UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

‘SOMETIMES RACE IS CLASS’: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SENSE OF SELF IN BUCHI EMECHETA’S *SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN AND* CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE’S *AMERICANAH*

BY

ANTHONY ADDAI-AMOAH KWARTENG

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2022

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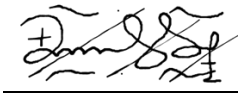
This Thesis is submitted to the University of Ghana, Legon, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy in English degree.

DECEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

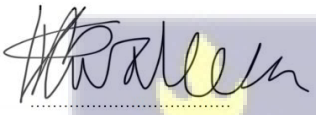
Candidate's Declaration

Except for the cited works, I declare that this thesis results from my original research and has not been presented for another degree at the university or elsewhere.

Signature:  Date: December 30, 2022

Name: ANTHONY ADDAI-AMOAH KWARTENG

ID: 10877648



Date: December 30, 2022

DR KWABENA OPOKU-AGYEMANG

(Principal Supervisor)

Date: December 30, 2022

DR KWAME OSEI POKU

(Co-Supervisor)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation and thanks go to my supervisors for their relentless support, encouragement and guidance.

I am grateful to the faculty and colleagues at the Department of English, University of Ghana, Legon, for their support. I am very grateful to my siblings for their unflinching support and prayers.

I appreciate the encouragement of Rev. Msgr. Prof. Stephen Ntim, Fr. Prof. Peter Nkrumah Amponsah, and Prof J.F. Wiredu. I also acknowledge the support of staff of the Faculty of Education, Catholic University of Ghana.

More importantly, my greatest inspiration for academic pursuit comes from my parents; I am eternally grateful to them for all they do for me.

Last but not least, I can never forget Fr. Dr Augustine Owusu-Addo, who gave me the courage to pursue this programme.

ABSTRACT

Sense of self is a person's identity, individuality and consciousness. This study explores the constructs (race and class) that compel African immigrants to reconstruct their sense of self in Euro-American cultural spaces, focusing on the works of Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Drawing on key concepts in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* as a theoretical lens, the study adopted textual analysis and close reading and contextual analysis to unearth how one's sense of self is constructed in Emechata's *Second-Class Citizen* and Adichie's *Americanah*. After considering the implications of the generational gap between Emechata and Adichie as second and third-generation writers, it stands to reason that African immigrant women writers use writing as a tool to tell their experiences of transnational migration and condemn racial and class inequality in Euro-American cultural spaces. Thus far, the diasporic experience described in both texts is a never-ending journey. Although travelling overseas is an intersectional experience that enables African immigrants to break away from the challenges they face in their communities, these experiences, I argue, induce them to reconstruct their sense of self to adjust to the conditions in Euro-American cultural spaces.

Keywords: African immigrant; African Literature; Class; Euro-American-Cultural Space Race; Sense of Self

DEDICATION

To my beloved family

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In *African Women Immigrants in the United States: Crossing Transnational Borders*, John Arthur contends that for West African immigrant women in particular, transnational spaces provide powerful contexts for understanding how class, racial, and ethnic relationships are manifested (107). Setting this in the context of this study, I argue that the intricacies of African immigrant experiences, as portrayed in literary texts, usually offer avenues for working through the complexities and nuances regarding race, class and identity. I find Fanon's notion of "double consciousness" particularly relevant here, as it highlights the internal conflict experienced by individuals marginalised by dominant social norms. In *What is Sense of Self*, Ylvisaker Mark defines sense of self as a person's identity, sense of individuality and consciousness. In this study, I argue that the characteristics that define an individual are then referred to as one's sense of self. These include, but are not limited to, one's political ideology or sense of belonging, as well as the things that influence us — all of which play an essential role in an individual's sense of self. Sense of self, as a crucial aspect of this discussion, is shaped by the interplay of these factors, particularly in the context of migration and cultural adaptation. Thus far, the crux of the argument I put forward in this study is that the nexus between race and class influences one's sense of self/ identity as an immigrant in Euro-American cultural spaces in Buchi Emechata's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah.*

In *Romance, diaspora, and Black Atlantic literature*, Yogita Goyal also avers that although a critique of nationality is generally present when discussing transnational and transatlantic frameworks, postcolonial and black British studies all take different

approaches to this critique (18). Following this, one can say that trans-Atlantic African immigrants' conditions cannot be the same in different spatial contexts and that the narratives of African immigrants can never be the same. More importantly, in the 19th and 20th centuries, African writers focused on African immigrants' lives in the Diaspora. As a result of the post-independence realities, a new genre of African literature known as "African literature in Diaspora" revealed many concerns relating to African immigration that the unstable political and socioeconomic situations on the continent compelled people to travel to the United States, Great Britain, and advanced economies in search of better life (Sackeyfio 3).

In "Immigration and African Diaspora Women Artists", Nkiru Nzegwu identifies intra-racial conflict and economic considerations as one of the major causes of African women migration. Nzegwu further argues that because these factors do not offer viable alternatives, migration becomes a question of need rather than a desire. Johnson Osirim believes the African novel is a popular literary genre in Africa and tells the story of African immigrants (367). This means that novels provide deep insights into the challenges and cultural adjustments faced by Africans who migrate, whether within the continent or abroad. I contend that focusing on themes such as identity, racism, and the quest for better opportunities, these stories offer a rich portrayal of the immigrant experience, highlighting the complexities of maintaining cultural heritage while navigating new environments. Thus, African novels significantly contribute to the global literary landscape by sharing African immigrants' unique and multifaceted journeys.

In *Africans in Global Migration: Searching for Promised Lands*, John Arthur, Joseph Takougang, and Thomas Owusu posit that Africans' immigration into Europe and the Americas can be categorised into three waves (3). The first wave began between the

1950s and the 1970s. Those who travelled to the Global North during these periods were Africans who had received the support of their government to study the arts and sciences. The second wave of African immigration occurred in the mid-1970s when Ghana and Nigeria witnessed political and economic instability, compelling many Africans to leave their countries, with the majority ending up in the Western world. The third wave began in this century and is currently ongoing. This group of people travel to the Western world primarily for better opportunities. One would then ask what accounts for the mobility into Euro-American spaces. To this end, it is crucial to understand what propels Africans to migrate and the challenges confronting them in their quest for greener pastures. It stands to reason that people migrate for several reasons, including the desire for better opportunities and the desire to elude a sense of insecurity. Notably, this is usually marked by the desire to pursue their dreams and the availability of suitable employment. What is often ignored is how to attain such objectives and goals. In the 1960s, the most common cause for male emigration from colonial and postcolonial African countries was a desire for "white man's education" (Anyanwu 1). This statement implies that migration is heavily influenced by economic forces, much like the process of globalisation. Similarly, in African literary scholarship, women writers focus on various degrees of problems. This study, therefore, explores how racial relations and class struggles compel African Immigrants to reconstruct their identities in Euro-American cultural spaces.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In his study, *Narrating the (Im)migrant Experience*, Ayo Oniwe argues that a critical examination of the continuous phenomenon of African immigrant writers abroad writing about immigration needs to be interrogated (3). Recent scholarship on immigrant identities has evolved from viewing Black diasporic identities as solely

connected by ancestral ties. This shift points to the fact that Black immigrants encounter various challenges. Copious studies (Akingbe; Nosalek; Ahmed; Dunton; Fasselt) have examined racial identities of African immigrants. However, I endeavour to delve deeper into the underlying constructs that drive African immigrants to reconstruct their sense of self (identity).

Additionally, it would be out of place to say that studies have not been done on Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. For example, Villanova'study "Voicing Creative Uprisings": Women and the Nigerian Diaspora in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*" centres on hegemonic representations and Eurocentric epistemologies of the female characters, Adah and Ifemelu (92). A cursory look at the literature reveals that little emphasis has been made in comparing Buchi Emechata and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's generational perspectives on the mediating constructs that influence the sense of self of African immigrants in England and America, respectively.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge the lacuna by exploring the constructs (race and class) that shape African immigrant's sense of self in Euro-American cultural contexts. It theorises on key concepts derived from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and explores how the generational gap between Emecheta and Adichie enriches our understanding of identity across different temporal and spatial dimensions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study is generally based on a comparative analysis of how one's sense of self is constructed through race and class in *Second-Class Citizen* and *Americanah*.

Specifically, the study seeks to**:**

1. explore racial discrimination in *Second-Class Citizen* and *Americanah*.
2. identify class relations in the novels

3. examine the generational gap in the portrayal of race and class dynamics and their influence on the sense of self of African immigrants

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does racial discrimination manifest in the experiences of African immigrants in *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah*?
2. What are the class differences in the characters' lives in both novels?
3. How does the generational gap shape the portrayal of racism and classism, impacting the sense of self among African immigrants?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This present study is based on two novels, both by Nigerian female writers. Analysing these two novels provides a unique view of colonialism vis-à-vis the construction of African selfhood in the Global North. This study focuses on the intricacies of social life regarding the nexus between race and class in *Second Class-Citizen* and *Americanah* and how these constructs (race and class) contribute to reshaping African immigrants in the United States and England, respectively. The plot, characterisation, setting, style, theme, and other literary elements are compared to understand the concerns of the writers. The study primarily draws upon close reading and contextual analysis of the texts and incorporates relevant secondary sources to provide a comprehensive analysis.

1.6 Justification for the Selection of Novels

As indicated earlier, some scholars have studied both novels from diverse perspectives. However, despite the various opinions and responses already formed, some aspects of the novels remain unexplored. What sets this study apart from earlier research is its focus on the intersection of digital media, storytelling, and identity formation in the context of African diaspora literature. Previous studies have explored the themes of racial relations, gender and identity formation in both narratives. This means that the

debate can still be extended to different levels. Hence, this study does a comparative study by theorising on Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* to explore how the authors' generational perspectives and narrative strategies shape their portrayal of racial and class dynamics, ultimately influencing the African immigrant's sense of self.

I, therefore, argue that by analysing how these narratives engage with issues of race, class and sense of self, particularly in the digital age, the study aims to offer a new perspective on the representation of African diasporic experiences. Drawing on Fanon's theories, the study seeks to illuminate how digital storytelling can challenge or reinforce existing power dynamics and colonial legacies in shaping African immigrant's sense of self.

Thus, it is remarkably justifiable that the historical roots add more depth to the stories and make them seem more realistic. This study provides empirical insights into the larger body of African immigrants' literary scholarship. The interesting thing about doing a comparative analysis of both texts is the fact that *Americanah*, which was written much later than *Second Class Citizen*, has a time setting which provides an insight to explore how these writers present issues on the nexus between race and class and their implication for immigrants in the United Kingdom and the United States. In their article, "Introduction: Everything Good is Raining: Provisional Notes on the Nigerian of the Third Generation," Chris Dunton and Pius Adesanmi posit that there are three (3) distinguishing *generations* of writers in Africa. Emecheta belongs to the **second generation,** while Adichie belongs to the **third generation** (9). Although Adesanmi and Dunton concentrate primarily on the work from Nigeria, their reflections still reveal a greater tendency in understanding the thematic concerns of each generation. The implication is that third-generation Nigerian Writers have considerable stylistic variation and thematic concerns, which are different from second-generation

Nigerian writers. In contextualising the generational gap in this study, I argue that analysing the generational differentiation requires an analysis of the two novels.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to recent scholarly debates in African literary scholarship. Thus, the study endeavours to make a substantial contribution to the scholarly understanding of African diaspora literature, mainly through an in-depth examination of how Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie deepen our understanding of how racism influences their use of language and the form of the Nigerian novel.

The theoretical underpinning of this study is rooted in established frameworks. Still, it innovatively applies the lens of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask* to examine Emecheta's and Adichie's works in a new light. This approach aims to deepen our understanding of how these different generational writers present various themes (race, identity, and postcolonialism), enriching the discourse on African diaspora literature.

Thematically, this research delves into a pivotal yet underexplored theme in African literature—racial hatred. By examining how this theme permeates the storytelling and character development in Emecheta's and Adichie's works, this study offers a compelling narrative that sheds light on the intricate ways literature reflects and responds to societal issues, particularly within the African context. To determine the generational gap in the worldviews of two West African writers who belong to distinct historical times, a study of *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah* would provide insight into understanding the experiences of African immigrants in England and America. Thus, not only the generational gap but, more importantly, how these two narratives examine transnational mobility across various locations of the Atlantic spectrum and the three key concepts of the phenomenon of diaspora: the loss of one's place of origin, the significance of memory and the quest for a convenient past. To this end, *Second*

Class Citizen and *Americanah* show how Emechata and Adichie demonstrate their dedication to the moral imperative in addressing the needless suffering of African immigrants in their works. This study is also relevant as it provides some insights into the field of African literature, specifically, the concept sense of self/the identity of African immigrants from Nigeria. This study takes an interest in arguments in Karin Barber's *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* that African texts also deserve consideration in light of the ongoing debate on historising global history in literary scholarship.

1.8 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative study design, employing a textual analysis approach. Through close reading and contextual analysis of *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah*, this study delves into character behaviours and personalities portrayed in the principal texts. It is important to note that adopting close reading and contextual analyses helps examine the texts within the context of their historical and cultural setting, but also in terms of their textuality – and the qualities that characterise the text. I argue that "situating" the texts within the milieu of its times and examining the roles of the authors and the characters, among other things, offer some clue in deconstructing the thematic tensions put forward in Emechata's *Second Class Citizen* and Adichie's *Americanah*.

To enhance the analysis, references to additional sources such as research papers, books, and online materials are included. The characters whose attitudes, behaviours, and statements reflect the focus of the study are given special consideration. This offers a comprehensive exploration of the themes and issues presented in the novels, enriching the understanding of the subject matter.

Summary of Primary Texts

Buchi Emechata's *Second-Class Citizen*

Second Class Citizen recounts the story of Adah, the main character, who seeks self-identity and emancipation for women from patriarchal regimes. Before moving to England, Adah was unaware of the brutal realities of racial prejudice in England. She eventually encounters an odd and surprising instance of racial discrimination. The new cultural modalities in England provide African immigrants with various opportunities to modify their identities. They battle difficulties related to race and class in their quest for personal identity. This means that when migrants get to new environments and settings, they forge their identities to meet the changing conditions.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

Americanah tells the story of a young Nigerian, Ifemelu, who migrates to the United States to attend university. The novel recounts Ifemelu's life in both countries, threaded by her love story with her high school classmate, Obinze. The broader message in Adichie's *Americanah* is racial and gender inequity. It is significant to note that Adichie presents to her readers the different treatments and opportunities based on the colour of a person's skin and sense of belongingness.

Although the two novels are set in distinct historical periods of colonialism and post-colonialism, they are connected by a shared world in which all curiously participate in their terrible subjugation. The narratives' analysis divulges the comportments that unearth how race and class-based issues impact black women in the diaspora. A close reading of *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah* in the context of the phenomenon of African feminism not only permits the chance to explore the minds of African females, whether they be the colonised people or immigrants, but also to explore the nexus that

exists between race and class–a close relationship that usually implicates African immigrants in the Global North to the lowest point in society.

The foregoing becomes clear when one understands not only the generational gap between Emechata and Adichie but also the psychological, material, and physical effects of racism in the lives of the characters in the two novels, Second Class Citizen and Americanah, especially the two leading characters, Adah and Ifemelu, respectively.

Arguably, it stands to reason that the issue of identity then becomes a significant problem that African immigrants are confronted with. Thus far, the psychological and emotional trauma that characterises the lives of African immigrants in these texts is connected to racism and classism. Racism and classism, then, seem to be a weapon continuously wielded by the Western world to forestall Africans and other races from fulfilling their dreams. In light of this, I argue that the nexus between race and class reflects one's sense of self (identity) as an immigrant. Against this backdrop, this study examines *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah* to see how race and class influence one's sense of self/identity as postcolonial subjects in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, respectively.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study is organised into five (5) chapters: The first chapter covers the Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives of the Study, Scope of the Study, Justification of the Study, Significance of the Study and Methodology.

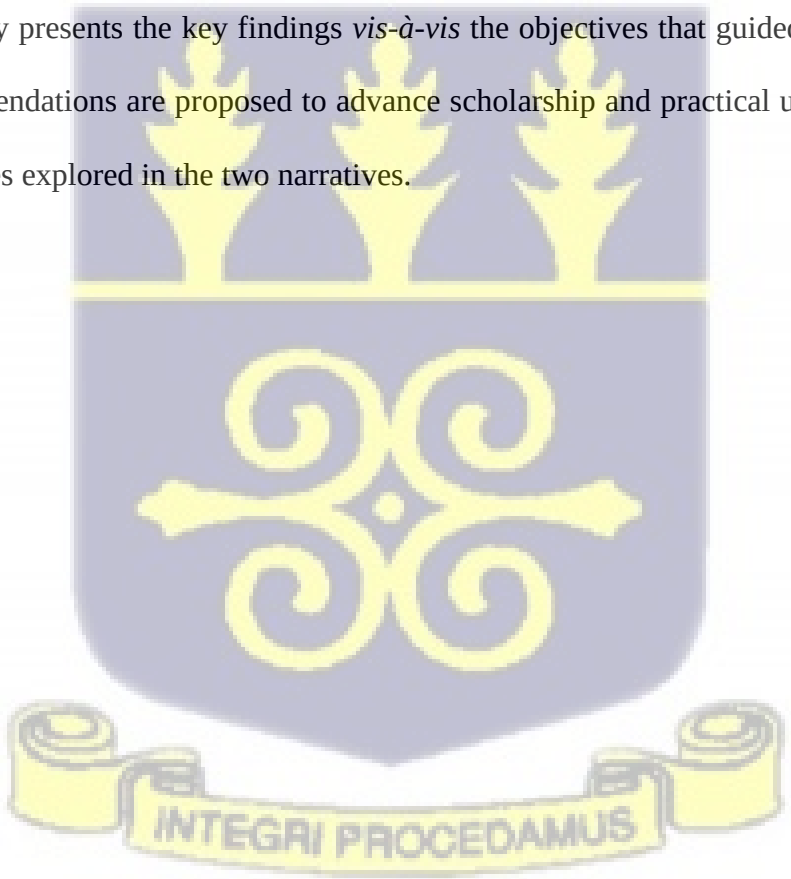
Chapter Two reviews related literature on the topic. The review primarily focuses on the works of Emechata and Adichie. The literature also provides insights into colonial discourse and how Western colonialism affects one's sense of self as an immigrant in

Euro-American cultural space. I argue that the arguments put forward by scholars play an integral role in understanding the topic under discussion.

