noted female writers. Zulu Sofola, the first Nigerian female playwright is an iconic figure in this generation. These writers were also preoccupied with the issues of the African women. Negotiations regarding the western centric feminist discourses found its way into the writings of these women. The writings of this generation are wrought with idealism and many subscribe to Marxist notions and hope for an egalitarian society, often questioning the need for conflict and discrimination. Thus, the second generation saw literature as an ideological weapon to bring out social changes into their society.

The contemporary third generation of Nigerian writers have originated since the 90s and they are still emerging on to the literary scene. These writers have adopted many features of the first and second generation of writers and they continue to experiment, to produce novelty. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is probably the most famous Nigerian writer of this lot. Her contemporaries include writers like Sefi Atta, Chris Abani, Chim Newton, Akin Adesokan, Unoma Azuah, Jude Dibia, Obodinma Iweala, Segun Afolabi, and Sarah Ladipo Manyika and so on. Most of these writers are living in the United States, United Kingdom or Europe and thus they are at once representatives of their native Nigerian tradition and agents of new literary creative movements. For these people the cultural complexity of their native land is as much a theme as is their migrant experience to the west.

Each generation is unique and paved the way for creating a rich legacy that is still inspiring the world literary platforms. The evolution of the colonial subject to

the postcolonial subject and finally to the contemporary transnational subject, can be traced through the study of each generation. Each of the three generations can be better understood through intersectional analysis, for each of them contains women writers who have written about precarious female situations that reflect on the socio-political fabric of their geographic location. And they are all pivotal to Nigerian literary tradition as much as their male contemporaries. Because, however, rich the tradition of literature is, it also speaks of the multifarious misrepresentations of African women, by their male counterparts and in the western discourses. The ancient folklore tradition belonged to the men and women of the native land. However, colonialism deconstructed the native social system and made opportunities more accessible to the men. Women were kept away from institutions of learning and they were delineated into second rate human beings who existed as only mothers, wives and daughters.

Even independence of the African nations did little to redeem women of their subordination. African literature and its critics viewed the world from a male centric standpoint, which made it difficult for the earlier writers like Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, or Grace Ogot to bring in the female consciousness into their writings. Thus, the male centric African literature reduced the female status, in spite of women being centric to the African social structure, in the form of story tellers, warriors, healers and nurturers. The stereotypes of African women, generated through the male centric African discourses and western literature proved challenging for the African female writers.



“Chinua Achebe, one of Nigeria's well-known male writers also mirrored this reality of patriarchy in his works. The man is made the subject of the narratives; he is significant and dominates. Because he is invariably always a central character women and children whose significance lies in their dependence on him are much less fully realized” (Amouzou 98). Hence the primary objective of African female writers in the beginning was to rewrite the wrong portrayals of African womanhood by their male counterparts and by the European colonialist culture. Flora Nwapa, in an interview given to Marie Umeh talks about how she is focused on painting a positive picture about African women. She did so, because she believes that there are many women in Africa who are positive in their attitude and are independent and industrious at the same time.

Flora Nwapa or Florence Nwanzuruahu Nkiru Nwapa (1931-1993), tried to deconstruct the male centric and western generated native female stereotypes, through her pen, thus paving way for generations of native female writers to follow her walked path. Flora Nwapa is chosen as the representative author of the first generation for intersectional analysis, because of the very reasons that make her writings unique and telling. Nwapa’s literary works is strewn with female circumstances which enable better scrutiny through intersectionality. Steeped in traditional discourses, Nwapa’s characters are rooted in the native soil, and are true amalgamations of conventionalism and strength. They provide good platforms for intersectional analysis that breaks down not only their life experiences but also the functioning of the native society. Nwapa recreates life and Ibo culture from the woman’s point of view and her first novel *Efuru* (1962) challenges the traditional

notions about womanhood. *Idu* published in 1970 portrays women as capable decision makers. However, Nwapa holds on to traditional subjects, transcending their selves into more realistic and powerful beings. Her 1986 novel *Women Are Different* is about a bunch of Nigerian women caught in the crux of modern European education and traditional Ibo customs. They are plagued by the patriarchal notions on womanhood and yet, they do not shy away from breaking taboos and doing what needs to be done. These women are also colonial subjects, caught in the transition of Nigeria from a colony to an independent state. They are caught in precarious historical moments of Nigerian nation-building, where they are found hesitating about the very potentiality of those moments. Thus, despite the transition to postcolonial subjects, these women are psychologically colonial subjects, yearning to return to their colonial past and also to an outright male centric society, where women are used to their subordination and will be in stable marriages. Hence, they are an amalgamation of very potent concepts of gender and political turbulence that emanate from their geographical location of being the citizens of a nation undergoing change. This novel posits an interesting intersectional analysis for the gender and political transactions that it portrays. Thus, Flora Nwapa's *Women Are Different* is taken as a primary text for the very possibilities that it suggests through an intersectional analysis, in this thesis.

While the first generation dealt with female situations within the native soil, the second generation saw characters not necessarily as mere native subjects. Migration to the west, in search of better opportunities became a constant phenomenon and resulted in the crossing over of the postcolonial subjects to hybrid

immigrants. However, migration for the native women was not an independent venture, during the postcolonial era. They travelled as wives and fiancés to men, who ventured abroad in search of better prospects. Nevertheless, migration did posit as an opportunity for these native women to cross over into what they hoped would be better circumstances, devoid of patriarchal power plays, signature to their native society. But migration brought in new sets of dubious circumstances, where the colonial subjects became the migrant second class citizens. Their struggles to establish their identity is multifaceted within the multiple interlocking systems of power that are at play in the white western society. Thus, by the second generation the circumstances of the native Nigerian women, became more complicated with additional power plays interacting to determine their fate. These situations are better understood through intersectionality.

The second generation is represented by Buchi Emecheta in this thesis. She is chosen for the very milestone that she represents in the legacy of the female Nigerian writers. Steeped in Womanism, Emecheta's female characters reflect her own strong resilience making her works largely autobiographical. Florence Onye Buchi Emecheta (1944-2017) is one of Africa's celebrated female writers and she is noted for her vehement resistance against the western sanctioned feminism. She prescribed to an African notion of feminism called Womanism, a term coined by Alice Walker to denote the everyday experiences of Black women or women of colour, that is steeped in the native traditional values. Hence, the struggle for African female emancipation is not a struggle against the traditional concepts of matrimony and motherhood, as perceived by the western feminists.

Emecheta's turbulent life as a woman caught in an abusive marriage and as a young immigrant mother in the western society forms the source to her craft as a writer. She calls out for female emancipation from the stifling patriarchal subjugation, as a testimony to her own life struggles. *The Joys of Motherhood* written in 1979 is Emecheta's most celebrated works. This novel has a fresh take on the cultural connotations of motherhood and its impact and reality. Emecheta criticises the pre-colonial traditional notions of female role-plays that women were expected to adhere to and fulfil in the postcolonial society. Postcolonial society witnessed a lot of transitions that were mostly denied to the female circumstances. Hence, Emecheta calls out for an evolution in the societal expectations on the native women, through her deconstruction of one of the most potent female stereotypes, that of the mother, through this novel.

In an interview to Adeola James, Emecheta describes this novel as "...in Joys of Motherhood ... I created a woman who had eight children and died by the wayside" (James 43). Emecheta is connected to Flora Nwapa, through this novel because the very title of this novel is inspired from Nwapa's novel *Efuru* published in 1966, where Efuru is said to have "never experienced the joy of motherhood" (*Efuru* 221). Emecheta's other works include *The Slave Girl* in 1977, *The Bride Price* in 1976, *Second Class Citizen* published in 1974, and so on. *In the Ditch* (1972) is Emecheta's first published novel and is a sequel to *Second Class Citizen*. *Second Class Citizen* chronicles the life of Adah who is a fictionalized version of the author herself, and who like Emecheta migrated to England with her husband, Francis and her two children and consequently abandoned the marriage after a

considerable time of enduring abuse. Emecheta, began writing as an escape from the emotional trauma she endured. This novel is a literary platform where the native woman evolves into an African immigrant in the white English society. She carries with her all of the essence of the native womanhood and tries hard to acclimatise it into the white society. Her circumstance of being a native and an immigrant, tickles out multiple perceptions on co-existence at intersections of race and gender experiences, through the shifts in geographic location. Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is taken as the second primary text for intersectional analysis for the very possibilities that the novel posits.

While the second generation dealt with subjects mutated by migration and native patriarchy, the third and contemporary generation has transcended over to being global citizens and are creating characters that are at once transnational and inscribed in their native identity. Their dilemmas are placed in a global context still very much rigged with racist and sexist power plays. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian writer belonging to the contemporary third generation, who enjoys a celebrity status in the global literary scenario today. An acclaimed speaker and a winner and nominee of many prestigious accolades, Adichie is often referred to as the literary progeny of Chinua Achebe, whom she regards as her first and true inspiration. Adichie is the prestigious winner of the MacArthur Scholarship and her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* fetched her the Man Booker Prize nomination for 2004. Her next novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* fetched her the prestigious Orange Prize in 2007. She is also well recognised for her cutting oratory. Her 2009 Ted talk "The Danger of a Single Story" won her many appreciations and her 2013 Ted talk "We

Should All Be Feminists” inspired the likes of Beyoncé, Dior and millions worldwide. *Americanah* published in 2013 fetched Adichie the National Books Critics Circle award. *Americanah* is the novel chosen for intersectional analysis, in this thesis, for the sheer contemporariness that it represents. *Americanah* deals with the everyday life of an African immigrant in America, touching up on the finer aspects of their existence that will render the analysis a deeper perception. The protagonist of the novel is both a native and a transnational citizen that enables ample scope for intersectional analysis.

All these three writers are favourites among literary scholars and much analysis has been done on their writings. Their works have been studied for their representations on gender or race and thus they are fertile examples for postcolonial analysis or feministic studies. Flora Nwapa is a researcher’s favourite author, for her novels are mostly walks into Nigerian native culture. The woman and writer in Flora Nwapa are better understood through her interview taken by Marie Umeh, and published as “The Poetics of Economic Independence for Female Empowerment: An Interview with Flora Nwapa” in the *Research in African Literatures* in 1995. The interview discusses the artistic stance taken by Nwapa and her aspirations for Nigerian literature. “Flora Nwapa: Women Are Different” is an article published in *ResearchGate* by Fatma Kalpakli on April 2017, wherein she writes about the gender patterns in the Nigerian society at the dawn of independence. This writeup also analyses on how Nigerian women work through the patriarchal patterns prevalent in the native society. “Choice and discovery: An analysis of women and culture in Flora Nwapa 's fiction” is an article published in University of South

Florida *Scholar Commons* by Mary D. Mears, where in Nwapa's female characters are given an extensive study. Mears based her study on African womanism. "Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa at the Biafran Literary War Front" by Uchenna David Uwakwe published in *ResearchGate* in 2019 talks about two stalwarts of Nigerian literature and their take on Biafran War literature. Both Nwapa and Achebe are compared and contrasted in their aspects of literary and ideological features. Hence, many researchers have worked on the gender aspects of Nwapa's fiction. Borrowing on their studies on gender in Nwapa's fictions, this thesis seeks to analyse gender at intersections with geographic location and political turbulence, in an endeavour to bring out the socio-political equations at play in the native society as displayed in Nwapa's fiction.

Buchi Emecheta's oeuvre of fiction has inspired many writers and literary scholars. Shalini Nadaswaran's "The Legacy of Buchi Emecheta in Nigerian Women's Fiction" published in *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* on March 2012, gives a studied analysis of Emecheta's female characters. The article deals with women characters in three of Emecheta's novels, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Kehinde* (1994) and *The Family* (1990). Emecheta's "Feminism with a small 'f'" published in *Criticism and Ideology: Second African Writers' Conference* in 1988 explains her stand on western feminism and also describes Emecheta's views on womanism. Anthony Barthelemy in his journal article titled "Western Time, African Lives: Time in The Novels of Buchi Emecheta" published in *Callaloo* in 1989, undertakes an elaborate study on the oeuvre of Emecheta's fiction. He excavates deeply into Emecheta's fictional fabric, to analyse the

interplay of factors that determine the female situations in the novels. “What They Told Buchi Emecheta: Oral Subjectivity and the Joys of "Otherhood"” is a journal article published by Cynthia Ward in *PMLA* wherein she discusses how Emecheta represents the struggles of African women in her fiction. Drawing inspiration from these write ups, this thesis undertakes an intersectional analysis, to understand the finer undertones of social discriminations emanating through a shift in location, in Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen*.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, is a rising star in the tinsel town of global literature. She represents both Nigeria and a transnational space that adorns her literary oeuvre with the glamour of relativity and rootedness. She is already a much sort after writer in the academic circles and her writing is much acclaimed for its representations. *Americanah* is her latest novel, published in 2013. This novel is a fine representation of her craft and politics. “Shifting intersections: Fluidity of gender and race in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*” by Mary Margaret Bonvillain published in *Graduate Theses and Dissertations* is a concise intersectional analysis undertaken of the novel, that has deeply inspired the idea of this thesis. The intersectional analysis of gender and race, in terms of location gives an accurate picture of the novel. “Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation” by Heather Hewett published in *English in Africa* in 2005, undertakes an in-depth analysis of the third generation of Nigerian writers with Adichie as the representative writer. This thesis is an attempt to study Adichie by placing her in the line of her predecessors and analysing her literature in the current scenario of gender and race politics. Intersectionality is an apt way to



undertake this study of social inequality, rampant in the write ups of these Third world women.

Intersectionality as a theoretical framework is still expanding its horizon and is evidently not limited to the academic circles. In fact, intersectionality has been heralded by fashion magazines and pop culture and embraced into almost every arena of social interaction. Gender has been introduced as an analytic category and a theoretical perspective due to the need to counter the tendency to neglect and misrepresent female experiences. Intersectionality thus imparts the analysis with depth which works towards better redressal of social inequalities and ensuing violence. The primary objective of this thesis is to analyse how discriminations can be studied in its plurality of manifestations. Social discrimination is rampant and existent in multiple layers and that makes it necessary to look upon it from a lens of multiple viewpoints that guarantees wholesomeness to the solutions generated.

The methodology adopted in this thesis is driven towards a better understanding of the interplay of power politics through various establishments of social manifestations. Nira Yuval- Davis in her essay titled “Situated Intersectionality and the Meanings of Culture” talks about translocality, transcalarity and transtemporality,

Therefore, in the intersectionality approach presented here, we also need to highlight the central importance in the analysis of issues of translocality - i.e. the ways particular categories of social divisions have different meanings – and often different relative power - in the different spaces in which the analysed social relations take place; of transcalarity -

i.e. the ways different social divisions have often different meanings and power when we examine them in small scale households or neighbourhoods, in particular cities, states, regions and globally; and of transtemporality – i.e. how these meanings and power change historically and even in different points in people’s life cycle. (N. Y.-Davis, “Situated Intersectionality”<sup>95</sup>)

Transcality and transtemporality defines the central methodology of this thesis. Social discrimination meted out to the Third world women are best analysed through intersectionality. Hence, the three Nigerian generations of female writers, each generation with a representative describes transcality in analysis because of the shift of spaces from the native to the west. These location shifts enable the analysis to gain insights into the manifestations of power and discrimination within the shared pockets of social existence like relationships, institutions or public and personal spaces. The three generation is also a walk into time, which describes the feature of transtemporality. Through the analysis of the three generations, sharing the same space at different points in history, it becomes possible to understand the mechanism of power plays that has evolved over time to manifest into social discriminations.

This study is designed to bring out the finer nuances in the experiences of the native Nigerian woman as she undergoes the evolution of becoming a transnational subject from a colonial/postcolonial subject. Through the intersectional analysis of her experiences, from a multiple spatial and temporal location, this thesis attempts to reveal the subtle sources of power politics that determines the life experiences of

Third world women and Coloured immigrants in the west. The three generations of Nigerian female circumstances are studied through the works of representative writers, who are pioneers of their times. A transcalar and transtemporal study is proposed to be undertaken through a double intersectional methodology so as to convey the workings of power systems in a society. The attempt is to unearth the catalysts that binds various social locations to produce social inequality in a society.

The methodology of this thesis is focused on space and time, through which experiences of discrimination are analysed through intersectionality. The selected authors occupy different points in history and share spaces of the native and the west at different points in history, thus enabling a progressive analysis of their experience which ensures a constructive redressal of social inequalities. Hence, through an intersection of geographic location with predominant issues of discrimination like race, gender, class or political instability, finer instances of discriminations and violence are analysed to understand how these intersections alter the perceptions of the characters, which in turn is reflexive of the authors' own perceptions and the spaces that they occupy. Leslie McCall's intracategorical complexity is employed as the first methodology of analysis. Human experiences are multidimensional and hence require the acknowledgement of the complications that make them unique. Intracategorical complexity devised by McCall recognises predominant categories of discriminations and while questioning those very categories, also delves deeper into the subtle feeder systems that are operating simultaneously to further those hierarchies. These hierarchies are evident through the lived experiences and altered perceptions of the characters, which is an eventuality. The second mode of study

employed is the six core analytic tools devised by Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge. Although all the six core tools are not employed, this method of analysis is effective in rendering a compact study of the social matrix within which interactions happen to attain meanings. All three plots are analysed using the necessary yardstick of social analysis that includes social inequality, power, relationality, complexity, social context and social justice. As suggested by the creators themselves, not all tools are necessary for analysis. However, this six core tool analysis delivers an eloquent study covering the spaces and the time periods occupied by the three generations.

The thesis walks backward into time, starting from the present Nigerian generation represented by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Her recent novel *Americanah* offers a fertile scope for intersectional analysis of the relatively contemporary experiences of native and migrant Nigerians. The spaces that these characters occupy play a pivotal role in creating the matrixes of power plays that metamorphoses their perceptions. *Americanah* is analysed through a simultaneous study of intersection of geographic location with gender, race and class; all of which create the dominant flux in the plot. The six core analytic tools of intersectionality are also employed to understand the novel in a capsule study involving the different pointers of the kit.

The second generation is represented by Buchi Emecheta and her novel *Second Class Citizen* is taken for both intracategorical analysis and the six core analytic tool of intersectionality. The categories for analysis in the first mode of study is the intersection of geographic location which is again a shift from the native

land to the west, with the issues of race, gender and class that the characters encounter at different locations. The second mode of analysis involving the six core analytic tools of intersectionality is employed to understand the shift in perception as the characters make geographic shifts.

Flora Nwapa represents the first generation, who reveals the foundation of the Nigerian writers in English, especially the women Nigerian writers in English. Her novel *Women Are Different* offers a native platform for intersectionality since there is no shift in location. However, it is the very location that determines the nature of social hierarchies that chisel the fate and perceptions of the characters involved. Hence the intracategorical complexity is rooted in the native locale and is fixated on the coupling of issues prevalent in the native Nigerian soil at that time, like gender and political turbulence. Intersection of the geographic location with gender and political turbulence offers a simultaneous study of the Nigerian patriarchal society and the Nigerian political state. The second mode of study involving the six core analytic tools of intersectionality, enables a deeper excavation of the early Nigerian society and undertakes a concise study of the native at the threshold of transitions.

The hypotheses formulated to analyse the select books of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa who belong to three different generations of Nigerian literature are as follows:

- To undertake an in-depth study into the existence of social inequality within the power structures of both the native and migrant spaces.
- The thrust is to focus on the relationality and complexity of the narrated experiences by placing them within their social contexts, so as to throw light on the fabric of social discriminations, that are still active.
- To utilise the six core analytic tools, which, postulates a yardstick analysis of experiences of social discriminations and thereby place them as an end-product of various coalitions of social categories.
- To undertake an intracategorical analysis, and there by recognise the categories of power structures and study their catalytic tendencies to generate hierarchies.
- To construe an intersectional analysis of geographic spaces with different categories, as present in the chosen novels, and excavate the interplay of physical spaces with different social denominators.
- To use transcalarity as a methodology, to ensure a thorough scrutiny of both the native and western spaces in which social transactions attain cultural significance.
- To employ transtemporality and thereby generate insights into the social categories and their evolutions over three generations and their consequent geographic spaces.

- To combine physical spaces along with mind-spaces in the intersectional investigations, and strive to attain a deeper understanding on experiences of discriminations and strife.
- To trace the iota of identity evolution from the colonial subject, to postcolonial and transnational subject.
- The focus on time and space in the methodology, seeks to make the study contemporary.

The primary objective of this thesis is to understand the nature of social discrimination as an experience feeding on the multiple systems of power, converging in a person's life, at any point in time and space. Intersectionality, is a prompt methodology to analyse the complexities involved within a marginalised experience. Standpoint theory, imparts the individual with the authority of his/her experience of discrimination. This furthers a better understanding of social discrimination, as an experience of diverse origins rather than as a homogenous classification that robs its possibilities.





## Chapter II

### **Third Generation: Intersectionality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah***

Intersectional thinking proposes to look at reality through the kaleidoscopic lens of heterogeneity. The roots of intersectional thinking run very deep into the annals of feminist history, even before intersectionality itself came into the mainstream. Black and racialised women found the attempts to homogenise female experience by the mainstream feminists, absurd. This attempt at homogeneity is mocked by bell hooks, in her book titled *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*.

When white women reformers in the 1830s chose to work to free the slave, they were motivated by religious sentiment. They attacked slavery, not racism. The basis of their attack was moral reform. That they were not demanding social equality for black people is an indication that they remained committed to white racist supremacy despite their anti-slavery work. While they strongly advocated an end to slavery, they never advocated a change in the racial hierarchy that allowed their caste status to be higher than that of black women or men. In fact, they wanted that hierarchy to be maintained. (125)

Thus, Black feminists have been pivotal to the development of intersectional analysis through their attempts to invoke the need to look upon discrimination as a consequence of various interlocking systems of oppression.

Intersectionality relates to the stratification of power in a society. The significance of intersectionality lies in its methodology of not reducing power into a homogenised construction. Power with all its complexities is analysed as an end-product of multiple oppressive systems at synergy. Hence intersectionality is not a single unified theory owing to its multidimensional properties; it is in fact a multitude of conceptual and theoretical tools.

While originally developed as a counter to identity politics that emphasize (as well as homogenize and reify) unidimensional versions of identity, some of these intersectional approaches have become a kind of fragmented identity politics, in which the focus is no longer, for instance, women or Blacks, but Black women. (N. Y.- Davis, "Situated Intersectionality" 93)

Intersectionality thus, brought onto the table, the peculiar problems of Black women, who suffer from both racial and gender prejudices. Both feminist and antiracist theories have excluded the problems of Black women which emanates from the intersection of race and gender. Theorists and activists like Kimberly Crenshaw, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis have all criticised the deliberate omission of Black female discourses from the mainstream feminist and antiracist critical thinking.

"Identity is not the goal but rather the point of departure in the process of self-definition. In this process Black women journey toward an understanding of how our personal lives have been fundamentally shaped by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class" (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 125). Epistemologically intersectional thought centres on the multi layered identities that

people live out, within a social structure of power relations. Identity is central to Black feminist discourse and defining and negotiating this identity becomes the central focus of the Black intersectional methodologies.

According to Kathy Davis, “Intersectionality initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated” (K. Davis 79). The questions of race, gender and migration that Adichie’s novel *Americanah* is teeming with is better explained through the kaleidoscopic lens of intersectionality.

*Americanah* published in 2013, is Adichie’s third novel. Much acclaimed for its multifaceted observations on gender and race politics, *Americanah* is ostensibly a love story, spanning three continents. The title of the novel is suggestive of people who return to Nigeria from America, carrying along with them all the affectations and snobberies of having been foreign-returned. The protagonist of the novel, Ifemelu is herself an Americanah. She and Obinze are childhood sweethearts living in Nigeria and their lives take different paths when they seek fortune in America and England, respectively. Through these two young spirited Nigerians, Adichie has carefully spun her acute observations on race, issues of identity, encompassing themes on loss and loneliness. Adichie also reflects on her own experiences in America as a migrant through this novel.

Migration warrants new experiences; Ifemelu and Obinze endure life as migrants and the fluidity and fluctuations in their identity and experiences enable an intersectional analysis. Movement across geographic borders prompts both the protagonists to undergo identity alterations. Adichie unearths the racial currents in

play, that encompass other discriminating factors like gender, class and nationality, which a Nigerian will have to overcome to establish his/her transnational identity. Through migration, Adichie presents the mechanisms of power play in a society, where power is allocated through hierarchies. Thus, identity becomes turbulent, as it undergoes fluctuations based on the way an immigrant gets treated, which again is influenced by intersections of his/her gender, race, education, location, class and so on. This process is highly complicated as maintaining individuality becomes a challenge even after returning to the homeland.

### **Intracategorical Complexity**

The female and male experience is constructed of multiple intersecting systems of oppression that cannot be comprehended through a single axis analysis of gender alone. Thus, unique methodologies are required to analyse the multifaceted complexities of social discriminations that make different perceptions, possible. Leslie McCall's intracategorical approach interrogates the construction of categories and also questions the existence of the very same categories. The categories at play here are gender and race, that alter in perception as the geographic location alters. Intersectionality of gender and geographic location offers a much deeper scope for analysing the conceptualisations on Black femininity and Black masculinity. Both Ifemelu and Obinze's notions on gender undergo vast changes in perception when they cross borders. While Nigeria offers a more patriarchal definition of gender, which both the protagonists take into easily; they are at a loss in their migrant countries where many other intersectional factors come into play. The struggles that Ifemelu faces as a female in Nigeria is hence, much different and less complicated

than those issues that she faces in America, as an immigrant. Similarly, Obinze discovers the absence of all privileges that were accorded to him as a man in his home country, when he migrates to become a black man in England.

Intersectionality of race and geographic location excavates the flux inherent in the concepts of race and class, prior and post immigration. Thus, instead of considering instances of discrimination as isolated case studies, intersectionality provides access to situations where many forms of power play occur to maintain and propagate hierarchy. Since intersectional experience is a sum total of many contributing factors, including sexism and racism, any analysis that does not take into account the multiplicity of contributory factors, does not sufficiently address social discriminations, which calls for an intracategorical analysis on the basis of transcalarity focusing on the issues of race and gender, in the novel.

#### 1) Gender & Geographic Location

*Americanah* is truly a novel of resistance, where the protagonists are in a constant debate with the patriarchal expectations and culturally bound notions of black femininity and black masculinity. They eventually succeed in proving how misleading such conceptualisations tend to be. There is a completeness of perception due to the constant shift of both the male and female focaliser. The varied socio-cultural-geographical environments within which these protagonists negotiate their identities make *Americanah* an interesting study on race and gender in the backdrop of migration. Resembling a bildungsroman, *Americanah* tackles the issues of race and gender, by delving deeper into the stereotyped notions of Black gender.

Ifemelu, the female protagonist, has a predominant perspective throughout the novel. Aspects of her femininity which include her relationship with her body, her sexuality and love life, her borrowed notions of gender and subsequent subversion of the same, in the backdrop of her experience as an immigrant will provide the first major instances of intersectionality in this chapter. How she becomes a product of both the American and Nigerian cultures while performing her sexuality and gender roles and, the social and political implications of her gender performances and thereby, her revelations on her racial feminine self, all form the crux of intersectionality in Ifemelu's gender experiences. Obinze also contributes, simultaneously, to the notions of black masculinity. Being the other half of the narrative in the novel, Obinze is a classic case study on how illegal migration afflicts masculinity. Obinze's attitude towards sexuality, gender based social impositions, femininity, stereotypical representations of black masculinity and migratory experiences enable an intersectional analysis. Furthermore, gender and sexual issues of Ginika and Auntie Uju as displaced Nigerians, also form extensions of intersectional analysis on gender and geographic location.

### 1.1) Ifemelu

“Racism and Sexism are grown up words” (Lorde 152). Ifemelu realises the changing perceptions about her sexuality and her gender as she grows up in Nigeria; that her body is not merely a component for feminine performance; but is also a site for racial, cultural and gender mediations.

Intersectionality of gender encompasses analysis on Ifemelu's fluctuating perceptions on beauty and femininity as seen through her treatment of her hair, her

body and her sexuality. Ifemelu's understandings on beauty undergo a vast change as she migrates to America. Her notions of beauty during her adolescence in Nigeria are immediately challenged as soon as she arrives in America and the same standards are then subverted when she lands back in Nigeria.

Ifemelu's perceptions on femininity is better analysed through her preoccupations with her body, mainly her hair. Hair becomes a major apparatus of connotations in *Americanah*. Further, body size as perceived in Nigerian culture and American culture, for its aesthetic values also influences Ifemelu's reactions and negotiations through her racial and gender experiences. Thus, race cannot be excluded from the conception of beauty that Ifemelu experiences in America and it is very much affixed on the white-centric representation of the female body.

“Within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the social and the political context in which the custom of black folks straightening our hair emerges, it represents an imitation of the dominant white group's appearance and often indicates internalized racism, self-hatred and /or low self –esteem” (hooks, “Straightening Our Hair” 2). Thus, *Americanah* opens to a very innocent instance of a girl wanting to get her hair done. But what makes this instance loaded with political meaning is that the girl in question is an African and she is placed in a white supremacist capitalist patriarchal society; and she has to take a train to go braid her hair because there are no stylists in her American city, who can braid her kinky African hair. The African hair is a recurring element for Ifemelu's growing awareness on beauty and racism in the American soil. Hair thus highlights the complex identity politics and its relation to race, gender, sexuality and beauty.

Interestingly during her Nigerian adolescence, hair does not have any political or social connotations but is an instrument in shaping her self-esteem and also the basis of the relationship between the protagonist and the women in her family. Ifemelu learns hair care from her mother and her aunt and in particular from her mother she receives her perceptions on hair and beauty. Ifemelu's first brush with standards of beauty is not only built upon her mother but also focuses on a singular part of her body, her hair.

Ifemelu has always been enamoured by her mother's thick hair. The hair was so thick that it needed special care. The hair consumed bottles of relaxers and took hours in the dryer. But nevertheless, after all these efforts, when her mother's hair unfurled from the rollers, it flowed down behind her, joyously like a celebration. Little Ifemelu would often try to imitate her mother. "Through the years of childhood, Ifemelu would often look in the mirror and pull at her own hair, separate the coils, will it to become her mother's" (Adichie, *Americanah* 41). This mirroring proves Ifemelu's complete reverence and devotion to her mother. And it also signifies how she tries to imitate her mother and realises that her own hair does not fit the expectations of familiar beauty standards of her country.

Curiously, Ifemelu loses her sense of reverence for her mother, when the latter joins a radical catholic group and consequently cuts her hair. The hair which is a symbol of beauty and femininity for Ifemelu, became offensive and a symbol of evil for her mother. "... her God changed. He became exacting. Relaxed hair offended Him. Dancing offended Him" (42). Thus, Ifemelu stops recognising her mother as



her object of desire and it also sparks her critical attitude towards demonising femininity with pre-imposed beliefs on womanhood.

Another family member who plays an important role in Ifemelu's perceptions on beauty and especially hair is Aunt Uju. Aunt Uju's self-care routine of beauty is centred on the arrival of her lover, the General. It is for him, that she beautifies herself and seeks Ifemelu's help in the process. Ifemelu clearly does not approve of the General, who is already a married man. She however, becomes aware of her aunt's malleability of character through the hair routine that her aunt involves herself in before the arrival of her lover, indicating total submission. However, it is Aunt Uju who warns Ifemelu of the difficulty of hair care in America. It is not only expensive, but also very difficult to maintain hair in America and thus upon migration, Ifemelu's hair care pattern undergoes a serious alteration, much aimed to meet the American way of hair care and beauty standards.

In America, hair attained completely different dimensions of meaning and existence. Stuart Hall, well known for his theory on cultural identity, claims that Black hair is irrevocably linked to racial and political spaces (Hall 222-37). Ifemelu thus undergoes a series of culture shocks over her trysts with the connotations attached with her natural kinky hair. Since much of the novel takes place in a braiding salon, hair becomes an immediate metaphor to many deep-rooted hierarchies inherent in the American psyche. In fact, Ifemelu calls hair as a perfect metaphor for race in America. Hair is common but is seldom understood for its complexities, much like race. The glaring fact of the non-existence of braiding salons in Princeton in spite of the presence of many Black people around indicates

the tendency of the American white society to alienate those who are 'different'. Identifying with a particular ethnic identity is considered impedance in the forward journey of a person, in the American society. Thus, this encourages techniques of assimilation resulting in the shedding of every feature that relates them to their home country. Adichie has often critiqued on this 'disassociation', and her most popular speech titled "The Danger of the Single Story" echoes on the absences/gaps in the mainstream beauty culture wherein only the predominant white skin, blue eyes and straight hair exist.

"Though there exists different conceptualisations of beauty, the dominant cultures' beauty standards have been made the norm, owing to supremacist colonial ideologies that suppress or annihilate other cultural perceptions of beauty, particularly the Africans" (Dasi 141). Hair thus, becomes political by being an instrument in racial classification. Assimilation becomes a social mechanism as practised by the migrants in America. Auntie Uju's first concern upon being called for a job interview is her hair, which cannot be braided. She fears she will not get the job because of her hair and thus follows the relaxer-rituals. Eurocentric beauty standards seem to be so ingrained in the American society that they are in various instances, institutionalized to the point where the way a black woman wears her hair can determine what kind of job she can have and whether or not she can keep the job. Before attending the interview in Baltimore, Ifemelu is advised to, "Lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters" (Adichie, *Americanah* 202). Adichie has thus touched upon a sensitive but very poignant issue of hair and its multiple racial complexities. White-female hair becomes the epitome of beauty and

acceptance and adhering to the white norms of beauty is a misconception that thrives in all migrant communities, especially, African. Ifemelu's major processes of assimilation happen through her hair, despite feeling a sense of loss and anguish, when she burns her scalp every time to straighten her hair. She sensed the grave damage in the burning smell of her hair. She knew it was dying by the way it hung around her, straight and sleek. She couldn't recognise herself and she left the salon mourning for what she has lost.

Hair becomes a major preoccupation for Ifemelu and when her hair begins to fall off, due to the straightening treatment, she cuts them off at the insistence of her friend Wambui. Ifemelu feels consequently weak and deprived of her femininity. Her cut hair sparks a lot of curiosity amidst her white colleagues, enquiring if the act was political or sexual, as if she is a lesbian. Once again hair becomes a metaphor for social, political and even sexual indications about a woman. Ifemelu's 'rebirth' comes with her association with a web community called HappilyKinkyNappy.com. She becomes aware of the many racist issues associated with her hair and beauty. She heals herself and her hair through the many remedies that is shared amidst the women of colour in the website; and later she resorts to challenging the established beauty norms, especially those that are perpetuated through beauty magazines. Her blogs become her pivotal platform in fighting against racism and gender stereotypes associated with it; especially when it comes to Africans. Thus, she starts loving her natural hair and thereby gains her self-confidence. After the initial blind submissions to the American standard of beauty; Ifemelu understands the various social, political and racial nuances of the American society through hair. Adichie thus makes hair a

metaphor for beauty and identity as perceived by the protagonist and those surrounding her in its many racial stereotypes.

The relationship between women and their bodies is deeply embedded in the corporeal culture of any society. And the complexity and philosophical implications of this relationship make it an integral part of the gender and social politics. The experiences and perceptions regarding body and beauty differ within various ethnic communities. In particular, the perceptions of the Black women on their bodies and conceptualisations of beauty differ very much from the White Eurocentric women.

As much as hair, body is also a sight of political and racial connotations, for Ifemelu. With regard to her body, Ifemelu constantly finds herself at odds with the dominant gender perceptions. Throughout the novel, Ifemelu is in constant negotiation to size her body up. While in Nigeria, she often compares herself to other girls, who according to her better fit the Nigerian standards of beauty. Ifemelu's conception of body is subverted when she migrates to America. Obinze, her boyfriend in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in defining the body to her. "He made her like herself. With him, she was at ease; her skin felt as though it was her right size" (61). This confidence and self-image, is distorted when she arrives in America, where a completely different body image is at play.

The Nigerian concept of female body, that Ifemelu carries with her as she migrates to America, gets a subversion shock, when she meets Ginika, her Nigerian friend. Ginika comes to receive her and Ifemelu is immediately shocked to see her slim body and even asks her "When did you stop eating and start looking like a dried stockfish?" (122). It is from Ginika, that Ifemelu gets her first lessons on American

beauty standards and how Ifemelu's body better fits the image, being "...thin with big breasts" (124). Ginika also tutors Ifemelu on the difference in various linguistic cultural interpretations between American English and Nigerian English. There is a whole gamut of cultural connotations pertaining to language and relating to body size in America. Ifemelu avoids words like 'fat', as in, America it has a negative body connotation. Ifemelu picks up new terminologies to re-think and re-size body parts. But she is critical of this new cultural stereotyping of bodies when she observes Ginika's friends who all look to her "almost interchangeable, all small-boned and slim hiped, their chestnut hair ironed straight" (127). A sense of estrangement befalls the protagonist because of her feeling of being a misfit in this new system of body standards. She feels further alienated from herself and her surroundings, when driven by lack of money; she meets a tennis coach, who elicits sexual services from her. Thus, denigrating herself through her body, Ifemelu is trapped in the fetishised racial and gender muddle of exploitation, because of her financial and racial circumstances.

Ifemelu's white American boyfriend Curt becomes an important character in bridging her cultural displacements in America. For Curt, Ifemelu is this exotic creature with perfect and enchanting body. To the American standards, her body seems right, but back home, in Nigeria, she is small in size. Floating between two perceptions about her own body, Ifemelu is in a constant negotiation with herself to define her body. "She was fat. She was not curvy or big-boned; she was fat, it was the only word that felt true" (6). In spite of integrating into the American culture, Ifemelu at no point develops a more secure relationship with her own body. She

heavily criticises the American beauty standards; where in thinness in a woman is glorified. But then, despite all her critical observations, she herself becomes a prey to this discriminating system of beauty codification.

Ifemelu thus, though initially caters to the Nigerian versions of body definitions, these standards get subverted into American, as she undergoes the process of assimilating into this alien culture. This diasporic experience of trying to fit the body into an alien culture, consequently results in the distancing of herself from her home culture, as well. Thus, when she returns to Nigeria, she realises her displeasure in her own body and finds ways to alter it. Upon meeting Obinze, Ifemelu is told that she is not fat though she has gained a few pounds, which puts the matter into a perspective that Ifemelu is still significantly influenced by the American culture.

The process of migration thus, has provided a conflicting experience of contrasting body images for Ifemelu. The social and cultural implications of the body create a process of self-awareness in her that is intersectional in experience due to being at the crossroads of migratory and racial experiences. The female body initially performs according to the Nigerian standards without adding further meanings; however, it takes on a new level of social and political implications as a migrant in the American culture. And this distorted version of the body lingers still within the protagonist, even after her return to her home country. Thus, without negating each of these conflicting versions on the female body, Ifemelu creates her own third version of the body, bearing all the complexities and ambiguities of the

intersectional experiences of these culturally and ethnic based assumptions about the female body.

*Americanah* is also a novel on female sexuality, analysing its development through various stages of intersectional factors like age, economy, culture and society. The narrative follows Ifemelu's sexual life, analysing the evolution of her sexual being. Through a fictional representation, Adichie successfully delivers a deeper understanding of the Black female sexuality. As an adolescent, Ifemelu receives sexual education under the influence of Obinze, her boyfriend in Nigeria. In fact, it is through these encounters between these two protagonists that sexuality attains a centre stage in the narrative. Ifemelu is more aware of the social implications of these encounters, as she has been amply warned by her mother, Aunt Uju and even by Obinze's mother. The first part of Ifemelu's sexual experience happens in Nigeria, where Obinze plays a pivotal role. In their first encounter, Ifemelu is shown as a confident adolescent expressing her desire for a kiss and there by even claiming her agency in front of Obinze. She openly flirts with Obinze and does not shy away from being open about her past relationships. Refusing to be a docile woman throughout the narrative, Ifemelu speaks her mind and demand mutual respect from Obinze. In Nigerian society, pre-marital sex is not openly condemned nor publicly endorsed. A woman is told to have sex and asked to withhold at the same time. But Ifemelu thwarts these social expectations through her sexual encounters. Through her teenage years, she receives various doctrines on sex. Her mother seldom talked to her about sex as it was a tabooed subject, a sin according to her religious indoctrination. It is Aunt Uju, who gives her a practical

explanation on female sexuality. Aunt Uju, asks her to be more docile which is in line with the patriarchal expectations of the Nigerian society. She does not believe in the woman partaking in the sexual act and the only agency that a woman has is to forbid intercourse even when she allows a man to kiss and fondle her. Aunt Uju thus advises Ifemelu on female sexuality as if it's a tabooed subject and much of its agency rests with men. Obinze's mother is the other person to influence Ifemelu on matters of her sexuality. Obinze's mother takes it upon herself to educate Ifemelu about female sexuality and the gravity of the implications that it brings along. She warns Ifemelu about the consequences of having sexual union with Obinze. She tells Ifemelu blatantly that the responsibility of it all will come crashing down on Ifemelu and not on her son Obinze. Obinze's mother thus advises Ifemelu to wait and to be responsible. She asks Ifemelu to be sensible and also to convince Obinze on why they should delay their sexual union.

Obinze's mother's advice is more like a cautionary tale, with much of the responsibility levied upon Ifemelu than her son, Obinze. Even when she does not deny their sexual desire, as Aunt Uju does, she contradicts herself by eventually putting the task to convince Obinze to wait, on Ifemelu. She draws out a narrow representation of masculinity and denies her son any sensibility. *We Should All Be Feminists* by Adichie mirrors the exact situation which is prevailing in all patriarchal societies. She talks about how girls are glorified for being virgins and are taught to hate one's own body and sexuality. The same way Ifemelu is taught to deny her own pleasure and to be more responsible in such matters than her partner, Obinze. In spite of being an ambiguous and unfair advice, Ifemelu subscribes to it and even



delays their sexual union. And when they do have sex, she is unable to enjoy because of the nagging guilt of having disobeyed Obinze's mother. "She had been tense through it all, unable to relax. She had imagined his mother watching them" (94). Thus, Ifemelu's initial sexual identity formulates during her adolescent years. Religion and patriarchal assumptions about sex and female sexuality, influences Ifemelu in her adolescence. Through Ifemelu, Adichie talks about the misplaced weight of sexual responsibility on the females. Ifemelu's adolescence in Nigeria, also mirror the reality of sexual awareness in the country.

Thus Ifemelu, who migrates to America, is no novice to sexuality. But her first sexual experience in America plunges her into a deep abyss of self-resentment and depression. During her undergraduate years, Ifemelu is subjected to open harassment due to her gender and her race. The hyper sexualisation of the African women's bodies haunt Ifemelu too as she is encouraged to exploit her sexuality by this foreign country. Much like Venus Hottentot, Ifemelu's body becomes a sight of racial and gender aggressions. Trying to look for a job to pay her rent and university fees, Ifemelu responds to an advertisement of a tennis coach. During the interview, Ifemelu is told that he is looking for a girl to help him 'relax'. In spite of Ginika warning her against accepting escort jobs, since it is equal to prostitution; Ifemelu accepts the job with no other options in her way due to her migrant status. Even when she clearly states that she cannot have sex with him, she is tensed with the fear of getting raped and killed. Ifemelu is shocked and disgusted with herself; that she was sexually stimulated in this encounter which leaves her traumatized for days. She does not talk to anyone about this experience, not even to Obinze, from whom she

consequently distances herself. She hints about this encounter to Aunty Uju, who hypocritically does not care about where she got the money from. Hence Ifemelu is completely alone in facing this traumatic sexual encounter that she had. The feeling of being reduced to a mere body shocks Ifemelu.

*Americanah* voices migrant problems, especially those faced by women of colour with no money. Sexual abuse is rampant and silent; and is a grave violence endured by many migrant women. Forced sexual stimulation as narrated in this traumatic encounter, sheds light on the discussions regarding female sexuality and its exploitations.

After this traumatic encounter, Ifemelu moves on in her life as a young adult woman and goes on to experience a satisfactory sexual life with her next boyfriend, who is, a rich white American called Curt. Her relationship with Curt is curiously normal and yet has undertones of racism. After their first sexual encounter, Curt admits that it is his first time with a Black woman. He seems to be implying that he should have done it with Black women. Despite the positive quality of sex, Curt always insists on the need to play sexual games that inscribe exotic connotations to Ifemelu's body. Both of them indulge in love games like 'Foxy Brown & Curt the Adventurer', which has deep racist undertones. Curt is obsessed with the 'exotic' as is revealed through the racial identities of his previous girlfriends, one a Japanese and another, a Venezuelan. However, Ifemelu though amused by his sexual behaviour, nevertheless pleases him by playing along. Her sexual satisfaction is centred on his and hence any chance of her being sexually independent is impossible. Ifemelu becomes a passive participant in the relationship, which

eventually she breaks off from. She becomes curious about her own sexuality and cheats on Curt, by having sex with her neighbour. Confessing it to Curt, who had looked upon her as a passive 'colonial subject', Ifemelu is surprised that Curt's first concern is whether the guy she cheated him with, is white. Curt's obsession with the race of her new found lover confuses Ifemelu and he accuses her of giving the guy what he wanted. Ifemelu denounces Curt's racist and sexist denigration of her by promptly correcting him, "I took what I wanted. If I gave him anything, then it was incidental" (288). Thus, the relationship, albeit a satisfactory one in the beginning, ends in notes of disdain. Curt has always objectified her sexuality into something exotic and has always enjoyed playing the 'coloniser' of her exotic body. Ifemelu's sexuality was not only objectified, but made passive, as Curt, much like Aunty Uju, who believes in women being subordinate to men's desires.

Ifemelu's relationship with Curt proves how Colonialism still lingers in the sexual perceptions on Black bodies. Putting an end to the relationship enables Ifemelu to break free of sexual subordination and passivity. The sexual being in Ifemelu evolves when sexual imagination becomes the hallmark of her next relationship. This sexual imagination is testimony of her sexual desire and subjectivity. This subjectivity plays out in her initial sexual encounter with Blain, which however turns out to be disappointing to her. Ifemelu's expectations become reversed when she becomes the active partner, whereas Blain becomes plain and frigid, in bed. Blain's strict and narrow, attitude toward sex repulses Ifemelu, but nevertheless, she subjects herself to his passive encounters. Blain's taste for regular and responsible intercourse bores her, but she succumbs anyways. Thus, she once

again moulds her sexuality according to that of her partner's. Consequently, passion starts ebbing away from the relationship and the only moment of intimacy she feels towards him is during the electoral campaign of Obama. Thus, their relationship is an intellectual and political kinship and not a physical or sexual one. *Americanah* debunks the mainstream representation of sexual frigidity in women, by making the man sexually frigid here. By making her protagonist more sexually active, Adichie, re-emphasises that sexuality is not a monolithic experience.

Migration hence completely alters Ifemelu's sexual being. Whilst in Nigeria, she was wrought with religious and patriarchal ideals about female sexuality; her migration to America posits challenging situations of sexual conflicts, for her. She turns out to be a submissive partner, succumbing to the wishes of her partner. Imbibing the quintessential Nigerian patriarchal values, she tries hard to assimilate her sexual being into the American narrative. The perceptions of Black female sexuality, still centres around colonialism and high-strung patriarchy, which makes her, become the passive feminine woman endorsed by her home country. But in America, she evolves as a sexual being and she returns to Nigeria, with her newly strengthened sexuality. In other words, she returns to Nigeria, as a confident adult; whose sexuality becomes significantly expressive. Ifemelu, embarks on a sexual affair with Obinze and proves to be an independent, sexually active woman. When Obinze seems reluctant about having an extramarital affair, Ifemelu cajoles him by openly making references to female masturbation. Thus, the novel breaks more than a few taboos where female sexuality is concerned.

With Obinze, Ifemelu returns to find a more free and wholesome self, active in her sexual desires, both verbally and physically. Thus, migration chances upon Ifemelu, a complete transcendence of her adolescent self, through the intersection of cultural, geographical, financial, sexual and racial experiences.

#### 1.2) Ginika & Aunty Uju

Adichie explores the intersection of gender and geographic location through two auxiliary characters also, both of whom provide with two different variants of migratory experiences. Ginika and Aunty Uju, also transcend boundaries like Ifemelu and Obinze, and they continue to be the social instructors for Ifemelu, past borders too. Ifemelu is given her first migratory lessons on gender by Ginika, who has rather taken well to the new American social standards. In spite of being a minor character, Ginika, represents the fluidity in identity adaptations.

In Nigeria, Ginika's personality aligned with that of the society's traditional expectations. She is much admired back home for her docile manner and physical appearance, both of which subscribe to the traditional notions of femininity. However, America transforms Ginika drastically; a change that instantly shocks Ifemelu, as she steps off the bus in New Jersey. Unaware of the cultural nuances of the female body size in America, Ifemelu is taken aback by Ginika's thin and frail body. When Ifemelu voices out her concern and shock over Ginika's frail body, she replies "Do you know I started losing weight almost as soon as I came? I was even close to anorexia. The kids at my high school called me Pork. You know at home when somebody tells you that you lost weight it means something bad. But here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you. Its different here" (124). Thus,

Ginika becomes the cultural interpreter to Ifemelu, who is introduced to a whole new gamut of cultural connotations of the body.

American beauty standards is much centred on weight and Ginika who whole heartedly prescribes to this beauty norm is careful about what she eats. Weight loss in America is a compliment where as in Nigeria it is an insult. Ginika, indoctrinates Ifemelu to this new system of standards that taxes on the wellbeing of women. Ginika joins America's intense obsession with political correctness and guides Ifemelu towards being politically correct. "There were codes Ginika knew, ways of being that she had mastered" (125). Assimilation is the key factor behind Ginika's adherence to these new standards; and, she becomes a prime example of gender socialisation and is a melting pot for the intersection of nationality and gender standards. In spite of the similarity in the cultural treatments of women in both countries, Ginika in Ifemelu's eyes is very successful in adapting to both these gender expectations. Watching Ginika perform her gender in a gathering, Ifemelu understands how well versed Ginika is in keeping up with the American norms of femininity; Ginika is verbally conscious of when to talk and when to remain silent. She is also careful about the comments that she makes in the gathering. Ginika is socially conscious about adhering to the American way of being a woman and she acts as a torch bearer for Ifemelu to follow, often educating her on the cultural connotations of her own body and her own language. Ginika thus represents fluidity in gender adaptation past borders. She adheres to the expectations of both Nigerian and American societies, never once faltering or questioning their authority.

“Unlike Aunt Uju, Ginika had come to America with the flexibility and fluidness of her youth, the cultural cues had seeped into her skin” (152). The intersectional play of gender and geographic location is wrought with conflicts and yearning in Aunt Uju. She, sails through the hardships of both the Nigerian and American life, without ever trying to thwart the patriarchal expectations of both cultures.

Uju came to Ifemelu’s house from rural Nigeria. She had come to stay in her uncle’s house in the hopes of getting better educational and employment opportunities. And in spite of becoming a smart doctor, she succumbs to the patriarchal norms of the society by totally submitting herself to the General, a corrupt politician. This submission destroys her independence, and thwarts her efforts towards a successful life. Aunt Uju has always been accepting of the patriarchal hierarchies at play in her country, which places a man in a much more advantageous position than a woman. She never questions her brother’s loss of job due to his decision to not address his boss as ‘mother’, since he finds it insulting to have a female boss. Curiously when Aunt Uju’s relationship with the General is mentioned, for the first time in the novel, he is described as her ‘mentor’, not just by Ifemelu’s mother, but also by the neighbourhood. As Ifemelu observes, her mother covers up the real state of affairs by changing the word. This shows the hypocrisy of the Nigerian society. These types of extra-marital affairs are allowed in silence and even acknowledged with the role of the man as guiding and protecting the woman. Even religion seeks to cover up the reality of such relationships by attributing the man as a mentor to the woman.

Ifemelu is given the first lessons on man-woman relationship by Aunty Uju and she witnesses the effects of patriarchal love play on Aunty Uju, whilst the latter is with the General. The General expects Aunty Uju to be a docile mistress, dependent on him for everything. Aunty Uju complies with his demands, even to the extent of altering her own body to suit his fancies. Ifemelu is also shocked to realise that Aunty Uju does not have any money on her own to give away. Aunty Uju is comfortable in giving up her financial independence to the General who according to her "...wants me to ask for everything I need. Some men are like that" (76). The radical shift in the gender performance of Aunty Uju while being in a relationship with the General baffles Ifemelu and she realises that "that relationship destroyed (Aunty Uju)" (521). Being the cultural commentator to Ifemelu on subjects of hair and sexuality, Aunty Uju, indoctrinates Ifemelu with the Nigerian ideals of femininity wherein the agency of the female body lies with the man. She is never conflicted with the gender norms that she also subscribes to, unlike Ifemelu. Aunty Uju loses her individuality by trying to conform to the restrictive gender aspirations of her home country. She struggles hard to restrict herself into these impenetrable borders of patriarchy, at home and abroad, and there by fractures her own self through her futile efforts.

The death of the General comes as a shock to Aunty Uju. She is consequently pushed to migrate to America in order to escape the General's family's wrath. Hence armed with nothing but her son and a medical degree, she escapes to America in the hope of making a better life. With the death of the General, Aunty Uju is left free to fend for herself. And so, the migration to America could be an



attempt of escape for Aunt Uju. For a woman who has always subscribed wholeheartedly to the patriarchal gender norms of her home country, America becomes a place of crisis by its different set of patriarchal norms that tax on women on multiple levels. Middle aged and with a son to look after, Aunt Uju is fast looking for jobs and filing for her medical school examination. In a society where patriarchal expectations are rigid in terms of skin colour, body size and texture of hair for women, Aunt Uju finds it hard to keep up with these standards and fight for survival too. Relying on three part time jobs to fend for herself, Aunt Uju is conscious of her physical appearance, especially her hair. Hair becomes an object of worry for Aunt Uju, as kinky hair seldom lands jobs in interviews in the American society. Hence, as her advice to Ifemelu, she herself undergoes a rigorous hair routine so as to salvage her situation. Enrolling herself in a medical school, one would expect Aunt Uju to derive strength from her new surroundings and grow independent and bold. But Aunt Uju faces multiple forms of oppression from her surroundings in America. Her migrant experience is wrought with intersections of race, gender, age and class. And contrary to what is expected, America subdues Aunt Uju. "Aunt Uju had deliberately left behind something of herself, something essential, in a distant and forgotten place" (146-7). She tries to break out of her subdued self which was much accepted back home by her lover the General. However, America transforms her into someone meek and quick to apologise. She adopts an accent in public, "And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-bashing" (133). Aunt Uju in trying to conform to the American notions of femininity, suppresses her boldness and yet in her personal zone and amidst her peers she is confident of being herself. This divide in her personality is due to her

intersectional experiences of race and gender as an immigrant because unlike Ginika, Aunty Uju did not migrate to America with the ease of youth. Another major facet of intersection of race and gender also exists in her relationship with Bartholomew.

Women in relationships have been an important arena of discussion in the feminist discourses, right from the beginning. Feminist studies have centred around female passivity and dependency on men (more so from an economic point of view), prompting the likes of Simon de Beauvoir to dedicate an entire chapter to married women in her feminist masterpiece *The Second Sex*. Whilst popular culture has contributed in many ways to the whole area of women in love, they still remain conflicting and debated subjects in contemporary culture. Aunty Uju in her relationships plays a passive role. She seldom reclaims her agency in her relationships. And migration does nothing if not make her more submissive in her relationship and in her interactions with the white American society. Her experiences are enshrouded with intersections of gender and race that is visible in her relationship with Bartholomew. She becomes docile and domestic when Bartholomew, an online dating acquaintance visits for dinner. She falls back into her smiling demure self, in her attempt to entice Bartholomew. She eagerly served him more beer and went out of her way in a desperate attempt to attract him. Both Bartholomew and Aunty Uju have a general consensus on their respective gender role plays. Consequently, Aunty Uju becomes the docile submissive woman who is in total alignment with all of Bartholomew's needs. By enacting an amalgamated version of both the Nigerian and American patriarchal expectations, Aunty Uju

entices Bartholomew into marrying her. But post marriage, Aunt Uju finds it difficult to cater to his narrow mindedness and eventually upon their shift to Massachusetts; she realises her mistake in marrying Bartholomew. Aunt Uju's case is a classic example of poor migrant women who remain in abusive marriages to ensure safety and acceptance in an alien soil.

Patricia Hill Collins in her influential *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* argues that black women have been largely silent about the negative and passive representations of black sexuality because of the lack of access to positions of power. This is exactly why Aunt Uju admonishes Ifemelu for breaking up with her rich white boyfriend Curt. Even the relationship that Aunt Uju is said to be in, at the close of the novel, is with a divorced Ghanaian doctor who treats her like a "princess" (299). This suggests that the male partner is chosen for his wealth, whereas the woman stresses on the importance of being put on a pedestal like a princess. Thus, Aunt Uju experiences a complete lack of agency in her relationships. Intersections of gender and geographic location play a major role in keeping her deprived of her own true identity. By constantly placing herself in the shadows of men and her exile to an alien nation, develops in Aunt Uju an immigrant identity crisis that she also instils in her own son.

### 1.3) Obinze

"Black male sexism existed long before American slavery. The sexist politics of white-ruled and colonized America merely reinforced in the minds of enslaved Black people existing beliefs that men were the superiors of women"

(hooks, *Aint I a Woman?* 88). Since the 1990's, studies on the construction of masculinity has gained greater emphasis. Scholars of African American identities like bell hooks and Kopano Ratele have advocated their focus on the study of black masculinity. In particular is their centering on the problematic constructions of masculinity by patriarchy. Patriarchy is based on the binary division of human beings into males and females and each division is attributed with their respective role plays. According to bell hooks, "Masculinity as it is conceived within patriarchy is life-threatening to black men" (hooks, *Yearning* 77). Intersection of race and gender prove to be futile for Black men who are stripped off of their gender privileges in a white centric patriarchal society. With this intersection of race and gender, Black men fall short in fulfilling their patriarchal constructs of masculinity which in turn renders them powerless and dangerous. Obinze, the auxiliary protagonist in the story lands at the crux of this intersection when he migrates to England. The intertwining of race and gender strips him off his masculine privileges that Nigeria had bestowed upon him.

Obinze lost his father at an early age, and had much of his initial instructions on gender from his mother. Masculinity as a set of gender expectations, is instilled in boys in Nigeria right from the young age. The pressure to perform their role of masculinity is high on boys in a patriarchal society, such as Nigeria. Hence falling short of such expectation is ensued by harmful ramifications like low self-confidence, substance abuse and violence to women. Adichie steers aside of the dominant rhetoric of masculinity while creating a character like Obinze. Being raised by a woman, Obinze has an air of "calm and inwardness" (Adichie,

*Americanah* 55). Obinze is in no struggle to prove his masculinity and even though he aligns himself with the traditional gender roles and hegemonic masculinity by associating himself with "... the clan of swaggering, carelessly cool males, the Big Guys" (66), as soon as he arrives in Lagos, he disassociates himself from their disobedience and loudness. He for one does not believe in breaking rules since disobedience and negative conduct does not form the crux of masculinity for him. However, placed in a society that forwards dominance as a trait of masculinity, Obinze also has his share of internalised macho-masculine attributes. Nigerian patriarchal society bestows upon men the duties of being dominant and intelligent and Obinze subscribes to these norms and is often left confounded by Ifemelu's outspokenness and actions. Even though he is not physically violent, Obinze exerts a certain authority over Ifemelu by discrediting her intelligence and power. He is accorded with a degree of irresponsibility in his relationship with Ifemelu by his own mother, who chooses to warn Ifemelu about the dangers of having unprotected sex. In Nigeria, the agency of the female body and sexuality lies with the man, but the consequences of such actions are solely the woman's responsibility.

Gender in Nigeria hence, accords Obinze lots of privileges with very less responsibilities to shoulder. And these privileges that mark Obinze's life in Nigeria is what he loses quickly, upon his migration to England. Right from his childhood, Obinze had wanted to go to his dream country America. And once he graduated, he applied for visa for his further studies and is consequently rejected, every time. His mother called it "... the terrorism fears... The Americans are now averse to foreign young men" (233). Thus, Obinze's dream of migrating to America is thwarted due

to his nationality and gender. He who occupies the privilege ladder in his home society is left disturbed by this process of Othering by a foreign nation on the ground of the very facts that accord him privileges in his home country-his gender and his nationality. Being a man in Nigeria entitles one many social privileges. But upon his arrival to the Western world, Obinze is immediately pushed into reformulating his ideas on what a man is. Masculinity attains a whole new meaning in the backdrop of migration. This intersection of migration and gender creates a whole new reality and identity for Obinze, which becomes difficult for him to comprehend. Back home, Obinze was just a man, with every privilege that patriarchy bestows upon him. In England, he for the first time, becomes, a black man and is treated as a lower-class person. This denigration on the basis of skin color also strips him off his patriarchal privileges and he is made to do trivial jobs. His 'choicelessness' renders him incapable of acculturation into his host country. He becomes invisible due to his status of being an illegal immigrant which further adds to his fears. The following three years of his stay in England provides him with an insight that he seldom imagined he would attain from his plush and comfortable life in Nigeria. Choicelessness makes him feel alienated in his host society. This choicelessness renders an excruciating lethargy which chokes Obinze. People flee from war or poverty but the need to escape from an abysmal lethargy is not understood by everyone. Hence, not everyone would understand why someone like Obinze who comes from a well-fed and satisfied background would want to look for life elsewhere. Not everyone can understand the dissatisfaction that has always conditioned him to look for life elsewhere.