Chapters Three and Four primarily analyse Emechata's Second Class Citizen and Adichie's Americanah, as second—and third-generation writers in Nigeria re-echo thematic tensions on the psychological manifestations of sense of self.

Chapter Five presents a comparative study of the two novels to ascertain the psychological implications of racism and classism on the characters' sense of self and the fact that these two authors belong to different generations.

Chapter Six provides Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations. The chapter primarily presents the key findings *vis-à-vis* the objectives that guided the study. The recommendations are proposed to advance scholarship and practical understanding of the issues explored in the two narratives.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the background of narratives on African immigrants and the rationale for engaging with Buchi Emechata's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, taking into account how race and class serve as mediating variables in moderating one's sense of self as an African immigrant. The chapter further explored the critical trajectory of the generational gap and its implications for contemporary society. The chapter saw that some parts of the novels have not been thoroughly examined despite the diversity of perspectives and reactions that have previously been expressed. This implies that the discussion can be explored from different perspectives.

This chapter reviews related literature. The discussions largely focus on the existing literature on Second-Class Citizens *and Amnericanah. This study adopts Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Mask as a theoretical lens to understand* how race and class influence one's sense of self as an immigrant. The literature also provides insights into colonial discourse and how Western colonialism affects one's sense of self as an immigrant in the Global North.

The review shall examine the nuances in the dearth of literature on how Africans grapple with the effects of colonial powers and the seeming massification of some Africans' quest for greener pastures in the Global North. The chapter provides insight into the works of Emecheta and Adichie and the antecedents of Western colonialism. It is argued that the narratives provide empirical insights on how race and class influence one's sense of self.

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning: Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*

This study theorises on Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* to examine the psychological implications of race and class on one's sense of self as a postcolonial subject. Fanon's work is significant as it provides insight into the extent to which racism is ingrained in black thinking and way of seeing things. Frantz Fanon's main argument in Black Skin, White Masks is how non-white individuals are stereotyped based on their skin.

Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) provides profound insights into the psychological effects of racism and colonialism on black individuals. This study theorises and frames Fanon's concepts of 'epidermalization of inferiority' and 'psycho-existential dynamism' to understand the experiences of characters in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*.

What Fanon shows through his concept of epidermalization of inferiority is how colonialism restricts black individuals' existence. Fanon's concept of the "epidermal character reflects the notion that one's racial identity is inherently tied to one's physical appearance, particularly skin colour. This means that, even if a black individual speaks with perfect diction and mastery of language, their racial identity cannot be erased or overlooked. In other words, regardless of linguistic proficiency, being black means being perceived as different, unique, and often surprising within a predominantly white society. Frantz Fanon's concept of the "epidermal character of race" offers a profound insight into the dynamics of racial identity and social perception. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon presents a compelling argument that one's racial identity is deeply ingrained in one's physical appearance, particularly their skin colour. He posits that even if a black individual speaks with impeccable diction and cultural assimilation, their racial identity remains visible and subject to societal stereotypes and prejudices.

Fanon's analysis challenges traditional notions of assimilation and integration, highlighting the persistent nature of racial discrimination. His observation that being black in a predominantly white society results in being perceived as special, unique, and often surprising underscores the pervasive influence of race on social interactions and perceptions. In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Paul Gilroy expands Fanon's ideas, arguing that racial identity is not merely a surface-level characteristic but a deeply ingrained aspect of one's being. Gilroy emphasises the importance of recognising and confronting the structural inequalities that perpetuate racial stereotypes and discrimination. Similarly, Ato Sekyi-Otu, in *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, explores the psycho-existential implications of Fanon's concept, highlighting the psychological toll of racial oppression on black individuals. Sekyi-Otu underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of racial identity that considers the intersecting factors of gender, class, and culture. It stands to reason that Fanon's concept of the 'epidermal' offers a profound lens to examine the complexities of racial identity and social stratification. Scholars such as Gordon elaborate on this idea, emphasising that "epidermalization is the process by which one's racial identity becomes a stigmatised part of one's self-concept" (Gordon 32). This stigmatisation results in a profound psychological impact, reinforcing feelings of inferiority and otherness. However, McCulloch offers a critique, suggesting that Fanon's framework underestimates the agency and resilience of black individuals in resisting imposed identities (McCulloch 54). In my view, both perspectives are valid. Fanon's stark portrayal of dehumanisation captures the harsh realities faced by many, yet acknowledging the resilience and agency of black individuals is crucial. This duality underscores the capacity for resistance and self-affirmation despite systemic oppression. Following this, it is worth noting that the epidermalisation of inferiority

parallels his notion of racial epidermal schema, as both describe the colonial limitations of black people. More precisely, both hinder the black individual's projection of possibilities for the future.

According to Fanon, the Psycho-Existential Complex is when whites assume social and political control while black people assume a posture of conformity (Fanon 5). As a result, terms such as "blackness," "whiteness," "coloniser," and "colonised" cease to be natural realities and instead become social constructs. These categories become a product of human agency that corresponds to the interests of the dominant group. One gets colonised simply because one is thought to be psychologically deficient and susceptible to colonial enslavement. Hence, this psychological construct is not solely projected by the coloniser; the colonised individuals often internalise and accept their supposed inferiority. This acceptance leads them to exhibit behaviours that reflect their imposed inferior status. This internalisation is a complex process influenced by societal norms, cultural beliefs, and historical contexts. While Fanon sees racism as a psychological construct, I argue that the issue of race is not only a psychological construct but a sociological construct in that it is the society that categorises people based not only on the colour of their skin but also their status in society. Be that as it may, one can say that sometimes race is about class: the haves and the haves not.

Thus far, for Fanon, the suffering of black people is a lived experience rather than an abstract one. It is a situation that elicits the following reactions: "'Dirty nigger' or simply, 'Look, a Negro!'" (Fanon 82) towards black folks. So, while McCulloch and Fanon place different emphasis on the term "black", they both recognise that blackness stems from the reality of being classified as non-white or "non-whites." It must be contended that the term "black" refers to those people classified as "non-white" by the

colonial enterprise. Based on this assertion, I argue that sense of self is inextricably linked to the historical root of colonised people.

In *Psychology, the Psychological, and Critical Praxis: A phenomenologist reads Frantz Fanon*, Miraj Desai asserts that "it is impossible to place Fanon as a theorist of only one particular field of study" (65). Similarly, Gordon Sharpley-Whiting and White posit that it is important to utilise Fanon's ground-breaking ideas to advance various human studies disciplines in their own right; the use of Fanon's thought for disciplinary generativity is known (6). Based on these arguments, it stands to reason that Fanon's work is an interdisciplinary one; however, since literature is about human life, as Adichie asserts, I argue that Fanon's work, its language and thoughts could fit into literature, taking into account his experiences and thoughts about human life.

The term 'white supremacy' used by theorists encompasses the ingrained psychological and cultural domination that Fanon observed as a result of colonialism. Extending the argument further, I contend that the ideas Fanon puts out that racism is firmly ingrained in one's psyche, it is important also to understand the inextricable link between race and class patterns in the Western world. Hence, whiteness and blackness are relational and contingent, as white privilege cannot be produced and sustained in the absence of race and class.

2.2 Concept of Sense of Self

In *What is Sense of Self,* Mark Ylvisaker defines Sense of Self as an individual's identity, sense of individuality, and consciousness. However, this definition merely scratches the surface of the intricate nature of sense of self. This study seeks to delve deeper into this concept, arguing that an individual's sense of self is a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by many factors. It is imperative to stress that, contrary to

popular belief, racial identity is imposed from without. Ngugi wa Thiong'o emphasises a more centred worldview in which Africans refuse to accept the notion that they are still colonised at the West's periphery. He advocates for a more centralised understanding of identity, lamenting that "Africans continue to fight for a world where they influence the governance, economic system, and cultures so that their existence become what they want to achieve (wa Thiong'o, qt in Amonyeze 4). The characters in these two novels endure sentiments of humiliation and desperation due to their poor valuation, which significantly impacts their sense of self. Interestingly, this has far-reaching repercussions regarding how African immigrants are seen in Europe and the Americas. Understanding how to manage the pre-migration cultural identities that such immigrants affirm is a hallmark of adjusting to US society, given that racial identity has been historically marginalised.

In light of this context, Fanon concludes that the white "master" wants labour from the colonised rather than recognition. The colonial enslaved person did not seek to use Sekyi-Otu's words, "individuation and self-authentification" (57). In wanting to be "like the master", the colonised enslaved person only reaffirms the master's values and supremacy. In other words, the enslaved person does not prove its being-for-itself. Accordingly, it may be concluded from Marx's proletariat that the colonised experience a more bizarre type of alienation, which manifests as a loss of sense of self in the colonised. This theoretical perspective shapes one's consciousness and identity. This is reflected in most literary scholarship, like Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which the image of the blacks is described in a derogatory manner. In light of this, it is remarkably justifiable to explore the challenges the female characters grapple with as they progress through the stages of life in England and America. This cultural transition occurs as a result of the conditions imposed on African immigrants' sense of self.

The emergence of African women's literary traditions began with an intentional endeavour to establish a place for African women's narratives and the problems they encountered (Christian 348-359). This means that literary scholarship is affected by how African women immigrants portray themselves and the world around them. As Hooper asserts, identity plays a significant role in African women immigrants' literature (74).

As far as we know, Sekyi-Otu and Crenshaw shed light on the characteristics that define one's sense of self; interestingly, however, their arguments do not take into account the fact that race and class also become the driving forces that influence one's identity in shaping one's lived experiences as an immigrant. Aside from these essential variables in identity formation, migration allows one to understand identity formation and the forms of agency through which an individual's challenge could be achieved. On this note, this study sought to explore these variables that define African immigrants' sense of self and quest for better opportunities in the Global North.

2.3 Migration and Identity

In today's globalised society, problems of migration and identity are becoming increasingly important. Because of this, exploring other spaces has always been at the heart of many people, often resulting in hybridity. Thus, migration is motivated by the desire for new and better opportunities, even if they are unsure how their lives will unfold. In. In his article "Transnational Migration, Identity, and the African Literary Experience", Ahmed Kabir contends that African literature is closely tied to the global issue of many Africans leaving their homelands for the West and the Americas (137). This means that African literature reflects the realities of transnational migration experienced by many Africans. By exploring themes of migration, identity, and the African diasporic experience, African literature provides a platform for understanding

and engaging with the complexities of these global issues. This perspective suggests that African literature is not only a reflection of society but also a critical commentary on the forces shaping contemporary African experiences.

Black people in the United States can be divided into three main categories: "those whose ancestors were brought into the country against their will between the 16th and the 19th century; those who wilfully immigrated from the Caribbean to the country after 1808, when the slave trade was outlawed; and those who emigrated directly from Africa" (Ajiboye 69). While African immigrants are made up of several groups with various identities, languages and cultures, black Americans in America are regarded as a single ethnic group (70). Ajiboye's argument is imperative because it helps one to understand that Africans, black Americans and other groups can never be the same, yet the racial system in England and America, as portrayed in both texts, classify all immigrants as Africans/blacks. To this end, identities often affect the structures in which they interact with others. Therefore, in their everyday interactions with Americans, African immigrants with their socio-historical backgrounds constantly navigate the system of racial structure. In all these, African immigrants yearn for that sense of historical attachment they do not have.

In reality, immigrants' attempts to reconcile their cultural identity with their newly "racialised" selves in the United States are represented through the forging of their identities (Okonofua 6). Taking inspiration from Okonofua's argument, it can be argued that Africans who travel in search of greener pastures are compelled to take on new identities to meet the demands of the Western world, thereby neglecting their sense of self as Africans. This implies that despite their quest for economic opportunities, this move does not help them grow psychologically, economically and socially as they forge their identities to overcome the racial tensions they face in the Western world.

Another point worth noting is that the ability to evolve as a person is also denied to the Oriental, according to Edward Said, who claims that they are seen as "static, frozen, and fixed eternally" (208). What Said puts across is that these representations of the 'Other' give rise to prejudices that imply indigenous peoples require Occidental guidance to advance and be rescued. This attitude is strongly related to the duty conveyed by the phrase "white man's burden," which refers to the process of imposing Western ideology and language on the people from former European colonies.

To understand how one can maintain one's sense of self, Adichie explains that the single story, the one written by colonisers to describe subjugated communities, "show(s) a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become". Although Adichie makes a profound statement, it stands to reason that the media plays an important role in peddling these 'falsehoods', as it were. Adichie expresses apparent regret for contributing to the "single story" phenomenon, demonstrating that she shared similar experiences. I argue that the danger of the single story deprives individuals of their dignity and shared commonality. I argue that situating what Adichie puts across admonishes her readers not only the need to address these preconceptions but, more importantly, the necessity of sharing multiple narratives rather than focusing on just one. I contend that most immigrants, just like black Americans, frequently struggle with identity, especially when living abroad. Traditional systems in Western countries have been drastically altered by globalisation. An increasing number of people concur that hegemonic notions of history and national identity have lost much support in the face of postcolonial migration and the ongoing battles led by minorities of colour to advance their rights (Weedon 180).

Given American nationalist anxiety, diasporic populations have opted for defining "themselves under the shared umbrella of a collective identity that is not always

territorially ascribed" (Benessaieh 24). The point is that immigrants in the U.S. know that these African countries are a melting pot, yet they have to protect their cultural heritage from the racial hatred and bigotry that still exist in America. Maria Diedrich, Henry Gates and Carl Pedersen, in their anthology, *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, describe black identity as produced through a spatial and temporal continuum (that comprises the Middle Passage epistemology and encompasses the global diversity of the African diaspora (8-9). Similarly, Paul Gilroy portrays black identity as the result of transnational continuing journeys and exchanges across the Atlantic in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. The Middle Passage slave trade, which he claims is at the heart of the black diasporic societies across the Atlantic, is central to his argument. Economic hardships, natural calamities, insurgencies, mismanagement, authoritarian administrations, and military coups all drove large numbers of Africans to migrate to the United States (81). Maitrayee Misra and Manish Shrivastava's article titled "Dislocation, Cultural Memory, & Transcultural Identity in Select Short Stories from *The Thing Around Your Neck*" helps assess the literary strategies Adichie has used to shape similar characters and situations in her transnational short stories and novels. The arguments made by Gilroy, Misra and Shrivastava suggest that economic hardships and political instability compel people to migrate to the Western world; however, I argue that the discursive movements are also marked by people's eagerness to discover and experience different cultures. Hence, the notion that people migrate as a result of economic and political instability is not entirely the case; some positive sides need to be recognised. Suffice it to say that the economic situation of the past years has also contributed to a movement in values away from materialism; younger generations are showing a greater interest in acquiring new experiences than migrating due to economic hardships and political instability.

Even though the situation has improved, it is significant to note that when several of these nations attained independence in the middle of the 20th century, former European colonial powers like France and the United Kingdom served as the favoured locations for migration. However, as these nations began to close their borders in the latter half of the 20th century, the United States saw a significant increase in African immigrants (Hing 64). Due to these circumstances, it is crucial to emphasise that in the context of this argument. "Voluntary" migration refers to postcolonial African migration that took place outside of the transatlantic slave trade. Even affluent Africans made relatively few trips to the United States during the first half of the 20th century since so much of the African continent was still governed by European colonial powers.

In *Orientalism*, Said reveals the discriminatory and robust Orientalist discourse from a Eurocentric perspective and highlights the need for Easterners to replace it with their narrative. It stands to argue that what Said puts out in this seminal work is that people of former colonies tell stories that reflect their cultures, voices, and the racial issues they faced. Several narratives have been put out to convey how African people have lived from ancient times to the present. In light of this, F.B.O Akporobaro argues that creating narratives set in Africa "is an exercise that demands the continuous invention of exciting and highly memorable experiences, situations, and characters" (101). This means that African immigrant narratives instil morality about African cultural norms. I contend that Akporobaro's arguments are in line with Abiola Irele's idea that "the purpose of all forms of narrative, whether fictional or 'factual' in intent, is […] the reformation of experience in such a way to endow it with a large significance" (159). Through the narratives produced in Africa, Africans can perceive "all the feelings experienced by their predecessors and those felt by their best and foremost contemporaries" (Awuzie 124). This assertion is important because Africans have also

witnessed how people from other continents perceive Africa today. To this end, this study addresses a lacuna in African literary scholarship by focusing on how race and class implicate one's sense of self in Euro-American cultural spaces. African immigrants' process of assimilation brings distinct, contentious and persistent conflict between their pre-migration and post-migration identities. Thus, the challenge that African immigrants face as they learn to traverse the numerous black worlds—African Americans and non-African American black—is crucial in understanding the race and class structure in the Western world. Reading *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah* arguably contributes to the cultural and social expansion of what it means to be an African immigrant in British and American contexts.

2.4 African Literature and the Digital Space

This study makes a conscious effort to connect the migration turn and the digital turn that African literature is experiencing while also recognising the overlap between the two in terms of formal and narratological choices. With this in mind, Stephanie Bosch Santana describes "new literary geographies using the term 'migrant forms', and contends that these literatures are structured by feature, and textualise such processes of continuous migration" (168). Although Bosch Santana makes an interesting remark on the role of digital literature, Opoku- Agyemang also asserts that this scholarship has not received the needed attention for its potential (14). Judging from the scholarly debates, I argue that African literature creates rich digital content for people to interact efficiently, such is the case of Adichie's *Americanah*, where Ifemelu uses her blog to present subtle issues that pervade American society. In doing so, Ifemelu creates an avenue for people to share their thoughts on the stories she posts on her blog.

In his influential work, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Jay David Bolter discusses that "our culture is also redefining the visual and

conceptual space of writing" (12). Bolter explains that "the writer enters into a reflective and reflexive relationship with the written page, in which thoughts are bodied forth" (13). Bolter's position also dovetails the arguments I draw in this work, that Adichie incorporates the influence of foregrounds the role that digital storytelling creates an avenue for readership. In light of this, I contend that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* is not hypertext fiction; instead, it reflects digital media practises through its non-sequential storytelling that encourages a wide range of readership. Thus, whether on the African continent or any part of the world, African literature and the discourses surrounding it have created rich digital content for people to interact easily. These converging occurrences pose several concerns concerning the history of African literature, digital forms and innovative ideas that have evolved in scholarly works and traditional cultural storytelling approaches.