Nigerian culture has praised Obinze for his gender, and the western culture makes him go through the process of Othering who according to Frantz Fanon "... has become an Other against whom all discriminations are justified precisely because of this assigned Otherness" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 116). Thus, him being a man does not afford Obinze any privileges in spite of the patriarchal set up of the western society, because, there masculinity becomes a privilege only in terms of its whiteness. Obinze realizes oppression in all its form, when he is made to do menial jobs like cleaning toilets, jobs that back home were considered women's jobs. He begins to understand Nigeria's gender hierarchy better through the process of Othering. This completely transforms his notions on gender and he starts questioning the suppression on Nigerian women. Thus, intersections of gender and migration, completely alters Obinze's perceptions of his own gender. Instead of considering oneself as privileged because one is born a man, Obinze, because of his three-year sojourn in a racist western country, begins to question his patriarchal privileges. He begins to question the way patriarchy is treating women. Observing his cousin's interactions with her husband, Obinze is engrossed in wondering if women innately develop this submissive attitude and wonders on how men could expect a vibrant woman to give up her everything to serve them.

Migration plunges Obinze in to a world of new perceptions of his own self. He is striped off his patriarchal privileges and he is dehumanized further by a society which accords value to human beings as per their skin colour. Thus, when he is caught by the immigration authority, he feels devoid of his social power and he

realizes that if at all he had any social power in Nigeria, it was all because of his gender.

Obinze being stripped of his humanity and devoid of his privileges, begins to understand what the women of his country go through simply because of their gender. Thus, he agrees to being 'removed' from his host country, when he is caught by the immigration authorities for being an illegal immigrant in their soil, "“Removed.” That word made Obinze feel inanimate. A thing to be removed. A thing without breath and mind. A thing” (Adichie, *Americanah* 279).

Deported back to Nigeria, Obinze starts off by taking a job with a corrupt businessman. Eventually, he becomes successful while “still reeling from what had happened to him in England, still insulated in layers of his own self-pity” (28). Climbing the social ladder by making a fortune, Obinze is constantly checked by his migratory experiences to not relapse back into his old ways of masculine privilege. His experiences of racism in England equip him to recognize his gender privileges and he is always attuned to women being subjected to patriarchal domination. There are instances like those of his house girl Marie, who is admonished by his wife Kosi for discovering condoms in the former's bag. Kosi shames Marie while she attempts to explain how “In my previous job, my madam's husband was always forcing me” (34). Kosi continues to insult her while Obinze could see the plight of Marie, a lower-class citizen, devoid of power and exploited by privileged man with money and social power. Obinze defends Marie in front of Kosi which further accentuates Kosi's insecurities about him, her husband. This silences Obinze for he understands why Kosi, his wife is being insecure about him. This is what a patriarchal society,



like that of Lagos can do to a woman. Women are infused with paranoia about maids and secretaries, because women are made to feel dispensable by patriarchy. Obinze recognises the effects of patriarchy in his own wife; her submissiveness, her insecurities and paranoia all disturbs him. In spite of being content in his marriage, Obinze wishes often that his wife would confront him or for once disagree with him by voicing out her opinion. But Kosi adheres to the traditional role-play of femininity and remains subdued unlike Ifemelu, who had often challenged Obinze in the issues of gender and sexuality. So, in spite of being content in his marriage, Obinze longs to be around women who are not bound by patriarchal inhibitions; he longs for a partner who would be open and not submissive. He wishes that these binary oppositions of gender, prevalent in his society will melt away to give rise to women who are not inhibited by patriarchy.

Obinze's marriage to Kosi was fuelled by societal expectations; he needed a trophy wife to parade with all his newly acquired wealth. "He was also newly rich and newly disoriented; one week he was broke and squatting in his cousin's flat and the next he had millions of naira in his bank account. Kosi became a touchstone of realness" (459). She being well-versed in the rules of patriarchy had always at first intrigued Obinze, "Obinze had always been struck by how important it was to her to be wholesomely agreeable person, to have no sharp angles sticking out" (28). After his tryst with racism and consequent fall from privileges in England, he has gained a whole new insight into the nuances of Nigerian society and how it accords him much more just because of his gender. This new insight disturbs him post-migration, where he is quick to notice the submissiveness and side-lining women, just because

of their gender. He sympathises with his house help, for being at the receiving end of exploitation and violence from her previous employer. It is this same insight that prompts him to seek divorce from his love-less marriage. He finds it unfair that he is trapping his wife and himself into a lifetime of co-existence without love. And in his choosing to free himself and his wife, he is met with his wife's confusion and fear of being abandoned for another woman. But Obinze is all set to work out things for both Kosi and himself, centring on the best interests of their baby daughter Buchi.

*Americanah* thus, offers its readers with a fresh take on masculinity, one where the man negates all the privileges of being masculine and refuses to endorse it as a social achievement. Intersectionality of gender and migration has provided Obinze with an epiphany on how to perform his gender without imposing silence or without being domineering. Pre-migration he had basked in the light of his masculine privileges and post-migration, he has learnt lessons on the true meanings and implications of gender and race. Having been stripped off his humanity and being reduced to a mere 'thing' to be deported back, Obinze has undergone the experiences of Othering which makes him aware of the plight of women in his country. Thus, Obinze's concept of gender undergoes a radical change post-migration. He decides to not put on a false façade of masculinity, one which has no humanity in it.

## 2) Race & Geographic Location

Race and gender operate very closely in moulding an immigrant's identity. *Americanah* being predominantly a novel on immigrant encounters is rife with intersections of various manifestations of 'othering'. Othering is the process wherein

a set of individuals designate another set of individuals as Other or different, based on their perceived differences and understandings. This creates binary opposition and it becomes problematic when power structures come into play within these binary divisions. Race being a social construction, exists today as a category of difference in most Western countries. Humans have historically categorised themselves; typically, according to visible physical difference to stigmatise an individual or a group as Others (Fanon, *The Wretched*). It is into this world of Othering whites that Ifemelu and Obinze step into as immigrants.

Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream

liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. According to this understanding, our liberatory objective should be to empty such categories of any social significance. Yet implicit in certain strands of feminist and racial liberation movements, for example, is the view that the social power in delineating difference need not be the power of domination; it can instead be the source of political empowerment and social reconstruction. (Crenshaw, “Mapping”124)

Adichie renders a multi-layered representation of intersectionality of race and geographic location in *Americanah*. Ifemelu and Obinze are high/middle class Nigerians, who lose their social power upon immigration. Though Ifemelu’s narration form the core of the text, Obinze too as the auxiliary protagonist delivers the nuances of Nigerian male’s migratory experiences. Both Ifemelu and Obinze had

never experienced racial prejudice before their migration; it is upon their migration that they ‘become’ Black woman/man, in alien soil.

Intersectionality of race and geographic location in the novel is evident in Ifemelu’s migratory experiences in the United States of America and consequently her blogs on her racial experiences in the foreign land. Obinze’s experiences of subtle and overt racism along with his struggle to survive in a White job market ensembles intersectionality of race and migration. Auntie Uju’s migratory experience is also wrought with identity crisis best understood through intersectionality. Migration wreaks havoc with the self-perceptions of coloured children born in alien soil. Auntie Uju’s perceptions on gender and race, influences her son Dike’s growing up and pushes him into identity crisis with dire consequences.

### 2.1) Ifemelu

“For Black women as well as Black men, it is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others—for their use and to our detriment” (Lorde 45). America’s race constructs force immigrants to migrate through the process of being Othered because of their skin colour. Nigerian students, especially, fall prey to this Othering because of their lack of knowledge on how racism will affect their daily lives. Ifemelu, herself arrives at America, loaded with Obinze’s unrealistic visions about the nation; uninformed and unaware about the racial stratifications at play in this alien society.

When Ifemelu was home in Nigeria, she was totally enamoured by Obinze’s account of America. “She hungered to understand everything about America, to

wear a new, knowing skin right away: to support a team at the Super Bowl, understand what a twinkie was and what sports “lockouts” meant” (Adichie, *Americanah* 135). However, America inundates Ifemelu to racial stratification immediately upon her arrival.

Simon de Beauvoir in her phenomenal book *The Second Sex* comments on the racial segregation that is rampant in America, even today; as “One of the benefits that oppression secures for the oppressor is that the humblest among them feels *superior*: in the United States a ‘poor white’ from the South can console himself for not being a ‘dirty nigger’” (Beauvoir 13). From the moment Ginika picks up Ifemelu from the bus station, Ifemelu is provided with cultural cues by Ginika to navigate and assimilate effortlessly into their host culture.

Language and its political correctness is an American obsession that Ginika cautions Ifemelu about. Adichie explores the various cultural manifestations of language as an Othering tool, through Ifemelu’s migrant interactions in America. Ginika becomes a pivotal device in these interactions because it is, she who educates Ifemelu on how to amalgamate into this alien culture.

Ginika recounted anecdotes about her own early experiences in America, as though they were filled with subtle wisdom that Ifemelu would need. She narrated how she had to recount her Nigerian cultural difference many times, through an example of how she was ridiculed once at high school for using the word ‘boning’ because she was unaware of the American connotation of the word. The cultural cues of America are quite different from Nigeria. Ginika is also the victim of the American urge for political correctness which in effect robbed her of her native

privilege of being a half-caste. Being a half-caste had earned Ginika privileges in her home country, but in America, calling oneself a half-caste is a derogatory term, shunned for its racial connotations. So now she calls herself biracial, which is an acceptable term to American sensibility. Migration had hence twisted her status to that of being just an African immigrant, from that of a privileged half-caste back home. She warns Ifemelu of these twisted notions that American society breeds in its immigrants and yet Ginika also confirms that her lighter skin tone is going to make things easier for her in America than it will for Ifemelu. Her sense of wellbeing is questioned often, through the American notions of cultural chaos. And, Ginika warns Ifemelu of how the white American society can affect its coloured immigrants in very disturbing ways.

Ifemelu is informed on the connotations that Americans add to race through language. Half-caste becomes a term that has no cultural equivalent and hence, what was considered as privilege in Nigeria becomes a problem in America. Cultural connotations pertaining to the body also have various nuances that Ifemelu had to tread through carefully. Thus, a word like 'thin' attains positive connotations where as a word like 'fat' becomes an insult. There is collective cultural negation of racism in America that refuses to identify a person as per their skin colour or hair texture, in spite of being an overtly racist society. And when this baffles Ifemelu, Ginika sweeps it all under the proverbial carpet saying, "Because this is America. You're supposed to pretend that you don't notice certain things" (Adichie, *Americanah* 127).

Being of an impressionable age, Ifemelu is confused by the reactions that she received during her initial time in America. For example, Ifemelu is left aghast by her college coordinator, Cristina Tomas's assumptions about her. Tomas's hasty reactions towards Ifemelu based on her skin colour and her accent leaves Ifemelu, totally bewildered. Cristina was talking to her in that peculiar accent because of her foreign accent. This realisation embarrassed Ifemelu and she felt like a child, in front of Cristina. Language and accent are used to propagate overt racism and strip immigrants off their agency. Ifemelu has spoken English all her life and yet upon Cristina Tomas's treatment of her due to her skin and accent, "Ifemelu shrank. In that strained, still second when her eyes met Cristina Tomas's before she took the forms, she shrank. She shrank like a dried leaf" (133).

Political correctness is in America, another way of stripping immigrants off their cultural agency. In America, unlike Nigeria, race takes over class, hence, Ginika's political correctness of using the term 'biracial' over 'half-caste' is in a way of depriving her of her cultural agency. In spite of Ginika's own culture allowing her to identify herself as a half-caste, her classmates in America, denies her this privilege, because there are words that can be said and over racist words are never mentioned. Through such linguistic censorship, Ifemelu, feels that America is stripping the Blacks off their power of articulation. For instance, the screening of the movie *Roots* by her History professor Moore, stirs up quite a discussion on the bleeping out of the word 'nigger' for suitable public broadcasting. A non- American student responds to the erasure of the word as, "It makes no sense to me" ... "I mean, 'nigger' is a word that exists. People use it. It is a part of America. It has

caused a lot of pain to people and I think it is insulting to bleep it out” (137). This political correctness stifles the migrant communities from allowing them to express their identities or speak out. This blatant hypocrisy of the American society is revealed by Adichie, through the process of delineating terms of oppression/racism as taboos. Thus, political correctness becomes a tool for Othering of the migrant communities, especially the African Americans and the Black Americans.

There is also the issue of internal racism that exists between the different nationals of African immigrants and the Black Americans. In fact, Ifemelu receives her first taste of racism from her aunty’s neighbour Jane, who is an immigrant from Grenada. Jane talks to Ifemelu about parenting in America, “If you are not careful in this country, your children become what you don’t know. It’s different back home because you can control them. Here, no...Otherwise she will start behaving like these black Americans” (112). In college Ifemelu joined the ASA, the African Students Association. “Nigerians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Ghanaians, South Africans, Tanzanians, Zimbabweans, one Congolese and one Guinean sat around eating, talking, fuelling spirits, and their different accents formed meshes of solacing sounds” (139). America’s refusal to recognise differences is firm and abutting from a collective denial of the existence of racism and oppression in the society. Acknowledging dissimilarities meant a self- analysis and embracing of one’s own hypocrisy that the American society collectively is unwilling to do.

Ifemelu goes on a reading spree in order to better understand and assimilate into the American culture. As per her boyfriend Obinze’s advice, she starts reading American novels, histories and biographies. “And as she read, America’s



mythologies began to take on meaning. America's tribalism-race, ideology and region-became clear. And she was consoled by her new knowledge" (136). Thus, Ifemelu sets about, unknowingly, to alter her racial identity through the process of reading. Adichie mentions James Baldwin and his work *The Fire Next Time*, as a book suggested by Obinze to Ifemelu. James Baldwin counters racial questions through his book, whilst Ifemelu is encountering those same issues half a century after in America. As observed by bell hooks in her phenomenal work, *Black Looks Race and Representation*, "In *the Fire Next Time*, he reminded readers that "there has been almost no language" to describe the "horrors" of black life"" (2). Reading helps her to gain new insights into the racial phenomenon at play in the American society, and she sets about to navigate through those nuances as an African immigrant. She experiences universality in her racial encounters as she bonds with other African students through ASA. At ASA students share their racial experiences in America, by aping how Americans talk to them. The stereotypical questions about AIDS and money and laughed off by the students and in their mocking and laughing, they felt safe to be with each other.

These collective conversations reveal the stereotypes of racism propagated against African students and in this collectiveness of experiences Ifemelu finds solace and herself. Thus, she chooses to retain her Nigerian accent and refuses to straighten her kinky hair, anymore.

"Straightening Our Hair" is a memoir by bell hooks wherein she discusses the various implications and manifestations of hair straightening. According to hooks, "This need to look as much like white people as possible, to look safe, is

related to a desire to succeed in the white world” (hooks, “Straightening Our Hair” 2). Straightened hair is linked historically and currently to a system of racial domination that impresses upon black people and especially black women, that they are not acceptable as the whites, that they are not beautiful. The bodies of Black men and women have been devalued, burdened and wounded in alienated labour and hence celebrating the same bodies is a liberatory struggle for the Blacks. Alice Walker talks about this liberation in her speech titled “Oppressed Hair” at Spelman College Atlanta USA in 1987. Letting the hair be, according to Walker is an act of ‘breaking the ceiling open’. “Straightening does to our racial identity what the chemicals in relaxers or the heat of pressing combs does to our hair – makes us seem whiter” (Morrison 1). Hair exists in the novel as a perfect metaphor for race in America. The complexities of race and hair are seldom understood for what they are, in spite of both being common. America discourages every ethnic association that one bears to one’s native land, as a part of the assimilation process.

Ifemelu, consequently starts blogging, as a means to talk to her past self. Through blogging she strives to teach what really America is all about to a naïve first time African immigrant that she herself was. “Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” is an anonymous blog started by Ifemelu and through blogging the fiction takes interludes of social commentary, in *Americanah*. Through Ifemelu’s blog, Adichie’s intention behind the creation of this novel becomes evident. Adichie intended *Americanah* to be a social commentary on race, gender and migration; those experiences that Adichie herself had, as an immigrant in

America. Thus, there is a certain professionalism that is imbued into Ifemelu's blogs, wherein she is seen using theoretical jargons to describe the influx of racism into her surroundings. The blogs are thus social commentaries on American society and by writing from one's own immigrant perspective; Ifemelu is also rendering her voice to immigrants of other ethnicities. She describes how Hispanic is almost clubbed with American blacks in poverty, even though Hispanic slightly tops American blacks in the American racial ladder. Hispanic can be the brown-skinned woman from Peru or the indigenous people from Mexico. It could even mean the light skinned biracial looking people from Dominican Republic or people from Puerto Rico or Argentina. The ambiguity of the Hispanic race is elaborately discussed on how the only essential marker of being a Hispanic is being able to speak in Spanish even though Hispanic has nothing to do with Spain.

Through such distant renderings on race and gender, Ifemelu participates in such social discourses providing her reader with a critical perspective on the American society. "There's a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top, specifically White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, otherwise known as WASP, and American Black is always on the bottom, and what's in the middle depends on time and place" (Adichie, *Americanah* 184). Ifemelu from her own time in America has realised that if one is not a white privileged individual in America, then the ladder of social hierarchy will tilt towards disadvantage. Ifemelu's tenure of mild elevation in the social ladder in America, is during her time of employment and consequent personal interaction with Kimberly and Curt, two Caucasian whites occupying the zenith of privilege in American social hierarchy. Ifemelu was at first intrigued by

Kimberly's perceptions on the under-privileged; "... for Kimberly, the poor were blameless. Poverty was a gleaming thing; she could not conceive of poor people being vicious or nasty, because their poverty had canonized them, and the greatest saints were the foreign poor" (149). As Kimberly's baby-sitter, Ifemelu is at once struck by the family's need for being politically correct. Kimberly's constant use of 'beautiful' for black women sounds false and hypocritical. By this exaggeration on being politically correct, Kimberly is engaging in subtle racism without being aware of it herself. Kimberly is a classic example of the danger of all the overt awareness of racism because of which one becomes reluctant to acknowledge differences; since it carries the risk of being labelled as a racist. Consequently, Ifemelu starts a relationship with Curt. Even though Ifemelu falls in love with him, she is struck by the number of times that she has had to explain herself to Curt and to her other boyfriends in America. Ifemelu understands that for Curt, she is a prized exotic possession, which is always evident through their love-plays. Ifemelu is exoticised by Curt's family, for her skin colour. Curt's mother often expresses her pride in all the 'exotic' girlfriends that Curt has had. Ifemelu is merely one in the long line of Curt's exotic female friends. But, through Curt and his family, Ifemelu gets a glimpse of the life of a WASP and how for them, the rest are mere minorities or others existing as accessories to fulfil their needs.

Ifemelu goes through the whole spin of trying to assimilate into this privileged white world. Straightening her hair becomes a necessity for her, to gain acceptance and livelihood. Though Curt helps Ifemelu in getting employment, even

then, she straightens her hair so as to look the part. Consequently, it is through her hair that she gets back to her true self.

Ifemelu understands subtle and overt racism as undercurrents existing in the American society and she is right on spot in calling out the hypocrisy and absurdity that is around her. Hence when in a dinner party, an Afro sporting Haitian singer declares how she has never had to encounter racism in her three-year-old relationship with a white man, Ifemelu confronts her by calling it a lie. Ifemelu speaks out on the problems of falling in love with a white person in America, because it is only after she came to America that she became black. Race, inadvertently creeps into such relationships the moment they step out into the world. One can only wish that love is above race but in reality, in America, race matters.

Race exists in the crevices of everyday living for a coloured immigrant in America. It is in intersections that race exerts its influence and alters one's identity. For an immigrant woman, race couples with gender to form the backdrop of her migratory experiences. Ifemelu's immigrant discourses are wrought with overlapping systems of oppression of gender, race and class. After Curt, she enters into a relationship with Blain, an African American. "She felt confident about Blaine: he was a descendent of the black men and women who had been in America for hundreds of years" (176). There is a sense of belongingness that her relationship with Curt was bereft of. Even though their breakup was on the point of Curt being unfaithful, Ifemelu has deeper reasons that are rooted in her being an immigrant African woman, caught in a white patriarchal capitalist society. The fact that her own people couldn't accept her relationship with a white man disturbed her. She is

subjected to internal racism, by a black man, when he sees her with Curt and asks her why she thinks that white man likes her when she looks like a jungle. This startles Ifemelu to the core and makes her realise that a relationship with a white man in the American society, is always going to be turbulent with racial and gendered connotations.

Beauty thus becomes a Eurocentric, white racist patriarchal ideology devised to burden the immigrant non-white women. The fact that even the natives subscribe to this ideology of beauty, makes it another intersection in the multiple vectors of oppression. Beauty becomes a racist ideology which burdens the African and other non-white female immigrants to conform and subsequently it plunges these women into a deep labyrinth of self-hate and identity crisis. As blogged by Ifemelu, on how Americans exoticise themselves through their association with some Indian, which would mean they are not dark as in black. By dark the white people mean Greek or Italian which makes them exotic. White men like exotic women, by which they mean light skinned women. But at no point does black become exotic

Furthermore, this crisis is worsened by the immigrants' refusal to bond with other immigrants. Inter racism is rampant, as revealed by Aunt Uju's neighbour Jane. Adichie however provides platforms for negotiating and resolving these conflicts and there by overcome the psychological and physiological pressures of assimilating into a dominant culture. This process is initiated through the questioning of Eurocentric ideals dominant in the American society.

Platforms like the African Students' Union serve as a reference point to many misconceived Europeans and Americans. When students from different countries of the African continent like, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Congo, and Nigeria and so on, come together with different cultures and world views and accents, Adichie is opening up platforms for educating and redeeming of both immigrants and natives. This recognising of differences becomes a handy tool in the fight against racism. Bonding with fellow Africans, keeps Ifemelu rooted in her perspective of herself, unmarred by the racist dominant ideals at play in the American society.

Ifemelu's racial experience at the backdrop of her migration is intersectional in essence. As an immigrant Nigerian woman in a Eurocentric American society, Ifemelu is challenged by multiple systems of oppression. "Sometimes in America, Race Is Class" (166), and this furthers the list of intersecting vestiges of oppression for immigrants. Race, class and gender contribute in the Othering of immigrants in America and Ifemelu finds herself displaced by these multiple structures of dominance.

Ifemelu's decision to grow her natural hair and to not relax her hair anymore is also her decision to reclaim her agency from white patriarchal racist society. By being a part of HappilyKinkyNappy.Com, Ifemelu inadvertently becomes a part of the collective movement of immigrant women striving to reclaim their identity. Through her kinky hair, Ifemelu starts loving her natural self and abandons the pressures of the Eurocentric society to amalgamate and acculturise.

Ifemelu adopts her full name 'Ifemelunamma' which in Igbo means 'beautifully made'. She imbibes the whole essence of her name, which helps Ifemelu, to reject her internalised feelings of inadequacy, which migration had bestowed upon her. Ifemelu, consequently, adopts her wholesomeness and rootedness and decides to return to her home.

## 2.2) Aunty Uju & Dike

Later, she said, "I have to take my braids out for my interviews and relax my hair... If you have braids, they will think you are unprofessional."

"So, there are no doctors with braided hair in America?" Ifemelu asked.

"I have told you what they told me. You are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed." (119)

Aunty Uju has never questioned authority in her life, in spite of being a smart educated woman. Thus, while it was patriarchy that ruled over Uju in her home country, upon migration, she struggles hard to meet the demands of the white capitalist, patriarchal society. It is a burden that takes a toll on her often, for, with a child to look after, Uju has to work three jobs and attend medical school to keep their lives afloat. However, instead of trying to be independent and self-sufficient, an opportunity that migration chances upon her, Uju, is desperate for a man to take over her life and run it, for her. Aunty Uju encounters racism in her everyday life as an immigrant. Like Ifemelu, she undergoes the pangs of being black in a white dominated job market. In spite of having the right credentials, Uju, is often caught apologising and feeling inadequate in front of her white patients. She is ruthlessly



insulted by quite a few patients, who refuse to believe that she is qualified to treat them. Thus, assimilation becomes a strenuous task for Aunty Uju, and she keeps trying to please every white folk that she encounters. ““Dike, put it back,” Aunty Uju said, with the nasal, sliding accent she put on when she spoke to white Americans, in the presence of white Americans, in the hearing of white Americans. *Pooh-reet-back*. And with the accent emerged a new persona, apologetic and self-abasing” (108).

Migration has made Aunty Uju, meeker. As reasoned by Obinze to Ifemelu, Aunty Uju’s gestures in the presence of whites is “... the exaggerated gratitude that came with immigrant insecurity” (119). This immigrant insecurity is profound in Aunty Uju. She is unable to grasp the cultural cues effortlessly, like Ginika. “Sometimes in America, Race Is Class” (166), and Aunty Uju finds herself marginalised on accounts of her race, class, gender and often times age also and all of her immigrant experiences can be concluded as occurring because of these intersecting systems of oppression.

Parenting in immigrant communities in America, is often wrought with conflict. The children born and brought up in America often suffer from identity crisis of the worst kind, since assimilation becomes turbulent for them. They no longer associate themselves with the cultural heritage of their true ethnicity nor are fully accepted by their host country. Hence, they dangle on the cusp of such alien societies, often forming turbulent associations with their surroundings. Dike, represents an uprooted generation of Nigerians, who are lost amidst the intersections of many oppressive systems at play in the society. Aunty Uju, often struggles with

her son Dike, who moved to America from Nigeria, as a toddler. He is often caught in the crux of his mother's survival angst and in spite of his mother's best efforts to raise him as an African; he identifies himself with the American culture and consequently calls himself an African American, much to his mother's disappointment. Aunty Uju, moves with Dike to Massachusetts, after her marriage to Bartholomew, an immigrant from Nigeria, who is an accountant in Massachusetts. Ifemelu senses a tension in Dike, after his shift to Massachusetts. Being otherwise a jovial person, Dike "...was no longer transparent. Something had filmed itself around him, making it difficult to read, his head perennially bent towards his Game Boy, looking up once in a while to view his mother, and the world, with a weariness too heavy for a child" (171). At school Dike is the only black kid, thus making him vulnerable to accusations for any trouble that is stirring around. This takes a toll on him and he recedes into himself more and more. His mother is totally unaware of what is going on in his life and she often admonishes him in Igbo, like "I will send you back to Nigeria if you do that again!", much to Ifemelu's fear that, for Dike, Igbo would become "...the language of strife" (171). Dike becomes an example for the classic case of assimilation anxieties, where in his non-belongingness is often transcribed into violence and aggressiveness. He is accused by his teacher of being aggressive and is asked to join special education where he will be taught alone by teachers who teach children with psychological problems. Aunty Uju is enraged at this accusation and she gets angry at his teacher. The school authorities even while claiming to treat Dike like the rest of the students, is often seen floundering on his skin colour which makes him stand apart from the rest of his school mates. Uju,

drives in his difference from the rest of his school mates and confronts the principal on how they can claim that they do not treat Dike different from other children.

As a kid, Dike is struggling to place himself in a society that he has been a part of since he was a baby. His skin colour, often becomes problematic for him, in his daily interactions with his school mates, who are all predominantly white. Consequently, he tries to commit suicide, which is mentioned in an off-handed manner by Auntie Uju to Ifemelu, without exactly wording out his reason for such an attempt. Auntie Uju, understands the source of aggression amidst immigrants like her and Dike. “These people, they make you become aggressive just to hold your dignity” (217). She is almost, always left alone to confront her issues with her son’s conflicts. Her, new husband Bartholomew, seldom notices her plight. Bartholomew, who is a Nigerian immigrant himself, has taken into the American way of life quiet easily. He is quick to judge his home country and his people much to the annoyance of Ifemelu. He has bleached his skin to merge in and plays the part of a sophisticated American quiet easily.

Auntie Uju’s migrant experiences are rife with conflicts of intersecting systems of oppression of race, gender and class. In spite of being qualified, she struggles to survive in the white dominant job market of America. She is often caught in a dilemma of purpose, as to why she even migrated to America. She often is caught questioning herself on why did she ever migrate to America. Even though she is professionally qualified, the people in her hospital refused to acknowledge her credentials and is often found tormenting her on her accent and her skin colour. She is racially abused by her white patients who outrightly refused her services because

of her race. Uju is found complaining about her plight and seen blaming Buhari and Abacha and such Nigerian politicians for having destroyed Nigeria and for making her flee from her home country.

Thus, Auntie Uju's race and gender makes her a prey to the white racist capitalist patriarchal society. She tries to please out of it and even subscribes to her homeland's tradition of submissive gender role plays, by marrying an immigrant like herself. However, her hopes of shoring up a secure life are thwarted by the very same gender norms that she stuck to, faithfully. Auntie Uju, Dike and Bartholomew are immigrants who experience different forms of oppression in America. These intersections of oppressing systems render multidimensionality to their experiences, as immigrants.

### 2.3) Obinze

Obinze has always harboured a rosy picture of the western society and though his racial recounts are not as prominent as that of Ifemelu, his experiences of strife in the western world does provide ample scope for intersectional analysis. Being an illegal immigrant makes Obinze go through the worst kind of racist experiences while trying to survive in the western world. Had he been a legal immigrant, his experiences would have been better in the white job market.

Post 9/11, the world became much more guarded and coloured immigrants have had to bear the brunt of the fear and suspicions of the white western world. Consequently, Obinze's attempt at securing a U S visa is rejected every time, simply because of his race and his gender. As reasoned by Elizebeth Sweet "A new, post

9/11 racism has emerged, which encompasses, race, gender, and perceived immigration status” (Sweet 255). This explains why Obinze is declared not qualified by the immigration authority, without even opening his papers. His mother reasons it out as, “‘It’s the terrorism fears . . . The Americans are now averse to foreign young men’” (Adichie, *Americanah* 233). Gender accords certain privileges to Obinze in Nigeria that are denied for Ifemelu, hence, rejection of his visa proposal disappoints Obinze. Later on, he travels with his mother as her assistant to England, and merely stays back undocumented.

Obinze’s immigrant experiences in London prove to be revelatory to him. Being part of the privileged group, in every aspect, in his home country; Obinze is suddenly pushed to the periphery of existence as part of the illegal work force. Through this Othering process that he is subjected to undergo, Obinze realised the plight of those underprivileged. He understands how gender works in his home society and how it puts women in a position of disadvantage, while according men like him, social power and privileges in Nigeria.

Racism operates overtly and subtly in the western society. Subtle racism exists through micro aggressions that immigrants are forced to put up with, especially those like Obinze who are undocumented. Obinze is marred by this invisibility that cloaks him from all the privileges of being an individual. “His eyes would follow them, with a lost longing, and he would think: *You can work, you are legal, you are visible, and you don’t even know how fortunate you are*” (227). Subtle racism is hard to pin point, but nevertheless, it exists everywhere in the western society.

Obinze starts out by cleaning toilets "... in an estate agent's office, on the second floor of a London building" (237). Back home he had joked with others about people who leave Nigeria for the west to clean toilets. In Nigeria, jobs like these were reserved for women. Men, seldom cleaned anything, a privilege accorded to them by patriarchy. Obinze, upon migration loses all his gender privileges and further suffers from racial disadvantages, which estranges him from his own fellow African immigrants. The Ghanaian woman, cleaning ladies' toilets, refuses to acknowledge him beyond the cursory 'good mornings'. In her, Obinze recognizes something of himself, a very comfortable life back home all abandoned for the western dream. However, Obinze catches her being friendly with the white woman who cleans offices. He realises how the woman is ashamed to be his friend while she is ok with being friendly to the Polish woman. Their familiarity with each other, on account of him being a Nigerian and her a Ghanaian, makes them understand each other in ways she didn't want to be associated with. She felt safe to be talking to the Polish woman because with her, she can choose to be whoever she wants.

Obinze, thus is stripped of every advantage that he enjoyed back home. In London, a fellow African woman considers him not worthy of interaction, delineating him to a much inferior position. Neither his gender, nor his class, accords him any saving grace, post migration.

Obinze witnesses the effects of immigration and consequent process of amalgamation through his interactions with the family of his cousin Nicholas and his wife Ojiugo and their two children. Obinze notices that Nicholas keeps everything Nigerian away from his kids, even their native language Igbo. "He spoke to them

only in English, careful English, as though he thought that the Igbo he shared with their mother would infect them, perhaps make them lose their precious British accents” (239). It is from this household that Obinze started to taste the bitter truths of gender privileges that he himself had enjoyed back home. In spite of the efforts of keeping the household Nigeria –free in many aspects, Nicholas and Ojiugo was by all means a traditional Nigerian husband and wife. She catered to all his needs while he played the man of the house. Obinze over-hears Ojiugo’s African friends talking about men ‘willing’ to marry them and adopt their child, as if it was a charity work. Immigration tends to put tougher cuffs on women with children. They are exploited by many simultaneous systems of oppression. Internalized racism furthers these systems of oppression as well. The immigrants lack a general consensus amidst themselves that is further exploited by the white capitalist society.

The existence of subtle racism is fired by the white society’s denial in accepting the existence of racism, even when they indulge in it. Political correctness is a masked version of subtle racism, performed by the whites, in the name of acceptance, convenience and so on. Obinze takes up a job of cleaning detergent – packing warehouse and a Brazilian man who cleans the adjacent building introduces himself as Dee, but then he pauses and lets Obinze know that his real name is Duerdinhito, and he has been calling himself ‘Dee’ because the English cannot pronounce his name correctly. This denial of identity to that Brazilian immigrant, in the name of convenience is an instance of subtle racism, where in, the person is denied autonomy of any kind. Obinze is eventually transferred as a temporary replacement with a company that delivers kitchens, wherein he has to sit beside the

white drivers and is constantly subjected to their racial slurs and dislike. Obinze is subjected to bully racism by these white drivers. Obinze is thus stripped of all his social privileges, and he becomes the black man caught in the intersection of race and his location. This imbues Obinze's lived experiences in the western world with profound meaning and consequences.

Obinze's Nigerian friend Emenike, who is married to a British lawyer, and thus has a British passport is asked about the difference in attitude towards race in America and England, to which he answers, "It seems to me that in America blacks and whites work together but don't play together and here blacks and whites play together but don't work together" (274). In England, class surpasses race in its discriminatory logic. Whilst in America, race is always the primary tool of oppression. This makes Obinze's situation as an undocumented labourer wrought with struggle because of the intersecting systems of class and race that simultaneously keeps him down in the social ladder of hierarchy. "I think class in this country is in the air that people breathe. Everyone knows their place" (275). Obinze realises how people seldom fight against this class equation that is rampant in the English society. In America, class is secondary whereas race is a primary factor and in England, class is followed by race. The cultural codes of difference between American society and English society are grasped by Obinze through race and class.

Obinze thus clearly understood the nuances of how race worked in the western society. While in America, race exists as race, in England race is superseded by class. This explains Obinze's migratory experiences which involves multifaceted



implications of his class as an illegal immigrant and his race as a black man. The inhumanity in being treated as a ‘thing’ to be deported back, upon being caught by the immigration authorities, serves as the final blow to Obinze. He is stripped of his humanity as well in the process.

Obinze who is deported back to Nigeria, comes home with an altered perception on gender and race. His fascination for America or the west in general has died a very slow and painful death. His migratory revelations work as a sensor in detecting and eliminating all undue privileges that comes his way. He is more sensitive to the trials and tribulations of women around him. Migration was a traumatic experience for Obinze, one that stripped him of his identity and finally humanity, itself.

*Americanah* in short is a novel which resonates with a lot of people in today’s troubled times of rampant immigrant insecurities. Intersecting systems of race, class and gender, work together or simultaneously to displace immigrants in a white patriarchal society. Leslie McCall’s intracategorical analysis thus provides us with a deeper insight into a society that is racially charged and where in assimilation becomes a humongous task of survival, as is evident from Ifemelu’s and Obinze’s migratory experience. Both the native and migrant spaces are wrought with multidimensional challenges that contribute to transcalarity. Adichie, in making her protagonists willingly return home also subsumes her plot with hope; hope for the home country and hope for the transnational citizen as well. Having discussed the first methodology, the chapter moves on to discuss intersectionality as an analytical tool.

## **Intersectionality as a Core Analytical Tool**

The core idea of intersectionality is to identify the major sources of inequality like race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, religion, and ethnicity and so on. These are seldom mutually exclusive structures, in fact, these are layered upon one another and they also work together through many combinations, at any given time. “Using intersectionality as an analytic tool can foster a better understanding of growing global inequality” (Collins and Bilge 27). The analytical tool of intersectionality devised by Patricia Collins and Sirma Bilge puts forth six core yardsticks of evaluation. These six core yardsticks combine in multiple ways to reveal the deeper layers of meanings at play behind discriminatory practices. “... using intersectionality as an analytic tool highlights the significance of social institutions in shaping and solving social problems” (27). However, all of the six core yardsticks need not be necessarily applied to study the underlying flux in identity and experience.

### 1) Social Inequality

*Americanah* dissects modern culture and lays bare the interlocked systems of racism and sexism that operate within its power structure. “Intersectionality adds additional layers of complexity to understandings of social inequality, recognising that social inequality is rarely caused by a single factor” (38). Adichie through her character Ifemelu, negotiates the finer nuances of inequality that women and in particular, coloured women are faced with. Gender and race operate simultaneously to create experiences wrought with discriminations and exploitations. There is transcalarity at play, whilst experiences attain deeper and more specific

connotations. Both Nigeria and America, offer a kaleidoscopic display of intersectionality. In Nigeria, gender becomes the major harbinger of misfortunes; in America, gender gets racialised to suite the capitalist white patriarchal society. Class also intersects at various junctures in both Nigeria and America to enhance the gender/race experiences. *Americanah* is a novel on the trials faced by women in patriarchal native societies and by coloured immigrant women in white capitalist patriarchal societies. Through Ifemelu and Auntie Uju, Adichie brings to the table, the interlocked systems at play that mutates experiences into complex algorithms of disadvantages.

Social inequality operates at multiple levels, for both the female and male characters. The shift in location, further accentuates the systems of discriminations. While at home, patriarchy governed Ifemelu's and Obinze's self-perceptions; upon migration, gender becomes a disadvantage for both as body and skin colour become the determining factors of privilege. Upon migration, Ifemelu becomes an African - American woman and Obinze becomes a Black man, stripped of his patriarchal privileges. Obinze faces exploitation and fears of deportation as an illegal-coloured immigrant in Britain. Ifemelu undergoes sexual exploitation and objectification because of her financial situation as a coloured immigrant in America. Gender performance becomes highly complicated in western society, as it is more intense and highly connoted with race and class. Through Auntie Uju, Adichie portrays the predicaments of coloured women, who find it hard to get a job in spite of their educational qualifications. Uju's experiences are wrought with intersections of race, gender, class and age. Unlike Ginika, Uju does not have the advantage of youth by

her side; and hence, she finds it hard to cop up with in a society that is constantly demanding. Aunty Uju also rubs off most of her insecurities and fears on to her son Dike, who faces the dilemma of belongingness. In spite of having been born in America, Dike is faced with the predicaments of belongingness. He is not accepted into the predominantly white capitalist American society and he finds no affiliations towards Nigeria either. Caught in a limbo between these two cultures, Dike finds it difficult to adhere to the race stereotypes to which he is constantly referred to by the white American society. Thus, social inequality is manifested into the very fabric of the novel, best revealed through an intersectional analysis. It is only through intersectionality that the minute details of discriminations are revealed, in the hopes of seeking social justice.

## 2) Power

Intersectional framework operates through a network of mutually interlocked systems of power that work simultaneously to create experiences and generate identities. These overlapping structures of power constitute systems like race, class, gender, age, ability, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion and so on. No system exists in isolation but in combinations with other systems of power. Hence, race mixes up with gender and class to generate hierarchies within a social structure. *Americanah* is an amalgamation of such power structures, where in identities undergo transition, through experiences of discriminations.

Within the native Nigerian culture, power rests with patriarchy and gets manifested through religion, family, education, beauty norms and such social constructions. Within the white American and British society, power rests with the

white capitalist patriarchy. Hence, both the native and the migrant nations, display interlocking power structures, within which the characters, both men and women, play out their respective roles. Their identities are formulated and reformulated according to the whims of the power dynamics. Patriarchy generates stereotypes and racist patriarchy generates identities that work to the disadvantage of coloured men and women in a white society. Ifemelu, is almost always a pawn in the hands of patriarchal power structures, visible through her self-perceptions and her relationships. Not for once does she own up to herself during the start of her relationships. The men with whom Ifemelu gets involved with, own her body and her sexuality. Thus Obinze, Curt and Blaine all contribute to the making of Ifemelu's identity and her sexual being. She is also a victim of the racist and sexist power plays that are constant in American society. Another female character Auntie Uju also remains caught in the labyrinths of patriarchal power structures which render her incapable of being independent. Her already bruised self is fractured by the racist sexist patriarchy of America. Ginika, however obliges to the power structures at play in both nations, without ever questioning them. She assimilates into both cultures with ease and never once falters. Obinze experiences gender privileges in Nigeria. But those are completely stripped away, when he becomes an illegal immigrant in Britain. His gender accords him no comforts and eventually the British racist society, also strips away his humanity by deporting him back to Nigeria. "Acting in complicity with the status quo, many black people have passively absorbed narrow representations of black masculinity, perpetuated stereotypes, myths, and offered one-dimensional accounts. Contemporary black men have been shaped by these representations" (hooks, *Black Looks* 89). Thus, Obinze

succumbs to the western notions of Black masculinity and comes back to Nigeria with a renewed sense of self.

Both Ifemelu and Obinze, find it difficult to assimilate into the power structures of their migrant nations. Thus, power relations determine the structures of discriminations at play. “Intersectionality as an analytic tool examines how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing” (Collins and Bilge 19). These power relations determine the social situations of people. “Using intersectionality as an analytic lens highlights the multiple nature of individual identities and how varying combinations of class, gender, race, sexuality, and citizenship categories differentially position each individual” (20). Thus, intersectionality understands power as a multidimensional phenomenon that operates in various combinations.

### 3) Relationality

“The theme of relationality that reappears in various forms across intersectional scholarship and practice has had an important impact on both” (210). Relationality focuses on the interconnectedness of experiences. The shift in perception from analysing the differences between races or genders to the interconnections between these pockets of power is what describes relationality. Adichie’s *Americanah* delves into the transnational experiences of the characters through the geographical shifts in location. Through Ifemelu, Auntie Uju and Obinze, Adichie creates characters that speak on migrant traumas and patriarchal power plays. *Americanah* thus transcends boundaries and merges experiences and identities and attains a transnational status. The characters’ relationality is best analysed through their intersectional experiences with power hierarchies.

Ifemelu and Aunty Uju are characters etched in relationality, as in their experience as women caught within the dominant power structures, resonate with the experiences of women, worldwide. Obinze, in being a privileged man in his native country and his experience of becoming a black man in Britain, reveals the racialised gender predicaments of coloured male immigrants in western society. *Americanah* thus operates at multiple levels and has a global appeal due to the relationality of its characters and their circumstances.

#### 4) Social Context

Contexts are mandatory in the historical production of perception. Experiences contextualised generate knowledge that paves way for intersectional analysis. Social contexts can have multiple meanings. All of these are rooted in the necessity to analyse the functioning of social inequality, power and relationality in a social context. *Americanah* is contextualised in both native patriarchal Nigerian society and capitalist patriarchal racist western society. Both provide the impetus to understand the mechanisms of power that generate social inequality. Ifemelu's experiences with native patriarchal ideologies and western capitalist racist patriarchal ideologies, is rooted in the context of many intersecting systems of power hierarchies. Obinze, also is caught in the labyrinth of power hierarchies wherein he loses all his gender privileges. Becoming Black in western society is contextualised in a transtemporal context of racial violence. America is still teeming with racial violence and *Americanah* becomes all the more relevant in this context. Ifemelu, Aunty Uju and Obinze reach out across pages to reveal a system that is still

as violent and socially discriminating. It is in the fixation of social context that any hope for seeking social justice, thrives.

The purpose of intersectionality is to reveal the web of social inequality that is rooted in many overlapping and simultaneous systems of power play. The revelation of these finer fabric of social disabilities through methodologies like those devised by Collins and Bilge or Leslie McCall, ensures the process of justice is set into motion. *Americanah*, is hence a novel on the racial inequalities that have always plagued Blacks in western societies.

Intersectionality successfully captures their predicaments and expounds the finer nuances of power play that determines such hierarchies. Collins and Bilge's intersectional analytic tool excavates the possibilities of different categories that determine the identity politics in different social contexts. Leslie McCall's intracategorical complexity analyses and questions the different categories like race, gender and class, that is at play. America is forevermore turbulent with racism and institutional violence against Blacks and other coloured communities. At this juncture, *Americanah* attains a historical relevance for its transcalarity and transtemporality.



### Chapter III

#### **Second Generation: Intersectionality in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen***

Intersectionality has become a predominant tool in feminist theory, to analyse the multidimensional oppressions existing in women's lives. The antiracist feminist critique, observes that the single axis analysis of gender or race, alone does not adequately describe the female discriminatory experiences. The insight that experiences comprise of multifaceted interwoven systems of oppression playing out in social locations as per the hierarchies of power existent at a point of time, make intersectionality, a viable tool for social conceptualisation. Thus, feminist theory is adapted to the multidimensional systems of oppression that construct women's lives, negating the previously existing belief of singularity of oppression or binary politics of power. Feminist theory has thus redeemed itself of its exclusions, where in discriminations were viewed from a monolithic viewpoint, which cancelled the existence of the role of difference in experiences. While Crenshaw ascribed intersectionality as a legal concept in 1989, through her essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics"; in 1991, she elaborated the concept of the same through her essay "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color". Crenshaw talks about structural intersectionality wherein she analyses "...the ways in which the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender makes our actual experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different

from that of white women” (1242). She describes political intersectionality in her essay “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, as “The concept of political intersectionality highlights the fact that women of colour are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (1245). Henceforth, intersectionality has outgrown academics and become a part of the international human rights discourse and many other fields of study dealing with social inequalities and identities.

There are different methodologies for intersectional analysis, suggested by the likes of Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberly Crenshaw, Sirma Bilges, Leslie McCall, Ange- Marie Hancock and so on. Leslie McCall is a key figure in the field of intersectionality, who described three types of methodologies: intercategory complexity, anticategory complexity and intracategory complexity. The intercategory approach uses the existing categories to investigate the social inequalities and complexities between different social groups. The anticategory approach deconstructs categories and is more fluidic in analysis. The intracategory approach is strategically placed between the intercategory and the anticategory approaches. It could be called an amalgamation of both the intercategory and anticategory approaches. Thus, it analyses the overlapping categories of social inequalities even while negating the existence of the very same categories.

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilges have devised a six core analytic tools kit for intersectional analysis. Collins introduced the interlocking systems of

oppression as parallel systems of power like racism, sexism, classism to which the vulnerable population is subjected to. Social Inequality, Relationality, Power, Complexity, Social Justice and Social context form the pointers for intersectional analysis. These six core pointers “...demonstrate how the structure of the inequality gap is simultaneously racialized and gendered for women of color” (Collins and Bilge 27).

This chapter engages both McCall’s intra categorical approach and Collins and Bilge’s six core ideas of analytical tool. The intra categorical approach is done through an overlapping of gender with geographic location, class with geographic location and race with geographic location. The novel is also studied through the six core ideas of intersectionality, where in the befitting ideas are applied for analysis.

Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* depicts a black woman’s coming to voice ordeals, prior to the emergence of the black feminist movement. Published in 1974, *Second Class Citizen* is Buchi Emecheta’s second novel and comes under the category of her London novels, which also includes *In the Ditch* and the memoir *Head Above Water*. These novels excavate the oppressive tendencies of the traditional African societies towards women, and the racist patriarchal lineages of the British society towards its immigrants of colour.

Torn between race, culture, and sex, Emecheta writes about a world lost and a world becoming, a world destroyed and a world indestructible. The Africa of Emecheta’s novels is a continent reeling in two times: Western diachronicity and traditional African synchronicity. And in these novels, Emecheta chronicles the personal dilemma of the African confronted and

lured by Western time and Western culture. The author herself and her female characters struggle to find their place in this world in these times. (Barthelemy 559)

People migrate to other countries for a number of reasons, ranging from economic betterment to escaping persecution. However, in African countries, migration used to be men's forte, prior to the sixties. They were lured into the western world by the economic opportunities or the white man's education, which is again perceived as a gateway for better employment and financial standing. Historically African women seldom migrated by themselves. They reached ashore as spouses or fiancés and not as professionals or students. Thus, migration is a gendered phenomenon, highly influenced by the economic forces at play within the cultural context of a nation. Nkiru Nzegwu's "Immigration and African Diaspora Women Artists" explains the connection between African female migration and the economic factors, at play at home, interrupted by war and ethnic conflicts and concludes that migration perhaps become the only viable solution for African women to escape persecution. Nzegwu goes on to add that "This mobility of African women is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the past, only African men received immigration permits and African women emigrated as wives and fiancées to Britain, Europe, Canada, Australia, and the United States; they are now emigrating on their own cognizance" (Nzegwu 304).

The Nigerian woman, who is at the vortex of a cultural conundrum in her home country, runs high in expectations at the possibility of migrating to the west. Thus, the west becomes the hub of freedom and possibilities for women, who are

otherwise, constantly checked and delineated according to the whims of the men in their society. However, migration ruptures their expectations the moment they land in the western world, wherein, the walls go around much higher than they had ever imagined. Patriarchy is at play and it comes down upon them coupled with racism and classism; making their lived experiences wrought with intersections of identity crisis. Thus, their lives as settlers become an every day ordeal of multi-layered negotiations with the host culture, to reform and establish their identity.

*Second Class Citizen* being an autobiographical novel depicts much of Emecheta's conflict ridden life as a child in Nigeria and as an immigrant mother of five, in Britain. Her early adolescence in the 1960's Britain as a single black mother is a crisscross of intersecting systems of oppression. Adah, the protagonist of the novel is in a constant struggle to establish her identity. Identity is central to any black feminist discourse. Intersections of such factors thus prove pivotal in the establishment of one's identity. An immigrant's self-perception is constantly chiselled by his/ her migrant experiences, wherein many intersectional factors come into play. Thus, intersectionality offers a deeper understanding of the immigrant lives in their multifaceted layers of existence. This totality ensures a better perception of the many walls and glass ceilings that a coloured immigrant is faced with in the white western society.

Buchi Emecheta is a strong voice in the liberatory black feminist literary paradigm. Her novels stand for the emancipation of the black women. Realising the implications that small things have in one's life; she calls herself a 'feminist 'with a small 'f'. In her speech titled "Feminism with a Small 'f'", she states: "Being a

woman, and African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f" (Emecheta, "Feminism" 174).

*Second Class Citizen* depicts migrations of both male and female characters; however, the female migratory experience is the focal point of the whole fiction. It is not merely the migratory experience of Adah, but also her constant struggle to hold on to her identity and preserve her dignity in a patriarchal oppressive system that forms the crux of the novel. The book is strewn with Emecheta's personal experiences of being an immigrant. It shows her deeper understanding of the turbulences involved in the migratory experiences of a Third world woman in the white western world. The cultural modalities that an immigrant black woman encounters in a foreign land, is wrought with constant struggle and negotiations. They attain individuality only through a process of conflict and ensuing transmutation of the self. Emecheta's home country, Nigeria, too is portrayed as a land of unjust patriarchal attitudes and mind-sets towards women. "The Nigerian society has been patriarchal in nature which is a major feature of a traditional society. It is a structure of a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women" (Makama116).

The structure of this chapter is focused on the migratory experiences of Adah and her husband, Francis. Similar to the previous chapter, intra categorical analysis of geographic location with gender, class and race respectively are encountered

through the kaleidoscopic view of the male and female experiences. The shift in spatial locations attributes transcalarity to the analysis.

### **Intracategorical Complexity**

Leslie McCall has designed all the three approaches of intersectionality, based on the way each approach deals with categories. “Social life is considered too irreducibly complex- overflowing with multiple and fluid determinations of both subjects and structures- to make fixed categories anything but simplifying social fictions that produce inequalities in the process of producing differences” (McCall 1773). Intracategorical method questions the basis of categories and their construction by simultaneously acknowledging the overlapping feature of these very categories of discriminations. The analysis of this novel intracategorically reveals the overlapping constructions of categories like, gender, race and class. These categories mutate with their geographic location to produce hybrid identities and perceptions in the chief characters.

#### 1) Gender & Geographic Location

Cynthia Ward describes the essence of Emecheta’s fiction as:

Her novels represent the experience of the African woman struggling to assert herself against historically determined insignificance, a self constituted through the suffering of nearly every form of oppression ..., a self that must find its true voice in order to speak not only for itself but for all others similarly oppressed (83).

Emecheta's fiction spreads across, universalising the plight of women caught in the intersections of patriarchy, race and class. Her work resonates the life of millions of coloured immigrant women in the west, for whom life back home is as much an ordeal as it is in their migrant nation. Adah Obi, is a reflection of Emecheta herself. For Adah, life pre-migration and post-migration is wrought with struggles and disappointments. Gender, for Adah attains connotations of multiple oppressions, both in Nigeria and England. But for her husband, Francis, gender, is constantly a weapon of dominance. Francis, is the auxiliary character, who is a privileged male in the patriarchal Nigerian society and a second class citizen as he calls himself and Adah and his children, upon migration. Nevertheless, he exerts his patriarchal powers, over Adah, irrespective of their geographic location. Francis is thus the primary agency of patriarchal authority in Adah's life, till the very end of the novel. Migration tramples his dominant position as a man, since in England he becomes a black man; however, he brings along his patriarchal privileges across to see to it that his wife is kept in control and is providing for him, as well. Thus, intracategorical intersectional analysis of gender and geographic location with respect to both Adah and Francis, sheds light on their perceptions about their gender roles and how migration warrants changes in such perceptions.

#### 1.1) Adah Obi

McCall's intracategorical analysis of Adah's identity through the intersection of gender and geographic location, takes us through Adah's childhood (pre-marriage) and post-marriage adult life, lived across the continents of Africa (Nigeria) and Europe (England). At this junction, various crossroads of systemic



discriminations intersect like patriarchy, education, fertility/female body, rape & domestic violence, parenting and religion. These sub categories vitalise the intra categorical analysis of gender and geographic location of both Adah and Francis.

“She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant” (Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* 7). The opening of the first chapter “Childhood” begins with the insignificance into which Adah, the protagonist of the novel is born into. A girl in any patriarchal society remains insignificant and her sole purpose is to adhere to the patriarchal expectations of her society. Adah is ignored by her mother, and is kept at home to be married off as soon as possible. Her beginning is like that of any other girl in her tribe, insignificant. This insignificance haunts her all through her life and Adah blames it on her parents for having her in the first place. “But it was their own fault; they should not have had her in the first place, and that would have saved a lot of people a lot of headaches” (7). Thus, patriarchy instils in Adah a regret at being born, a regret at being an inconvenience to her family and her tribe. Adah carries this regret all throughout the novel and it manifests into many of her tragic decisions to suffer silently. This regret at being an inconvenience to others is evident right from the start, when Adah sheds all those endearing pet names given to her by her father, because she resembled his mother. She becomes ‘just Adah’, since people around her found her many names confusing. Those names of endearment are the last of any sort of significance that her family had bestowed upon her. With the death of her father, Adah, becomes truly miserable

since she is handed over to her mother's brother as a servant, where as her own mother is inherited by her father's brother, as his wife. This custom of patriarchy, which hands over women to men, like possessions, reveals the deep-rooted gender bias of the Nigerian society. Adah's brother however, inherits all their money and is expected to get educated.

Adah, understood that education was her true liberation and hence, she fought from her early years to go to school. Her gender makes it difficult for Adah to get educated, since patriarchy makes it impossible for girls to aspire for anything other than becoming wives and mothers. She is allowed to study, after much consternation, because an educated woman will fetch better bride price. Thus, everything in patriarchy, works for its own betterment. The education system of Nigeria is biased towards girls and does not forward positive discriminations to promote female education. Hence patriarchy intersects with education to promote social inequality for women. However, Adah is clever enough to understand this and she is driven by her dream to migrate to England, one day. England represents the land of liberation for Adah, "Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven" (8).

Adah's perseverance to get educated is mirrored upon Emecheta's own struggle. Her determination takes her into the difficult terrains of struggling against the male ego of the Ibo tribe and earning her nicknames like "Ibo tigress" in the process. But somewhere amidst all this, she succumbs to the forces within and outside herself. She cannot wiggle her way out of the patriarchal forces at play around her and from her own limitations within. Adah's determination to get herself

out of being treated as a second class citizen at home, lands her in an even marshier labyrinth of patriarchal power play. But Adah is also smart enough to learn from her circumstances and to twist her disadvantages for the betterment of herself.

Patriarchy teaches girls to be useful in life, if they have to remain indispensable to others. This is not entirely a bad thing because this taught Adah to be self-reliant and responsible for herself. She understood the value of the money that she brought in and also realised the importance that it gave her amidst her own people, who do not value her for herself but for her money and the housework that she can do. Thus, Adah took this as an opportunity to learn an important survival strategy and she was happy for it, because for her survival mattered the most.

Hence survival becomes Adah's sole motif right from her childhood. Every time when patriarchy comes down to crush her, she picks herself up with her sheer determination and hard work to escape this life of insignificance bestowed upon her. At the age of eleven, Adah was given the responsibility of funding her brother's education and make financial contribution to the family. Her mother was already looking out for suitable alliances for her, focusing on the huge brideprice that she hoped Adah would fetch her. However, Adah drove off each of the men who came to see her with insults and rebuke until they stopped coming.

It is by sheer determination that Adah gets herself admitted to the Methodist Girls' School. To continue her education after her schooling, Adah decides to get a house where in she would have some peace and quiet, without the troubles of any fighting, so that she can study and earn a degree. However, it becomes increasingly difficult for Adah to find a home, because "In Lagos, at that time, teenagers were not

allowed to live by themselves, and if the teenager happened to be a girl as well, living alone would be asking for trouble. In short, Adah had to marry” (23).

Adah held her mother responsible for many of her misfortunes. Had her mother not married again, she would have had some refuge in life. Adah, missed her father terribly and her longing for him is forever present throughout her life. From her mother, Adah has understood how women also become perpetrators of patriarchy. And this distrust becomes the pivotal force in keeping Adah subdued in front of the oppressive patriarchal forces at play. Her search for a home and a sense of belongingness drives her into subservience. The death of her father haunts Adah for the rest of her life. She becomes a pawn in the hands of patriarchy, more so because of her father’s demise since she loses her family and sense of belongingness too with her father. This later on becomes her driving force that takes her through the treacherous paths of domestic violence and racial brutalities. Adah is thus displaced from her own people from a very early age, and she grows up much like an orphan even when her mother and brother were alive. Patriarchy has a way of abandoning females and so it does with Adah too. At its intersection with education and traditions patriarchy constructs categories of discriminations and inequality against women. McCall describes how gender as an analytical category becomes indispensable for combating against the rejected and misrepresented female experiences.

Religion also plays a better part in abandoning women in patriarchal societies. At the intersection of religion and patriarchy, there is the visible play of power that delineates women into second class citizens. Adah, at many instances is

seen questioning religion and its significance in her life. “That was the trouble with Jesus, He never answered you; He never really gave you a sign of what to do in such a tempting situation. Anybody could twist what He said to suit his own interpretation” (21). Adah remains conflicted about religion, especially Christianity, that the missionaries had taught her, which made her to expect nice things in life. “Those God- forsaken missionaries! They had taught Adah all the niceties of life ...” (28). Adah found religion confusing and manipulative. “But the one thing Adah could not stand was when a group of people took a portion of the Bible, interpreted it the way that suited them and then asked her to swallow it like that, whole. She became suspicious” (100). Adah questions the unjust attitude of Christianity towards women, especially when Francis quotes Bible much to his advantage and to justify his superiority over Adah. “Was Eve the only person who ate the apple? Did not the man Adam eat some too? Why was it that women had to bear most of the punishments? It was not at all fair” (102) She also expresses her concern towards the logic behind her Ibo religion. “That was the trouble with being a believer in all these transcendent Beings. One did not know when one aroused the anger of one or the other” (29). Religion becomes an agency of patriarchy and this intersection perpetrates inequality.

Marriage is an institution of patriarchy that is designed to keep women in subordination. Adah, gets married to Francis, who is too poor to pay bride price and who is studying to be an accountant himself. That ensures the continuity of Adah’s education, but none of her relatives attend her marriage out of anger towards her for depriving them of the hefty bride price that Adah could have fetched them. For her

however, “It was the saddest day in Adah’s whole life” (24). Eventually Adah gives birth to a daughter and also lands herself in a job as a librarian in the American Consulate Library. Francis feels threatened by her new job and hefty pay packet; however, he is advised by his father to enjoy her money.

Post marriage, Adah enjoys a blissful time, living comfortably with four maids to look after her household. “These four girls did all the work in the house. All Adah had to do was to go the American library, work till two-thirty, come home and be waited on hand and foot, and in the evening be made love to” (26). One can see that through education, Adah has struggled her way to gain a better social standing in a patriarchal society. As long as she brought money to the household and she produced children, her husband or his family had nothing to complain. Fertility is a prerequisite for a woman in a patriarchal society. “A woman would be forgiven everything as long as she produced children” (26). Even though Adah has no trouble in that quarter, fertility and motherhood are constant themes found in Emecheta’s fiction. Emecheta deals with both fertility and motherhood as those that bring more troubles and bondage to women. Adah’s fertility is hailed by her native people, but later on Adah realises the potent power that Francis has over her body and life, through her fertility.

Gender, in Nigeria is truly traditional in its manifestations. Women and men take on their traditional roles without ever questioning them. Men enjoy privileges that women are bereft of. Adah, too begins in disadvantage and insignificance, in her home country. But through sheer determination, she educates herself and wriggles her way out of the disadvantages that women in patriarchal societies have to bear

with. Through securing herself a good job and marrying into a poor family, Adah, ensures her acceptance into her husband's family. But in spite of her better social standing, Adah had not completely escaped the patriarchal radar. Thus, upon her suggestion when Francis applies for further education in England and is eventually accepted, her plan to accompany her husband is thwarted by the family elders. "So she found herself alone once more, forced into a situation dictated by society in which, as an individual, she had little choice" (27). Adah is shocked that her joy of fulfilling her dream of going to England is aborted by her husband and his family, even though; she has to pay for his expense.