It is worth mentioning that Adichie, in telling his story, responds to Western media bias and manipulative narratives that pick only negative stories from Africa. By making an argument about the perception of the Black immigrant, Adichie ventilates our knowledge of how racism and oppression shape the world of the ordinary Black immigrant.

For instance, Achille Mbembe says a distant digital past exists for Africa and a distant African past for the digital. In an interview with Bregte van der Haak titled "The Internet is Afropolitan," Mbembe argues that "the world of Africa, the pre-colonial world, as well as the world of now, has always been somewhat digital". It is productive to explore how this scholarship (digital space) provides an avenue for understanding the experiences of racism in Adichie's *Americanah*. The idea behind digital technology is strongly related to Mbembe's assertion that "the archive of permanent modification, mutation, conversion, and circulation is an important characteristic of what we might

term African culture." I argue that Mbembe provides an exciting point in understanding African literature in the digital age. In this regard, focusing on the blog posts Adichie illuminates in the novel on how race and class influence non-American blacks in America is productive. It stands to reason that the blog helps to extract the thematic concerns developed in the text.

2.5 Race: struggles against class and sense of self

In his work, *Adjusting the Lenses: feminist analysis and Marxism at the End of the Twentieth Century,* ¸Valerie Bryson defines class as a group of people who have similar socioeconomic status based on a hierarchy that also serves to provide each class with a sense of belonging and connection to other classes (6). This implies that due to the diverse socio-historical experiences, immigrants challenge the social distinction in two ways: first, they cannot adapt to it adequately; second, the different systems of social classifications bring them into the American racial complex. In effect, Bryson's arguments enable us to understand African immigrants' experiences in the Global North.

Similarly, Benjamin Okonofua pointed out: "African immigrants are questioning their racial categorisation as Black, which they see as a metonymic device for the inferior position of African Americans relative to Whites" (2). Okanafua's arguments mean that African immigrants feel uncomfortable in recognising disparities between blacks.

In his thought-provoking work on racism, Michael Dyson, like Johnson, shares the same trajectory about the dynamic nature of black racial identity. The experiences of black folks in America are governed by the structure that still exists, a system that does not allow them to transcend their sense of self, as Toure asserts, without some self-

inflicted traumas (47). What this means is that in America, there are Back American and non-American blacks, and these structures are endemic and systemic.

To return to one of the most prominent ideas in race theory, Du Bois asserts that the problem of the 20th century is colour (19). Although the argument Du Bois expressed seems applicable to life in the 20th century, a cursory look at scholarship shows that the 21st-century race is not just about the colour of one's skin. Instead, it is about class: the privileged and the underprivileged. I argue that the relationship between identity and social constructs remains an observable problem and a personal concern in the age of globalisation.

In reading Emachata's *Second Class Citizen*, one must have in mind that race and class stratification dovetail into the "immigrant community". Despite her position of subjugation within the family, Adah has been accustomed to living in Lagos as a highly educated woman of repute. It has been demonstrated that first-generation immigrant children who were born in Britain also struggle with problems of identity and culture. This encounter, as I argue in this study, is still prevalent in Britain, where people are subtly refused offers due to the identity they hold. In light of this, black people have had to work outside the home much more frequently than white people to augment the meagre salaries they receive. Despite being a social category for examining the oppression experienced by black people in developed countries, sense of self seems to have received less attention in earlier studies than race and gender.

Edward Ademolu observed the nuanced dynamics of humanitarian representations and hybrid identity within African diaspora communities. Through critically analysing visual media and cultural discourse, Ademolu explores how external portrayals shape internal perceptions of identity and belonging (206). His examination of hybridity highlights the complexities diasporic individuals face in reconciling multiple cultural

influences. While Ademolu's insights are valuable, I further explore how these representations impact individual agency within diverse diasporic contexts.

In "Contested Identities: African diaspora and Identity Making in a Hair Braiding Salon", Nicole Jenkins examines the intricate process of identity formation within African diaspora communities, focusing on interactions within a hair braiding salon. Through ethnographic research, Jenkins uncovers how cultural practices and social dynamics influence identity negotiation among diasporic individuals. Her findings underscore the salon as a microcosm where personal narratives and cultural heritage intersect, shaping perceptions of belonging and community identity (821). While Jenkins' study enriches our understanding of diasporic identity, I explore the role of race and class in shaping African immigrants' sense of self in this present study.

2.6 African Diasporic Literature and Generation of Writers

African Diaspora studies have a significant place in the ongoing debate about historicising African diasporic scholarship. The concept of Diaspora forms part of a narrative resistance in which black communities are characterised by a long history of forced migration, the dominance of cultural marginalisation, and the continuous struggle for citizenship (Jackson & Cothran 578).

Despite geographical disparities, African women writers experienced a similar situation. Despite producing the majority of writing, women writers received little attention. While despairing about the neglect of reviewers in her interview with Adeola James, Ama Ata Aidoo points out that the subject of women writers' voices being hushed is related to the overall position of women in society (Adeola 11-12). What this means is that women's writings have received less attention due to the traditional role that prevented women from writing.

Interestingly, second and third-generation women writers have changed the African literary canon since the turn of the twentieth century by examining a diverse range of compelling themes, including post-colonial issues, feminism, marginalised status and subjectivity. Drawing inspiration from this, it is important to expand this notion and investigate the immigration experiences of African women immigrants in the West. Thus, this study explores African literary scholarship and diverse representations of women's experiences in the diaspora. In doing so, this study foregrounds women's experiences and the evolution of female writing that has shifted the direction of the African novel in the twenty-first century.

In her work, *Representation of Female African Immigrant Experience in the West,* Koskei observes that contemporary writers seem to have broken loose from early writing, which focused on individuals who left Africa due to higher education and returned to serve their country (7). It is important to stress that since literature is about human life, examining these arguments in light of literary texts will help unravel these nuances that tell the story of African immigrants. This implies that as the argument about African immigration gains significant attention globally and locally, new-generation writers present a wide range of issues that evoke African identity. The discussion of African immigration seems to be picking up steam among authors of the younger generation as it gains significant attention. I argue, in a broad spectrum, that in as much as the movements may be discursive, what influences their sense of self/identity is a result of the racial relations and class tensions that confront them (African immigrants). Drawing on these arguments, this study argues that both novels are somewhat autobiographical and depict not only Nigerian women's experiences but, more importantly, the nuances of African immigrants' lives in the Western world.

In her book, *West African Women in the Diaspora Narratives of Other Spaces, Other Selves*, Rose A. Sackeyfio examines how African diaspora women's literature explores the issues of liminality, hybridity and the life of female characters outside of Africa by drawing on the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe, and Taiye Selasie. Sackeyfio. The point that Sackeyfio drives home is that living in the diaspora is an unfamiliar experience filled with new prospects and conflicting realities of alienation. It can, therefore, be contended that the migration of African women paints a clear picture of African women's experiences in the Global North.

Contemporary writers, especially Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, focus on the agonising and dehumanising treatment of African migrants, particularly female protagonists in foreign lands (Ademolu; Gomez, Jenkins; Valkeakari). This means that African immigrant women's identities extend beyond race, encompassing their experiences with migration, displacement, and the complexities of navigating new cultural landscapes. Alou believes that Adichie sustained African writers' engagement with questions of migration and transnational movement, which had enthralled African literature since the advancement of postcolonial literature (20). The implication is that most Africans living in the West were reluctant to renounce their identities and cultural lineage to their own countries. On the other hand, most African authors desire to write about their continent while residing in the West or Western academic institutions, typically as political or cultural exiles. What stands out, more importantly, is how one's sense of self is created through several means, such as skin colour, gender, religion and language. Aware of all these problems, Nigerian women writers focused on issues faced by women in Africa and the diaspora.

In "Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's" Nervous Conditions", Uwakweh observed that "women writers are exposing previously unacknowledged gendered spaces and roles through their engagement in the war discourse, a formerly male domain" (84). This means that the need for women to write about Africa came from the desire to provide feminine perspectives to the sociocultural issues on the continent discussed by male authors. They also wanted to address themes connected to female subjectivity to emphasise the cultural boundaries of female agency. For instance, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie were ignored due to tradition, colonialism, patriarchy, civil war and other factors. Travelling overseas, then, becomes a discursive experience that allows people to break away from the structures of social conventions and a chance to learn about the various aspects of the Global North. Be that as it may, it is significant to note that race was a critical factor in the colonial exploitation of the African continent and the resultant legacies of colonialism and the slave trade; hence, it is a conversation that needs to be reckoned with. Through their diasporic interactions, Emecheta and Adichie can elicit their perspective of the Global North and Global South from their lives' distinct yet interconnected legacies. In their novels, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi show how African immigrants contribute to the reshaping of black identity in the United States and England, respectively. Hence, these two narratives are important to examine because they reflect not only thematic concerns on race and class but also the generational gap that, most likely, shapes the meaning and contexts of African immigrants in the UK and America.

Coly's *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures* presents a new way of reading contemporary African writers' novels. Coly speaks against European idiosyncrasies ascribed to postcolonial subjects.

A cursory look at *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah* makes it a point to argue the extent to which race defines class, which, in effect, affects one's sense of self.

It is possible to argue how these factors simultaneously contribute to the sustained manifestation of the psychological effects of colonialism and the struggle for a sense of self. Thus, a comparative reading of these two novels dramatises and, more importantly, theorises fundamental concepts in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* to unearth the psychological effects immigrants from Africa encounter. Attending to the particularities of the immigrant's experience allows for a more nuanced approach that exposes divergent experiences of postcolonial subjects in the diaspora, who encounter a wide range of issues in their quest for selfhood.

The same problem is brought up by Wright and Palmer when they explore the diversity of the African diaspora and how important it is to take black identity into account in all of its facets in relation to African ancestry and not just based on a shared history of slavery. In their article, "Introduction: Everything Good is Raining: Provisional Notes on the Nigerian of the Third Generation," Chris Dunton and Pius Adesanmi posit that there are three distinguishing *generations* of writers in Africa. Emecheta belongs to the **second generation,** while Adichie belongs to the **third generation** (9). The generational differentiation makes for an exciting reading of the two texts. The implication here is that Emecheta and Adichie are second and third-generation writers. Thus, as a second-generation writer, Emecheta sets her novel in two settings: the first is rural, and the second is urban. Adichie develops characters who look remarkably resilient and prepared for any challenge. For instance, Ifemelu, the main character, resists being harmed. She faces many obstacles because of her identity, which she finds difficult to handle, but she never lets them overcome her.

In "Immigration and African Diaspora Women Artists," Nkiru Nzegwu addresses various issues that shape contemporary African literature regarding immigrants, such as racism, identity, gender, and ethnicity (311). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the brilliant African authors of the new millennium who fosters and sustains African identity and dignity regardless of gender. Adichie's writings present the issue of African immigrants' struggle with racial and ethnic discrimination in the West.

Emecheta's title foreshadows class status and Adah's experiences in England. As was established, Adah initiates a way of speaking to first-class citizens despite its unfavourable situation. As she realises that reconstructing her life and identity gives her better chances to take part in establishing a more inclusive society, Adah demonstrates greater optimism about the likelihood of successful integration at this point. Thus far, Emecheta illustrates the resilience of a woman in a repressive environment through her (Adah's) displeasure with staying in England as a second-class citizen. Upon all the challenges confronting her as an African immigrant, she (Adah) demonstrates awareness and the willpower a woman can have.

Conflicting ideologies regarding women's social roles, particularly in light of colonialism, impeded their full rights to writing. Emecheta's identity as a writer, her approach as a writer, and her very being as a writer continues to be the affirmation of the position held by other Nigerian women writers. Emecheta's earliest writing inspiration, which she recognises in the novel *Second-Class Citizen*, came from her aunt in Ibuza, who could fascinate her with storytelling sessions. In addition, *Second-Class Citizen* describes some of the challenges the author had while attempting to write a book from home.

2.7 Literature Review of Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*

Second-Class Citizen revolves around Emecheta's life as an émigré in England. The narrative engages with the question of individual sense of self in cultural, ideological, and historical contexts. As an African immigrant woman writer from Nigeria, her work presents issues concerning women writers in Nigeria, particularly the experiences of immigrants who travelled abroad in the 1960s.

Porter avers that it would be ludicrous to imply that one can escape the feminist debate when analysing the works of a writer like Emecheta, who takes the role of women in various cultures very seriously in all of her works. However, suggesting that this is the primary component of her work worth looking at is quite another (123). It is imperative to argue that some of the text's seeming flaws would be better understood if it were viewed as a novel about human suffering. The novel's well-known feminist concept will gain additional support if viewed as a novel about a young African woman learning about herself as a prospective writer and about the issues of love, marriage, and student life abroad (particularly in an unfriendly environment). The female characters in Emecheta's novels exemplify African women in general. In reference to Emecheta's feminism, Cynthia Ward once said:

> 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).

In her essay, "The Death of the Slave Girl: African Womanhood in Buchi Emecheta's Novels", Frank investigates the dangers of relying almost entirely on Emecheta's

feminist theme by drawing sweeping and incorrect assumptions about the African woman's "bondage" and the Western woman's "freedom" in Emecheta's work.

In "Feminism and Self-Assertion of Female Characters in Buchi Emecheta *Second Class Citizen* and Zaynab Alkalis *The Stillborn*," Ifeoma Odinye tells the plight of the feminine gender in the context of sense of self/ identity. In the same vein, Odinye affirms that Adah becomes successful in her fierce devotion to a better life for herself and her family (50). This means that Adah's experiences at home and abroad prepared her to be strong.

In their essay "Search for Identity and Home in Buchi Emecheta's Novel *Second Class Citizen*", Longjam Bedana and Laishram Sangeeta examine how Emecheta portrayed the magnitude of experiences and consequences of poverty, as well as the loss of self-identity that Adah encounter. This means that Adah, after a lifetime of fighting systemic racism and segregation, incorporates an identity that gives her a perspective as a writer who accepts England as her second home, based on liberty, free from the social injustices she faces (35).

Buchi Emecheta says she does not want to be called a feminist: "I write about the little happenings of everyday life. 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 553). In light of this, it can be contended that the writings of Emechata portray the experiences of African women subtly.

In "The Experience of an African Woman in Britain: A Reading of Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*" Omar Sougou recounts the experiences of an African women

who face a lot of problems that go beyond the oppression of women. Omar's argument to a large extent, implies that the challenges and or experiences Adah faces in England seem unspeakable.

In her article, on the violation of human rights in Miriama Ba's *So Long a Letter* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*" Florence Orabueze, is of the view that the novel as a literary work evokes nostalgic feelings about African women in the diaspora. This means that both writers present not only affecting women but the denial of right to formal education. She considers these issues and concludes that in the novel, Emecheta shows how a woman can gain free will and redefine the 'norms' set by society (117). This means that *Second Class Citizen* as a fictional work, allows Emecheta to use Adah to recount how the African woman can become financially and economically independent.

It stands to reason that earlier research examined several facets of Emecheta's novel as a postcolonial feminine narrative. As far as I know, earlier research on the text also brings forth the idea of sense of self, the impact of colonial powers on Africans in the Western world, and how Emecheta confronts them in her novel. It appears that none has read *Second Class Citizen* through Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask*. This, therefore, precipitates the need to focus on the challenges migrants from Africa (Nigeria) face in constructing their self-identity.

In her book *Lessons of Solidarity: Buchi Emecheta and Mariama Ba on Female Victimizers*, Laura Dubek agrees with Emecheta's portrayal when she highlights the negative aspects of traditional Igbo culture for women, suggesting that the principle of 'male daughter' denies women independence and personal happiness by alienating them from other women" (207).

In her work, "Re-defining The Orient: Edward Said and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*" Elçin Ayakan examines *Second Class Citizen* in the light of Said's *Orientalism*. It is important to note that women writers had to overcome many challenges while confronting, contesting, and creating a new place for themselves. I observe that some of the difficulties the author meets in Nigeria are featured in novel. It can be viewed as a technique, a means of individual resistance to the prevalent narrative about women's writing, since it is perceived as an autobiographical novel. Writing an autobiographical novel can be considered as a tactical move for claiming selfhood, much like writing itself can be seen as a strategy. Through the means of creating an autobiographical novel, the writer sets her desire for self-definition; she recasts herself out of the only reality she could claim: her experiences and the desire to persevere. The narrative supports a rejection of white-imposed vilification of the black self and makes assertions for a new identity as an emigrant. In analysing this text, how Emecheta presents the issue of gender and the value placed on the individual in the composition and functioning of Igbo societies are considered. As a woman writer from Nigeria, Emecheta's work is intensely linked up with issues concerning women writers in Africa.

Friedman argues that the individualistic concept of the self that pervades Gusdorf's work raises serious problems for critics who recognise that the "self, self-creation, and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities, and many non-western peoples" (Friedman 73). While taking into account the differences in socialization in the construction of male and female identity, Friedman refers to Regina Blackburn in her "In Search of the Black Female Self" and says that the black women autobiographers use the genre to redefine the female self-perspective (Freidman 78). Based on this claim, it is important to point out that understanding the novels of authors

like Emecheta requires an awareness of how cultural variations, experience and disparities in socialisation affect one' identity. In light of this, the literary heritage of Nigerian writers writing in English arose from the colonial period, and real-life events had a significant role in shaping that literature.

If Adah had not been financially independent, Adah would have been more negatively impacted by Francis. She thus exhorts all women to make an effort to live independently of their husbands by trying hard to obtain university education. Yakubu's arguments centre on Adah's ultimate release from Francis's servitude, by maintaining her financial and economic independent from Francis, Adah essentially belittles her husband to the bottom rung of the social ladder. (Yakubu 75). This raises the question of how one's sense of self and the relics of colonial powers influence African immigrants in the Global North.

2.8 Literature Review of Adichie's *Americanah*

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu, a Nigerian immigrant, learns how to traverse the new and foreign racial terrain of the United States, chronicling her life and lessons through blogging. The novel is somewhat autobiographical, as it loosely parallels Adichie's own experiences on entering the United States as an African immigrant, learning what it means to be labeled "black" for the first time.

Ifemelu, faces many obstacles because of her identity, which she finds challenging, but she never lets them overcome her. Ifemelu is a fascinating heroine who stands out from other female protagonists, since she learned how to overcome any challenge that comes her way. Adichie highlights several issues facing modern-day Nigeria, including abuse of power, corruption, unemployment, and a shoddy educational system. It comes to light that all these factors played a major role in understanding the conditions that

propel Africans to leave their countries for Europe. This move opens her eyes to the disparity between the west and the prevalent racism, which astounded her.

Adichie addresses herself as a happy feminist and boldly talks about feminism. Her recent manifesto, "We should all be feminists" clearly outlines her views on feminism. This is also prevalent in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* as most of her female characters face one form of racism or the other. Job requirements and application differs for Americans, especially non- American blacks; especially, Africans whose skin colour differs from theirs. This bridges a gap between them, which often results to a great difference on the jobs available to them and the constant battle to negotiate their identity.

As far as I know, recent literary studies on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie examine a variety of themes and narrative strategies in her novels and short stories. One significant collection of such scholarship compiled by Ernest N. Emenyonu, an Africana studies professor at the University of Michigan - Flint, is *A Companion to Chimamanda Adichie* (2017). The book includes articles specific to each of her major works of fiction. Responses *to Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* generally focus on Adichie's portrayal of gender roles and binary oppositions. Examinations of *The Thing Around Your Neck* closely relate to *Americanah*, as Adichie's stories depicts many transcultural individuals and the ways in which these characters shape identity. The import of Emenyonu's argument is that Adichie's narratives offer some insights in understanding the sense of self of the African immigrants.

In *Americanah*, Adichie portrays the life of Ifemelu as a young foreign student who is eager for higher education in the US. Thus, Philadelphia plays a significant role in her academic pursuits, which consequently leads her to be awarded a fellowship at

Princeton University. As an African immigrant, it had never crossed her mind that in America one is judged based on their colour. However, as she begins to recognize the irony of American racial politics, particularly as it relates to her skin colour, Ifemelu starts a blog where other people can share their experiences on how racism is perceived in American society. Adichie also describes how Ifemelu advances to a privileged position in America, attains US passport, receives a fellowship at Princeton, and eventually buys a house.

In her study, 'Contextualising Identity in Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* Ngwaba explores a variety of issues in Nigeria, including misuse of power, corrupt practices, insecurity and poor educational system. It is important to point out that all of these factors played a role in explaining why the majority of African citizens left their respective countries. Ifemelu, for instance, moves to pursue a higher education. This move opens her eyes to the vast disparity between the west and the prevalence of prejudice, which has a detrimental impact on her sense of being.

In *Second Class Citizen*, features both male and female characters, but Emechata focused a lot on African women immigrants. She presents her protagonist as seeking sense of identity and independence from gendered roles. Emecheta experienced migration first-hand and knew that migrants go through all forms of transformations to reach their goals. For immigrant women, the new cultural modalities in the host country offer many ways to challenge and transform women's work and identities. Thus far, one may say that in their quest for self-identity, people suffer from, not only gender, but also racial relations and classism. This implies that, when migrants adjust to new environments and settings, identities might be subjected to novel changes as individuals they confront social, economic and emotional problems. Ifemelu, the main character, refuses to submit in any way. She faces many obstacles because of her identity, which

she finds challenging, but she never lets them overcome her. Ifemelu is a fascinating heroine that stands out from other modern female protagonists since she learned how to overcome any challenge that comes her way. Adichie highlights the several issues facing modern-day Nigeria, including power abuse, corruption, unemployment, and a shoddy educational system. All of these factors played a role in why the majority of Africans left their homeland. In order to pursue a better education, Ifemelu decides to move.

Americanah is one of the early novels to delve deeply into the representation of online identity and its transformative impact upon a protagonist. Ifemelu's first encounter with an online community takes place after a mishap with her hair. Following the advice of a friend, Ifemelu checks the website, where she discovers a community of black women who enjoy retaining their natural hair. Ifemelu logs on and sends out her first message into cyberspace, along with a photo of herself, after having a hair epiphany after reading about other women's comments regarding hair:

> ...Jamilah's words made me remember that there is nothing more beautiful than what God gave me. Others wrote responses, posting thumbs-up signs, telling her how much they liked the photo she had put up. She had never talked about God so much. Posting on the website was like giving testimony in church; the echoing roar of approval revived her. (Adichie 209).

In Women *in African Women's Writings: A Study of Novels by Buchi Emecheta and Tsitsi Dangarembga* Mansour Gueye explore how these writers adapt the mainstream feminist tradition to their African cultural context and protest against women's subjugation.

In their study, "Reconfiguring Others': Negotiating Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*", Niyi Akingbe and Emmanuel Adeniyi argue that despite its dialogic engagement with the possibility of harmonising the varied characters'

racial/cultural backgrounds, Adichie's experimentation with transculturalism faded in a miasma of morbid biases and despair.

As far as we know, *Americanah* is the more heavily publicised, written about and taught novel of the two and part of the attention received by *Americanah* has to do with Adichie's relationship to digital and social media themselves, her TED talks, her occasionally controversial statements that generate vigorous social media debates, her fashion posts on Instagram, and the fact that she originally disseminated the text of her short non-fiction book Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions on Facebook. Given Adichie's strong relationship with various media, it is no surprise that her third novel, *Americanah*, thoroughly explores the digital realm. The main character, Ifemelu, uses digital media as a fashionable blogger who engages in scandalous and offensive conversations concerning race in the United States.

Following the arguments, it stands to argue that the novel foregrounds the use of technology with characters that rely heavily on their computers and Blackberries for text messages and emails. I focus on how the protagonist, Ifemelu, forges a connection between her fragmented subjectivities through an online identity and her incursions into the difficult world of micro-celebrity relations. The novel contrasts somewhat rigid national frameworks by showing how technology is bringing the role of digital media and cyberspaces to bear the experiences of migrants. I, therefore, look at Adichie's interaction with digital forms through her blog, which is woven into the fabric of the text.

In her article, "Afropolitanism for Black Women: Sexual Identity and Coming to Voice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*", Caroline Lyle opines that the novel insinuates that becoming a whole subject is only possible when female racialised sexual

experiences are consciously lived through and confronted, so that the voices of female Afropolitans can emerge. This means that Obinze's experiences are a part of the more significant immigrant tale that weaves together the African Diaspora's experience and the ambiguities of cultural assimilation. I contend that the dominant White culture appears to foster stereotypical perceptions of immigrants to protect its political, economic, and social hierarchy, as diversity undermines the White male majority. The teleological essence of prejudices is based on the belief that a social group's well-being can only be assured if other oppressed groups are regarded as inferior. *Americanah* portrays Whites as custodians of the human race, who built their capitalist powers on the graves of immigrants throughout history and continue to abuse the vulnerable.

In his study, "Art as an Antidote to Clandestine Migration: A Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and No Violet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*", Alphonse Mokosa delves into how two renowned female writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from Nigeria and NoViolet Bulawayo from Zimbabwe, use art to represent human experience. The novel's exploration of the role of literature in understanding and interpreting the paradoxes of unlawful migration adds a significant layer of thematic depth to the narrative. The study is based on the notion of realism, which is deeply concerned with how the action affects the character and has a propensity to delve into the psychology of the actors in their stories. The pragmatic functioning of literature, emerging from creative awareness, is also a vital aspect of the novel's exploration of the human experience, underscoring the importance of literature in understanding the human condition.

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has examined how Adichie and Emecheta present issues on African immigrant experiences in their works. As second and third-generation writers in Nigeria, I argue my point by re-echoing the thematic tensions of how race and class influence the sense of self of African immigrants. From the review of related literature, it stands to reason that this study is different from the earlier studies as it highlights, from a socio-psychological approach, the lived experiences immigrants face in constructing their sense of self, how they manage to establish themselves and how race and class impact them. Thus far, it can be contended that African literary scholarship is significantly enriched by women's voices expressing their concerns through writing. Their voice, particularly those of Buchi Emechata and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, played an indispensable role in ascertaining their sense of self/identity. I argue that reading their works provides an important avenue in exploring the peculiarities surrounding African women immigrants' narratives.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF *SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN*

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the profound struggle with identity in Buchie Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. It delves into how the characters grapple with life in the UK: the idea of who they are and what they strive to become in postcolonial spaces and how they grapple with the challenges that come with living in England as African immigrants/postcolonial subjects from Africa. It foregrounds the thematic representations of the life of immigrants and how they strive to rethink and reinvent themselves to fit into the new environment. The novel offers an unapologetic description of how deeply ingrained and pervasive anti-immigrant sentiments are perceived in England. The narrative depicts the country, particularly London, as a simmering ground of racial resentment that may be exhibited openly or subtly. This is done through the lens of Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*. The chapter primarily focuses on Emecheta's varied presentations of African immigrants' racial, cultural, economic, and identity issues. Adah, the main character, and minor characters like Francis demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of such racial resentment, and they are the main subjects of the analysis.

The study emphasises class distinction; I argue that the difference in social class and the alteration in the roles immigrants assume in society impact their sense of self. Buchi Emecheta explores the nexus between race and class relations and various conditions that contribute to identity formation through the main character, Adah. Finally, the analysis shows how Emecheta highlights the main challenges that African immigrants encounter while creating new identities in order to 'fit' properly in English culture.

3.1 Race

In *Second-Class Citizen,* Adah encounters racism as an impediment in the pursuit of her dreams. When Adah looks for accommodation for her family, in chapter 6, it becomes evident that London is blatantly racist toward Black people since most advertising says, "Sorry, no coloureds". Adah and Francis confront racism directly as they examine a two-room flat. Adah was asked by the woman she spoke with on the phone to set up the room check, but Adah had changed her voice, so the woman may not have realised she was Black. The woman looks through the window before heading downstairs as Adah and Francis approach, but she cannot see them well based on her surprised expression when she sees them. Emecheta also illustrates racial relations among Nigerian immigrants in London, as Yoruba and Ibo people take on stereotyped attitudes toward one another. The Yoruba people even assume Ibos are cannibals. Adah must conceal her Ibo identity from a Yoruba landlord later in the story to rent an apartment. In the narrative, racism is shown in several ways. The English people have different kinds of prejudice toward African immigrants. For instance, when Adah's son is afflicted with meningitis, he is treated at a terrible facility, so Adah and her family are compelled to reside in an undesirable area when they move to London. Her husband, Francis, tells her: "Everyone is coming to London, the West Indians, the Pakistanis, and even the Indians, so that African students are usually grouped together with them. We are all blacks, all coloureds, and the only houses we can get are horrors like these" (Emecheta 36). "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." (Emecheta 70). This implies that the ideological notion and experience of blackness and whiteness are often linked to race. In this extract, Adah reflects on her initial experiences of

discrimination in Britain, particularly considering whether the discrimination she faced was more pronounced by her fellow citizens than by white people. Adah's thinking also makes us understand that she not only faces discrimination from people from her own country but might make her feel unsure about her identity as a Nigerian in Britain. This part of the story shows that discrimination is complex and affects how we see ourselves. Adah's reflections show her as someone who thinks deeply about her experiences and tries to understand the different sides of discrimination. It makes us think about how people deal with discrimination and how it shapes their identity. The phrase "if one could call it that" indicates a degree of uncertainty or reluctance to label her experiences as discrimination outright, suggesting that Adah is engaging in a nuanced exploration of her encounters. This contemplative tone is significant as it suggests introspection and critical reflection on Adah's part. By comparing the discrimination she faced from her fellow citizens to that of white people, Adah highlights the complexity of racial dynamics in England. Thus, her experiences of discrimination from her fellow countrymen may impact her sense of identity as a Nigerian living in Britain, suggesting that her identity is not static but is influenced by her interactions and experiences in different cultural contexts. Her thoughts show that discrimination can be complicated. She compares how she was treated by people from her own country to how white people treated her. This comparison suggests that discrimination can come from different places and is not always about race alone.

As evidenced across cultures, the core concept of race has been the focus of discussion for many years. As a result, some Western scholars have defined and divided society into several groups depending on the colour of their skin. However, it stands to reason that racial relations also come with class stratification. This is because black people in England are seen as people with low incomes, and this is usually based on the colour

of their skin. This notion still resonates in contemporary society, where black people in the diaspora are always relegated to the background.

On the other hand, this experience proved to be a means of destroying one of Adah's misconceptions regarding white supremacy. When Trudy, Adah's English foster mother, maltreats Adah's children and lies to the children's officer about her behaviour, Adah becomes aware of English domination. "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. … 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 …! Why, then, did they claim to be superior?" (45) For Adah, this pushes her to recognise the world around her. She has also gained the knowledge and fortitude to confront the colonial attitude that has long been ingrained in her. As a result of her understanding of colonial rulers' shortcomings, the colonised continued to fight them. Adah becomes aware that white people can deceive. Adah learns to think of the colonial mentality she had while growing up in Nigeria; thus, her perception toward the socio-cultural milieu changes radically due to this situation.

It is important to note that Francis and Adah encounter racial tensions in a variety of circumstances, including the employment of their nanny, renting an apartment, job interviews and so forth. When Adah learns that her sick son, Vicky, is being sent to a hospital with the name "Royal Free", the height of racism becomes intolerable. Ironically, the hospital's name refers to what seems to be free and royal care that would be provided. Adah finds this hard to believe and has concerns about the hospital's poor care (34). Judging from this, I argue that one experiences the apogee of racism when one travels abroad. In London, Adah realises that as a black woman, she is discriminated against by white people. The extent to which such racism is exemplified

becomes evident when the landlady, who seemed caring and loving over the phone, refuses to give them rooms when she (the landlady) notices that they are black. “Every door seemed barred against them; nobody would consider accommodating them, even when they were willing to pay double the normal rent” (71). Adah and Francis were frequently confronted with notice boards that read, “Sorry, no coloureds.” Adah learns that “her colour was something to be ashamed of” (70). Black people are at the bottom, and they are treated unequally in various services, including housing, job opportunities chances and education.

A majority of black people reside in distinct neighbourhoods. Along with the segregation and discrimination that black immigrants encounter, one can say that the inferiority complex frequently results in trauma and identity crises. It is also important to stress that black people may easily transcend the prejudices that others have about them when they feel confident in their appearance and embrace their colour. However, when black people reject their black identity, they begin to consider themselves inferior, which frequently leads to tension among themselves. Adah has had misconceptions about white people in general and British society during a tender age. She is raised in a culture where the majority of Africans, if not all of them, are in admiration of British culture. Since so many of her Igbo relatives desire to visit England, Adah thinks the country is remarkably similar to heaven. Adah, on the other hand, is sceptical of this superiority of the British and contends that they cannot simply be superior to Blacks due to their White skin. Before travelling to England, “Adah’s father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God’s Holiest of Holies. Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven” (5). Adah thinks that Britain is like paradise because of the Igbo people’s respect and adoration for the British people. She

considers it to be a place without sin. Like other African immigrants, she thinks that English people are always honest and make no mistakes. This extract deepens our understanding of how Adah's father and others in her community viewed the United Kingdom with great respect and admiration. They saw the UK as incredibly important, almost like a sacred or heavenly destination. The idea was that going to the UK was like visiting a holy place or even heaven itself. This perception likely came from stories and beliefs passed down over time, possibly influenced by colonial ideas that portrayed Western countries like the UK as superior and full of opportunity. However, the reality for many immigrants, including Adah, was often very different, with challenges and discrimination awaiting them in the UK. The quote shows the contrast between the idealised view of the UK and the actual experiences of immigrants, highlighting the complexities of migration and the gap between expectation and reality.

Adah's romantic and idealistic view of the United Kingdom and the British people is shown to be misleading in the novel. She now sees England as a gloomy country where people are encouraged to stifle their emotions, much like the gin her parents consumed back home. "If you made a mistake and uncorked the bottle, the gin would bubble out" …. She faces real England, tolerating nothing rebellious, hiding her people's sufferings below the surface and embodying a supreme power over any other races. Adah encounters British people who are "remote, happy in aloof way, but determined to keep their distance". (Emechata 27; 83). This extract implies that Adah's experiences in Britain reflect a more profound underlying dynamic of colonialism and racism. The metaphor of uncorking a bottle suggests that revealing the truth about the sufferings of Adah's community is met with resistance and suppression by British society. This metaphor symbolises the deeper, systemic issues of power and control that govern the

relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The metaphor of uncorking a bottle of gin, where the gin represents the people's sufferings, suggests that any attempt to reveal or address the hardships faced by Adah and her community is met with resistance and suppression. This image creates a sense of pressure and containment, emphasising the repressive environment in which Adah finds herself. For this reason, one can say that the description of 'real England' as tolerating nothing rebellious and hiding the sufferings of Adah's people beneath the surface implies a facade of civility and control that conceals the underlying inequalities and injustices. This further reflects Fanon's concept of "epidermalization of inferiority." This concept describes how colonised people, like Adah and her community, internalise feelings of inferiority based on their skin colour. The metaphor of "uncorking the bottle" and the description of British society as hiding the sufferings of Adah's people beneath the surface align with Fanon's idea that colonial powers suppress the voices and experiences of the colonised. This portrayal highlights the superficiality of British society's acceptance of diversity while maintaining a dominant and oppressive stance. The depiction of British people as "remote" and "happy in aloof way, but determined to keep their distance" further reinforces the idea of isolation and detachment in their interactions with Adah. This suggests a sense of superiority and indifference towards Adah and her community, reflecting the unequal power dynamics.

Also, in contrast to the white people whom she has idealised just like any other Ibuza. Being black compels Francis to have an inferior mentality, which renders him a deserted person. He also emphasises how ethnic and cultural diversity among those from the Orient has been "homogenised." Most Orientalized people in the UK are forced to live on the outskirts of white people's neighbourhoods by the racist ideologies of the West.

In his words to Adah:

> You see, accommodation is very short in London, especially for black people with children. Everybody is coming to London. The West Indians, the Pakistanis and even the Indians, so that African students are usually grouped together with them. We are all blacks, all coloureds, and the only houses we can get are horrors... (38)

The passage implies a broader issue of racial segregation and discrimination, as black immigrants are often grouped with other non-white immigrant groups, such as West Indians, Pakistanis, and Indians, under the umbrella term "coloureds". One perspective that can be gleaned from this analysis is the concept of racialised spatial segregation. The extract suggests that black immigrants are forced to live in specific areas of London due to limited housing options, reflecting a form of racial segregation that persists in urban spaces. This perspective underscores the enduring impact of colonial and racist ideologies on contemporary urban landscapes, challenging the notion of a post-racial society.