"Father does not approve of women going to the England. But you see, you will pay for me, and look after yourself, and within three years, I'll be back. Father said you're earning more than most people who have been to England. Why lose your good job just to go and see London?" ...Francis was an African through and through. A much more civilized man would probably have found a better way of saying this to his wife. But to him he was the male, and he was right to tell her what she was going to do. (28)

So, Francis goes alone to London, leaving a dejected Adah, too sullen to even cry at his departure. In his absence, she bears him a son and goes to work and sends him money. Eventually, Adah, convinces her in-laws about going to England. After much effort, she sails with her two kids, to England in a luxurious ship. In England, Adah's excitement is short lived as she realises that she and her children are totally under the mercy of Francis. Right upon her arrival, Francis attempts to hit her which frightens Adah, since back home, Francis would have never thought of

hitting her. Adah, immediately, misses the cosiness of her home back in Nigeria, wherein she was protected by her in-laws since, “To them, Adah was like the goose that laid the golden eggs” (39). In England, Francis was free to exercise his will upon Adah “...in England, you are a second –class citizen” (39).

Immediately confronted with racism, classism and domestic violence, Adah is shaken up in realising that her dream land had none of the glamour and hope that she had always thought it had. England becomes a prison where in Adah and her children are left alone to face the rage of Francis. “At first Adah thought Francis hated her. This was his first opportunity of showing her what he was really like. Had she made a mistake in rushing into this marriage? But she had needed a home” (40). In spite of getting a job in England, Adah puts up with Francis’s rage and violence and indifference, because she had always craved for a home. Already with two infants to care for, Adah is always on her toes about getting pregnant again. Francis rapes her constantly, being totally inconsiderate of her concerns of becoming pregnant again. Thus Adah, realises that what was considered a boon in her home country, becomes a bane in her migrant country, since she becomes pregnant again and is found unable to cope with the physical demands of her own husband and children. And when she falls sick, Francis goes to other women. Francis refused to work and “The fact that she was still laying the golden eggs stopped Francis from walking out on her” (42). The responsibility of child rearing was totally abandoned by Francis. England made it possible for Francis to totally negate his fatherly duties. Adah realises the painful disposition of mothers in a patriarchal society. “In Nigeria, when children were good, they were the father’s, they too after him, but when they



were bad, they were the mother's, taking after her and her old mother" (45). Thus, even parenthood was designed keeping the man's best interest in place. Adah is totally alone in her parental duties and being pregnant makes it all the more challenging for her to meet up to the demands of childcare.

By gender, Francis deems Adah a second class citizen. "'She's only a woman,' Francis said by way of an apology" (93). By this excuse of being a woman, Adah is subjected to physical and sexual violence by Francis, who sees it as a befitting measure to keep her in his limits. Patriarchy enables Francis to acquire a dominant position and Adah, in concurrence obliges. "...she felt it was her duty to work, not her husband's. He was to have an easy life, the life of a matured student, studying at his own pace" (95). Hence, in spite of migrating to the western world and despite having a job, Adah succumbs to the patriarchal pressures exerted on her by her home country through her husband. Adah's need for a home and her desire for belongingness makes her hold on to Francis. "She simply accepted her role as defined for her by her husband" (95). Thus, migration and gender intersect to Adah's disadvantage, since in England; Adah succumbs to what she had been fighting against in Nigeria. Gender role is re-emphasised by migration in Adah and even though in the end, she seeks divorce, she does it only when he disowns his children in front of the entire court, when she was fully pregnant with his fifth child. "In our country, and among our people, there is nothing like divorce or separation. Once a man's wife, always a man's wife until you die. You cannot escape. You are bound to him" (172), so says Francis to Adah. But Adah rebounds with courage to break free and the final pages of the novel are but a spilling out of what has been

boiling all throughout the novel. “Like all such men, he needed victims. Adah was not going to be a willing victim” (122).

Adah’s life like Emecheta’s becomes a Ferris wheel of hardships, because of the overwhelming power that patriarchy has over their life. Gender becomes a cross to bear, before migration and after migration. Adah’s perception on gender undergoes vast changes throughout her strife with patriarchy. But Adah is unable to break free of this toxicity, because of the very abandonment that she had experienced from her family and tribe because of patriarchy. Home, becomes her single most reason to suffer silently, in spite of her empowering perceptions of herself. Adah’s craving for a home is exploited by her husband Francis, to keep her under control.

At the mention of a home, Adah started to cry. If only she had had a home, she would not have married so early. If only Pa had not died when he did. If only her people in Lagos had been civilized enough to know that a girl who decided to live by herself and study for her degree was not necessarily a prostitute, if only ...Her thoughts went on and on. Now here she was in a foreign country, with no single friend, except her children. (154)

Gender thus, at its intersection with geographic location has produced many sub-sects of social inequalities. Religion, education, marriage, fertility/body, rape& domestic violence are few such sub sects that intersect with gender and geographic location, in Adah’s life. Adah’s identity is shaped by this intersectional play of categories that overlap with each other. Intracategorical complexity is related to Black feminism and focuses on neglected experiences of black women. Thus, an

African woman is kept at the intersection of multiple social structures of discrimination and studied. Adah's geographically located gender experiences, by these standards are rift with multiple systems of crisscrossing social inequalities that play a pivotal role in formulating her identity.

## 1.2) Francis

McCall's intracategorical analysis is primarily about the excluded experience of the Black woman; however, the analysis of the Black man's experience also supports the documentation of the allied systems of inequalities at play. Black man's experience is studied through his patriarchal privileges that alter with location. Thus, this analysis deals with how Francis, at the intersection of gender and geographic location, enacts his privilege. Francis overcomes every other sub sects of social inequalities at the intersection of gender and geographic location, like poverty, education and employment, through his gender privileges, in spite of his geographical location.

Francis is introduced by Emecheta as a "...a very quiet young man who is reading to be an accountant" (23). He was poor too, unable to pay the bride price of five hundred pounds that Adah's mother was expecting. In Nigeria, both Adah and Francis are ruled over by patriarchy. Francis, despite his education feels threatened by Adah's hefty pay packet. But his father insisted that he need not worry and he must best enjoy the fruits of his wife's pay. Thus, Francis lives life in Nigeria, according to the dictation of his elders and their customs and traditions. He believes he is entitled to be served by Adah and reveals himself to be a truly chauvinistic male. When Adah suggests moving to England, Francis's joy knows no bounds. And

he informs Adah, without any qualms what so ever, about why she should stay back in Nigeria, and fund his expenses in England. Francis makes use of his patriarchal privileges on Adah, while Adah, has had to work hard to gain the very privileges that Francis is also enjoying. While in Nigeria, Francis goes easy on Adah, because she is the “golden egg laying goose” (102), in his household; upon migration, patriarchy assumes a more violent demeanour in Francis. One can even say that in Nigeria, whilst patriarchy subdued Francis and protected Adah, because of her pay-packet; in England, out of the radar of their elders, patriarchy enables Francis to be violent and demanding towards Adah. Upon arrival in England, Francis loses all of his man-privileges that he had enjoyed back home. Being delineated into a second class citizen, Francis lives in the periphery of the white society, along with other black immigrants. Upon Adah’s arrival, the roles get reversed, where in Adah and the children become dependent on Francis to understand the English ways of life. Francis derives a perverse pleasure in putting down Adah, by assuming dominance over her,

Then he spat out in anger: “You must know, my dear young *lady*, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americas; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants; you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you are a second- class citizen. (39)

In England, Francis’s masculinity becomes violently toxic. He constantly abuses Adah physically and verbally. Patriarchy attains a demonic presence in their relationship, so much that whilst it makes the relationship violent, it also makes

Adah feel grateful for her marriage, in spite of being the victim in it. “But even if she had nothing to thank Francis for, she could still thank him for making it possible for her to come to England, for giving her own children, because she had never really had anything of her own before” (40). In Francis, masculinity, takes an ugly turn, by making him irresponsible and violent. He totally abandons his parental duties, almost never acknowledging his children. He demands Adah to serve him and to keep the children quiet while he is in the house. He constantly rapes Adah, showing little concern for her health or her fear of another pregnancy. Francis turns out to be a selfish, cruel man who totally soaks in his patriarchal privileges. When Adah is sick, he sleeps around with other women. He shows little regard for his children and looks upon them as burdens. In spite of being an ardent religious believer, who is often found quoting from the Bible, Francis is often found negating the very principles of the Bible, in his ways of living. But in patriarchy, religion too becomes men’s forte. Religion is manipulated to justify the suppression of women by men. Francis himself is often seen quoting from the Bible. “Francis was a great one for preaching sermons. It was always Jehovah God said this, Jehovah God said that...she watched and listened to her husband preaching to her about the diligence of the virtuous woman, whose price was above rubies” (98). Francis justifies his ways in front of Adah through religion, where in man is deemed superior to women by God, himself. While in Nigeria, religion is used to justify why Adah should remain submissive and subservient to Francis; in England, the Bible becomes his ally in justifying his violence towards his wife.

Francis had said only two days ago that he had more ribs than she had, because Jehovah God took one of his own ribs and broke it into seven little pieces and made her own cage from them. That was why she was called “wo-man” because she was made from the ribs of a man, like himself. (99)

Intersection of gender and geographic location, thus, produces a more toxic version of patriarchy to evolve in Francis. He, by no means is seen warming up to his wife, once they migrate. Francis abandons his duties as a father and husband, and reveals his more selfish and violent self. England enables him to be violent towards his wife and practice infidelity. Whereas in Nigeria, his own toxic masculine self remains subdued in the presence of his elders. In England, becoming a second class citizen himself makes Francis feel justified in perpetrating violence on to his wife, who he feels is inferior to him, because of her gender. McCall’s intracategorical complexity reveals the transmission of social power through gender to Francis. His experiences further sheds light on Adah’s trauma as Francis becomes the sum total of the whole patriarchal power play in Adah’s life, towards the later part of the novel. In spite of losing his gender privileges, Francis’s life at the intersection of gender and geographic location remains essentially patriarchal and evolves in toxicity.

## 2) Class and Geographic Location

According to Valerie Bryson, class is a group of people who share a common socio-economic position, involving a hierarchical structure which also provides a sense of identity and a relation to other classes (55). In *Second Class Citizen*, class is seen to be the demarcation that keeps apart people, in Nigeria. The distinction

between the rich and the poor is glaringly visible in Nigeria. However, the same class conflates into one large immigrant community dissolving the differences in between, under the throes of racism from the host nation. Through intracategorical complexity, the overlapping effects of class and geographic location are studied through the experiences of Adah and Francis.

Adah is the daughter of a seamstress and her beginnings are very humble. As a child, she had suffered deeply because of her father's death and her mother's consequent re-marriage. Poverty becomes an offshoot of patriarchy that willed to keep Adah a victim forever. It is through education that she climbs the social ladder in Nigeria and is seen living a very plush life after her marriage, in Nigeria. Francis on the other hand, comes from a poor family. He starts off at the lower end of the class ladder, and upon marriage to Adah, climbs the social ladder through her well-paid job. Francis truly basks in the privileges that patriarchy accords to men in his society. It is thus, through gender that he ventures to transcend his class status at home. Upon migration, however, things take a turn for the worse, as the intersection of class and geographic location evolves into violent outbursts of toxic gender play. Thus, at the juncture of intracategorical analysis of class, there is the unholy alliance between intersections of social structures like gender, patriarchy, education, employment and so on. Even though migration diminishes the social privileges enjoyed by Francis, back home due to his gender; he does not shy away from exacting the same privileges from Adah post migration.

## 2.1) Adah Obi

Class in Nigeria is different from class in England. Adah, is able to transcend class in her home country, whereas in England, class becomes a wall of intersections. Adah is the daughter of a seamstress and thus, her beginnings were modest. She is further displaced by the play of patriarchy in her society, which works to her disadvantage, at every juncture.

Education is the only means through which Adah can escape her dogmatised society. Thus, Adah spends her early years rebelling against her own family, so that she is allowed to go to school. Adah ensures herself that she receives an English education; hence, she enrolls herself into the Methodist Girls' School. English education, she believed would give her a one-way ticket to England, where she hoped life would take a turn for the better. The death of her father pivots Adah into a chasm of grief and abandonment, from where she never actually recovers. Many of her misfortunes stem from her insecurities because she has never had a real family to claim as her own. Through education, Adah is seen climbing up the social ladder and after marriage to Francis, Adah acquires a well-paid job as a librarian in the American Consulate. Her job works as a social filter that keeps much of gender atrocities at bay. Adah, lives a life of comfort where she has four maids waiting on her and who addresses her as 'madam'. Thus, class is transcended by Adah through her education, which gets her a creamy placement and a hefty pay packet. Francis's poverty further makes Adah's job indispensable, since the whole household is dependent on her income.



But migration plunges Adah into a group of immigrants, where all such class differences conflate to give rise to a single migrant class. This consisted of all Africans, irrespective of their country of origin, lodging together. Adah does not take well to this ‘shacking’ together of coloured people “...to her horror, she saw that she had to share the house with such Nigerians who called her madam at home; some of them were of the same educational background as her paid servants. She knew she had had a terrible childhood, but still, in Nigeria, class distinctions were beginning to be established” (Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* 38). Adah is left deeply disturbed by this social plunge into disadvantage, because of which she even begins to regret her migration to the England. In England, class is almost always never isolated. Class couples with race to produce alarming discriminations, towards the migrant communities. In class system too, Black women face manifold challenges than Black men. Black women’s social status, according to bell hooks, is “lower than that of any other” because of their place in society. They occupy the bottom place in society” (hooks, “Black Women” 281). Adah’s position as elite in Nigeria, and her consequent social fall as a coloured immigrant in Britain, echoes throughout her disillusionment magnified by her small living space which she has to share with her husband and children. Her landlord and neighbours are working class Nigerians, the likes of whom she has always distanced herself in Nigeria. How much ever, Adah stresses on class mobility, she is pinned down to the bottom of the social ladder by her husband Francis, telling her that “...in Lagos ...you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England, you are a second- class citizen. So, you can’t discriminate against your own people, because we are all second- class” (Emecheta,

*Second Class Citizen* 39). The psychological effect of being termed a second –class citizen, makes Adah cringe. However, she is dragged into the class by Francis, who is coerced by their neighbours, who dislike Adah’s distancing of herself from them. She is constantly forced to seek work in the t-shirt factory, where many of their neighbours work. But Adah vehemently seeks employment that is in keeping with her university education. The lack of many successful Blacks around further alienates her amidst her own neighbours and her new colleagues. Thus, while it was education that helped Adah transcend the boundaries of disadvantages back home, in Britain, Adah again struggles to climb up the social ladder armed with nothing but her job to her advantage. In those struggles, Adah remains constantly isolated. Adah refuses to remain a second-class citizen. In Adah, Emecheta portrays an over determined woman, whose strength during adverse times reveal how a woman can triumph over oppressions with sheer determination. The whole novel is focused on Adah’s constant struggle to never succumb to the social conditions that she is subjected to. In Nigeria, she fights patriarchy and class, armed with her education and job; in England, she fights the second-class status thrust upon her by her fellow immigrants and whites, through her job.

As Jude Agho and Francis Osighale state:

Through the character of Adah, Emecheta also emphasizes the significant function of education in the political, social and economic liberation of woman as demonstrated by Adah. If Adah had not been educated, she would not have been able to become the family’s breadwinner. With education, a woman is free. (Agho and Osighale 606)

## 2.2) Francis

Francis has seldom struggled against class, at home or after migration. Hailing from a poor family, Francis who was studying to be an accountant knew all about class mobility and marries a well-educated girl with a good job prospect, as a means to climb the social ladder. In spite of earning less than his wife, he feels entitled to be the recipient of his wife's earnings because patriarchy endows him with rights over his wife. His insecurities that flare upon knowing his wife's hefty pay, is quenched by his own father, who advises him to just enjoy what she is earning. Hence, patriarchy as a privilege is handed down to generation of males, who grow up believing that they are entitled to certain privileges from their women folk. Francis belongs to this category of males, hence, in Nigeria, class is not an equation that Francis is seen associating himself with, in spite of being poor. He climbs up the social ladder, by marrying a well-placed woman and soaks up all the financial benefits that she brings forth.

Upon migration, however, Francis takes a turn for the worse, by projecting a toxic masculine self, who is violent and irresponsible towards his family. He associates himself with the working-class Africans who are his neighbours and is swayed by their opinions about his wife. Francis derives a perverse pleasure in keeping Adah grounded to a reality that he believes is her's too. In spite of being in England for a longer time than Adah, Francis could not get over his tribal cultural complex. Thus, upon Adah's arrival to England itself, he deems her as a 'second-class citizen'. Whilst Adah is seen rebelling against, this fall in social ladder, Francis is seen getting comfortable with it because he has Adah who will provide for him.

Hence, Francis does not go to work and he regrets bringing his family to England. “Somebody had warned him that the greatest mistake an African could make was to bring an educated girl to London and let her mix with middle-class English women. They soon know their rights” (Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* 64). Thus, intersections of class and geographic location merely bring out the toxic masculinity out of Francis who deems himself as a second-class citizen and who, refuses to work and climb up the social ladder.

Through intracategorical analysis, it becomes clear how class at the intersection of location and gender works differently for both man and woman. Francis, even though delineated to second class, exudes his patriarchal power over Adah. Adah who had worked her way up the social ladder in Nigeria, is met with glass ceilings of race and gender, by which she remains a second class citizen.

### 3) Race & Geographic Location

Race is a pronounced social structure of inequality within the realm of intersectional studies. Intracategorical complexity reveals how race couples with other sub sects of inequalities like gender, class, patriarchy, education and so on to work towards the disadvantage of the coloured immigrant in a white racist society. The issues of racism encountered by coloured immigrants are more than being merely skin deep.

Racism is not akin to a coat of paint on the external structures of social relations which can be scraped off...Seeing racism in this way, as something peripheral, marginal to the essential patterns of social and political life can,

in its worst manifestations, simply endorse the view of blacks as an external problem, an alien presence visited on Britain from the outside. (Gilroy11)

Blatant racism includes exclusionary and violent practices that deny these immigrants their right to livelihood and dignity. Most often, coloured immigrants are denied accommodation and employment and when it comes to coloured female immigrants, racism takes an even uglier turn. Women have always been at the receiving end of the worst possible repercussions of all social evils. Racism, is never an exclusive practice, it is almost always intersected with other discriminations like sexism, ageism, ableism, classism and so on.

Nigeria got independence from the British colonial rule in the 1960s, but what ensued in the Nigerian society is a general disregard for their native culture and a growing inferiority against the British. In spite of being a postcolonial novel, *Second Class Citizen* brings forth this growing unrest within the native society and transpires it into the individuals occupying the plot. Thus, Adah Obi and Francis are caught in a native anglo maniac society, where in travelling to England and becoming like the English is the pinnacle of success. As Frantz Fanon states

Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with hiding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. (Fanon, *The Wretched* 37)

The feeling of inferiority is socially transmitted from the native culture to its people, in Africa. Adah faces this constant dilemma during her formative years in Nigeria, ridden with chaos and conflicts, wherein the British white world becomes a land of aspirations as opposed to her own country. However, England loses its charm post migration and thus in Adah, racism at intersections with geographic locations, produces the process of othering that happens due to her being a woman and being a subject of a former colony.

### 3.1) Adah Obi

Adah the heroin of Buchi Emecheta's memorable *Second Class Citizen*, is not only a representative of trends among urban African women; once in England, she becomes a microcosm of Africa herself and her place in the western mindset, a place which is surely second if not third, *third* in fact being a more likely ranking for a *Third* World continent. (Iyer 125)

Right from the beginning of the novel, there are comparisons done between places in Nigeria. Adah's native place, Ibuza pales in comparison with Lagos, which is a buzzing city. But even Lagos is not civilised enough when compared to England. Been to England, elevates the social status of a native and people swarmed to meet such England returnees. "Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven" (Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* 8).

Thus, the native finds in his/her fascination for the colonial, an inferiority of his/her own identity and culture, which is inscribed into him/her by the very culture

that he/she belongs to. Thus, Adah grows up amidst such marvelling of the British ways, that she finds an aping of the white ways of life all around her. People coloured and straightened their hair to look European because welcoming a lawyer returning from United Kingdom was like welcoming a holy messenger from heaven. Thus, reverence for anything white is followed to the book by her native people.

Mimicking the European way and defining success in association with the western world surrounded Adah during her early years in Nigeria. Hence, she perceives England to be her safe haven, the land which will put her out of her native miseries. Adah's early years is seen as a struggle to equip herself worthy enough to earn a ticket to England. Education was her only means of escape and it is this dream of migrating to the white western world that fuelled her to fight against her misfortunes and patriarchal taboos. Education from a Christian missionary's school gives her the leverage required to pursue college education and land her in a lucrative job that makes England seem like a land not very far away. Thus Adah, after marriage is found dreaming of taking her family and settling in England. Adah's English education makes her associate herself with the Europeans more and in effect she looks down upon her own people. Even her husband Francis is not civilised enough for Adah, "Francis was an African through and through. A much more civilized man would probably have found a better way of saying this to his wife. But to him, he was the male, and he was right to tell her what she was going to do" (28). Francis remains an African throughout the novel and his attitude towards Adah remains insensitive and ignorant. In spite of the setbacks, Adah is eventually

seen sailing to England, in a luxurious ship with her children; her husband Francis already waiting for them in England.

Adah had never encountered racism before she landed in England. Growing up in Nigeria, with multitudes of problems, the native society was preparing Adah to feel inferior about herself and her culture, in the white western world. Adah had grown up imbibing the negative value attributed to her native culture and the urge to aspire for the sophisticated supremacy of the western world. However, this colonial mask of superiority is smashed through Adah's first-hand experiences of England.

Adah's arrival in England becomes contrary to what she expected it to be, "England gave Adah a cold welcome ... If Adah had been Jesus, she would have passed England by" (36). Adah is also shaken out of her idealised versions of white people. "They looked remote, happy in an aloof way, but determined to keep their distance" (36). Adah is shocked to encounter herself as a black, former subject of the British colony, when she is introduced to the deplorable ways in which it is deemed appropriate for blacks to be housed together. Adah is accustomed to comfort and style in her home country and in Britain, she falls from her comfortable living standards and is dismayed to be accommodated with lower class blacks, the likes of whom she had as servants in her home country. "You see, accommodation is very short in London, especially for black people with children ... We are all blacks, all coloured, and the only houses we can get are horrors like these" (38). Further Adah is horrified to learn that the English treat all the immigrants as second class citizen, a title that Francis bestows upon her, immediately upon her arrival. Adah is gravely disturbed to be clubbed together with the sort of people from whom she had always



distanced herself back home. Thus, Adah becomes a black woman upon her migration to England, and she loses all the privileges that she had earned back home. In England, she realises that no matter her education or her job, her skin colour decides her social status. The notion of the black immigrant is imposed upon the individual as a stereotype and irrespective of his/ her education; he/she has to fit to the mould of a coloured immigrant.

With the social delineation, the African immigrant faces many more social and economic challenges in conducting his/ her life in England. Parenting one's own children is considered as a privilege amidst African communities in England. "So rampant was the idea of foster-parents that African housewives in England came to regard the foster-mother as the mother of their children. They say that in England Nigerian children have two sets of mothers-the natal mother, and the social mother" (45). The socio-political structure of England is very different from Nigeria. Foster mothers are a means for Nigerian parents to help their children learn the English ways and also as a means of distancing the children from their native culture. So, when a Nigerian mother finds herself pregnant, she immediately looks out for foster mothers. The credentials of foster mothers are seldom checked, for all that is required is that they be white. So, no one bothers to check whether the foster care is clean or suitable, if the foster mother is white. "The concept of 'whiteness' could cover a multitude of sins" (46).

People's skin colour is problematised by the white community but the coloured immigrants comply with the social standards of the English society because they want their children to adapt to the English way of life. Adah, in spite of

being disturbed by the connotations attached with the skin colour, however, agrees to foster parenting so that her children will understand the English ways as she had always wanted them to. Culture conflict is evident even in the core concept of parenting. "...in England, looking after babies was in itself a full-time job" (46). Adah, in spite of not wanting to give the responsibility of her children over to a stranger, complies because in England "Only first-class citizens lived with their children, not the blacks" (47).

All the myths about European superiority as perpetuated in her home country prove false, as Adah encounters life in England. Trudy, the foster mother of Adah's children, becomes one of the first whites to break Adah's rose-tinted expectations about the English. "As for Adah, she listened to Trudy destroying forever one of the myths she had been brought up to believe: that the white man never lied" (52). Through Trudy's cruel treatment of her children, and her consequent lying to the children's officer, Adah is enlightened about the mythical superiority of the English society. "But Adah could not stop thinking about her discovery that the whites were just as fallible as everyone else. There were bad whites and good whites, just as there were bad blacks and good black! Why, then did they claim to be superior?" (53).

The Nigerian children, in their parents' efforts to get them acclimatised to the western ways, become traumatised and experiences estrangement from their own culture and family. Language becomes the first obstacle, through which these children, undergo this process of being abandoned. Similar to Dike in *Americanah*, Titi, Adah's infant daughter, experiences trauma. The pressure of learning to talk in

English and the estrangement by the silencing of the native language, takes a toll on Titi. She becomes silent and she refuses to talk anymore. After much coercion from her friend from Nigeria in Yoruba, Titi opens up “Don’t talk to me. My Dad will cane me with the belt if I speak in Yoruba. And I don’t know much English. Don’t talk to me” (53). Titi is clearly caught in the crux of forgetting her own language and adopting a foreign tongue. The trauma of punishments for speaking in her native tongue silences her, since she feels estranged in the English tongue. This is often the trauma experienced by second generation immigrant children, who feel displaced and silenced due to immigration. The problems encountered by Nigerian parents and children, in a white western world are unique and complex.

Adah stops catering to the white supremacy myth anymore and hence, stops complying with the white expectations of the black immigrants. By questioning the colonial discourses at play in her home country, Adah breaks off from the self-imposed inferiority much to the consternation of her neighbouring Africans. This further alienates them when contrary to what is expected, Francis stays back to take care of their children, while Adah goes to work and earns well enough to support them. The cultural differences of both the nations estranges Adah more, because England doesn’t believe in socialising more than what is necessary. Hence, Adah found herself all alone, not even without a friendly neighbour to whom she could have opened her heart out in Nigeria. English society is cold in more ways than one. People are expected to bear their own problems and one who cannot bear can always get rid of themselves.

Adah feels displaced amidst her fellow African neighbours, who expected her to live like them. “Adah had exploded another myth. Second-class citizens could keep their children with them” (67).

Adah’s immigrant experiences are best described by intersections of racism and sexism that she encounters in the hands of her husband and fellow Africans. “She hated being treated like a native woman who was not supposed to know the important happenings in her family until they had been well discussed and analysed by the menfolk” (69). Thus, life post-migration is a constant struggle against the rampant sexism and racism that Adah encounters as a black woman. She experiences inter-racism from her own African neighbours. “Thinking about her first year in Britain, Adah could not help wondering whether the real discrimination, if one could call it that, that she experienced was not more the work of her fellow countrymen than of the whites” (70). Thus, Adah Obi is othered by both the white European community because of her racial roots, and by the black immigrant community due to her desire to live like a first class citizen, in the white world.

Adah encounters racism through the process of finding accommodation due to their eviction. She constantly finds ‘No Coloured’ boards hanging out, much to her dismay. Such blatant racism crushes Adah’s spirit, because home was always a dream for her. Something she never had for herself in Nigeria. So, Adah was determined to find herself a clean home in a good neighbourhood. She has never compromised on what is the best for her and her children, but the English society was bent on conditioning her to inferior things, because in the English society, anything that is beautiful and clean will go to the whites and never to the blacks.

Consequently, Adah develops a resistance within herself against this racial gender power play. Adah begins to engage herself in oppositional gaze against a culture from which she is excluded. At the hospital, after her emergency C-section, Adah becomes extremely conscious of her race and class. The white nurses and patients in the hospital, pitied Adah for not having a proper night dress to wear or a visitor who actually stays long enough to talk.

She did not want to hear anymore. She did not want to think anymore. She did not want to see anymore. She closed her eyes, she dived into the sheets, covering herself up. The world would not see her now, the world would not know whether she had a hospital dress or her own dress. Had she not covered herself up, just like a dead person? (119).

Adah resists succumbing to the white gazes around her which sees her as a ““poor nigger!”” (125). Adah uses the oppositional gaze to sum up the whites and their culture, often inverting the subject-object equation. She was astounded by the silence of the English people and how they managed to bottle up their feelings. She found them human only outside the pubs when they were seen letting out their emotions, corked in before.

Resistance boils up in Adah with a surge of national pride that enables her to rupture herself from the white gaze which defines her as an object. The intersection of race, gender and class produces experiences for Adah, which evokes in her an oppositional gaze through which she resists the white culture. “She was going to show people that she came from Nigeria and that Nigeria was an independent republic” (124). Adah understands the nuances of being black in a white world and

stops eulogising the whites and takes them for what they are. More importantly Adah, through an intersection of racism and geographic location, locates her own self-respect and nationalism. Already a voracious reader, Adah discovers self-acceptance and pride through the works of James Baldwin. She reconciles with herself that she and her children will remain black in this foreign land. “They were all going to be black, a black of different breed. That’s what they were going to be” (141). Unlike her husband Francis, who resorts to being a second class black man, Adah resists and strives to rise above such classifications, fighting against a racially patriarchal white society and the traditional toxic masculinity of her husband. Thus, intersection of race and geographic location provides the impetus necessary for Adah, to rise above her social limitations and to walk out of her abusive toxic marriage.

### 3.2) Francis

Confronting white supremacist capitalist patriarchy would not provide sexist black men with an immediate sense of agency or victory. Blaming black women, however, makes it possible for black men to negotiate with white people in all areas of their lives without vigilantly interrogating those interactions. (hooks, “Reconstructing”107)

Emecheta portrays Francis in a venal light, as the opponent of Adah, the hindrance in Adah’s journey towards self-fulfilment. While in Nigeria, he remains rather subdued because of the larger patriarchal agents at play, like his family and tribe. In England, Francis unleashes his selfish, irresponsible, cruel self on to Adah; who to her great horror realises that England has brought out the worst in Francis.

Migration to the west is wrought with challenges for a coloured immigrant. Like Clay in Baraka's *Dutchman*, being a black man in a white society warrants certain malleability of character. The black man caught in the intersection of race and geographic location, finds himself devoid of his patriarchal privileges in the white western world. Francis, accepts the discriminations that are put out against a black man like himself in England. However, he takes out these repressions on to his family, by being a cruel and irresponsible family man. "As long as black people foolishly cling to the rather politically naive and dangerous assumption that it is in the interests of black liberation to support sexism and male domination, all our efforts to decolonize our minds and transform society will fail" (107). Francis finds a perverse pleasure in letting Adah know that in England, she like him is a second class citizen.