Furthermore, the term "coloureds" used in the extract reveals the racial hierarchies present in society, where non-white groups are collectively marginalised and discriminated against. This raises questions about the construction of race and how it influences social interactions and access to resources. By examining housing through a racialised lens, we can better understand the structural inequalities that shape urban environments. The description of housing as "horrors" speaks to the broader issue of social injustice and the denial of fundamental human rights. It highlights the need for equitable housing policies that address the needs of marginalised communities.

This suggests that the housing situation for black immigrants in London, particularly African students, is challenging due to racial discrimination. Thus, African immigrants are often grouped with other immigrant communities, such as West Indians, Pakistanis, and Indians, under the term "coloureds." This grouping reflects a more extensive

system of racial discrimination that affects where and how these immigrants live in London. The term "coloureds" indicates a shared experience of marginalisation and reflects the racial hierarchies present in society. The description of housing as "horrors" creates a strong image of the terrible living conditions these immigrants face. Hence, African immigrants come from places like the West Indies, Pakistan, and India, and because they are all seen as "coloured," they often end up living together. The passage shows how racism and segregation affect black immigrants in London. This language reinforces the idea of racial segregation and how people of different races are maltreated.

"England gave Adah a cold welcome" encapsulates the initial encounter between the colonised and the coloniser (40). "The cold wind that blew on her face as she emerged on the deck was as heavy and hurtful as a blow from a boxer" (32). This cold weather shows that Adah is unaccustomed to such conditions. To a large extent, this foreshadows the bitter experiences Adah confronts in England. It stands to reason that Adah was not welcomed in England. When Adah first sees the house where she and the children will live, she is taken aback. Francis cannot provide her with a lavish mansion comparable to those owned by the British.

One may argue that Francis was lazy as this attitude prevented him from getting a job to raise income and rent an apartment. Nevertheless, it stands to reason, at a deeper level, that Francis' inability to secure a job is a result of an inferior mentality that blacks are always at the bottom and need little or no recognition from the white man. To this end, no one will rent a house to black people in Britain. Thus, in England, the minority population resided in different neighbourhoods. Adah's fear is rendered insignificant when she learns that she is an African immigrant from a former British colony. The deplorable living conditions that were forced on black people had nothing to do with

the lifestyle she was accustomed to in Nigeria. While Adah strives to establish her identity and ties to African culture, her husband, Francis, adopts an opposite mentality. He admires the British way of life and beliefs. This is evident through his conversion to Catholicism, as well as kissing his wife in public. Despite these situations, Francis cannot be accepted by English society since white people have a preconceived notion of him as well. The name Emechata gives to this character, Francis, provides some insights to argue that Francis was more into the British way of life. As a result, he is seen as an "Other," much like his wife. This character's in-between existence, as a result of being rejected by the country whose principles he loves, leads to his limitation. As a result, it is not erroneous to argue that he is in contrast to his wife.

Francis reminds Adah that black people in English society are classless beings. Their status as "second-class citizens" is homogenised. She cannot sustain the high standard of living in Lagos and London. Francis tells her you are a second-class citizen when you arrive in England. This move by Francis does not only reinforce the racial tension in England, but to a large extent, it reinforces how class stratification and elite life are associated with white folks and not black folks. Because we are all second-class citizens, you cannot discriminate against your people. He has conformed to black 'racialised,' 'second-class' status. The word "second-class" was what Adah was concerned about. Francis lived up to and loved this term since he had grown completely brainwashed by it (Emecheta 39- 40). Anthias, in his work, *Evaluating 'diaspora': beyond ethnicity?* Posits:

> As an enabling device the „race" paradigm delivers concerns with the negative categorisation of population groups, and their structural disadvantages. However, the social positioning of these groups is often not related to their migration and settlement trajectories. Their location and constitution within their country of origin (as class

> subjects, for example) have been seriously under-explored. (559)

This implies that the stereotyping Adah faces from her landlords and other hostile situations she encounters may be examined through the lens of Fanon's idea of horizontal violence. Adah wants to confront racial supremacy in England; she desires to be treated equally with other humans and to be a first-class citizen, like white people. The inferior mentality Francis maintains does not affect her. For Francis, being black means being inferior. She was well aware that his psychological blackness was deeply entrenched because of his colour. She gets to know the common practice of racism, but Francis's mentality provides a conducive environment for its development. Fanon reflects on such a predisposition for an inferiority complex. Adah's struggle with racism foregrounds Fanon's insights into the psychological impact of colonisation. Adah, as a Nigerian immigrant living in London, faces a society where the culture and language of the coloniser are dominant. This dominance can be seen as a manifestation of the "civilising mission" that Fanon describes, where the colonised is expected to adopt the culture and language of the coloniser. Judging from this, one can say that Adah's experience of racism can be understood through the lens of Fanon's concept of the "inferiority complex" imposed by colonisation. As she navigates a society that values British culture over her Nigerian heritage, Adah is compelled to internalise feelings of inferiority, leading her to question her own identity and worth. This internalised oppression can manifest in various forms, such as self-doubt, low self-esteem, and a sense of cultural alienation.

Adah believes that the black race has a similar status to other people. After arriving in England, she knows the challenges she must overcome as an African immigrant

woman. She must also deal with the resentment of the other black residents of Ashdown Street. Adah is determined to overcome all the complex challenges. Adah's conviction is that a person's "race" cannot be used to judge a person's dignity.

It is important to stress that the struggle between the two cultures affects Adah and Francis' lives, yet how they experience the conflict varies. The ejection of Adah and her family from their rented house in Kentish town and their subsequent quest for another accommodation appears to be the apogee of racial discrimination. This implicates them to the racial realities in England since no one wants to welcome blacks into their homes.

White English people see all brown-skinned immigrants as equals, and they give accommodation for them in immigrant communities but not in areas populated by English-born people. The English have preconceived notions towards black people, believing that they are all alike and that they should be alienated in terms of housing, medical care and other factors. Francis reminds her: "You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen." (37). In this sense, the use of direct speech and the contrast between the speaker's formal language and the colloquial reference to "a million publicity officers" and "a million pounds a day" highlights the disparity between the perceived success in Lagos and the reality of being treated as inferior upon arrival in England. The juxtaposition of extravagant wealth with the term "second-class citizen" underscores the abrupt shift in social status experienced by African immigrants, emphasising the linguistic markers of class distinction and the challenges they face in England. The linguistic markers in the text reinforce the claims about the challenges African immigrants face in England.

Emechata draws the reader's attention to race. As a consequence, they are accountable for the racial gap in English society, which is divided into two racial classes: whites and blacks. As seen in the extract above, this disparity causes extreme psychological pain to Francis and other male friends since they are forced to accept and believe in the lower position that is imposed on them as legitimate and natural. Her intention may be to remind the reader of the inextricable link between race and hatred. The deep-seated sense of inferiority that black people experience keeps them from entering restaurants. Today, black Africans experience discrimination in Europe because of their race and way of life. Adah understands that being comfortable in England is problematic. At some point, the African students, as evidenced in the text, experience emotional problems as they have no one to confide their problems in. Adah and Francis symbolise the underprivileged, marginalised black immigrants and those from Third World countries who prefer to reside in the United Kingdom. Adah is discriminated against at various stages of her social life there. Despite her colour, she desires to preserve her cultural values and expects to be treated as a first-class citizen.

3.2 Class

Bryson defines class as "people who share a common socio-economic level and hierarchical structure, as well as a sense of belonging and affinity to other classes" (51). Taking inspiration from Bryson's argument, it is also important to point out that the hierarchical structure, I argue, is also connected to one's colour. Adah has preconceptions regarding people from lower socioeconomic classes, but she is aware that in England, all black people are considered lower class. As the narrator points out, the character's attitude exemplifies how black people are marginalised and pushed to the bottom of English society:

> In any case, Francis and Adah had to look for another place to live. If it had been possible for them to find a new place, they would have

> been moved within weeks of her arrival in London. However, it had not been. During the days and weeks that followed, she had asked people at work if they knew of anywhere. She would read and reread all that shop windows had to advertise... She was beginning to learn that her colour was something she was supposed to be ashamed of. (Emecheta 70-71)

Another point worth noting is that Adah wished to visit England and experience Western idiosyncrasies. Her husband, Francis, proved to be the only one who could help her, yet his attitude did not meet her expectations. Adah believes Francis when he tells her about his family's decision to keep her from going to Britain.

Adah's questioning of Francis's lack of care makes her understand the plight of the women she meets at the hospital. Adah understands her situation in London and realises that to escape from all these psychological problems and prejudices correctly, she ought to behave like a true contemporary lady and "learn" the norms of being a first-class (118). Adah discovers the materialistic need to feel recognised in a civilised society. In her second delivery, she determines that she should pretend like a rich man's wife in England. Francis' contemptuous behaviour is repeated throughout the novel. Adah mostly looks down on Nigerian locals because of her academic prowess and close links with European standards. She perceives her lifestyle as a higher social class, relative to the developed world, than the locals and regards her people as inferior. Adah considers Francis' view on the world as distinctively African: "He had had little opportunity of coming in contact with Europeans as Adah had. Those God-forsaken missionaries" (2). In this excerpt, the class distinction is subtly implied through the contrasting experiences of Adah and her husband, Francis, with Europeans. The phrase "He had had little opportunity of coming in contact with Europeans as Adah had" suggests that Adah has had more exposure to Europeans than Francis. This difference in exposure implies a certain level of privilege or higher social standing for Adah, as she has had

more opportunities for contact with Europeans, which could include interactions with missionaries. The mention of "God-forsaken missionaries" further highlights a potential class difference. The term "God-forsaken" suggests a negative view of missionaries, which could indicate a more critical or cynical perspective often associated with a more educated or sophisticated viewpoint. This contrasts with Francis's limited exposure, indicating a possible lower social status or less education compared to Adah. This subtly reveals the class distinctions between the characters through their experiences and attitudes towards Europeans, adding depth to the narrative's exploration of social class.

Religious education also impacted Adah, and she uses it in many ways. After persuading her to accompany Francis to Britain, she speaks to her mother-in-law: "That was life, she said to herself. Be as cunning as a serpent and as harmless as a dove" (27). Of course, it might be claimed that the colonised reacted to the colonisers' attitude because Adah has little regard for native values and believes in the colonisers' supremacy. This is seen in her eagerness to visit Britain despite any obstacle. Adah finally makes it to Britain after all of the tribulations. However, her experiences do not end up being what she had expected throughout her life. The encounter between the colonised and the coloniser is presented below. "England gave Adah a cold welcome. If Adah had been Jesus, she would have passed England by. Her children must have an English education and, for that reason, she was prepared to bear the coldest welcome, even if it came from the land of her dreams" (29). This illustrates Adah's challenging experience as an immigrant in England and her determination to provide her children with English education. The mention of England giving Adah a "cold welcome" suggests that she was not met with warmth or acceptance upon her arrival. Despite this, Adah is willing to endure this treatment for the sake of her children's education,

highlighting the sacrifices she is willing to make for their future. The import of this extract illuminates the class distinction experienced by Adah as an immigrant in England. The phrase "Her children must have an English education" suggests a desire for upward mobility and access to better opportunities, often associated with a higher social class. Adah's conscious desire to endure a "cold welcome" for her children's education highlights the sacrifices she is willing to make to improve their social and economic standing. This reflects the class disparities and aspirations for social mobility that are common themes in immigrant experiences. The reference to Jesus passing England by as if he had been in Adah's shoes adds a layer of religious imagery and metaphor to the narrative. It suggests that Adah feels rejected in England, much like Jesus may have been by specific communities during his time. This comparison underscores Adah's alienation and isolation in her new environment. The phrase "even if it came from the land of her dreams" indicates that Adah had high hopes and expectations for England before her arrival. However, the reality of her experience contrasts sharply with her idealised vision of the country. This discrepancy between expectation and reality adds depth to Adah's character and highlights the challenges immigrants face when seeking a better life in a foreign land.

The idea she made up in her mind sharply contrasts reality. The fact that no one appears to notice her arrival, and even more so the fact that the civilised world does not like what she imagined in Nigeria, shocks her even though she spent her whole youth fantasising about Britain. She senses a change in Francis when he kisses her in front of everyone, which adds to her initial surprise. The most fundamental flaw, however, may be seen in Adah's unrealistic portrayal of Europeans. The British treatment of Adah did not seem to be acceptable, notwithstanding her criticism of her own people's terrible manners: "The whites she saw did not look like people who could make jokes about

things like death. They looked remote, happy in an aloof way, but determined to keep their distance". "The sharpness in the voice seemed to say to her: 'It is allowed for African males to come and get civilisation in England, but that privilege has still not been accorded to females.'... yet she hoped that the two of them would be strong enough to accept civilisation into their relationship." Because if they had not, it would have been a massive mistake for them to come (28). Adah's reference to Francis as uncivilised does not only mean that he is uncouth, but importantly, Francis cannot afford to give her better treatment.

Adah's status as a member of the elite class in Nigeria, who now must live in the same compound with "such Nigerians who called her madam at home" (Emecheta 36), shows the fall in social class status in Britain. A few Nigerians possessed the same standard of education as Adah's workers. Adah's disappointment at seeing the one room they had to share with their two kids seems unpleasant. Of more significant disappointment to Adah is the fact that the landlord and neighbours are working-class Nigerians, "A microcosm of the community she meant to rid herself of" (Sougou 513).

> I know you won't like it," Francis continues, "but this is the best I can do." As you can see, there is a severe shortage of housing in London, particularly for black families with children. Everyone is planning a trip to London. West Indians, Pakistanis, and even Indians, for example, are sometimes paired alongside African pupils. We're all blacks and people of colour, and the only dwellings we can afford are atrocities like this. (Emecheta 29)

Emecheta employs various linguistic and literary elements in this extract to underscore the class distinction between black and white individuals. The use of direct speech in phrases like "I know you won't like it" and "this is the best I can do" presents the dialogue, making the experience of housing shortage and discrimination more relatable for the reader. This technique emphasises the personal and emotional impact of

accommodation for African immigrants, highlighting their struggle for dignity and respect.

Additionally, the descriptive language in phrases such as "severe shortage of housing" and "the only dwellings we can afford are atrocities like this" creates a vivid picture of the challenges faced by African immigrants in London, emphasising the stark contrast between their living conditions and those of white individuals. This vivid imagery evokes a sense of desperation and helplessness, emphasising the dire circumstances faced by African immigrants.

Also, the symbolism in the passage, particularly the reference to "black families with children" and being "paired alongside African pupils," symbolises the broader issue of racial segregation and discrimination. This reinforces Fanon's concept of the "epidermalization of inferiority," where physical characteristics, such as skin colour, are used to justify discrimination and perpetuate social hierarchies. The Parallel structure, "We're all blacks and people of colour", emphasises the collective identity and shared experiences of African immigrants and other marginalised groups. This underscores the systemic nature of discrimination and highlights the need for solidarity and collective action to address these issues, aligning with Fanon's call for unity and resistance against colonial oppression. In effect, one can say that, through these linguistic and literary elements, Emecheta deepens the reader's understanding of the theme of class distinction and its relation to Fanon's concepts, providing a poignant and empathetic portrayal of the challenges faced by African immigrants in London. Thus, despite their differences, English people regarded all immigrants as the same. However, Adah could not bear the notion of being regarded the same as any other immigrant in England: "Then, 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" (31).

However, much as Adah insists upon class mobility, Francis tells her: "… but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen. So you can't discriminate against your people because we are all second class" (Emecheta 37). The idea of "second class" reflects Adah's sense of self: "Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only up to it but enjoying it too" (38). While the other blacks in the neighbourhood are conditioned to live as second-class citizens, Adah strongly rejects this idiosyncrasy. As a single character, Adah detests her people's perception of her status as second-class citizens. Adah refutes and instead applies for jobs where she can use her university education to be in the upper class. Since few other educated black people were occupying such positions in England at the time, Adah's application isolated her from other black women at home and at work.

Although Adah's situation appears humiliating, she must confront the reality that she is in England as a foreigner. There is no need to respond to Francis's enraged expressions towards Adah:

> … in Lagos you may be million publicity officers for the Americans; 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. (30)

The extract employs irony by juxtaposing the imagined wealth and success one might have in Lagos with the harsh reality of being considered a "second-class citizen" in England. This highlights the stark contrast and challenges faced by African immigrants. The repetition of the phrase "you may" emphasises the extent of success one could achieve in Lagos, only to be reduced to a lower status upon arrival in England. This

repetition draws the reader's attention to the disillusionment and disappointment immigrants face. The contrast between the lavish lifestyle described in Lagos and the status of a "second-class citizen" in England highlights the disparity in opportunities and treatment based on location and race. This emphasises the unfairness and discrimination experienced by African immigrants. The direct address, "So, you can't discriminate against your people, because we are all second class," directly engages the reader and reinforces the theme of unity among marginalised groups. It suggests a shared experience of discrimination and calls for solidarity among those facing similar challenges. Living "like an elite" with "hundreds of servants" creates a vivid picture of wealth and success, contrasting sharply with the reality of being marginalised in England. This enhances the reader's understanding of the disparity in circumstances and the impact of societal perceptions. Hence, one may argue that African immigrants already feel inferior to white people. In other words, because of the mentality that stretches back to the colonial era, black people in England are the lowest socioeconomic class. Adah thinks she is superior and unique to all other black people, yet British society sees her as a second-class citizen. As Iyer points out, "Adah is not just an example of African women's advancements; whilst in London, she does become a reflection of Africa herself and her position in the Western perspective, a position that is unquestionably second, if not third, becoming a Third World continent (28). Adah is still regarded as a colonial subject among other immigrants in England. Adah's situation is a failure from a Western perspective compared to her situation in her country and her education, which could have given her a higher social status. In England, this ideology is still prevalent, and Adah and her family suffer as a result of the othering process. There is no relationship between this situation and her childhood, education, financial situation or social class. Like all other black people, she must, therefore, fulfil the roles

assigned to them. Despite Adah's attempts to turn the situation around, the black community in the United Kingdom has already come to terms with its inferior status. Black women are looking for women who would encourage their children to embrace English manners while giving up their customs, just like she wanted her kids to have a respectable English education.

> Children are said to have two sets of mothers in England: their biological mother and their social mother. A Nigerian housewife in England would place an advertisement for a foster mother as soon as she learned she was having a child rather than buying strollers and crocheting baby shoes. Everyone only wanted to be certain that the foster mother was white, regardless of whether or not the lady was acceptable or the home was tidy. The idea of "whiteness" might be used to justify several misdeeds. (36)

The extract above illuminates the complex nature of motherhood and family dynamics experienced by Nigerian immigrants in England. The idea of having two sets of mothers, biological and social, reflects the cultural adaptation and survival strategies immigrants employ in a foreign land. The practice of seeking a white foster mother exemplifies the importance placed on social acceptance and assimilation into the dominant culture. This reflects the issue of racial hierarchy and the internalised belief in the superiority of whiteness. The mention of "buying strollers and crocheting baby shoes", juxtaposed with the emphasis on the race of the foster mother, highlights the prioritisation of social appearances over material possessions. This reflects Fanon's internal belief in the superiority of whiteness and the lengths individuals may go to conform to societal expectations. Through these observations, Emecheta critiques the impact of racism and the lengths individuals may go to reconstruct their status and survive within a stratified society. Adah's worry about skin colour at this point in her life is evident in the fact that she wants her children to grow up knowing British traditions. African families feel pressured to go by the standards to be recognised by

the English, even though parenting conventions in England and Nigeria are very different. “Only first-class residents lived with their children, not the blacks” (39). When Adah gives birth to her son, her attempts to be identical to the whites in England are apparent. While other white women who give birth in hospitals are well-received by their families, Adah’s husband shows little interest in her and maltreats her. Due to financial difficulties, Francis cannot send “flowers, “ cards, “ or “presents” due to financial difficulties. Adah constantly relates herself to the other women in the hospital. She avoids seeing other white mothers out of guilt. Adah is fascinated with her appearance and social position as a black immigrant striving for class equality with white people.

Adah acknowledges her sense of self in Britain as a black immigrant from a former British colony and a woman capable of meeting first-class white citizens. In the “South” that Emecheta depicts in her narrative, Nigerian women cope with class alienation and poverty. While, in Nigeria, Adah is described as a “second-class citizen” because of her gender, in England, all Nigerian migrants are characterised in this way due to their “race” and status. As Francis points out: …; “you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants: you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen. “(71). This implies that not only does the writer represent a specific (class-based) ideology, but the result itself elicits a reaction from the reader, which Althusser refers to as “ideological self-recognition” (9). It can be contended that ideologies are perplexing and contradictory, but literary language appears to provide a symbolic or formal resolution of internal discrepancies. To this end, Emecheta develops a mentality in response to the colonial discourses she encounters. From an ideological position, she sees herself in relation to Western norms. Adah exhibits a postcolonial mindset that, in reality, refers to the coloniser. Adah then

realises that her experiences in her Nigerian community and, subsequently, in British culture led to an othering process because of her status. To borrow Fanon's terminology, what emerges from this interaction is a "psycho-existential complex" (Fanon 5) in which whites assume social and political domination, while blacks assume subservience. This implies that social notions such as 'blackness, 'whiteness,' coloniser', and 'colonised become social constructions rather than psychological constructions. On the one hand, it makes sense to argue that these classifications become the result of human agency and, as a result, take on certain meanings by the interests of the dominant group. Although Fanon's general understanding of how the colonised are economically and socially marginalised is the focus of his study, reading Emechata's *Second Class Citizen* makes the case to argue that there is an existential philosophical analysis in his thinking that requires further exploration. "Even if Francis did qualify, he would never have the courage to bring her to a restaurant to eat, not in London anyway, because he firmly believed that such places were not for blacks. Adah knew that his blackness, his feeling of blackness, was firmly established in his mind" (57). The deep-rooted class distinctions experienced by Adah, a Nigerian immigrant in England, are manifested in the excerpt. "She used to tell herself" suggests a reflective tone. This introspective narration helps the reader empathise with her desires and frustrations. Emecheta employs irony to highlight the harsh realities of racial discrimination. Adah's belief that she would be served if she had the money contrasts starkly with the unjust reality that denies her access to these establishments based on her race. This irony serves to emphasise the deep-rooted racism prevalent in society and the disparity between Adah's aspirations and her lived experiences. The use of foreshadowing (*Adah knew that..*) adds depth to the narrative, hinting at the challenges and limitations that Adah and Francis will face as a black couple in a predominantly

white society. Adah's realisation that Francis would never have the courage to bring her to a restaurant in London foreshadows the social barriers and prejudices that will shape their lives. The use of the phrase "an empty dream" conveys a sense of disillusionment and unattainability. The repetition of the word "blackness" emphasises Francis's deep-seated belief in his inferiority, which, to a large extent, shows the internalisation of racial stereotypes. This repetition serves to reinforce the theme of racial discrimination and its impact on the individual psyche. The use of internal monologue also allows readers to empathise with Adah's frustration regarding her social status. These linguistic markers deepen our understanding of the disparity between Adah's aspirations and the harsh realities she faces, emphasising the barriers imposed by societal structures.

3.3 Sense of Self

This section delves into the factors that compel Adah, the main character, to reconstruct her sense of self and assimilate into English societal norms. Adah's journey represents defiance against traditional gender roles, as she takes control of her life and children, even divorcing her husband, Francis. This decision would have been considered taboo in her Nigerian culture. This defiance symbolises her determination to challenge societal norms and carve her path. The narrative also reflects the harsh realities faced by many Nigerian immigrants in 1960s London, where finding suitable housing proved daunting. Adah and Francis, like many others, are forced to live in cramped and inadequate accommodations, highlighting the struggles of immigrant life. "Sometimes, she wondered if she would ever be able to lead a normal life again. Here she was, a stranger in her own country, a second-class citizen in her husband's country. She had lost her identity completely" (Emecheta 73). This reinforces Adah's struggle with her sense of self and belonging. She feels like a stranger in Nigeria, where she is no longer living, and in England, where she is not entirely accepted. The reference to being a

"second-class citizen" emphasises the societal barriers and discrimination she faces, which further complicates her sense of identity. Throughout the novel, Adah grapples with these conflicting identities, trying to find a place where she feels she truly belongs. Her experiences reflect the broader theme of identity crisis among immigrants, particularly those who face racial and cultural challenges in a new country. Adah's struggle with identity and self-perception is profoundly influenced by the racial and class dynamics she encounters as an African immigrant in England. A dah's status as a "second-class citizen" due to her race not only limits her access to specific spaces but also affects her sense of belonging and acceptance in society. Encountering racism leads Adah to question her identity and her role in society as she deals with being treated as inferior based on her race. As an African immigrant living in challenging conditions, she faces the harsh realities of economic disparity and social marginalisation. These circumstances limit her opportunities and contribute to feelings of powerlessness and alienation. Adah's inability to afford accommodation in England highlights the intersection of race and class in shaping her experiences and sense of self. Given that these challenges abound, "she practised and practised her voice". The word "voice" signifies Adah's attempt to find her place and assert herself in a society where she may feel like an outsider. Her voice is not only about language but also about her sense of self. This conscious effort can be seen as a way for her to adapt to her new environment and possibly assimilate into the dominant culture. Language plays a crucial role in shaping our identity and sense of belonging. For Adah, mastering the language of her new country may be a way to assert her presence and establish herself within the community. In effect, Adah must reconcile her Nigerian identity with the realities of life in England, where her race and class position her as an outsider. Adah's journey, in my view, exemplifies the complexities of identity formation in the context of migration,

where external factors such as racism and economic inequality influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and their place in society. It is important to stress that what propels her to this action is borne out of racial discrimination of her being black and her quest to live as a first-class citizen. This fosters the impact of race and class stratification on one's sense of self as an African immigrant. This study argues that what African immigrants encounter is a result of the enigma's stereotypical nature to escape racism and embrace elite status. What seems missing is that their identities and appearance are forged to fit into Euro-American cultural and economic contexts. In discussing these issues in *Second Class Citizen*, it is essential to mention that Adah, at the beginning of the novel, is portrayed as a woman who cannot be broken by anything. Suddenly, the situation that she meets in England compels her to acclimatise herself to the English way of life. Adah's efforts to practice her voice and assimilate into the dominant culture resonates with Fanon discusses the concept of "epidermalization of inferiority," where racial differences are reduced to physical attributes, leading to the internalisation of racial stereotypes and the belief in the inherent superiority of whiteness. Adah's practice of her voice can be seen as a manifestation of this, as she seeks to overcome the presumed inferiority associated with her racial identity by adopting the speech patterns of the dominant white culture. Adah's practice of her voice reflects this internalised desire to conform to white cultural norms to be accepted in a society where whiteness is privileged. I argue that this act is a result of the colonised person's internalisation of the coloniser's values and standards, leading to a rejection or suppression of their own cultural identity.

One can say that racial prejudice has physical, psychological and economic effects on the black characters in the novel. It appears that many blacks presented in the story have their families beset by the gale of racism, their marriages fail, and their dreams aborted.

The black men in the novel, Francis, Mr. Noble and Mr. Babalola, end up as failures. Although Francis's selfishness and laziness eventually lead to the collapse of his marriage with Adah, this marital failure, arguably, is connected with racial bias, prejudice, and discrimination in British society. Adah and her family are looked down on by the English landlords and are compelled to live in a run-down neighbourhood owing to the discriminatory attitude in England. Adah is obliged to bear the burdens of being a woman, a black woman, and an immigrant with class struggles. Ada's pursuit of a new house exemplifies how her experiences with race and class intersect. She fights and resists prejudices and racist attitudes that impede her sense of self. Adah is usually concerned about being labelled as "second-class", yet she is resolute in confronting such demeaning sentiments.

In Britain, race and class are often seen as two sides of the same coin, but for immigrants, those two issues are inseparable. Because of their race, Adah and Francis cannot obtain inexpensive homes and are often treated differently. They are first pushed into a lesser class, but Adah's determination and intellect enable the family to move slightly higher. Adah struggles with the intersection of race and class because she finds it difficult to understand why she must share places with individuals who would have been her servants in her home.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF *AMERICANAH*

4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the thematic concerns in the novel, ranging from race, class and sense of self. The analysis focuses on how race is constructed in the United States and the criticism of American privilege. Ifemelu must deal with one of the most critical considerations in American society. This is further exemplified by the main character, Ifemelu, who is offered the opportunity to study in America to find a better life. Still, her status as an African immigrant hampers her adaptation to America. Ifemelu's blog excerpt demonstrates how Adichie addresses the complex relationships between race and class in America. Thus, the analyses of the text extensively focus on posts from Ifemelu's blog and how they are foregrounded in the novel to reflect the nexus between race and class. Finally, the analyses will unravel how Adichie brings to the fore the challenges that African Immigrants face in search of greener pastures.

4.1 Race

Ifemelu's blog becomes a significant component of the story, providing her with a platform for presenting racial issues in America. The blog is more than a social media platform that links Ifemelu to her followers. Ifemelu's blog helps her to demonstrate how racism is seen in every facet of American society, where she frames her feelings and experiences of this nation toward black Americans and non-black Americans. "In America, racism exists, but racists are all gone. Racists belong to the past. Racists are the thin-lipped mean white people in the movies about the civil rights era" (Adichie). The contradiction between the existence of racism and the perception that overtly racist individuals no longer exist. This irony serves to highlight the disconnect between public perception and the ongoing reality of racism in society. This also reflects a common

misconception about racism in America, suggesting that overtly racist individuals are a thing of the past, often associated with historical portrayals of the civil rights era. This view overlooks the subtler, more systemic forms of racism that persist in contemporary society. This perspective aligns with Frantz Fanon's key concepts in *Black Skin, White Masks*, particularly his exploration of the internalised racism experienced by black individuals in a racially stratified society. Fanon argues that even in societies where overt racism may appear to have diminished, the psychological effects of colonisation and racial oppression continue to shape individuals' identities and experiences. He critiques the idea that racism is solely a matter of individual attitudes, highlighting instead the structural and systemic nature of racism that permeates institutions and social norms. The metaphorical language describes racists as "all gone." This figurative expression implies that racist individuals have disappeared, emphasising the idea that racism has evolved into more subtle forms. Additionally, the mention of "thin-lipped mean white people in the movies about the civil rights era" alludes to a specific portrayal of racists in historical contexts. This allusion evokes imagery and stereotypes associated with past representations of racism, adding depth to the commentary on race. The contrast between the idea of overt racism being a thing of the past and the idea that racism still exists serves to highlight the complexity of racial dynamics in contemporary society. This contrast challenges one to reconsider their assumptions about the nature of racism and its impact today.

In *Americanah,* Adichie examines how race relates to relationships, politics and education. In essence, *Americanah* is a love story interspersed with an intraracial relationship between Ifemelu, the main character, and Obinze, her high school lover. Adichie uses two of Ifemelu's romantic interests—one with a white guy named Curt and one with an African-American man named Blaine—to examine the relationship

between race and romantic relationships. Ifemelu enters into a relationship with Professor Blaine after a turbulent affair with Curt. She swiftly learns that the experiences of African immigrants in America and African Americans differ from each other.

> Curt had never been with a black woman; he told her this after their first time, in his penthouse apartment in Baltimore, with a self-mocking toss of his head, as if this were something he should have done long ago but had somehow neglected. (Adichie 240)

The dialogue between Curt and Ifemelu serves as a window into their characters. Curt's statement that he had never been with a black woman, delivered with a "self-mocking toss of his head," reveals his casual attitude towards race and possibly a lack of deeper understanding or empathy. This characterisation is crucial as it sets the stage for the dynamics between the characters and underscores the theme of cultural differences.

It is significant to note that Curt's penthouse apartment in Baltimore represents his status and privilege, highlighting the socio-economic gap between him and Ifemelu. This symbol adds depth to their relationship, suggesting that their differences extend beyond race to encompass broader societal divides. Adichie's use of descriptive language, such as "self-mocking toss," creates a vivid image of Curt's demeanour. This helps characterise Curt and adds a layer of irony to the scene, suggesting that his attitude towards their relationship is superficial and lacks deeper understanding.

Curt's statement that he had never been with a black woman, ironically, underscores the superficiality of his understanding of race and relationships, highlighting the challenges faced in interracial encounters where cultural and racial differences are often overlooked or misunderstood. Through this interaction, Adichie offers a commentary on interracial relationships and cultural encounters. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as keynote speaker at the 2018 *Inbound Conference* in Boston, asserts:

> All of the black people I know, myself included, are happy being black and particularly happy that black don't crack, so the problem is not blackness because blackness is beautiful. The problem is that the white racists have imposed on blackness the burden of many negative stereotypes (qt. from IzaackM)

In the excerpt above, Adichie offers an interesting take on issues that continue to define black civilisation and its politics: race and migration. It seems nice to hear the voice of a female Nigerian writer talk so passionately, even critically, and at times with a good sense of humour about the problems that influence our life, identity and society. Even outside America, Ojiugo remarks how snobbish and arrogant Britons seem to detest ethnic interaction: "English people will live next to you for years, but they will never greet you. They appear to have buttoned themselves up" (Adichie 274). Similar to this, before Obama was elected, an unidentified American, likely a white American, left the following remark on Ifemelu's blog: "How can a monkey be president? Somebody do us a favour and put a bullet in this guy. Send him back to the African jungle. A black man will never be in the white house, dude, it's called the white house for a reason" (404). vividly captures the venomous racial prejudices that persist in society. This passage employs potent linguistic markers and literary devices that deepen our understanding of the entrenched racism and its impact on the sense of self for black individuals, particularly in the context of political and social power dynamics. The derogatory language in the passage is striking. The use of the term "monkey" is a deeply racist slur that dehumanises and infantilises black people, reducing them to a feral status. This underscores the demeaning attitudes that continue to plague societal views on race. Additionally, the phrase "African jungle" invokes primitive and savage imagery associated with Africa, reinforcing stereotypes about the continent and its people as uncivilised and barbaric. These linguistic choices are powerful in illustrating the depth of racial prejudice and the way it strips individuals of their humanity. The use

of violent imagery conveys the hostility faced by black individuals. The explicit call to "put a bullet in this guy" reveals the extreme hostility and hatred harboured against the idea of a black president. This reflects the dangerous levels of animosity and the lengths to which some individuals are willing to go to resist racial progress. Such a violent image is a stark reminder of the real threats and psychological trauma that racism can inflict.

Furthermore, the text diminishes identity and belonging through phrases like "send him back to the African jungle" and "the White House for a reason." The former implies that black individuals do not belong in positions of power or within specific spaces in America, negating their American identity and insisting on an inherent foreignness. The latter phrase serves as a rhetorical reinforcement of the idea that spaces of power and prestige are reserved exclusively for white people, perpetuating racial exclusion and the belief in white supremacy. These linguistic markers highlight the systemic nature of racial discrimination and its impact on the sense of self. Relating this to Fanon's concepts in *Black Skin, White Masks*, we see clearly how racism dehumanises black people, creating an inferiority complex and alienation. The term "monkey" directly dehumanises the black president, aligning with Fanon's analysis of how racist language strips individuals of their humanity and dignity. Additionally, the violent imagery of assassination echoes Fanon's exploration of the psychological trauma inflicted by a racist society. Fanon also delves into the idea of racial identity and alienation, explaining how black individuals are often made to feel like perpetual outsiders. The demand to "send him back to the African jungle" reinforces a sense of alienation. Moreover, the assertion that the "White House" reflects the power structures that Fanon critiques. The "white gaze" maintains and enforces these structures, determining who is considered legitimate and who is excluded from power. This serves as a stark

reminder of the persistent and pernicious nature of racism. Through derogatory remarks, imagery, and the undermining of identity and belonging, Adichie illustrates the deep-seated prejudices that continue to influence societal attitudes and power dynamics. Fanon's concepts in *Black Skin, White Masks* provide a critical framework for understanding these issues, highlighting the psychological and social impacts of racism on black individuals and their ongoing struggle for recognition and equality.