He laughed. A joyless sort of laugh, dry and empty. "I remember at one of your Old Girls' Association meetings where that white lady... yes, I remember, she was from Oxford, wasn't she?- I remember her telling you all that young women with your background should never in all your lives talk to bus conductors. Well, my darling, in England the middle-class black is the one that is lucky enough to get the post of bus conductor. So you'd better start respecting them. (Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* 40)

Francis, adhered to the white notions of blackness and considered himself inferior to the whites. He practises full- fledged sexism towards Adah, by being abusive and irresponsible and he constantly berates her, so as to keep her under his control. Racial repressions in Francis produces violent outbursts of toxic sexism.

Language is an important step towards cultural assimilation. The immigrants find it necessary that their children speak the white man's language and adopt the white man's way of life. Thus, Francis is also careful enough to not disappoint the white society, and he punishes his daughter for speaking in their native tongue. This harshness from his side completely silences Titi. Thus, race and migration to the western world, makes the black man feel powerless and insecure. Francis feels it more because of Adah's defiant nature and her unwillingness to succumb to racial inferiority, unlike him. "Adah knew that his blackness, his feeling of blackness, was firmly established in his mind. She knew that there was discrimination all over the place, but Francis's mind was a fertile ground in which such attitudes could grow and thrive" (58).

Emecheta talks about what migration to England has done to Nigerian men, who had travelled with great hopes under their sleeves to this white world of racial hierarchies. "...there was a great deal the United Kingdom was going to do for these men. In search of this dream or reality, or whatever you decide to call it, they sold all, abandoned all they had held dear" (80). Independence of Nigeria brought forth a number of such England returnees who come back "...equipped with law degrees, and a great talent for oratorical glibness" (80). Those men, who failed miserably, hung out in pubs and got themselves involved with white women. Eventually they married these white women and produced a breed of half-caste children. "Nearly all the failures married white women. Maybe it was the only way of boosting their egos, or was it a way of getting even with their colonial masters? Any woman would do, as long as she was white" (81). For these men, the guilt of abandoning their families,



back in Africa, was assuaged by their marriage to a white woman. The disastrous failure of their dreams of becoming an elite black back home, is replaced by "... a reality of being black, a nobody, a second-class citizen" (81).

The difficulty of remaining a respectful black man in a white society is conveyed through the story of an old Nigerian called, Mr Noble. Noble was not the name given to him by his parents, "He was given that name when he came to England, when he became a second-rate person, when he became second-class" (81). Due to a gross miscalculation, Mr Noble became penniless and he became a lift man at a tube station. His white colleagues made a clown out of Mr Noble.

They liked him, because they turned him into a jester, a clown. They would invariably ask him to perform some African tricks, just for laughs, and Mr Noble would comply...He stopped being a man respected in his own right and became a clown for men young enough to be his sons. On one occasion, he was asked to remove his trousers; his mates wanted to see whether Africans had tails or not because that was the story they were told during the war...Mr Noble removed his trousers for a pint of beer. (82)

Thus, survival in a white society requires a degree of malleability of character, like Mr Noble's. This is what makes Africans like Francis and his neighbours accept their poor living and working condition. In Francis it arouses insecurity and conflicts when his own wife, whom he regards as much inferior to him because of her gender, refuses to accept her inferiority in front of the white society. Thus, migration and race intersect to produce malleable black masculinities,

which are required to downplay their patriarchal powers in a white society, where the white man occupies the top of the racial and gender ladder.

Contemporary black power movement made synonymous black liberation and the effort to create a social structure wherein black men could assert themselves as patriarchs, controlling community, family, and kin. On one hand, black men expressed contempt for white men yet they also envied them their access to patriarchal power. (hooks, "Reconstructing"98)

It is not that Francis had no issues with the white society, but that his lack of courage to stand up against it is what threatens his power, in front of his wife and his neighbours. "They love dogs, the English do. Yes, they love their dogs, Francis continued, so much so that they would rather the dogs butcher a black man, than let the black man kill the dog" (Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* 128). Thus, intersection of geographic location and race produces in Francis a meeker being who accepts his racial inferiority. This meekness transcribes into toxic masculinity, due to his racial and gender insecurities and fear, and becomes violent and irresponsible towards his own family. Unlike Adah, Francis has no evolution of nationalism or dignity. He remains a second class all throughout the novel, seldom ever standing up against it.

Adah and Francis are thus caught at the intersections of gender, class and race, across continents. While gender makes Francis, powerful in his home country, in England he is delineated into the status of a second class citizen, in spite of his gender. Adah, who is born into 'insignificance', fights for her identity and dignity, through education and ambition; fighting against a highly patriarchal society at her

home country. Upon migration, she loses all her hard-earned privileges and goes on to become a second class citizen. While, for Francis, privilege is endowed upon him through his gender, for Adah, privilege is the prize after a long battle. Though, migration seemed like a dream come true, England, was nothing like what both Adah and Francis, had envisaged. Life as an African immigrant, in a white western world, is filled with challenges that intersect at multitudes of points.

### **Intersectionality as an Analytic Tool**

Intersectionality provides wholeness to the experiences of the black women and men. This wholeness is transcribed to a better perception regarding the variant discriminations that a coloured immigrant suffers in an alien soil. The complexities of such multifaceted experiences require a complex tool of analysis. Adah and Francis are prototypes of African men and women, who live inside the matrixes of their cultural constructions of power. They become immigrants of colour in white societies, facing complex situations of human degradation and exploitations. The six core ideas of intersectional framework, suggested by Collins and Bilge, are effective in understanding the complexities of the human experiences. The intra categorical approach employs intersections of various factors, classifying them at the crossroads of different combinations. Even when the existence of categories in human experiences is negated, this approach provides a bird's eye view of the junctions of human interactions and discriminations.

Thus, intersectionality provides a deeper insight into the complexities of the human experiences. Employing tools of analysis put forth by Collins and Bilge is yet another means of analysis. These ideas form guideposts that work to render a

combined view of clarity to the human experiences. The four ideas of intersectionality as an analytic tool employed here are: social inequality, relationality, power, and social context are applied here to gain an insight into Adah and her experiences.

### 1) Social Inequality

Social inequality is the primary reason behind the conception of intersectionality. The complexity of human experience calls for an equally multifaceted analytical tool. The grading of human experience in terms of social inequality is a primary feature of intersectionality. Social inequality remains cultural and location specific. The social inequality faced by a native is different from the social inequality faced by an immigrant, though both the experiences might have overlapping intersections of discriminations. Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* is primarily a novel on the social inequalities that Adah Obi, the protagonist had to undergo in her native land, Nigeria and her migrant country, England. Being auto biographical, Adah Obi is but a reflection of Emecheta herself.

Emecheta has been a pioneering literary figure in bringing out both the native and the migrant issues faced by the black women. Her oeuvre of literature comprises of female protagonists gripped with social inequalities and fighting against the systems of power at play. While in Nigeria, the pioneering system of power is patriarchy, abroad, in the English society, it is racist patriarchy. Classism is also an evil that many of Emecheta's female protagonists battle against. In fact, *Second Class Citizen* is a novel where in Emecheta has penned down her own battle with sexist patriarchy at home and racist classist patriarchy, abroad in England.

Thus, social inequality is rampant in this novel. Right from Adah's birth into insignificance and her growing up years are wrought with gross gender discriminations levied upon her by her own family and her tribe. Adah's struggle to get herself educated, in the face of utmost adversities remain a testament to her success. In spite of being educated and getting employed, Adah remains abandoned by her family. Females face such gross dereliction in patriarchal societies. In spite of getting no help or support from anyone in her family in getting educated, Adah is expected to get married and fetch a hefty bride price because she is educated with job prospects. However, it is through education that Adah overcomes such gross discriminations and she marries into a poor family. Getting employed in the American Consulate elevates Adah's social position and her salary makes her indispensable for her husband's family. Yet, patriarchy haunts Adah at every juncture and when she reveals her long-time dream of going to England, her husband Francis, without any qualms whatsoever, informs her that their elders have decided that he will go to England to study and she will remain in Nigeria and pay for his expenses, abroad. Even religions, both Christianity and their native Ibo religion, perpetuate patriarchy. Thus, nothing truly will disperse the social inequality that females face in a patriarchal society. Women are valued for their utility value and Adah's story is not different either. There is also classism indulged in by those England returnees and even by Adah herself. Being employed in the American Consulate gives Adah white people as her acquaintances. She thus associates herself more with those white people and remains distant from the common native folks who worked at her household.

These roles get reversed when Adah goes to England. She is immediately confronted with classism and racism. She is utterly shocked by the living conditions of immigrant Africans in England. Being reduced to a subject from a former colony, Adah is disappointed to be shackled in with the same type of Africans whom she had kept at a distance, in Nigeria. England confronts Adah with a whole lot of new problems. Parenting, accommodation, language, money, domestic abuses, racism, classism, sexism, inter-racism are some of the issues that Adah confronts in England. Social inequality that a coloured immigrant woman faces in White west society is strewn with intersections of many forms of discriminations. Cultural assimilation becomes traumatic for a coloured immigrant woman who is faced with such racist, sexist and classist inequalities. Physical and mental violence that these women undergo in alien countries are rampant. Thus, intersectionality enables us to understand the gendered existence of African women in the colonised patriarchal histories of their countries. This further enables them to construct a political identity, from the collective intersections of their shared experiences.

## 2) Relationality

Interconnections of experiences help in erasing the binary divisions of hierarchies. The 'either/or' is erased out and a more inclusive and interconnected 'both/ and' is welcomed into the analysis of experiences. Relationality attributes a co-existence of identities and experiences. Adah Obi is Emcheta herself and Emecheta's experience with the patriarchal power play in her native society and the racist classist patriarchy in her host country, echoes on with the experiences of many coloured women as natives and as immigrants. Such interconnectedness is important

in analysing the contributions made by race, gender and class into formulating social inequality.

Adah's native experiences start with her birth in to insignificance. Women born in patriarchal societies are well aware of this insignificance levied upon them in variant degrees. Adah's struggles with domestic violence, rape and ensuing pregnancy is also the shared traumatic experiences of many women caught in traditional patriarchal societies. Adah's immigrant experiences of enduring racism, sexism, classism and other issues relating to cultural assimilation connects her to Asian and African immigrant women.

Education is perhaps the true liberation for many women in patriarchal societies. The struggles endured by women to get themselves educated is a direct result of the traditional patriarchal believes of their society. Patriarchy produces binary divisions of superior and inferior, wherein women are deemed inferior to men. This relationality of Adah Obi's experiences connects her to the collective political identity of being a Nigerian woman, one which gives her the pride and courage to not succumb to oppressive forces.

### 3) Power

Power is a construction of intersecting systems of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and nation and so on. These are interlocking systems of power relations mobilized in a society as per its dominant ideologies at play. In a patriarchal society, gender relations become the turbulent sites of power equations.

Power is thus relational and is produced in binary oppositions. Analysing the play of power in societies will reveal the social dynamics in flow.

In *Second Class Citizen* Emecheta has presented two societies driven by dominant ideologies of race, gender, class, nationality and ethnicity. The Nigerian society is strictly patriarchal where in power rests with the males of the society. Women are regarded as inferior and mere commodities to be transacted along with other possessions. Even amidst these power negotiations, men who return from England are given a much superior position. These men are viewed as Messiahs who will enlighten the natives on the ways of the whites. Thus, notions of cultural and ethnic inferiority are bred in the minds of the natives through these cultural transactions wherein the western language, western religion and the western education are deemed superior to its native counterparts. This is what makes Adah dream of going to England, because she believes from an early age that England is a land of hopes and dreams. Ensuring an English education becomes mandatory for Adah, if she has to fulfil her dream. In Nigeria, Adah is in constant struggle with the dominant forces at play. Patriarchy is not merely practised by the men in the society, women also further it like Adah's mother, who seldom wanted anything for Adah but to marry her off and pocket the bride price. Adah's struggles to get herself educated pays off and she lands a lucrative job in the American Consulate. However, not before the very society makes marriage the only means to complete her education, since single girls cannot stay alone in Lagos. Thus, she gets married and finishes off her degree and gets employed. In spite of being the golden egg laying goose in her husband's family, Adah's life is still very much under patriarchal



control. None of her life decisions are taken by her, but they are decided by the elders, who rule the roost. Adah, must obey no matter what. Thus, she grudgingly accepts their decision to send Francis to England for education, while Adah stays back to pay for his expenses. Thus, patriarchy has always exerted its power over Adah's life and her need to have a family to call her own makes her succumb to its demands.

The English society is nothing like what Adah had imagined it to be. She is shocked at the blatant racism that she encounters and the nauseating classism that is practised against immigrants of colour. The living conditions of the black immigrants are deplorable and Adah is disappointed to be shackled along with the kind of people whom she had as servants back in Nigeria. England also engages in patriarchy and Adah is faced with her husband's toxic masculinity, which is the direct result of his clipped patriarchal privileges and his sense of racial insecurities. While in Nigeria, the elders protected Adah from this toxic masculinity of Francis; in England she is left alone to face it. Thus, she is constantly raped and abused with little regard for her health or a resultant pregnancy. Patriarchy in England enables Francis to be cruel and irresponsible towards his children. Thus, in England, power rests dually, with the racist classist society outside and with the abusive sexism that Adah encounters through Francis. Both choke Adah into submissiveness. But the collective political identity enables Adah to stand up against the racial inferiority imposed upon her by her host nation. The burning of her manuscript of her first novel and the consequent disowning of her and her children (when she is pregnant with the fifth child) by Francis is what prompts Adah to seek divorce. Thus, power

rests in intersections of racism and sexism in Adah's experiences. However, these intersections overlap and gain meaning only in relation to one another.

#### 4) Social Context

The social context is what sets the wheels in motion for the analysis of the power play and resultant social inequalities and ensuing relationality, in an experience. The experiences are contextualised to impart momentum to its intersectional perception. These different perceptions are possible only if the social context is fixated enabling an understanding of the differences. The social context of being a weaker sex in a patriarchal society and a coloured female immigrant in a racist sexist society is what enables intersectionality of Adah's experiences. Her native society preaches patriarchy and robs her of her dignity and basic rights, because she belongs to the weaker sex. Her migrant society discriminates her as a subject of a former colony. Adah confronts racism, sexism and classism, as intersected variations of discriminations.

Thus, the social context of belonging to a weaker sex and being a subject of the former colony, results in the power dynamics and social inequality that Adah faces.

Intersectionality provides multi-layered perceptions to Adah's experiences. The complexity of her life is marked within the power dynamics that is at play in her life constantly. However, social justice remains elusive in Adah's life in spite of her courage and best efforts.

Intersectionality helps in locating an individual across their multiple identity configurations. Both McCall's Intracategorical approach and Collin's and Bilge's six core analytic method emphasises the experiences of marginalised groups occupying disadvantaged social locations. Both methodologies highlight the heterogeneity within the individual experiences. Intersectionality through its focus on minority experiences, also catalyse a simultaneous analysis of the intersectional location of the research. The multiple spatial locations in the novel makes the study transcalar in nature.



## Chapter IV

### First Generation: Intersectionality in Flora Nwapa's *Women are Different*

Feminism has evolved through history by negating all the essentialist notions regarding womanhood and has always been thematically centred on what it means to be a woman at different historical conditions. Right from the early contestations against slavery to women suffrage, feminism has been an all-encompassing theory, where racism, sexuality, social class and gender intersect to reveal the web of inequality. The notion of global sisterhood, propagated by western feminists was criticised for its exclusionist tendencies, as pointed out by the likes of Mohanty and Davis. Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I A Woman* predates all these criticisms by at least a century. In Truth's words,

Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (McKissack and McKissack 110)

Truth's powerful speech deconstructs every aspect of essentialist patriarchal notion of womanhood and echoes in one way or the other with every marginalised and exploited woman spread globally. Truth, remains the flag bearer of intersectionality and her locution is a beacon for every non-white feminist, who came afterwards. Intersectionality is often debated as a prerequisite for feminist

enquiry aiming to decentre the normative narrative of discriminatory discourses. The multiplicity of simultaneous systems of oppression enabled a reconfiguration of feminist discourses, wherein inequality surfaces through interlocking systems of othering. Even though the term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberly Crenshaw, the concept was in use, way before in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like Truth, Maria Stewart, in 1832 declared “Methinks I heard a spiritual interrogation—’Who shall go forward, and take off the reproach that is cast upon the people of color? Shall it be a woman? And my heart made this reply —’If it is thy will, be it even so, Lord Jesus!” (Blackpast). Stewart articulates the critique of difference and thus postulates on intersectionality. She challenges the way race, class and gender intersect to work against Black women. Thus intersectionality, in its core, works as a liberatory force for Black community and especially Black women. “Race, ethnicity, and geography matter, as they are all determinants of access to social capital or social resources” (Massey and Denton 330).

Although a uniform consensus has not been established between many feminist philosophers, regarding the nature of such systems of discrimination, as in whether they are naturally occurring or socially constructed, the relationship between these systems are even more contentious. Intersectionality, plays a pivotal role here by providing a framework to dissipate the complications arising from these overlapping structures of inequality (such as, race, gender, class, sexuality, disability etc). Leslie McCall addresses this complication of overlapping structures of inequality through her suggested methodologies of anticategorical, intercategorical and intracategorical analysis. Patricia Hill Collins and Silma Bilge provide reasons

to believe the impossibility of separating categories of inequalities, through their analytic tools of intersectionality. The common aim of these theorists is to reveal the inadequacy of anti-racist feminist discourses in interrogating the experiences and struggles of women of colour. Intersectionality sheds light on hidden systems of exclusions, which remain ignored in the single axis analysis of gender or race or class, as separate categories of study.

Women in patriarchal societies are victims of many forms of discrimination. Intersectionality helps in recognising the many converging systems of oppression that plague the lives of native women, in traditionally phallogocentric societies. According to Nira Yuval-Davis “the point of intersectional analysis is not to find ‘several identities under one.’ ... This would reinscribe the fragmented, additive model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities” (N. Y.- Davis, “Belonging ” 206). The lives of Black women and women of colour are wrought with structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. The methodological concern of intersectionality is thus to contextualise the experiences of Black women and women of colour. The web of intersections that crisscross the lives of native women, also finds unique coupling between various institutions of patriarchy to produce subservience as a way to keep the dominant ideology of patriarchy, afloat.

African fiction towards its inception had been wrought with the portrayal of African men as bread winners and heads of the family, and African women as subordinates, child-bearers and housekeepers, as purported by the male African writers. “In Nigeria for example, the national anthem calls all compatriots to “serve

their FATHERLAND ", consequently excluding all the valuable women from all spheres of nation building" (Amouzou 97).

Flora Nwapa, by becoming Africa's first internationally published female novelist has paved the way for a whole treasure-trove of female writers like Buchi Emecheta, Tess Onwueme, Zulu Sofala, Mabel Segun, Nawal El Sadawi, Aminata Sow Fall, Mariama Ba, Zaynab Alkali, Akachi Ezeigbo, Ifeoma Okoye, Tsi Tsi Dangaremba, Alifa Rifaat, Bessie Head, Nadine Gordimer, Ama Ata Aidoo and also the new generation writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chika Unigwe, Amma Darko, Grace Akpan, Ehigiator Dumebi Ezar, and Maryam Bongel. Thus, Flora Nwapa is rightly called the Mother of Modern African literature.

By breaking the silence of women in Nigerian letters, Flora Nwapa has made a name for herself as a major twentieth-century African woman writer ....

With the characterizations of her female protagonists in her adult fiction, she complicated the female identity as delineated in the literature of Chinua Achebe and his brothers by critiquing both their gender conventions and power relations between men and women in the homestead. Thus, the female literary tradition she initiated was rooted in resistance, a protest against the one-dimensional images of the Nigerian women either as wives, mothers, femme fatales, or rebel girls. (Umeh and Nwapa 23)

Curiously though, Nwapa has rejected the western notions of feminism. In the interview given to Marie Umeh, Nwapa explicitly declares her rejection of western feminism,



I don't even accept that I'm a feminist. I accept that I'm an ordinary woman who is writing about what she knows. I try to project the image of women positively. I attempt to correct our menfolks when they started writing, when they wrote little or less about women...I started writing to tell them that this is not so. (27)

Nwapa's oeuvre of literature is aimed at correcting the historical misconceptions attributed by the male writers, towards the women of her country. This became a trademark of all the African female writers who arrived at the literary scene, henceforward; they portrayed strong women as their protagonists.

Nwapa writes about native women caught in the intersections of patriarchal traditions, colonialism, modernity, western education and Christianity. Colonialism brought modern education and Christianity, which came into direct conflicts with the traditional Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa culture and practises. Education became westernised and this further alienated individuals from their native belief systems. The repercussions of such conflicts pervaded throughout the political, social, cultural and economic platforms of the native society.

In Nwapa's fiction, African women take rightful stands and reclaim their agency. Nwapa's first novel *Efuru* published in 1966, speaks of a woman who walks out on her family to marry the man she loves. She is beautiful, smart and is even better at trading than her husband. She breaks taboos and yet remains unapologetic till the very end of the novel. All of Nwapa's six novels including *Women Are Different* published in 1986 portray strong women questioning the gender patterns

and belief systems of their country and thus revealing a deeper insight into the historical and cultural annals of the nation.

### **Intracategorical Complexity**

*Woman Are Different* is about three women who are different and who struggle amidst traditional patriarchy and postcolonial chaos, to gain financial independence and acceptance in their society. Agnes, Dora and Rose are three close friends who meet during their school days at a missionary school. They remain close and each other's confidante throughout their conflict-ridden lives. Through these three women, Nwapa, paints the picture of modern Christian education and ideals set in rift with the nation's own native belief systems. However, education provides the necessary impetus for these women to dream and dare. They dream of getting married and also becoming a part of the administrative machinery running the newly independent Nigeria. Their lives are rife with intersections of many systems of conflicts. Migration has no relevance in the novel as the geographic location remains still and unchanging, largely. However, it is this very geographic location that provides the platform for intersecting patterns in experiences to emerge. Thus, through employing Leslie McCall's intracategorical approach, it is deduced that the two intra categories of intersectional analysis will be gender and geographic location and political turbulence and geographic location. Gender in Nigeria is rife with patriarchal sexist traditions, which comes in direct conflict with the results of modern education and Christianity. The newly independent Nigeria is also a fertile ground for intersecting patterns of politics to evolve. The receding of colonial masters reveals a land and a system engulfed in chaos and greed. It is thus under this

crisscross of patterns that the lived experiences of the three female protagonists attain meaning. The curious mixture of colonialism, patriarchy and political turbulence, wreaks havoc in the lives of the female characters. They are always met with simultaneous alliances of systems of oppression that are specifically rooted in the native soil. Agnes, Dora and Rose are progenies of a chaotic nation born into tumultuous times of political upheavals and civil wars. To analyse this chaotic fabric through McCall's intra categorical analysis, is to trace out novel mutations of oppressive structures that are quite different from the previous chapters. Caught in the crux of a political unrest and civil war, the female protagonists in the novel, give a peek into the multifaceted systems of power, at play in their society. In spite of the fix in the geographic location, the catalyst that works out against the female protagonists of the novel, remain demographically erected in the location of the novel. Hence the intracategorical analysis, analyses the simultaneous intersection of geographic location with gender and political turbulence, to understand the play of power in the process of othering.

#### 1) Gender & Geographic Location

Nigeria, at the dawn of independence, is rife with political and cultural chaos. The traditional belief systems are being overtaken by the western education and western religion. However, sexism remains rampant and so is the number of women coming up to claim their agency and independence.

At the intersection of gender and location, Nwapa brings in problems that are universal in nature. The gender patterns brought out by Nwapa, is found in every

patriarchal society. Nwapa's own stand regarding gender equations are revealed through her three main characters, in the novel.

At the Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girl's School, Agnes, Dora and Rose are being prepared by the Christian belief system and modern education, to face a world, which will be turbulent and postcolonial. The principal of the school, a white missionary named Miss Hill, instils the girls with courage to dream and dare. The egalitarian atmosphere of the school is in sharp contrast with the outside society. The girls are aware of this mismatch and yet, they hope their education will redeem them of every evil that is out there. Education is unanimously viewed as the single most redeeming factor by all the three girls. However, in spite of their education and its future prospects, all the three girls remain within the boundaries of their patriarchal expectations. Nwapa herself believed in the redeeming qualities of education and sought to regard education as a woman's companion through her fight against biased gender hierarchies. However, as any womanist, Nwapa believed in the importance of family and children. The conflict of this entire novel stems from this intersection of modernity and traditionalism.

Education remains highly gendered in Nigeria. Even though within the walls of their school, the girls do not come across such gendered hierarchies, they partake in the same unconsciously through their relationships and future aspirations. All the three girls are fixated in securing their Cambridge School Certificate; however, they see for themselves a future as defined by the patriarchal gender role plays. Hence, for Agnes, Rose and Dora, life after school is left in a limbo as they do not assume their agency to decide for themselves. Agnes, who comes to the boarding school so

that her step mother can find someone to marry her off , is only buying time until she is married off. For both Rose and Dora, their future depended totally on their partner's decision.

Ernest was to do his Cambridge School Certificate that year. He would go to Yaba Higher College, and later read medicine. By the time he finished his course at Yaba, she, Rose would be finishing at ACMGS, and they would be married. Then if he wished to go abroad and read for his specialist degree, he would take her. She was not sure of what she would read when she went abroad, but whatever Ernest suggested would be all right. (Nwapa, *Women Are Different* 29)

The Yaba Higher College, to which Ernest gets admission to read medicine, is "...the institution that the brains of the country went to in those days" (43). The fact that there were only three girls in the medical school affirms the gender discrimination with in the education system of Nigeria. Positive discrimination is the only means through which more of Nigerian women can come to the forefront to gain quality education. It is found normal for boys to dominate and the girls to remain passive receptors, in Nigeria. This gender hierarchical play is present in every social, political and personal arena. Adhering to this gender power play, Dora has also opted out of continuing her education. Since, her boyfriend Chris is also working, she plans to get married to him as soon as she finishes school. Agnes, however, remains desolate for she is to be married to a rich man old enough to be her father. Thus, in spite of getting a modern Christian education, all the three girls

remain a pawn to the patriarchal power play. The fact that, Rose and Dora relent willingly and Agnes is forced does not make their circumstances any less biased.

Religion also endorses patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Christianity is preached through the missionaries running the school. The girls grow up having Christian faith and their traditions have evolved into Christianity. The old people lament the withering away of their native rituals, “I prefer our own native law and custom marriage...Nobody bothers to uphold a marriage if things begin to go wrong” (54). While Christianity makes the girls go meek and submissive, the education that they received keeps them afloat during sinking times. Marriages are institutions of patriarchy. While, all the three women get married, their hopes to remain married are thwarted by the men in their life. Gender accords certain privileges to the men, in Nigeria. Hence, marriages become enactments of gender power plays; where in women find themselves fighting lonely battles.

As planned, Agnes gets married to the man, who had wanted to marry her when she was as little as ten years old. However, Agnes buys time to finish her education, after which she was to accept this proposal. Through Agnes, Nwapa shows the dispensability of daughters in a patriarchal country like Nigeria. Daughters are treated like commodities to buy and sell by their own families. Women face violence of many kinds in a patriarchal society. Education is one redeeming factor that can provide independence and dignity to women. Women attending Agnes’s wedding discuss on education and their narrative prove their helplessness, “Papa Emeka behaves in such an atrocious manner to me. He seems to tell me during some of our quarrels: “If you can’t take it, go.” Then I think-where

will I go to with seven children? So I stay. But if I had that piece of paper which Agnes now has, I could have left him and gone to study” (53). In spite of lamenting for her lost opportunities and her ill-fate, this woman, is a confusing mix of being both a victim and a perpetrator of patriarchy. They are all aware of Agnes’s dislike for the man she is being forced to marry and that he is an imposter whose true identity is that of a drug smuggler and not a doctor as he claims and yet, they concur with the marriage. “But you know what our husbands are like. Once they are given money, they sell their daughters” (53). Agnes however refuses to remain a victim. She continues with her education without the knowledge of her husband. She has already given birth to four children and while in the University she falls in love with a man named Ayo Dele. When she finds out about her husband’s affair with her step-mother, Agnes leaves him and starts living with Ayo Dele. Ayo Dele “...was both a lover and a teacher and a father to her children” (62). In fact, he is the only man in the entire novel who takes responsibility of his family and who can be regarded as a role model. Unfortunately, his sudden demise leaves Agnes desolate and alone with her children. She remains lost without a man and falls into self-doubt and self-blame, inflicted upon her by her Christian believes. “Was she not being punished for deserting her husband? Was she not being punished for being over ambitious? ...Her husband, though she was not in love with him, was kind to her. He respected her, he loved her, if that was love” (62). Self-pity and self-blame are offshoots of guilt that patriarchy inflicts into women, who seek independence and self-sufficiency. However, with her children dependent on her, Agnes picks herself up and moves forward and goes onto have a well-placed career in the civil service where she works under the Assistant Chief Inspector. She breaks patriarchal power

play by becoming an independent rich woman, who drives her own car. But she is also the ideal woman, who picks herself up in adverse situation and brings up her children, single handedly. And yet, when she drives to pay her estranged husband a visit after many years, she is shaken by the authority that a man still has over her and her children.

‘Sit down, my wayward wife’, he said. A blunt knife seemed to have been driven into Agnes’ heart. She said nothing, but tears filled her eyes... Whether you answer my name or not, you are my wife and the children are mine. One day, you will bring them back to me. You cannot say they are not mine. They are mine. You had them in my home, under holy wedlock. So whether you committed adultery or not, having them was my responsibility, they are mine’. (65)

Gender in Nigeria enables Agnes’s husband to exert his authority, in spite of being absent for years from her or her children’s lives, as in a patriarchal society, children always belong to their father taking after his name. “It is observed in the literature that the establishment and practice of male dominance over women and children, is a historic process formed by men and women, with the patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organization” (Makama 117). Thus, it is not out of love that he wants his children back but out of his responsibility that comes from the belief that he owns his children. Intersections of gender and location thus produce tougher situations for the woman by unduly empowering the man.

Dora, after finishing school trains to be a nurse and also marries her boyfriend, Chris. However, after marriage Dora is perturbed by Chris’ irresponsible



ways. “He made no attempt to go to any institution of higher learning. He made no attempt to educate himself” (Nwapa, *Women Are Different* 67). Chris, read newspapers all day and discussed with his colleagues in the High Court on how to become rich without actually working for it. He had expensive tastes which ill matched his salary and thus he took bribes as well. Dora has already had five children and working as a nurse was proving to be difficult for her when she actually wanted to be a baker. Chris did not bother about this transition and it was only when Dora started to make money through her baking business that Chris started taking interest in what she was doing. He started keeping accounts for Dora. “Dora worked and worked, made the money, while Chris spent the money as he said, judiciously” (68). Chris’s friends were envious of him for having a smart business woman as his wife. “Some compared Dora with their wives, and went home to beat up their wives for not being as successful as Chris’ wife” (69). So blatant was the sexism that prevailed in the Nigerian society. Chris, however, went ahead with his irresponsible ways and was warned for taking bribes. Dora, who had been too busy with her children and her business, becomes horrified and suggests he resign and help her out with her business. Chris however, finds it beneath him to work for his wife.