The alienation and disparaging words used against black people in *Americanah* problematise the disrespect white people exhibit towards African immigrants. Understanding individuals as fellow humans requires talking with them about their cultures. The text explores digital platforms to project one's voice, a particularly relevant concept in modern times. Ifemelu uses her blog to offer people the opportunity to be heard. This study shows the relevance of an intersectional perspective in understanding the social prejudice that Ifemelu faces in America and the recognition she receives for creating a blog to tell her story publicly. Ironically, Aunty Uju's and other Nigerians' convictions may be a part of the issue, highlighting the complexity of the problem. It is important to note that "all of us look alike to white people" in America, she tells Ifemelu (Adichie 148). This notion held by African immigrants reveals the problem Ifemelu has been thinking about: immigrants are not welcomed and permitted to enter America's culture as equals due to racial disparities. In *A Different Mirror*, Ronald Takaki posits that "we originally came from many different shores, and our diversity has been at the centre of the making of America" (438). Adichie maintains that racism is persistent and complex and that it is crucial to see oneself differently upon moving to the United States. The main character, Ifemelu, admits this on her blog. However, she notes how "tribalisms" of identity shape her immigrant experience and mostly have little bearing on how she is regarded and classified in America. Adichie

talked about the significance of race in American discourse in a talk she gave in Copenhagen in 2014 on the International Author's Stage:

> Race is the major organizing principle of American history, American life, really, and it is the one also that Americans are the most uncomfortable about. It's the subject that they circle around, the subject that they invent codes to talk about… It's the subject that, many Americans think that it has to do with the past, but it's very much the present, and I think also that it's the most misunderstood, the most potentially contentious, social subject in America.

The statement means that race has been a foundational aspect of American history and society. It has influenced key events, policies, and social structures throughout the nation's history. Adichie reinforces race in her idea of the challenges she discovered on moving to the United States. Her stories often deal with the intricacies of identity as influenced by other social constructs. For instance, in *Americanah*, Ifemelu regularly explores tribalisms—not simply race, but overlapping kinds of identity that shape how America defines itself. In her blog, "Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A Few Explanations of What Things Really Mean, "Ifemelu unravels the term Americans adopt to avoid saying race openly. "Of all their tribalisms, Americans are most uncomfortable with race," she wonders and explores the ways that terms like diversity and culture may stand in for the racial connotations portrayed by White folks (Adichie 435). "Diversity means different things to different folks. If a white person is saying a neighbourhood is diverse, they mean nine percent, black people. "The minute it gets to ten percent black people, the white folks move out …Sometimes they say "culture" when they mean race" (345). The statement "Diversity means different things to different folks" is ironic. It implies that while diversity is often celebrated as a positive value, its actual practice and perception are fraught with racial prejudice. This irony highlights the discrepancy between the ideal of diversity and the reality of racial segregation. By juxtaposing the notion of diversity with the real-world implications of

racial bias, Adichie underscores how the term can be manipulated to obscure genuine issues of racial inequality. The exaggeration in "The minute it gets to ten percent black people, the white folks move out" serves to emphasise the irrational fear and prejudice that some white people have towards black people. This hyperbolic statement underscores the extent to which racism influences the behaviour of individuals and communities, leading to the preservation of racially homogenous neighbourhoods. The dramatic shift from nine percent to ten percent black population as a trigger for white departure highlights the absurdity and deep-seated nature of racial biases. The use of the term "culture" as a euphemism for race points to how discussions about race are often masked by seemingly neutral or positive language. By saying "culture" instead of directly addressing race, people can avoid confronting the uncomfortable realities of racial prejudice and discrimination. This euphemism allows for the perpetuation of racism under the guise of cultural differences, masking the true intent and thereby complicating efforts to address racial tensions. This aligns with Frantz Fanon's concepts in *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he discusses how language and social practices perpetuate racial hierarchies and the alienation of black individuals. Fanon argues that the superficial acknowledgement of diversity often masks deeper systemic racism, much like the passage illustrates the disingenuous use of terms like "diversity" and "culture" to avoid confronting racial issues directly. This means that race is a topic that many Americans find uncomfortable to discuss openly. This discomfort often leads to avoidance or indirect conversations about racial issues. Americans often use coded language or euphemisms when discussing race to avoid confrontation with the subject. This practice of circling the issue can prevent honest and productive dialogue about racial inequalities and their impacts. Adichie discusses how class interacts with race to influence a person's status on the US racial hierarchy. To this end, Ifemelu examines

how different marginalised groups fight to maintain their position above Black Americans and immigrants in terms of race. She demonstrates that her class status is fairly affluent. When Ifemelu demonstrates that she is "Black, baby", she may unknowingly reveal the class of her family. Obinze, Ifemelu's schoolmate, finally travels to London on a three-year visa to eventually move to America, his dreamland. Ironically, the son of a university professor in Nigeria scrubs public restrooms. Due to the dearth of employment possibilities for black immigrants, Obinze settles for this in London; "he was indeed abroad cleaning toilets, wearing rubber gloves and carrying a pail" (237). Racism may also be shown in job descriptions, as black people are expected to clean restrooms while white people clean offices. Emenike, a former classmate from Obinze's high school who now resides in London, is also affected by the racial tensions in the UK. Although he is married to an Englishwoman who works as an attorney in London, his race nevertheless makes him a target of discrimination. However, race was considered noticeable in the United States since it determined how one was treated. Ginika, her mixed-race classmate, had told Ifemelu that she had a better time in the United States since she was not entirely African like Ifemelu. Ifemelu also noticed that her Nigerian accent betrayed her. Hence, she considered it daunting when, after introducing herself on campus, an American clerk drew out her words, assuming that Ifemelu would not hear her if she talked in the American accent. She also does an independent search into American history to understand the basis of racial identities and American culture. She feels better after learning this new information, and as she continues to read, "America's mythologies began to take on meaning, America's tribalisms—race, ideology, and region—became clear" (129). This afforded her the willpower to argue with lecturers in class without fear of "scolding about being disrespectful but an encouraging nod, Adichie remarked in *The Danger of a Single*

Story: "Now, despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather because there was no need."

Ifemelu, like Adichie, comes to America with the danger of "a single story" about how heaven America is. During Ifemelu's initial arrival and early beginnings in America, she, like many African immigrants, faced the same problems that new entrants experienced. For Ifemelu, the main challenge is the consciousness in a country where some people want to believe that "America [is] now colour-blind." (26). However, Ifemelu learns from the beginning that this is just wishful thinking and that race is still a complex issue that needs to be addressed: "We all wish it were not. But it's a lie// I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America" (291). This implies that becoming black is, arguably, what Adichie experienced when she discovered that people's expectations were based on the colour of their skin. In one of her prevailing posts, "To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby",

> "When you are black in America, and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will say we're overreacting, or we're being too sensitive (285).

In this extract, Adichie explores the struggles that black people confront in America and the paradoxes and intricacies of American racial discourses. The contrast between the private and public spheres is a central theme in this passage. When the narrator states, "When you are black in America, and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together," it underscores the intimacy and equality

experienced in private. However, this contrasts sharply with "the minute you step outside, race matters," highlighting the societal pressures and racial dynamics that come into play in public. This stark contrast emphasises how race infiltrates every aspect of life, even in intimate relationships, and how the public gaze can alter the dynamics of a relationship. The repetition of the phrase "we don't" in "we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off" emphasises the silence and suppression of racial grievances within interracial relationships. This repetition emphasises the fear of being misunderstood or dismissed by their partners, reflecting the broader societal tendency to downplay or ignore the lived experiences of black individuals. The use of direct address "you" in the opening sentence creates an immediate connection with the reader, making the experience more relatable and personal. This technique draws the reader into the narrator's perspective, fostering empathy and understanding of the complexities involved in love and race. The concept of belonging is at the centre of this situation. Ifemelu is driven towards racial politics, which characterises her as an "Other" in the United States. She realises she is black, which positions her at the bottom of the ladder. As an immigrant, she is made to feel "out of place," as if she does not belong to this world. These immigrants who move into the first world often wish to live that wonderful life. For instance, In *Travels in Negotiations: difference, identity, politics*, Avtar Brah points out that immigrants are "in" the first world but not "of" the first world, and hence, they begin their journey to the American Dream as interiorised subjects whose achievement rarely surpass certain levels. (188). Adichie uses the experiences of Ifemelu as a non-American black person to point out the confusion that U.S. racial discourse elicits, especially for black people who have not internalised the socio-cultural rules that such narratives implicate. Arguably, the issue addressed by Adichie is the fact that even

though racial discourse is fundamental in the American social structure, white people pretend that race does not exist and do not want to talk about it because it makes them uncomfortable. “Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care” (222). The use of a direct address with “Dear Non-American Black” immediately personalises the message, creating a sense of urgency and direct communication. This technique engages the reader directly, making them confront the harsh reality of racial categorisation in America. The commands “Stop arguing” and “Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian” imply an authoritative tone, which reflects the societal pressure to conform to the imposed racial identity. These imperatives underscore the inevitability of being racialised in America, regardless of one’s national origin. The use of ellipsis in “So what if you weren’t ‘black’ in your country? …” creates a pause, emphasising the abruptness and dismissiveness with which American society disregards the nuanced identities of immigrants. This highlights the abrupt imposition of a monolithic racial identity. The parenthetical aside, “—you say ‘I’m not black only because you know black is at the bottom of America’s race ladder” reveals the internalised fear and stigma associated with being black in America. It exposes the harsh social reality and the reluctance to be identified with a marginalised group. These linguistic markers work together to convey the message that American society forces a singular, often negative, racial identity on black immigrants, disregarding their diverse backgrounds and identities. This illustrates the societal tendency to reduce, where being black is equated with being at the bottom. Similarly, Adichie reflects the pressure on black immigrants to abandon their unique cultural identities and accept a homogenised, often stigmatised, racial identity imposed by American society. Fanon’s concept of the “white gaze” is also

pertinent here. It refers to the way white society views it. It defines black individuals, stripping them of their individuality and subjecting them to a collective stereotype. Adichie's passage illustrates this phenomenon by showing how black immigrants are seen through a lens that prioritises race over personal and cultural identity, forcing them into a predefined social category. I argue that racial relations exist in America and even today continue to complicate the immigration of any individual of colour. Therefore, reading *Americanah* provides the avenue to better understand the black-white binary by presenting the concept of "non-American Blacks". African immigrants believe that America is a haven and a Promised Land, where they can fulfil all their dreams and aspirations. Ifemelu becomes aware of "white fragility" in America and understands how it supports white privilege. Adichie propels the reader to understand how race is constructed in American society.

Black people face several types of racial discrimination in the Western world, often in America, simply because of their skin colour. Being black is regarded as an affliction or worthless by some Americans. For instance, a white guy explained to Ifemelu in a chat about her blog that Black people are not desired in American society: "The only race that matters is the human race." But he said, "Ever write about adoption? Nobody wants black babies in this country, and I don't mean biracial, I mean black. Even the black families don't want them" (5). In American society, racism is evident in the workplace. Among some black people in general, and especially African Americans, such a mindset still prevails. Black people are not liked or welcomed by other Black people. In his book *Critical Theory Today: A User-friendly Guide*, Lois Tyon assert that "African American Criticism internalised racism often results in intra-racial racism, which refers to discrimination within the black community against those with darker skin and more African features" (362). This implies that internalised racism has

to do with the idea that whites are superior to blacks; due to their identity, it was difficult for black individuals, particularly non-American blacks, to find work. Because of their skin colour, Ifemelu and her aunt had trouble getting work. These two figures represent and illustrate the prejudice that African immigrants face when they immigrate to the West, particularly the United States of America. Indeed, Adichie uses this example to highlight some of the flaws in American culture. Ifemelu believes that America is a nice place where one can quickly achieve her dream. Interestingly, what makes Ifemelu think so? Perhaps one can say that she had this notion from watching *The Cosby Show*, in which black folks are portrayed positively. This premonition suggests that blacks in America live wealthy and successful lives. This notion is still prevalent in contemporary society, where people always think that when they travel to America, they will inevitably become free and live without any obstruction and frustration.

After some time, Ifemelu realises that whatever she had seen on television about the U.S. appears misleading and misrepresented because of the bitter experience she witnessed in the U.S. Ifemelu feels dejected and dehumanised because her white classmates at the university have a notion that she is from an African jungle. Ifemelu experiences emotional and psychological problems. To this end, one can say that Ifemelu's painful experience is borne out of racism in American society. Ifemelu and her friend Ginika encounter many social problems that affect their sense of self.

"And after you register your own company, you must find a white man. Find one of your white friends in England" (Adichie 29). This foregrounds Fanon's concept of the epidermalization of inferiority. Fanon explores how the relics of colonial powers affect the psychological makeup of colonised subjects. This reinforces the notion that black people see racial hierarchy and internalise them, which makes them feel inferior in the Western world. Whenever faced with racial discrimination, African immigrants

behave in ways that make them appear inferior. Fanon's epidermalization of inferiority explains colonialisation through the perspective of internalisation. It is interesting to note that this supremacy, as evidenced in the extract, tells how blacks tend to uphold whites in high esteem and feel that they are always inferior to the whites; for how could an African register his company in the name of the White man— "the white man is sealed in his whiteness [and] the black man in his blackness" (Fanon 3). Today, this situation still resonates in African society, where some African businesses use foreign companies and allies to secure contracts from the government. To a large extent, this is how Africans have internalised the white supremacy syndrome in their minds, that everything coming from the 'Whiteman' is supreme. Although Adichie's main focus in the novel is on characters who moved from Nigeria to America, Dike comes out as a character lacking a distinct sense of belongingness in Nigeria or America. While Ifemelu, Obinze and the other characters experience identity crises due to their stay in America, Dike was made to feel like an outsider: "You told him what he wasn't but you didn't tell him what he was" (470). This shows one of the significant issues Adichie presents on identity formation. It can be argued that people who travel in search of greener pastures experience a feeling that does not fit societal expectations. They see themselves as outsiders at home and abroad. This move reinforces Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "unhomeliness." Adichie uses Dike to demonstrate how the American educational system operates. The school even intended to take steps to put him in a special education class with instructors who are experienced in dealing with mentally-ill children in order to keep him apart from the other students.

Dike was regarded as deadly and aggressive at such a young age due to the way his skin colour. Even though Aunty Uju and Dike spent the entire Saturday in Hartford visiting Ozavisa, the school accused Dike of accessing their computer system. This

demonstrates how Dike was exposed to racism at a young age and how others attempted to influence him. “When I asked why they thought it was him, they said they got information. You have to blame the black kid first,” he said and laughed “(346). This excerpt deepens our understanding of the systemic racism that permeates American society. This illustrates the suspicion and blame placed on black individuals, reflecting broader themes of racial prejudice and injustice. The character’s laughter and the phrase “You have to blame the black kid first” are laced with irony and sarcasm. This irony underscores the absurdity and injustice of the situation, highlighting how such biased actions are commonplace and accepted without question. The phrase “You have to blame the black kid first” serves as a critique of the association of blackness with guilt, reflecting broader societal tendencies to criminalise black individuals. This repetition serves to underline the arbitrary nature of the blame placed on the black kid.

Because of his skin colour, Dike suffers from prejudice, stereotyping, and stigmatisation at school. The school discovers that someone has accessed their computer network, and Dike is the only person they might suspect because he is black. The whites associate black people with thievery and bad behaviour. They call Aunty Uju and her son to publicly humiliate them for a crime without providing any proof. They did not care that Dike was not even proficient in computers and that he was out to see friends on that particular Saturday with his mum. The school administration’s last statement is that they are no longer concerned about him. Dike’s suicide attempt may have been the culmination of these painful events. This is because a few days later, Aunty Uju contacts Ifemelu to inform her that Dike has almost passed away after taking an overdose of medications and going downstairs to lie down on the couch. Even though Dike scares Aunty Uju and Ifemelu, it illustrates the extent of the trauma Dike

experiences every day as a result of the colour of his skin. Unlike the other characters, the poor young boy cannot take it. Because of the racial tensions in America, Dike finds it hard to live a normal life. This contrasts with the independence and sense of community he would have felt in his own country. Interestingly, Adichie compared the experience of Dike, a young African kid, to that of older African or African-American people to show that this applies to both young and older people. “Hey Dike, got some weed?” was a frequent question from his schoolmates (433). Dike would laugh, but this little remark embodied the notion that all Black people deal with or use drugs. Similarly, Mr. White, a security guard at one of Yale’s libraries, was arrested and questioned by police after the white worker “assumed the two black men were dealing drugs” (424). Adichie makes a point that is extremely pertinent to contemporary developments in the United States: “When a crime is reported, pray that it was not committed by a black person. If it turns out that it was, stay well away from the crime area for weeks, or you might be stopped for fitting the profile” (274). With the contentious police shootings like the one that killed Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2012, in which police officer George Zimmerman was initially charged with murder before being cleared of all charges, this is an issue that is very germane in the United States today. In May 2020, George Perry Floyd, an African-American man, was slain by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Back in Nigeria, Ifemelu avoided writing about race after leaving America since it had little impact on her life there. She reveals how race is not an issue in Nigeria, yet in America, she experiences frequent discrimination due to her race. She has become aware of “white fragility” in America and understands how it supports white privilege. Adichie propels the reader to understand how race is constructed in American society.

It is important to stress that African immigrants still experience various forms of racism that prevent them from living their lives fully in America.

4.2 Class

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu discusses racial and social class issues in America on her blog. Through her blog posts, Ifemelu reminds the readers that the top and bottom are the only two key areas to focus on. In her writings to her followers, "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" (227). This further strengthens the fact that in America, class stratification is seen in the purview of one's colour. From a diasporic standpoint, I argue that the novel portrays class as a powerful social determinant of where one comes from. Ifemelu addresses this issue in one of her blogs by sharing her experiences as a babysitter for a wealthy white family; in this instance, we see that race is more about class and that black skin invalidates social class for the white, who perceives black as 'poor thing'. The "metaphor, ladder of racial hierarchy" highlights racial divisions and implicitly suggests economic and social stratifications accompanying these racial distinctions. In America, the position of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) at the top of the hierarchy implies not just racial superiority but also socioeconomic dominance. Historically, WASPs have occupied the highest echelons of economic and political power, which has allowed them to maintain and perpetuate their privileged status. This dominance is reflected in better access to education, higher-paying jobs, and more significant influence in societal institutions, reinforcing class stratifications along racial lines. Conversely, the consistent placement of Black Americans at the bottom of the hierarchy underscores their systemic marginalisation and economic disenfranchisement. This position is not only a marker

of racial discrimination but also of economic and social deprivation. Black Americans have historically faced barriers to economic opportunities, such as limited access to quality education and the exclusion of suitable apartments. These barriers have entrenched poverty and limited social mobility, further solidifying class stratification. The phrase "what's in the middle depends on time and place" introduces a dynamic element to the discussion of class. It suggests that the socioeconomic status of other racial and ethnic groups can fluctuate based on various factors, including immigration patterns, economic conditions, and political policies. For instance, certain immigrant groups might initially face economic hardships but gradually ascend the socio-economic ladder through education and entrepreneurial opportunities. However, their position remains precarious and subject to change based on broader societal attitudes and economic shifts.