...but what bothered him so much was having to work for his own wife. That was the way he thought about his wife’s proposal, and that was the way his colleagues, friends and relatives would think of Dora’s proposal. It was unmanly to do that. He would not do it. He was the breadwinner and his wife was not going to feed him. Let her go on with her business. He owned her. Her property was his because she was his wife. (69)

In spite of Dora cajoling him with partnership and making him the Managing Director, while she does all the hard work, Chris refuses to accept her offer. He had plans to study law abroad and to set up a lucrative practice in Nigeria, once he finishes law. Thus after helping Dora, build their house, Chris takes a leave of three years without pay to go abroad and study law. Dora is shocked to know of Chris' decisions which he had taken without consulting her. And she is disturbed that none of the Christian teachings that they had at school had done any good on Chris. Thus, Chris goes off to London, leaving Dora alone to look after their five children and her business. The post-colonial Nigeria saw many young men travel abroad to study law. There are also stories of men becoming failures and settling in with some white woman, abandoning their wife and children back home. Marrying a white woman became an alternate version of success, for these men. Chris' letters to Dora reduced to nil eventually and Dora is left alone with her children to face the civil war that ravaged Nigeria, after independence.

The shrewd and enterprising business woman in Dora, predicted and prepared for the oncoming coup by making arrangements to shift and shore up her business in Aba. She shifted her children to Aba, and rented a flat to settle them in. It is when she planned to sell the house she built with Chris, to finance her business that she realises much to her horror that Chris had already sold the house. She is shocked and heart- broken at knowing this betrayal by Chris and she eventually decides to visit him in England. However, with a war at her door step, she had to change her plans now that the money she hoped she would have by selling the house being no longer available. Dora remains resolute even in the face of war. "Dora has

foresight. Even in July of 1966, she thought of what to do” (74). Changing her plans, she goes to Orlu and buys land and builds a four-bedroom bungalow and stocks it up with furniture and food. Thus, when the Biafran war started, she evacuated her bakery in Aba and set it up in Okporo. She continued to run her business even during the war and became so self-sufficient that she purchased back the house her husband had sold. Through Dora, Nwapa deconstructs an age-old belief sustaining patriarchy. “Another erroneous conception that Nwapa challenges in her *oeuvre* is the idea that African women are not property owners” (Umeh 119).

Amidst all these struggles, Dora often thought about Chris, who is now totally absent from her or her children’s lives. She hoped he would return because “A man could abandon his wife, but not his children” (Nwapa, *Women Are Different* 75). Thus, she waited for her husband to come back. When it seemed like a long time, Dora sets out to find Chris by herself. And she does find him in a flat in Hamburg, Germany, with a German wife. He dismisses her without a proper talk and a heart-broken and enraged Dora, comes back and divorces her husband by the native law and custom.

Like Agnes, Dora does not take lightly to her husband’s betrayal and consequent abandonment. In spite of her being a Christian, Dora comes back from Germany, to divorce her husband by the native custom. There is a reversal of gender role plays in Dora and Chris’s marriage, where Dora becomes the breadwinner and the responsible one, whereas Chris is an escapist and squanders all her money and even steals from her. The missionary run school had prepared Dora well for the adversities they had warned these girls about. Dora had lived a Christian life of

being a faithful and committed wife, until she discovers her husband with another woman. After, her divorce as per the native customs, Dora gets into a relationship with Tunde. Dora remains a strong and resilient woman. Gender in intersections with patriarchy has produced in Dora, a woman torn between two traditions, one of Christianity and another of her native culture. She tries hard to remain a good wife by holding on to a crumbling marriage. But eventually, she resorts to the native custom to end her marriage and free herself from the shackles of patriarchy. Dora is an extraordinary woman, who struggles hard to keep her family intact. Faced with a civil war and her husband's betrayal, Dora takes care of her children and keeps them safe when the coup was destroying everything around her. Thus, Dora is a nourisher and a successful business woman.

Rose is the protagonist of the novel. Right from the beginning Nwapa shows Rose as an ambitious and serious-minded girl who even influenced her own father with her political ideas. She is enamoured by Ms Hill, during her days in the missionary run school and is herself a devout Christian.

Rose plans to get married to her boyfriend Ernest and hopes to live her life the way Ernest would plan it. Plans are set for Ernest to go to Yaba Higher College to read medicine and abroad for specialisation, and Rose will accompany him. In spite of being a bright student, Rose seldom has any plans for her own future education. She even wonders what she will study when she goes abroad with Ernest and hopes that he will suggest something. Rose thus relied on Ernest to plan her life and she depended on him too much to show her what is best for her. Ernest displayed a condescending attitude towards Rose, very in-keeping with his gender

status. He, like majority of men in his country, did not believe that women can study science and tells Rose that if she studies hard enough, she might make it to Yaba. After school, while both her friends Agnes and Dora get married, Rose has to wait for her boyfriend to finish his medical degree. Ernest, however in keeping with the gender expectations, leaves for England to continue his medical studies. Rose, after graduating goes to University of London for her Diploma in Education. Like Dora, she too loses Ernest to the white western world and she comes back disheartened. Eventually she meets Mark, and “What intrigued Rose so much was Mark’s domesticity, he took over the cooking. He cleaned the house and he even baked” (58). Thus, Rose starts taking him seriously and they get married. When Mark gets admission in Harvard, Rose withdraws all her savings to give him money. It is only after Mark leaves for America, that Rose realises that the marriage was fake and Mark had actually betrayed her. Mark had in effect abused her psychologically, emotionally and even financially. “Slowly it began to dawn on her that Mark had jilted her. She had lost contact with Ernest, now Mark. She was miserable. She felt sorry for herself” (82).

Through Rose, Nwapa creates a woman, successful in career but one who is deemed a failure as per the patriarchal gender system. Rose is unable to keep a man for herself. In spite of her success in career, Rose is almost always found pitying herself, for not having a man in her life. Her education or her career does not bring her solace when she reels into self-pity.

But couldn’t it have been better if she were pregnant? After all, her friends in ACMGS were married and had children. If she were pregnant, she would

have had something to look forward to, a baby, boy or girl it did not matter. Nearly eight years after leaving school, she could only boast of a degree nothing else. (82)

In Nigeria, as in any other patriarchal nation, women's primary duty is to procreate and take care of her offspring and husband. Rose, in spite of her credentials, feels short of fulfilment because she is not pregnant from Mark. The fact that he betrayed her also does not salvage her from her feelings of despair for not having a child by him. Rose herself questions what success means for a woman in a patriarchal society. In spite of being at the pinnacle of her career, she falls for wrong men who take advantage of her and who settle for nothing. Olu, comes into Rose's life while she was recuperating from the trauma of Mark. Olu is a business man and his education and polished behaviour impresses Rose. His intellectual superiority and sophistication make Rose decide to have a baby by him. By this decision, unintentionally, Rose succumbs to the patriarchal norms on motherhood that is thrust forcefully upon women by male-centric society.

When she misses her periods, she becomes hopeful. "Olu was giving her all those things she thought Ernest would give her, but did not. Mark exploited her. She kept him and he jilted her" (87). But during her fifth month of pregnancy, Olu's wife barges into her office. Her good secretary warns Rose in time for her to hide, but the commotion takes a toll on Rose. The very next day, she loses her baby, and Olu disappears from her life too, forever. Thus, Rose is left dejected, again, in the quest to find the perfect man for herself.

Rose has nothing but her work to find solace from. Thus, after each heartbreak, she throws herself into her work. This echoes one of Nwapa's primary beliefs that education and job are the true redeemers of women. Rose, then tries her luck with another man named Tunde. However, Tunde is shown as reeling from the guilt of the death of his wife by car crash. His guilt is due to the fact that he was driving the car, when the crash happened. Thus, though initially Rose is enamoured by Tunde, she soon realizes the shadow of his wife looming over him. His guilt in not being able to protect his woman, which is what is expected of a man in a patriarchal society, makes him a prisoner of a solitary life, wherein he is seen excessively cleaning everything around him. Rose understands Tunde's ineptitude to deal with his wife's death and realises that a relationship with him will be impossible. "Tunde was searching for something he knew he had lost forever. Rose could share with him his type of music, his books and even his solitude, but the memory of his wife and his guilt over her death, she could not share" (138). Thus, Rose succumbs to her own loneliness rather than sharing a man with his dead wife.

In the native culture, it is normal for a man to take another woman and it is perceived as evil that a woman would want to keep a man to herself. Nwapa's first novel *Efuru* centres on this theme of marital abandonments which a woman suffers in a traditional Igbo Nigerian society. However, in *Woman Are Different*, all the three female protagonists have cracked marriages and have affairs, and yet, they yearn to have a stable secure marriage through which they hope to gain social acceptance.

Men are dealt with more acceptance and sympathy by all the three women. They yearn to return into the institutions of marriage as they feel that only marriage will give them true acceptance and dignity. Christianity plays a pivotal part in reemphasising the patriarchal notions into their minds. They confess how they would accept their wayward men back into their lives, in spite of feeling anger and frustration. “...Rose, if Chris comes back today and shows penitence, I’ll go back to him... If we say we are Christians, we must practise Christianity, that is, we must forgive those who have wronged us” (101). Ernest comes to Rose and proposes marriage and asks her to take care of his mother while he finishes his course in England. Rose neither accepts him nor rejects him and is also seen taking care of his mother. In spite of later realising that Ernest had been lying to her about his marriage to an Irish woman and his true identity, Rose continues to check on his mother. In a letter to Dora, Rose laments about her situation where she yearns to resort to native customs and how she is prohibited by Christianity from seeking such solace. Rose is caught under the rift between Christian and her native believes.

*‘Dora, is there anyone who has the kind of problem that I have? Do you think it is high time I went to a palmist? Or perhaps I should go to Ijebu to be told what to do so that my good fortune will begin to manifest itself again...But Dora one has to believe, one has to have faith before one can have positive results. My upbringing does not value that kind of approach.’*

(124)

In spite of the atrocities and violence that these women suffered in their relationships; it is ironical that they themselves endorse marriage and uphold



traditions when it comes to their children. Dora's daughter Chinwe was trying to leave her husband, and Dora wanted Chinwe to stay put. In spite of knowing that Chinwe's husband had cheated on her and even brought a seventeen-year-old girl into her house does not deter Dora or Rose from advising her to stay put in her marriage. This could be attributed to their own guilt of not working enough to maintain their relationships. Another trick that patriarchy plays on women is to give them the burden of responsibility of anything that goes wrong in a relationship. Thus if the man sleeps around or if the woman cannot produce a child, the guilt rubbed into the female, haunts her and keeps her within the limits of patriarchy. Rose laments her lost opportunity with Ernest when he visits her again, to propose marriage.

I did not think of him in his predicament. I thought only of myself. He needed support at the time. He needed understanding and love. I did not give him any of those. I revelled in my hurt and I refused to forgive him, and now here I am, close to forty three, no child, no Ernest, no husband and no lover.  
(112)

In a patriarchal society, women are kept within constant tabs pertaining to their body, their fertility and their age. Rose finds herself at odds with her relationship status and her age and fertility. She picks up the blame for having failed all the men in her life and she succumbs to the feeling of loss and being a failure, because she could not keep any of the men in her life. Dora fears for Chinwe on the same account that Chinwe might be walking out of her marriage because like her mother Dora, she too cannot keep her marriage intact.

I know it hurt her. It is not so much the adultery as the deceit that is hurting Chinwe, I know, but still, I don't want her to leave her husband, because of the effect it will have on her younger sister who is not yet married. Soon people will say that my daughters are incapable of marriage, that they are following my footsteps. (113)

The responsibility of safeguarding a marriage, thus falls on the woman's shoulder and men get the privilege of not bearing the responsibility of anything, in a relationship. It is this same privilege, that Ernest reaps when he tries to come back into Rose's life and eventually what makes her take care of his mother, in his absence. It is this same privilege, that Chris, Dora's husband and Agnes's husband also reap, as they are accepted back.

The two women knew that marriage in Nigeria in the seventies was quite different from marriage of the forties. The women thought that their men were chickens who were manipulated by their mothers, sisters and all the clan. Rose told of a man she knew very well and complained that his wife ill-treated him because he had neither a mother nor a sister to give her a good fight ... He single handedly could not control his wife, could not look her in the face and say 'Woman, enough is enough'. He needed female relations in the family to do that for him. (113-114)

Thus, patriarchy makes women feel responsible for men's actions. In this process, women are pitted against each other, to safeguard the interests of men.

Agnes is also equally disturbed about her children, as Dora is. The wayward ways of her daughter Elizabeth, frustrates her. Elizabeth accuses Agnes of abandoning her father and even calls her a prostitute. It is after this incident that Agnes brings her estranged husband back to live with them. Thus, Agnes accepts her husband back, so as to gain acceptance from her children, whom she had brought up single handedly. Elizabeth takes to prostitution and when, she is arrested for drug trafficking, along with Ernest, Agnes negotiates boldly with the drug mafia to bring her daughter back safely. Agnes does this all alone and thus; it is curious that a woman so bold could succumb to patriarchal power plays for social acceptance. She brings her husband back into the family so that she gains acceptance from her children and so that they will go ahead and get married.

These three women, thus, in spite of being warriors in adverse situations, are haunted by passivity when it comes to accepting retrogressive traditional norms. In spite of having instances of gender reversals, like Dora divorcing Chris and Agnes leaving her husband, where women take active decisions and steer their destiny according to their whims, it is curious that both these women accept their husbands back, towards the later part of the novel. They yearn for a pre-colonial past when gender relationships were totally in man's control. This is evident from the conversation between Rose and Dora, where they lament the loss of a past culture, which is curiously very sexist.

‘Think of our culture again at this period. Even before the British came to rule us, there were so many primitive societies in our country, untouched by any outside influence. In one primitive society, if a man caught his wife with

another man, he cut off the man's head, a very glorious action indeed! In another primitive society, if a man caught another man with his lover, he cut off the head of the man who tampered with his lover. In yet another primitive society, a husband could give his wife in order to find favour from another man. (101)

Rose and Dora hence want back a system where in they had no negotiations about their gender role-plays. They lament the loss of values where a man, if he catches his wife with someone else cannot cut off the intruder's head. These two women romanticise sexism, proving their desire to be within the patriarchal power play.

Hence Nwapa, ends her novel by lamenting aloud on what Rose has for herself. "Dora has come to terms with Chris and has her children; Olu always went back to his wife after each affair; Chinwe and Zizi had their youth to show. Even Tunde cherished a dear dead wife. But Rose, what had she?" (138). With this closing sentence, Nwapa has brought out the play of different intersecting factors in the protagonist Rose's life. Whilst all her friends reconcile with their partners and children, Rose has no body to share her life with. Her success in career does not count as her credential in a patriarchal society. Without a husband or children, Rose cuts out a very sad picture for Nwapa, which curiously reveals Nwapa's own stand towards patriarchy. By mentioning Chinwe and Zizi, who have their youth by their side, Nwapa, is also revealing ageism suffered by women in a patriarchal society. Women after crossing a certain age limit are looked upon as sorry figures, if they are not yet married or have no children. Age is a crucial factor in calculating the

indispensability of a woman in a patriarchal society. Thus, through Rose, Nwapa adds additional factors to intersectionality, like ageism and infertility that work as offshoots to the intersection of gender and geographic location.

At the intersection of gender and location, as per Leslie McCall's intracategorical analysis, Nigerian women can be found fighting with many demons of patriarchy, simultaneously. They suffer from the manipulative emotions of guilt and undue responsibilities thrust on their shoulders, by patriarchy. A woman's indispensability lies in her utility and even then, she has to constantly prove her worth in front of her family and the society. The three women characters are successful in their own area of expertise. They are an aberration to the pre-colonial and colonial dictum of weakness and passivity associated with the female sex. However, in spite of being strong and independent, these three women long to succumb to patriarchy. They endorse marriage and even advise their daughters to stay put with unfaithful partners, something that they themselves have not done. Thus, at the intersection of gender and geographic location, there are elements like education, religion, marriage, customs and traditions, sexism, infertility and ageism that define the experiences of these three women. These elements intersect in various associations to provide a wholesome view of the life of women in colonial Nigeria.

## 2) Political Turbulence & Geographic Location

The Biafran war occurred from 1967 to 1970. The civil war was a direct result of postcolonial Nigeria being torn by ethno-nationalistic forces, ripe with distrust, greed and enmity. Nationalism need not always be a sentiment that binds

people together, especially when the colonial forces are replaced by ethno-nationalistic groups, then nationalism will only pullulate hegemony and violence, as it happened in Nigeria.

Early literatures about Nigerian civil war were seldom written by female writers since war was always men's forte. The Biafran war literature especially was male centric. Thus, little was written on women's sacrifices and survival through the war to protect their families and also care for their children. Nwapa, through her fiction deconstructs this male discourse of nationalism and also reveals her criticism towards this largely male constructed political system. Infact Nwapa's women characters at various junctures are suspicious of this masculine nation building and even express their distrust in the political system of their country. There has been an increase in the interests in female survival stories, even from third generation Nigerian female writers, because the Biafran war is still a huge part of the Nigerian consciousness. The war was a bloody affair where boys over ten years of age were killed and women mutilated and the dead bodies of children lay "scattered like dolls in the long grass" (Forsyth 261).

The haphazard configuration of different tribes by the British into a united nation called Nigeria, took its toll after independence. Nigeria at its inception was only a nation by its geographic boundaries, while her insides were teeming with conflicts and deception. The loosely configured tribes were all at war with each other and their increasing intolerance and distrust towards each other culminated in a three year civil war. Though Nwapa gets into detail description of this civil war in her other novel titled *Never Again* (1975), the political turbulence and the

anticipation of the same, in colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, forms the background of *Women Are Different*.

This novel brings forth poignant questions regarding the political functioning of the nation, questions often raised by the female characters as a part of their increasing awareness and distrust towards their surroundings. There is also a psychological unwillingness displayed often to let go of their colonial masters. Christianity and modern education play pivotal roles in this transaction. Independence is not always viewed as an opportunity. In fact, almost all the three female characters, overlooking the political and ethnic turbulence occurring around them express their doubts regarding independence. They are not confident about the newly formed government and consequently, the civil war that breaks out affects everyone including the three women and tests their mettle for survival. “The real tragedy of the postcolonial world is that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to negotiate this new world” (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 129).

Nigeria was torn up by ethnic conflicts, rife with self-imposed racial inferiority and inter-racism. Political turbulence intersecting with the location renders another gamut of meanings to the experiences of the characters. At this intersection, there are conscious interplays of self-imposed racial inferiority and inter-racism being practised. The civil war heightens the suffering of these women, as they are caught in its vortex all alone and struggling.

The missionary run school that Rose, Dora and Agnes, attended under the principalship of Miss Hill, was preparing them for the time when Nigeria would need Christian educated people to be a part of the administration. Miss Hill was part of the British flock who believed that it is their duty to prepare the youngsters for political independence. They strove to do it through Christianity and modern education. "...she (Miss Hill) felt Nigeria needed well brought up Christian girls who would take their places when they eventually handed over power to the people" (Nwapa, *Women Are Different* 23). There was also the issue of cultural differences that Miss Hill encountered while tutoring the natives. She was well aware of these differences and kept her distance from situations that did not concur with her belief system. "Miss Hill had a thousand and one things to say to the girl, but she did not. After all she thought, she was a foreigner in a foreign land with strange cultures" (22). Miss Hill earnestly hoped that the girls in her school will become tomorrow's hope for Nigeria, through their education and scholarship. She vehemently protested against the native tradition of marrying them off early. "She had not graduated in Oxford and come to Nigeria to train Nigerian girls to be good wives" (23). However, women in Nigeria have always been excluded from the mainstream because of the gender patterns prevalent. Hence even though, Miss Hill hoped her girls to help run the country some day and the girls themselves, hoped for better prospects for their nation, the society as such gave little space or respect for women. "Women (and the family) are located in the private domain, which is not seen as politically relevant... as nationalism and nations have usually been discussed as part of the public political sphere, the exclusion of women from that arena has affected their exclusion from that discourse as well" (N. Y.- Davis, *Woman* 23).



Miss Hill, hoped to erase this imbalance in the socio-political life of women in Nigeria. However, by modern education, native languages were not ignored. In fact “ Ibo language was one of the subjects taught in school, and church services were conducted in English as well as Ibo” (Nwapa, *Women Are Different* 23).

Whilst native languages were encouraged, it goes without question that the motive of the missionaries was primarily to ‘civilise’ the colonies. The girls in the school in spite of receiving a modern education are seen resorting to inter-racism and blame game, prevalent between different ethnicities, during a school protest. Miss Hill is shaken by this reversion of the students into their native self, by negating the Christian values that she had so thoroughly instilled in them. ““Janet, we are not as uncivilised as your people. We do not carry matchets where we come from” (33). Inter racism is rampant between students as they pick on one girl named Janet, who wanted to beat up Miss Hill during the school protest. The violence displayed by Janet, is a colonial instinct, condemned by her fellow students as uncouth and uncivilised.

...that silly and uncouth girl to call my people uncivilised? From what home does she come from? Is her home better than my own? Look at her, her people went about stark naked not long ago. It was only when the missionaries came that they taught them how to cover their nakedness. (33)

Thus, the civilising role of the missionaries is acknowledged and this goes hand in hand with a self-imposed racial inferiority. The native ways of life are condemned and has been discarded for a more modern Christian way of life. This incident which rattled Miss Hill, for the shocking regression of the girls in to their

native demeanour raises doubts in Miss Hill's mind, "Could it be possible that the girls, well selected from good Christian homes, could come here *bush*, and leave here *bush*?" (35). Janet, towards the later part of the novel is seen as a victim of this cultural compromise. She appears deranged and dirty in front of Rose and is found obsessed with Friday. Obsession with Friday could indicate her tug of war with Christianity and her native religion. Thus, Christianity uproots many natives from their true system and abandons them totally.

However, Miss Hill leaves Nigeria with the satisfaction of having prepared her students to face whatever struggles that lay in the future.

She could also see future stateswomen amongst them who would be in politics and thus shape the destiny of their country, Nigeria, She said, though perhaps unnecessarily, that she was not pleased at the way politics was going in the country and added that she feared for the political future of Nigeria. She warned them that it was too soon for Nigerians to advocate for independence. Independence, she said would come, but that the people must be prepared for it... Independence she told the girls did not mean that all the white civil servants should leave Nigeria and go home, so that the new breed of educated Nigerians should take their place... The meaning of independence was awareness of Nigerians to their responsibilities in government. (48)

Miss Hill, enacting her racial superiority, describes the implications of independence to the students, many of whom are perturbed by the moral questions that they will be facing after their nation goes independent. The students are aware

of the issues of bribery and general chaos that has infected the political administration of the country. But even when the girls were besotted with the moral questions behind the giving and acceptance of bribes, they toy around for solutions within the patriarchal parameters of their society. The cultural fabric of the nation is such that, women do not directly associate themselves with position of power, but they interrogate themselves on their stand when their husbands would come to acquire such power and consequently misuse it. It is from such cultural fabric, that Rose, Agnes and Dora have risen to overrule the patriarchal power play by acquiring positions of power. Agnes, who is appointed as a Woman Education Officer in the Ministry of Education, senses the political changes happening in the country as early as 1962. She notices how the new administrators, many like herself, young and educated from Ibadon are catering to the British definition of success and thus resorting to corruption and negation of their duties.

To them independence meant living in the GRA-Government Reservation Area, taking over the positions of the British, driving cars like their colonial masters, but ignoring the grave responsibilities attached to the new positions. The British were not emulated by these new men. The civil service was still regarded as the white man's service, and therefore one could cheat the government, and boast about it, because it was a foreign government. This mentality persisted years after independence and this worried Agnes and some well meaning people like her. (63)

There is thus a rift between the people in the way they look upon this newly acquired independence. Not everyone looks upon it as an opportunity for the nation; some feel that independence has come too soon.

Her (Agnes) boss had worked under the colonial masters for a long time, rising from messenger to the position which he then held. The presence of people like Agnes in the service annoyed him. Good things had come to them too soon, and he was envious in spite of the fact that had it not been for independence he would have been a mere secretary in one of the ministries.

(63)

Agnes, however, goes on to topple such professional and patriarchal narrow mindedness, and goes on to acquire a powerful position wherein she has her own huge house and drives her own car and is also invited to the cocktail parties hosted by the ministers.

Of the three, it is Dora, who has a real struggle during the civil war. Abandoned and betrayed by her husband, Dora is caught at the vortex of the civil war, all alone with her children. Dora's forthrightness enabled her to foresee the future and be prepared for what was to come. When in 1966, a political coup happened; Dora predicted and prepared for a counter one. "The drama was being played out in Lagos and Kaduna no doubt, but Dora had the foresight that soon the world she used to know would change beyond recognition" (71). Her first step to counteract the upcoming turbulence was to move far away from its epicentre and hence she shifted her headquarters to Aba. Dora concurred with Miss Hill that independence had come too soon for them.

Dora did not see the reason for jubilation over the coup. Were those who were spared not guilty of bribes and corruption? Her teachers were right, independence came too soon. We had power thrust into our hands and we did not know what to do with it. We failed to use it judiciously. We became intolerant of those who opposed us; our political opponents became our enemies, and when they defeated us, we would not take defeat; we said the elections had been rigged. When a political party lost, overnight, its loss became victory, for during the dead of night, those who lost had bribed those who won, and a defeat turned into victory. (72)

The counter coup turned out to be violent. Dora's own children became traumatised by the murder of the Supreme Commander. Dora, was, however, wrestling with her shock and anger from the betrayal by her husband, Chris. However, she was aware of the bloody power play that will follow this counter coup. The army had taken control and Dora feared the outbreak of a civil war. "She had to wait until the situation in the country settled, and pray that there will not be a civil war. God forbid that there should be a civil war. She read about civil war in her history lessons-the American Civil War. Civil war was cruel. It was worse than any other type of war. God, she prayed, prevent us from having a civil war" (73). Being a practical woman, Dora had the insight to foresee the future and thus she planned accordingly for her and her children's safety, in case a civil war breaks out. She thus went to her native place and brought land and built a bungalow and stocked up on food. She evacuated her bakery in Aba and set it up in Okporo. Thus, Dora is able to save herself and her family from hunger during the civil war. She kept her business

running and thrived financially during the war. Women's survival stories of war are often not solitary struggles, but one where they sacrifice and struggle to keep their families safe. Hence, surviving the war for a man is more of a masculine re-emphasis, whereas for a woman it is more familial.

Rose is caught in the cluster of hard-working Nigerians, who tried to make independence worthwhile. However, Rose witnesses violence and burning of cars and narrowly escapes getting hurt by some thugs. She is confused as to why ordinary people are being tortured, to which her boss warns her, ““But the man they burnt to death at Agege a few weeks ago was not a politician. His was a case of mistaken identity,” said her boss. That’s why we must be very careful. We have to watch events as closely as possible”” (90). All this chaos makes Rose rethink her stand on independence. She who had inspired her own father about how Nigeria is ready for independence, while she was a child, begins to have doubts about herself.

All that Miss Hill had told them when they were in school was coming true. No, Nigeria was not ready for independence. Nigeria needed time to mature, to be a nation. Nigeria needed time to learn that when they were independent, it did not just mean taking over from the colonial masters. It meant taking over responsibility from the colonial masters. It meant being patriotic, taking decisions that would benefit the country just as the colonial masters took decisions that benefitted the mother country. (90)

For Rose, the future of Nigeria is apprehensive. She is shocked by the violence happening around and this turbulence shakes her trust in the political system of her country. She also engages in self-infused racial inferiority, wherein

she feels that the colonial masters would have done things better as they do for the mother country. In calling the British 'colonial masters', Rose surrenders to her racial inferiority and loses all hope for a self-governed Nigeria. She expresses the same to Dora, about Nigeria's ineptitude to self-govern

“You see, Dora, we in Nigeria are in a kind of cultural melting pot. We have moved too fast since independence. Think of the colonial era. Things did not move too fast but we were sure where we were going. Since independence, we have had a civilian regime, a military regime, and civil war all between 1960 to 1974” (101). Thus, they lament for the lost bondage, with which they missed the order imposed upon them by the British rule. Independence shocks Nigeria's social and political fabric into total unrest and ensues it with total political and moral chaos.

Thus, at the intersection of political turbulence and location, there are overlapping issues of inter racism, civil war, self-imposed racial inferiority and chaos. All of these contribute to the political unrest that had infected Nigeria leading to the three year civil war. All the three women are caught in the civil war, by which their destinies are changed forever. Though women and children are most often casualties of war, Nwapa has produced female characters that do not cut as sorry figures, they are fighters and survivors. Hence, Nwapa has successfully deconstructed the image of the morally compromised native women during war outbreak. They become active agents of survival, resilient and bold unlike how they have been portrayed in the main stream war literature.

## **Intersectionality as a Core Analytical Tool**

Leslie McCall's intra categorical approach thus provides an insight into the deeper intersections of the Nigerian gender structure and political climate, as presented in the novel. Intersectionality of experiences establishes an in depth analysis of the same, where in multiple perspectives become possible. The Collins and Bilge analysis is yet another means of undertaking an intersectional analysis that immediately identifies and analyses an inherent social problem in its social context through its variables of power and relationality. "Oppressions differ, as do attempts to explain and/ or justify them" (Peterson 14). Though all the six core tools are not required for analysis here, the tools that are applied give a clear picture of the problems that the novel wrestles with.

### **1) Social Inequality**

The common sense of privileging the masculine and devaluing the feminine is culturally and collectively internalized to such an extent that we are all variously complicit in its reproduction. And it is also implicitly and explicitly manipulated to reproduce inequalities as if this were natural and inevitable, thus making critique and resistance difficult. (15)

The primary objectives of intersectionality are to identify the inherent social inequalities and bring it to the forefront for justice. Social inequalities are never easy to address, as in they are not constituted of a single discriminatory factor, but mostly will be a result of a number of intersecting factors. Thus, to address social inequalities, identification and redressal of its complexities are mandatory. Location



is a primary contributor in social inequality as in it is almost always location specific. The social inequalities faced by different sections of the society differ by their social standing. Thus, in a patriarchal society, such as Nigeria, women occupy the periphery of the social circle of power, while, men occupy the centre. In a colonial society, the colonised occupy the periphery whereas power rests with the coloniser. A patriarchal colonised country will have native women in the margins. In a newly independent country, rife with power struggle and chaos, women almost always occupy the margins, whereas men of power occupy the centre. Women have to work their way through patriarchal mind sets and glass ceilings to get to the centre. It's a hard task, but one which all the three women endeavour to reach in the novel. However, their struggles are rife with gender power plays and though they break the traditional shackles of gender inferiority, they do not consider themselves as successful. They subscribe to the patriarchal definition of success for a woman, wherein she attains acceptance and dignity, only under a man's shadow. This irony is wrought in the novel, which is Nwapa's own view in spite of her portrayal of three powerful female characters.

*Woman Are Different* is a novel on postcolonial chaos encumbered by the people of Nigeria, while being ill-equipped to handle the newly gained independence. This turbulence results in massive turmoil and disrupts the entire nation as the Biafran civil war. The violence is unprecedented and many are caught in the vortex of this political mayhem. Nigeria is already a culturally biased country. Patriarchy defines the way of life and gender role plays are followed to the point. Colonialism brought in Christianity and modern education, both which displaced the

native folks from their true ways of life. However, gender hierarchy remained unchanged. It is through these graded associations that all the three women, struggle hard for survival. They are better informed by their Christian education through their white missionary principal, Ms Hill, on the importance and possibilities of education. Through education, they hoped to redeem whatever discrimination they suffered.

The Christian missionary school provides these women with the forewarnings of a future wrought with conflict and all the students including, these three women are prepared to face this future. Agnes, who represents the dispensability of daughters in Nigeria, is married of to a man who is an imposter and who is old enough to be her father. She succumbs to the marriage and yet, continues her education without her husband's knowledge. Dora gets married to an irresponsible man, who steals from her and who abandons her to marry a white woman. Faced with the civil war, Dora single handedly brings up her children and her baking business. Rose remains a miserable character in the novel, because of not having a husband or children. Rose is however, very successful in her career. But in a patriarchal society, the yardstick to measure success is different for both men and women. These three women adhere to this yardstick and hence, they are often caught yearning to be in a stable relationship. In spite of achieving and overcoming so much, these three women are left feeling incomplete and not accepted by their own family. The men in their lives exert their influence on these women, even in spite of their absence. Their infidelities and betrayals are consequently pardoned by these three women. The burden of guilt and responsibility are always a woman's to

bear in a patriarchal society. The failures of marriage, inability to produce children, growing old are all a few of the crosses bore by the women in a society. This social inequality runs deep into the cultural consciousness of the nation and it is multifaceted in its implications.

The civil war that ravaged Nigeria is a result of the unstable governments that took turns because of the corrupt political parties. Miss Hill had warned the girls regarding the chaos that Nigeria will plunge into if independence comes too soon. All the girls at some point of the novel concur with Miss Hill's observations. There is a dependency on the colonial masters, expressed often in the novel. The Nigerians emulated the British administration and their corrupt ways. The ethnic conflicts added fuel to this mayhem and what ensued was a three year civil war that devastated the entire country. It was a hard battle to win, but all the three women, Agnes, Rose and Dora come out of it unscathed. Their Christian education and belief system has also unconsciously inflicted them with racial inferiority. They consider their fellow Nigerians as incapable and inferior compared to the white colonial masters. This inherent racial inferiority is also a result of the cultural conflicts between the colonial and the native. Many are casualties of such cultural conflicts. An example would be Janet, a fellow student from the missionary run school, who was ridiculed for her bush ways. Janet reveals the presence of the bush, in the racial history of every African. Torn between the native customs and the colonial system, Janet, becomes mentally unstable. Years after when she barges into Rose's office, "Her dress was torn at the sides. It was dirty, old and shapeless (Emecheta, *Woman Are Different* 83)", suggested Janet's poverty. Her insistence on

not eating on Friday and not to be touched on Friday indicates the religious chaos within her inflicted due to the Christian faith. She asks Rose to talk to her husband so that her children will be released from jail. In Janet, Nwapa creates those that have withered away, because of the colonial cultural conundrum. It is clear that Janet and the likes of her are the casualties of the civil war. The social inequality instilled by colonisation, patriarchy and political instability gives rise to many forms of discriminations that are intersectional in nature. Social inequality is rampant in the novel and in fact, Nwapa provides education as the solution to end many of the social miseries at play.

## 2) Relationality

“Intersectionality’s focus on the relationality among intersecting oppressions, and its search for the common features that reappear across multiple oppressions potentially deepens understanding of disparate forms of domination and resistance” (Collins, “The Difference”<sup>23</sup>). Nwapa’s fiction is best known for its relationality. She writes about women from an ordinary stand point, thus making their experiences relatable. Nwapa, took upon herself the task of redressing the historical literary bias shown towards the female characters by the male writers in Africa. Hence, instead of portraying mere subordinates to men, Nwapa etches her female characters as power houses of strength, wisdom and courage. Culture and tradition hold importance to these characters and yet when they break rules, they do it unapologetically.

Nwapa’s *Women Are Different* is almost a didactic novel in that it preaches what women require for self-sufficiency and independence. However, Nwapa’s

female characters also take their familial roles very seriously. Hence becoming wives and mothers are also important for them. Yet they are by no means submissive or meek. Faced with betrayals and civil war, these women work hard to save themselves and their children. Thus, Nwapa's female characters are by no means geographically restricted; their identity permeates across location and attains universality.

Relationality becomes an indispensable tool in intersectional analysis, for it is through relationality that the existence of the multifaceted social injustices can be understood. Women anywhere in the world know the importance of education and how it becomes an effective tool in dispersing the cultural taboos, historically preying on them.

Nwapa also discusses on the dangers of political instability and how women and children become the first casualties of a resulting civil war. In turn, Nwapa also lets her readers know, how forthrightness and hard work, can save lives, through these three women. They never negate their familial responsibilities even though they do not take lightly to their spousal betrayal. Hence, Nwapa's female characters are strong, resilient women, unflinching in the face of cultural bias, political turmoil and civil war.

### 3) Power

“Intersectionality's emphasis on intersecting systems of oppression suggests that different forms of domination each have their own power grid, a distinctive “matrix” of intersecting power dynamics” (22). These power grids operate in

different combinatory matrixes to generate experiences of social inequalities. In a patriarchal postcolonial society, sexism and political unrest, decide the power dynamics at play. Nigeria, in Nwapa's fiction is at its inception and thus a fertile ground for conflicts. This cultural chaos leads to the political instability of the nation. Nation building is largely seen as a male-centric activity. The power dynamics is thus in a constant flux.

*Women Are Different* is a novel on modern women's resilience and struggle in a post-war society, where in gender roles are etched and strategised to suite the power structures at play. In a phallogentric society, such as Nigeria, power always rests with the men. Women are subordinates, bound by social customs and traditions to serve men. While Nwapa, etches her females as powerful, educated women; she does not take them out of this power structure. In short, Agnes, Rose and Dora survive inside this structure, without even wanting to be out of it. This is evident through their relationships and their acceptance of their estranged spouses back into their lives, towards the later part of the novel. Neither Agnes nor Dora accept back their husbands for themselves, but they do so for their children, and in general for the society; because they hope that their healed marriages will fetch them acceptability and respect from their surroundings. Rose on the other hand, wallows in self-blame for not giving enough care to Ernest when he had come to her with his problems. Gender structure in Nigeria cushions the man. The burden of the well-being of marriage does not lie on his shoulder. In fact patriarchy infuses women with guilt for becoming successful. This is revealed through Agnes's shaken self who drives away from her husband's house, shocked to realise his hold on her life in

spite of the years of absence and neglect. Dora's marriage was always an act of appeasement from her part, wherein, she is often seen cajoling and pampering her irresponsible husband. Rose, on the other hand has been left emotionally, financially and psychologically abused by the men in her life. Thus, in relationships, power rests with the men. Even when Agnes walks out on her husband, to live with another man, she becomes dependent on this other man to guide her through life. Hence at no point in any of the relationships, do these women hold power. It is when they are left alone to face a crisis that they muster up courage to save themselves and their children.

In spite of being survivors of a civil war, and single successful mothers, Agnes and Dora are disturbed to see their daughters becoming independent. Dora, disagrees with her daughter's decision to divorce her cheating husband. While Dora herself is a victim of betrayal, she wants her daughter to hold on to her marriage. Agnes, too wants her daughter to give up her wayward ways and settle down. The only way they hoped their daughters would concur is if they showed them the way themselves; hence both Agnes and Dora accept their husbands back. Thus, even when they deconstruct the gender hierarchy prevalent, by becoming the bread winners and the house owners, Agnes and Dora have never truly endorsed superiority. They have willingly given up power to their men and hoped their daughters will do the same. Rose on the other hand, remains totally devoid of self-assertion, in spite of being a successful rich woman. She is haunted by the feeling of being incomplete and is desperate to at least have a child by the man she courts. Patriarchy negates women of the ownership to their own self and their body. The

female body is a commodity that is required to perform certain functions. Rose, thus is left devoid of any power or agency over herself, and she wonders on what she truly has, compared to her friends. Patriarchy even makes the most successful woman feel inadequate. Thus power in a gendered society is streamlined to suite the male-centric way of life. All the three women transcend the cultural boundaries of gender hierarchy and become successful and yet, power remains elusive in their lives.

Nigeria is a country born into conflicts. The ethnic conflicts aggravated through the creation of the nation. The tribes, that have already been existing as mini nations, were haphazardly configured together, with an outright denial of their differences. Thus Nigeria was merely a nation by its geographical boundaries and not by its nationalistic sentiments. Political unrest thus ruled the roost and the whole country was becoming a pandemonium of varied ethnic clashes. Hence the power that the British exercised over Nigeria was never actually given back. Racial inferiority and inter racism became rampant and true nationalism and independence remained a distant dream.

The novel is rife with instances of distrust and confusion regarding the arrival of independence. The process of nation building is viewed with suspicion by all the female characters. However, their yearning for the British order reemphasises the racial inferiority that many of the natives suffer from. Christianity and modern education play a pivotal part in propagating a cultural chaos. The native customs and traditions are soon abandoned and the new order is by no means empowering to the people. The fact that, even when the female characters at different points, are seen



recollecting their principal Miss Hill's words on how Nigeria had acquired independence prematurely, they also seek back a lost tradition of native customs on marriage and courtship. Thus post-independence, Nigeria spirals down into total chaos and when the political system collapses, a civil war becomes imminent.

In Nwapa's fiction, independence remains a conflicting subject, one which is a traumatic episode in the annals of Nigerian history. The ethno-nationalistic conflicts never actually made it possible for the people to experience power. Power eluded the citizens and remained vested in the hands of corrupt political parties.

The idea of community constitutes an integral dimension of power relations; it is the bedrock for theorizing the resistance of subordinated groups as well as the political action of individuals within such groups. Because subordinated groups are routinely excluded from formal institutions of governance and knowledge-construction, the resulting social inequalities that they experience limit their ability to exercise power within and across multiple domains of power. This exclusion in turn limits effective problem-solving because the perspectives of the people who are most affected by social problems are silenced. (23)

#### 4) Social Context

Contextualising of the social inequality is mandatory in addressing it and delivering social justice to the victims. The social context also supplies the analysis with the much-needed multiple perspectives, that will heighten the chances of understanding the intersectionality within.

The social context of a patriarchal society with in a politically unstable country becomes a fertile ground for the enactment of different power plays. The gendered society marginalises its women, while men are given primary status. The political instability ensuing independence, questions the credibility of a male centred nation building process. Women and children are victims of both gendered hierarchies and political chaos. All the three women are culturally rooted to the gendered ethos of their surroundings. They cater to their patriarchal upbringing and in spite of the troubles in their marriage; they enter into relationships where men play the upper hand. Success for a woman remains an elusive topic in patriarchal terms. This is why the novel ends with a dejected Rose, wondering on what she has. Her thriving career is obviously not a relief, let alone an asset. Thus the social context of patriarchal power domain, remains biased towards women. However, the cultural rift between the colonial education and Christianity and the native customs and traditions, also create its own set of problems. These cultural displacements lead to inter racism, racial inferiority and people caught in the maze of cultural chaos. Janet being an example of a victim caught in the vortex of cultural displacements in which her native believes is no longer considered valid. She is shown as a deranged and dirty woman, totally clasped in the web of religious chaos and domestic problems. Thus analysing the social context in the novel sheds light on the contextual discriminations happening in the undertones of this fiction. The three primary female characters fight their own battles against the patriarchal and the political fabric of their society. “Through the portrayal of those three female characters, Flora Nwapa crushes the myth of men’s supremacy in society in that

Dora, Rose, and Agnes endeavour to free themselves from their respective husband's financial domination by means of personal toil" (Gbaguidi 80).

Intersectional analysis of this novel sheds light on the nuanced discriminatory experiences of each of the primary female characters of the novel. Nwapa, in showing the plight of modern women against patriarchy, within a crumbling political system and faced with a civil war, also enlightens on the true path to female redemption.

Thus Nwapa in this novel writes off the effacement, marginality, and misrepresentation of women with subtlety and grace, contending that a woman is not an inanimate object without brains, feelings, emotions and desires. In challenging male perception of what women want and need, Nwapa gives the female point of view. In her "woman-centred oral literature", she emphatically asserts that the so-called passive, passionless, unimaginative, powerless, and irresponsible African woman is a figment of male's imagination which she has set out to correct. (Umeh118)

It is impossible to talk about inequality without analysing the intersecting categories of discriminations. Through the negation of the essentialised notions on womanhood, intersectionality explores the previously hidden exclusions in female identity and experience. Nwapa's *Women Are Different* emerges as a kaleidoscopic textbook on native female experiences caught in the crux of traditionality and modernity; in between the colonial and postcolonial era through intersectional analysis.



## Chapter V

### **Conclusion**

Intersectionality has gained popularity and prominence over the years since its inception. In fact, intersectionality has been at once dealt with in various ways; it is conceived as a theory, applied as a methodology, followed as a paradigm and used as a tool. In any form, intersectionality promotes the understanding of human lives as that which is shaped by the interactions between different social positioning like race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, geography and so on. Inequities thus are not the result of a single distinct factor, but an outcome of the conjoined efforts of multiple social locations.

Lived realities are infused with complex social dynamics that shape experiences. These complexities that rig daily lives have to be acknowledged and processed through multidimensional systems of analysis. Further, this process of analysis has to discover enroute the existing categories of social inequalities in the life of an individual, rather than predetermining a single category as the decisive one. The relationships between these different categories are never constant; they change over time and location. Experiences of oppression and privileges can occur simultaneously, depending on the context. This calls for a multilevel analysis, where in power structures are recognised and studied in conjunction with each other. Intersectional methodologies are driven towards picking out even subtle currents of power dynamics, which manifests into experiences of discriminations. In fact, even the researcher or policy makers or activists engaging in such analysis must be aware

of their own power and social positioning when taking an intersectional analysis. This reflexivity guarantees a particular gravity and direction to the research and resultant policies.

Time and space are crucial to intersectional analysis. It is within the intersection of time and space that social orders are created and different kinds of knowledges are situated. Privileges and oppressions are determined by the temporal and spatial location of a social subject. Time and space are not fixed determiners; on the contrary, they are fluidic in nature and are very much swayed by people's perceptions and social conditionings. This flux guarantees the inclusion of complexity which is central to the dynamics of experience.

The methodology of this thesis is focused on social locations and time, over spatial shifts, as evident from the use of concepts like transcalarity and transtemporality. This serves the purpose of addressing the issues of evolving mutations that naturally happen to identities and experiences over time and space. Through a methodology of intersections of geographic locations and social locations over the course of three generations occupying different points in time, this thesis has focused on the identificatory and normative aspects of intersectionality that go into the evolution of the colonial/postcolonial/ transnational female subject.

Nigerian history is strewn with chaotic episodes of colonialism and civil wars where in the country has often been on the brink of disintegrating into ethnic sub groups. The female writers of the nation have always been preoccupied with multiple issues resultant of deep-rooted patriarchy, colonialism, identity crisis and the turbulent process of nation- building. Their preoccupations reveal a gamut of

systems of power dynamics, operating simultaneously. These experiences have evolved over time and have mutated into other more complicated webs of concerns, through migrations and its resultant chaos. The native female, caught in the throngs of patriarchal and colonial power plays, mutates into migrant Third world woman through her migration to the west, whereby she is further isolated in terms of her race, her gender and her class.

Leslie McCall's intracategorical analysis is undertaken through an intersection of geographic spaces with predominant social locations like gender, class, race and political turbulence, in all the three chosen novels. Hence geographic location becomes the constant epicentre for intersectional analysis spanning across time through the three generations, which makes the analysis transcalar and transtemporal in nature. The native and western spaces are analysed from multiple standpoints taken by the three consecutive generations of Nigerian female writers. Thus, geographic location remains pivotal in the origin of experiences of discrimination, which are indeed rooted in the social context of the nations. Intersectionality provides a fascinating window into the overlapping systems that work to produce inequality. Through intracategorical complexity, the overlapping systems are categorised and yet negated for its definite boundaries to acknowledge the complexity involved in life experiences.

The thesis is designed as a walk back in time to emphasise on the contemporariness of the topic. Intracategorical analysis of the three writers brings out the evolution of the contemporary transnational female subject from the colonial/postcolonial female subjects. The intersection of gender with geographic

location reveals the existent finer systems of power plays. In the contemporary generation or third generation represented by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, the native space is ruled by patriarchy and its feeder systems like religion, class, beauty, ageism and sexuality. The immigrant nation is wrought with multiple notions on gender like beauty, body fetishism, ageism, forced sexual stimulation, migrant issues, sexuality, sexual frigidity and class. However, race intermingles with gender in the foreign spaces and transcends the male and female immigrant experiences into chaotic instances of social discriminations. Becoming a Black man/ woman is defined by these systems that co- exist in native and foreign spaces. While for men, native spaces offer privilege; migration to the west, brings in overlapping systems of race and class which delineates their status to that of Black immigrants. Ifemelu and Obinze return as changed individuals due to their experiences of migration that has affected them both adversely and yet differently. For Ifemelu, both nations offer intersections of multiple social locations which do not compliment her status as an African- American female student. Obinze migrates to come back with a better perception of his own privileges as a man in his native society. Thus, at the intersection of gender and race with geographic location, *Americanah* opens the window to the migratory experiences of two individuals who aspire to be transnational citizens. In doing so, they reveal the hardships of migratory experiences as both a female student from the Third world and an illegal immigrant from the African continent; issues that are very much relevant in today's world.



The postcolonial subject portrayed in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* migrates to England to become an inhabitant from a former British colony. Both geographical spaces are wrought with intersections of many rigid systems that prove futile for the woman, for she is struggling in both the native and migrant nations. Like *Americanah* the native space is ruled by patriarchy and its various tributaries like religion, traditions and custom, marriage, education and class. Adah at the intersection of gender with native space is faced with patriarchy and abandonment, and is always engaged in a solo fight against the systems that seek to dominate her. In her lonely fight, Adah is armed with nothing but her courage and determination to educate herself, for she understands very early that only education can truly redeem her from the clutches of patriarchy. Francis being a man finds privilege in the native society. However, Francis belongs to a poor family and his marriage to Adah uplifts his social position in the native society. At the intersection of class and native space, both Adah and Francis cross over the power structures through different ways, Adah through education and employment, and Francis through marriage to Adah. When they migrate, new equations and consequences manifest in their lives. Gender in the migrant nation is wrought with problems for Adah in the form of domestic violence, rape and consequent pregnancies. For Francis, at the intersection of gender and the western space, toxic and violent masculinity and infidelity manifests. Both Adah and Francis fall off from their upper-class wagon upon migration for at the intersection of class and geographic location, no coloured person is spared. At the intersection of class and geographic location, England offers no solution because neither education nor a well- paid job helps Adah and Francis get out of the poor housing conditions meant for lower class

Africans. While Francis succumbs to being a second class citizen, Adah fights hard against this degradation. Race works simultaneously along with these systems of power and creates havoc in the migratory experiences of both Adah and Francis. Adah loses her fascination for the white people and Francis is afraid for his life because he is aware of the dispensability of Black men in white societies. Thus, at the intersection of race, class and gender, Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* offers an in-depth view into the systemic politics of violence and discriminations prevalent in both native and western societies.

While the first two chapters undertake a transcalar study of both the western and native spaces, the third chapter representing the first generation through Flora Nwapa, centres on the native space and the transcendence of the postcolonial subject from the colonial subject. Nigeria is caught in the throes of independence and the transition is ensued by civil wars and unrest. This provides for fresh categories to seep into the intersectional analysis, since power is centred within systems of turbulence as well. Thus, intracategorical analysis includes the intersection of the native space with gender and political turbulence that has a telling effect on the characters. *Women Are Different* portrays a patriarchy driven native society being furthered by feeder systems like religion, education, marriage, infertility, ageism, spinsterhood and cultural conflicts. At the intersection of gender and geographic location, strong women remain a pawn to the patriarchal power plays. These women have waded political unrest, civil war and poverty and yet at the intersection of gender and their location, they yearn to get back into relationships and are even found advising their children on sticking to marriages and complying with native

traditions. Rose is a prime example of this irony, she is a successful career woman and yet her ineptitude to hold on to a man or get pregnant makes her suffer at the intersection of systems like ageism, infertility and marital status. At the intersection of gender and native space, the men find it easy to get off their infidelities and violence. Patriarchy accords them these privileges and even their victims pardon and take them back eventually. Nigeria is suffering from tensions between the western and native cultures, which are furthered by simultaneous systems like modern education and Christianity. Being brought up in the Christian faith and modern education, all three protagonists completely adhere to the British ways and they even doubt their own country's potential for self-governance. At the intersection of geographic location and political turbulence there are systems of conflicts, civil war, racial inferiority and inter racism. There is chaos inherent within these systems and what ensued is a three-year civil war that tore up Nigeria. The women are shown to surpass all these hurdles through their hard work and determination. Nwapa's *Women Are Different* showcases strong willed powerful women, who never abandon their families in the face of adversities. At the intersection of their location with different pockets of power systems, they come out as survivors. However, patriarchy reigns supreme in their lives and they yearn for relationships and the stability of marriage clearly depicting the priorities of native Black women.

The simultaneous analysis of the three generations responds to the transtemporality in intersectionality and concurrent analysis of the native and western spaces makes the study essentially transcalar. At the intersections of gender and geographic location, all the three generations are seen caught within the

interlocked systems of patriarchy and other feeders. Race intersects with geographic location and from the second generation on, the native experiences also mutate to migrant experiences and undertake many more systems of power and connotations. These overlapping systems of power, traced out through intracategorical complexity can better explain social inequality and there by render visibility to the marginalised sections. It is intersectionality that makes all of this possible.

The other methodology of intersectionality adopted is the six core analytic tool created by Collins and Bilge, which gives a milestone study of the different social locations through the fixtures of collective dynamics like power, social inequality, complexity, relativity and so on. These fixtures serve as points of interrogations, wherein the social locations like race, gender, class and so on, portrayed in the novels are analysed for its contemporary relevance. This tool gives a concise analysis of the African situations in both the immigrant and native country. As explained by the creators of this tool themselves, not all pointers need to be taken for analysis. Hence, all the three generations have been analysed by a common set of tools which include social inequality, relationality, power, and social context.

Social inequality as a yardstick to evaluate the systems unearths the currents of injustice and inequity prevalent in societies. In *Americanah*, these societies include both the native and the west (America and England) where social inequality is very much part of the social fabric through gender and race. Patriarchy has a strong hold on the characters meting out disadvantages and privileges to them. Race couples with white centric capitalist patriarchy and unleashes havoc in the lives of coloured immigrants. Class also becomes a quotient of social inequality. Both the

native and the western societies are rampant with a share of these problems. The migrant issues get highlighted in *Americanah* and in a white society, no native privilege exists. Hence the process of becoming a Black man or woman is turbulent and traumatic for coloured people. *Second Class Citizen* also showcases the raging gender and race issues persistent in the native and the western society. Migration brings in new problems when the native crosses over to be a migrant. Social inequality works through the system of race, gender and class in the novel and the characters are found struggling and at times succumbing to this power politics. The first generation is wrought with issues of patriarchy and political turbulence. The process of nation building was a tumultuous process that caused civil war and political unrests in Nigeria. Women and children were caught suffering during the war and the aftermath of it was a highly unstable political situation which wreaked havoc everywhere. In *Women Are Different* this turbulence is showcased and the female characters are shown to be caught in the midst of this upheaval. Women are already denigrated into subordination by patriarchy and further Christianity and modern education too sees to it that customs and traditions of subordination are maintained by the women. Thus, social inequality is evident in the writings of all the three authors who represent the womenfolk of their respective generation.

Relationality is also a means to seek social justice. By relating to the experiences of discrimination of others, will one summon the courage to resist such oppressions and stand up for social justice. All the three authors have presented the readers with a world of social dynamics which is relatable. Adichie's *Americanah* is very much in keeping with today's migrant issues and race problems in America,

which explains why the novel is so highly acclaimed today. By making strong female protagonists to lead their novels, all the three female writers have made their novels highly inspirational. Emecheta's memoir of being an immigrant mother of five children in England is depicted through Adah's predicament. The three female protagonists of Nwapa's *Women Are Different* clearly portray the issues faced by women in highly patriarchal societies. Their tenacity and endurance in the face of grave situations makes them survivors. Thus, relationality binds all three writers through their novels of female endurance.

Power is an integral part of all social systems and it is this power that determines the social dynamics. In all the three novels, power rests within patriarchal systems in the native spaces and with the white capitalist patriarchy in the western spaces. The victims of this power politics are coloured women in the native society and coloured immigrants in the western society. Patriarchy has many feeder systems active simultaneously to produce experiences of discriminations. All the three novels depict various such feeder systems that are interlocked to produce discriminations. In *Americanah* gender and race work simultaneously to generate power. *Second Class Citizen* also has patriarchy and race working through social structures to generate power. In *Women Are Different* power rests with in the gendered political system and patriarchy. Power is persistent in all the three novels and this makes these works relevant and contemporary. "In essence, the domains-of-power framework connects the broader analytical space of a specific matrix of domination with the social dynamics of how it organizes individual and collective political behaviour across varying social contexts" (Collins, "The Difference"<sup>24</sup>).

Experiences stem from social contexts. It is the context that gives meaning to an experience and makes it one of advantage or disadvantage. Thus, a coloured woman in a white patriarchal society is bound to have experiences of discriminations. Women in patriarchal societies will also endure bias. The contexts of the three novels include both native and western platforms that render specific meaning to the lives of characters. Thus, the analysis of the specific context ensures the recognition of inequality and enables hope of redressing them. *Americanah* is an apt example of this social commitment. Adichie has brought to the table her own migrant experiences in America so that the finer nuances of the turbulence in migration and race can be addressed globally. Both Emecheta and Nwapa are also socially committed writers who have delved deeper into the native and western platforms to deliver experiences of discriminations that their fellow Nigerians face. As women, all three of them are committed to bring to the focus the Black female situation, be it in the native space or the west.

The multiplicities in the nature of inequality have a profound impact on the female population in a society. Poverty is a fine example of this system, because on an average, women are found to be poorer than men in a society. Topping that with issues like race or class or gender can have compounding effects on the experiences of discrimination that women undergo. Intersectionality traces out a person's scope for privilege in a society, focusing on aspects like gender or race or class and so on. Through the intersectional analysis of these three novels representing three generations of female Nigerian writers, there is an attempt to recognise social privilege as a consequence of systemic power plays. This is undertaken through a

study of the experiences of both the female and male characters, just so that in contradicting them, the glaring ineptitude of the social systems to deliver justice is exposed.

Intersectionality has often been criticised for its ambiguity. Since the primary focus of intersectionality is on subjective experiences due to its anchoring on Standpoint theory, intersectionality has been often accused of its tendencies to contradict. However, intersectionality calls for reflexivity, which ensures that lived experiences are not treated as generic. Hence it opens up the possibilities of interpretation which also allows multidimensionality of experiences and locates hierarchies within them. Today the world is far from dissipating these hierarchies existent within lived experiences. There is a rise in global protests against discriminations of various sorts and trying to battle against these hierarchies requires recognition of the historical contexts surrounding these issues, which is facilitated through intersectionality. The world today is forevermore turbulent and divisive and in dire need of a methodology to find solutions.

From the disparate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in communities around the globe to international protests against racism and discrimination, current events have shown that we are far from achieving equality. Trying to interpret and battle a multitude of injustices right now may feel overwhelming. How do we take on all these issues, and why should we? Intersectional feminism offers a lens through which we can better understand one another and strive towards a more just future for all. (“Intersectional feminism”)



This article titled “Intersectional Feminism: What It Means and Why It Matters Right Now” published in the *UN Women* magazine on July 2020 includes multiple voices representing the oppressed communities of the world, where in the pandemic has intensified the already existing processes of marginalisation, as a part of the COVID- 19 survival strategies. Kimberly Crenshaw, in an interview given to the *Time* magazine, published in Feb 2020, speaks on what intersectionality means in the current pandemic scenario, even though it has been thirty years since she has coined the term. To quote Crenshaw,

These days, I start with what it’s not, because there has been distortion. It’s not identity politics on steroids. It is not a mechanism to turn white men into the new pariahs. It’s basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts. (Steinmetz)

The world is going through unforeseen circumstances due to the pandemic, which has amplified immensely, the forces of social discriminations prevalent worldwide. The intersectional feminist lens provides a crystal-clear view of the interconnected webs of challenges that is plaguing different communities, all at once. The pandemic has exposed the urgent need to question these power structures which is the only way to uproot the deeply set systems of social inequalities, in order to build a future which belongs to everyone equally. Thus, intersectionality is

forevermore important today because of the multiple and compounding nature of challenges that's hounding communities everywhere. "In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the challenges of the virus have exacerbated long standing inequities and decades of discriminatory practices, leading to unequal trajectories" ("Intersectional feminism").

This is the problem in the current scenarios. The core idea taken for this research has a lot of scope for further study. The present world requires immediate and effective solutions for myriads of problems like the pandemic crisis, refugee crisis, gender, race, sexuality, unemployment, political unrest and so on. "Intersectional feminism centres the voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression in order to understand the depths of the inequalities and the relationships among them in any given context" ("Intersectional feminism"). The most immediate process in the redressal of social discriminations is to first recognise them and name them for what they are. An experience of discrimination is almost always sourced by multiple feeding systems of power dynamics. These feeder systems like race or gender or class or ability or sexuality and so on, have to be isolated and organised to be studied in depth in order to be redressed. The remedial measures of resetting these systems of discrimination must be meted out to everyone, so that everyone is served with justice and equality.

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## Appendix

### List of Published Articles

No.	Authors	Title of Publications	Journal/Anthology Name, Vol. No. & Year	National/ International	Publisher with ISSN/ISBN	Impact Factor
1)	M.P. Reshma & Dr. Nilan.	Hair, Race and Representation: An Intersectional Study of the African Kinky Hair in America	Studies in Indian Place Names (UGC CARE Journal) Vol-40-Issue-43-February -2020	National	Eduindex Journals ISSN 2394-3114	6.3
2)	M.P. Reshma & Dr. Nilan.	External Directives: An Intersectional Study of <i>Nappily Ever After</i>	Pursuits Oct-Nov 2018 Vol. XVI	National	ISSN 0974-7400	-