> "Sometimes in America, Race is Class" with the story of his dramatic change, and end with*: it didn't matter to him how much money I had. As far as he was concerned I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked. In America's public discourse, "Blacks" as a whole are often lumped with "Poor Whites". Not Poor Blacks and Poor Whites. But Blacks and Poor Whites. A curious thing indeed*. (Adichie 204-205)

From this extract, one can tell Ifemelu's displeasure with the inextricable relationship between race and class in America. The statement "Sometimes in America, race is class" highlights the deeply intertwined nature of racial and class relations in American society. This idea is vividly illustrated in the excerpt where the protagonist experiences a dramatic change in perception based on her race. Despite her wealth, she is judged solely on her appearance, demonstrating how racial prejudices can override economic status. The story unfolds with the protagonist encountering a man who cannot reconcile her appearance with her socio-economic status. "It didn't matter to him how much

money I had. As far as he was concerned, I did not fit as the owner of that stately house because of the way I looked." This encounter underscores the notion that one's race often dictates social standing and perception, regardless of actual financial or social achievements in America. This reflects a form of social stratification where race becomes a primary determinant of class. This racial bias is further evidenced by the way "Blacks" are often grouped with "Poor Whites" rather than "Poor Blacks and Poor Whites." This implies that being black is intrinsically linked to being poor, a stereotype that disregards the socio-economic diversity within the black community. It reflects a societal tendency to view blackness through a monolithic lens of poverty and inferiority, perpetuating systemic inequalities and reinforcing class divisions based on race. This idea is closely related to Frantz Fanon's exploration of the "white gaze" in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon argues that black individuals are often seen not as individuals with their own identities and statuses but through a lens of racial stereotypes imposed by white society. This dehumanises black people and reduces them to mere representations of racial preconceptions. In the narrative, the protagonist's wealth and social status are rendered invisible by the man's inability to see beyond her race.

As was already mentioned, black people face difficulties in reaching elite status than white people. Ifemelu's blog addresses this matter by offering a disillusioned perspective of America, whose class structure is based on white supremacy. Ifemelu goes deeper into this issue in a post entitled: "What Academics Mean By White Privilege, or Yes it Sucks to Be Poor and White but Try Being Poor and Non-White."

> ? Black folks don't have that choice. The black guy on the street in New York doesn't want to think about race, until he tries to hail a cab, and he doesn't want to think about race when he's driving his Mercedes under the speed limit, until a cop pulls him over. (Adichie 429)

As we can see, the blog allows Adichie to address complex matters of the U.S. social structure with an ironic tone. Consequently, Adichie points out how the relationship between race and class is detrimental to African immigrants. Despite adhering to traffic laws and displaying indicators of upper-class status, the black driver is still subjected to suspicion and scrutiny based solely on race. This highlights the inextricable link between race and class, where socio-economic achievements do not shield black individuals from racial discrimination. Adichie's use of juxtaposition and repetition deepens our understanding of the pervasive impact of race and class on the lives of black individuals. By repeating the phrase "doesn't want to think about race," Adichie emphasises the inevitability of racial considerations in situations that should be neutral. The juxtaposition of everyday activities with racially charged outcomes underscores the constant presence of discrimination, regardless of socio-economic status. The disregard that white people exhibit towards black people is still witnessed in many respects in America. For instance, Ifemelu's second job was provided to her by Kimberly, a wealthy white American who employed her as a babysitter. Kimberly "paid cash under the table" (179). Belkhir and Barnett assert that in domestic chores, "the greater liberty of the capitalist class and higher status of women... is achieved at the expense of the lower working-class women who are forced to do "dirty job" by these white women (Adichie 167). It is important to note that, in America, race is usually about class. The carpet cleaning incident demonstrates how black people are meant to be at the bottom of society. The carpet cleaner made the presumption that all black people must be lower class, and this reinforces the idea that impoverished whites are better off than blacks in America. Thus, even poor white people are higher than black people in the American social hierarchy. From struggling to make ends meet, Ifemelu becomes an American citizen primarily through her immersion in privileged

circles and relationships with affluent and well-connected American boyfriends. Race is overhyped these days; black people need to get over themselves; it's all about **class** now, the haves and the have-nots" (2). This statement, used by the protagonist as the opening sentence of a blog post titled "Not All Dreadlocked White American Guys Are Down," is laden with literary and linguistic markers that enhance our understanding of class stratification. The use of "overhyped" implies that concerns about race are inflated and unwarranted, which is a dismissal of the natural and pervasive impact of racial discrimination. This rhetorical strategy minimises the significance of racial issues, reflecting a common tendency to downplay systemic racism in favour of more palatable narratives. The statement "black people need to get over themselves" contains a condescending tone, indicative of a lack of empathy and understanding. This linguistic marker portrays black people as overly sensitive and self-centred, perpetuating stereotypes that undermine their experiences and struggles. This also negates the historical and ongoing oppression faced by black individuals, suggesting that their concerns are baseless. The phrase "it's all about class now, the haves and the have-nots" attempts to shift the focus from race to class, framing societal issues in purely economic terms. This binary classification simplifies complex social dynamics, ignoring how race and class intersect to create unique forms of disadvantage. The distinction between "haves and have-nots" reduces black people, especially African Immigrants, to lower economic status, neglecting how race influences opportunities and outcomes. Hence, class is another determinant in the digital divide since many people do not have access to social media due to a lack of finances or awareness, in contrast to Ifemelu and her readers (Duce 245). This suggests that using her blog to generate income led to her successful adaptation.

4.3 Sense of Self

In examining sense of self in *Americanah*, it is important to show how Adichie presents the problems these characters encounter as African immigrants. Adichie shows how life in America affects Ifemelu's sense of self. Aunt Uju, who has been in America for some time, influences Ifemelu to subscribe to the American way of life to overcome the racial and class relations that she confronts in America. Aunt Uju confers that her American friends will not recognise her, so she adopts a new name that is not her own: "America had subdued her" (135). In doing so, Aunt Uju changes her name to overcome the stereotypes and prejudices that come along with living in America as an African immigrant. This dovetails with the argument in Titilayo's "Transnational Memories and Identity." Ufomata examines the psychological effect of losing a name: "There is the distortion of people's names for the convenience of others (235). This implies that naming is an essential aspect of one's identity; hence, stripping a person of their name hits the core of their sense of self, which could result in psychological trauma. This is the reason that African immigrants are compelled to live American and British ways of life. I argue that these experiences are borne out of racism and the struggle for a better living in Euro-American cultural spaces.

Ifemelu changes her hair to fit into the foreign culture. Although the notion of the social politics of hair has already been discussed, several essential issues will be revisited in this part to examine how hair plays an integral role in helping Ifemelu forge her identity as an African immigrant. Ifemelu is keen on relaxing her hair because "you do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (Adichie 119). This represents Ifemelu's situation and serves as a yardstick for accepting or rejecting Western conventions. African women frequently engage in and respect cultural practices involving hairstyles. According to Mercer, the practice is crucial in establishing the identity of the African

diaspora because it allows people to respond creatively to their shared experiences of oppression and dispossession. In this respect, African women are compelled to engage in this shift by choosing less expensive hairstyles due to the financial obligations of adopting a new identity. The African immigrant longs to have intricate hairstyles like other black women in the USA, but her financial situation constrains her, and she chooses less expensive ones.

Ifemelu and Obinze discover their place in the world as they grow up. This makes the point to argue that the identity of a person is closely related to racial prejudices as a result of their circumstances. Ifemelu must grapple with her identity as an African, African American, and American- or as an outcast in America. First, she copes by adopting an American accent and curling her hair, ostensibly embracing a new identity as an American. Following this, it must be borne in mind that the immigrant decides to embrace new identities, get special treatment and alleviate the pain brought on by racial prejudice. This presumption leads African immigrants to mimic, seeking to mirror the prevalent norms so that they can be recognised closely. This notion resonates with Edward Said, who posits that the coloniser assumes some degree of imitation and attempts to imitate the colonised. The coloniser wants the "other" to accept its ideals while maintaining the dominating position. According to Fanon, being Black in a racist Eurocentric society results in the contempt that develops amongst various Black groups, a sense of inferiority and conflicting identities. These issues, which are seen as psychological reactions and barriers to the formation of an authentic Black identity, are brought by the internalisation of racist and dehumanising Eurocentric cultural beliefs. These very same mechanisms induce self-denial, which marginalises African immigrants from their value systems and cultural beliefs. In situating these arguments in *Americanah*, Ifemelu must simultaneously negotiate these two cultural dimensions

while attempting to incorporate both cultures into her identity, battling her fear of being lost and giving in a part of who she is. One of Ifemelu's remarks best shows this viewpoint: "Home was now a blurred place between here and there" (117). This shows how a transnational, globalised identity—which is also, in some ways, an uprooted identity—emerges. This is inextricably linked to the concept of home; however, Ifemelu acknowledges in this extract that the lines between people are no longer defined; this makes it difficult for her to have a sense of self. In this instance, home seems to be a nebulous, imaginary environment that lacks a clear sense of place and incorporates elements from Africa and the United States. "Why do you have to do this? Your hair was gorgeous braided. And when you took out the braids last time and just kind of let it be? It was even more gorgeous, so full and good" (204). Through this remark, Adichie reinforces the notion that for a particular group of African immigrants, including Ifemelu, assimilation was seen as a panacea and a means to prosperity. In other words, this emulation of American culture by African immigrants serves as a practical negotiating point to overcome the various racist structures in American society. Aunt Uju subsequently reconstructs her identity, which results in sacrificing her African way of life in pursuit of becoming an 'American citizen' without being discriminated against. As a result, she transforms into an estranged woman who not only perceives and understands the world through an African lens but also aligns herself as an African woman in a foreign land. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon addresses issues concerning black people's inferiority complex in the French Antilles and their efforts to integrate into white society. Fanon constantly emphasises the significance of whitening oneself to achieve white standards so that the white man would recognise the dignity of black folks. He refers to this process as "lactification", involving not just the whitening of one's skin but also the whitening of one's intellect

and culture (Fanon 28-9). Adichie focuses on her personal experiences as a Black immigrant. For example, Adichie regularly recounts in interviews a time when she was called "sister" by an African American guy and her immediate reaction of resistance; she felt uncomfortable being identified as belonging to a community with which her cultural and historical tie seemed uncertain. Consequently, Ifemelu is compelled to reconstruct her identity amid psychological tension between these two cultural settings, presenting issues of race, class and identity. It is interesting to note that Ifemelu is not the only character stuck between the two cultures; Adichie further observes the case of Bartholomew, Aunt Uju's first American lover, who had not visited Nigeria in years but had a positive impression of it based on his experiences and conversations on online messaging groups with Nigerian immigrants.

When Ifemelu gets a job interview, her advisor tells her she needs to straighten her hair, so she does. This happens following advice from her friend, Ruth, who tells her before attending the job interview in Baltimore: "My only advice? Lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff, but it matters. We want you to get that job" (201). The implication is that Ifemelu must sacrifice her natural hair to fit American beauty standards. In black communities, hair matters in many ways for women and men. What is considered desirable hair is based on white standards of beauty, which include long and straight hair (usually blonde).

> 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. (Adichie 116)

Consequently, black women's hair generally fits outside what is considered desirable in mainstream society. Although Ifemelu always wears braids, she is compelled to make

them suit American standards by fixing her hair with chemicals. Ifemelu, at the train station, gets an Ethiopian taxi driver to pick her up at her destination. The driver tells Ifemelu that she does not look African at all because her blouse is too tight and warns her not to let America "corrupt her." She angrily goes into the bathroom to make sure that her blouse is not too tight. Ifemelu would later write a blog post about this. The cab driver asks Ifemelu where she comes from, as he cannot recognise her accent. When she replies that she is from Nigeria, the man is surprised:

> 'Nigeria? You don't look African at all. 'Why don't I look African? 'Because your blouse is too tight. 'It is not too tight. 'I thought you were from Trinidad or one of those places.' He was looking in the rear-view with disapproval and concern. 'You have to be very careful, or America will corrupt you (206).

We can tell from this extract that the man wants to know where Ifemelu comes from based on her accent and appearance. Given her attire, which appears to be disliked by the man, he would have assumed she was from Trinidad or "one of those places". This shows the extent of hatred among African immigrants toward Black Americans. There is also another example of an African immigrant seeing America as a sinful and corrupt force to reckon with. Ifemelu does not share this sentiment, but it is all too familiar to her. The conversation begins with questioning the protagonist's African identity based on physical appearance and clothing, revealing underlying stereotypes. The exchange, "Nigeria? You don't look African at all. 'Why don't I look African? 'Because your blouse is too tight," illustrates how the protagonist's identity is judged through a narrow lens of cultural expectations. In the extract, several binary oppositions can be identified. The dialogue contrasts the protagonist's African identity with what is perceived as non-African characteristics: "Nigeria? You don't look African at all." This establishes a binary between what is expected of an African appearance and what is considered non-African. The mention of the blouse being "too tight" contrasts with the stereotypical

expectation of what African attire should be. This opposition highlights cultural expectations versus personal conviction. “You have to be very careful, or America will corrupt you” sets up a binary between the purity of African culture and the corrupting influence of American culture, reflecting fears of cultural assimilation and loss of identity. The tight blouse signifies modernity, individualism, and perhaps Western influence. The signified concept is the perceived deviation from traditional African values. Similarly, “America” here signifies a geographic location and a cultural space associated with corruption, moral decay, and loss of authenticity. The signified concept is the fear of losing one’s cultural identity. Through these markers, Adichie conveys deeper meanings about the cultural tensions experienced by African immigrants. The text also engages with broader cultural codes and myths about African identity and the immigrant experience. These codes are part of the larger structure of meaning within which the characters operate. The notion that to be African one must adhere to certain cultural norms and appearances reflects a myth that cultural authenticity is tied to specific outward signs. The critique of the protagonist’s attire thus becomes a commentary on this myth. The fear of corruption in American culture reinforces the myth of the immigrant experience as a journey fraught with cultural loss and identity crises. This myth reinforces the binary opposition of home (Africa) as pure and abroad (America) as corruptive, showing the complexities of maintaining one’s cultural identity in a new environment. The phrase, “You have to be very careful, or America will corrupt you,” employs metaphorical language to symbolise the perceived threat of cultural assimilation. The word “corrupt” implies a loss of purity or authenticity, suggesting that adopting aspects of American culture could lead to a degradation of the protagonist’s African identity. This metaphor highlights the tension between maintaining one’s cultural heritage and navigating the pressures of assimilation in a

new environment. The description of the protagonist's clothing ("your blouse is too tight") serves as a focal point. Clothing, in this context, becomes a symbol of identity and the tension between African values and the influences of Western culture. Ifemelu's resistance to the critique of her clothing ("It is not too tight") signifies a defence of her personal choices and an assertion of her autonomy in defining her sense of self. The conversation implicitly addresses the broader themes of racism and class tensions. The attitude of the Ethiopian driver reflects a societal tendency to impose rigid and often prejudiced views on African immigrants. The reference to being corrupted by America underscores the anxiety around cultural preservation and the fear of losing one's roots in the face of systemic racism and class pressures. These literary devices and linguistic markers help one to understand the protagonist's struggle to resist the perceptions imposed on her, highlighting the nuanced and often challenging process of maintaining one's sense of self amidst external pressures and prejudices.

One of her first experiences of discrimination occurs at the university. When looking for the registration office, a young white girl gives her directions. She replies that she speaks English: "I bet you do... I just don't know how well" (133). This leaves Ifemelu speechless, and for years, she fakes an American accent, adopting "a way of being that was not hers" (175). Realising that language represents one's identity, and that her American accent may impede her pursuit of the American Dream, Ifemelu strives to study and perfect the American accent. To the non-American black who rejects it, it is more than a racial symbol. The social stratification helped Ifemelu to gain a more complex knowledge of race and identity.

> Why do you have to do this? Your hair was gorgeous braided. And when you took out the braids the last time and just kind of let it be? It was even more gorgeous, so full and cool." "My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz band, but I need to look professional for this interview, and professional

> means straight is best but if it's going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky." "It's so fucking wrong that you have to do this. (Adichie 204)

Ifemelu explains why, in America, a black immigrant needs to fix her hair to be seen as a white person. She does not fix her hair just for aesthetic reasons. Instead, she tries to appear white because her natural kinky black hair limits her work options in America. In this way, whiteness and high career opportunities are all inextricably linked in America. Ifemelu is fully aware of the relationship between hairstyles and career opportunities in America. Black immigrants must either accept conventional menial jobs with low pay or follow white cultural preferences, particularly about their hair, to increase their chances of earning better positions.

Aunty Uju provided Ifemelu with a friend's social security card when she arrived in America so she could get a respectable job. She began submitting applications for positions in the newspapers but was consistently turned down due to racial stereotypes. She agreed to give her body to a tennis instructor since she was anxious to find work to pay her rent. Ifemelu was apprehensive because she did not resemble the image on the security card. However, Aunty Uju assured her that black people in America were all equal. Her previous identity as Ifemelu was, therefore, lost. The fact that she was a black woman living in poverty in America was what counted. Ifemelu fell into severe despair due to this experience: "She felt like a small ball, adrift and alone" (190). Ifemelu endeavoured to explain what had occurred to Aunty Uju, but she could not help because American society had corrupted her aunt. As a result, Ifemelu was primarily frustrated by the challenging circumstances. Not only that but she is also compelled to forge her identity to meet the expectations of the American way of life. She does this to make ends meet for herself as an immigrant. Perhaps this move by Ifemelu has some ramifications for her sense of self, as she is compelled to identify with American

standards. This is a clear indication of how race and class reflect one's sense of self as an African immigrant. This implies that the experiences these immigrants encounter, in some way, compel them to embrace new identities to feel acceptable in American society. This issue is still prevalent among African immigrants who travel to Europe and the Americas for a better life.

> She shrank like a dried life. She had spoken English all her life, led the debating society in secondary school, and always thought the American twang inchoate; she should not have cowered and shrunk, but she did. And in the following weeks, as autumn's coolness descended, she began to practice an American accent. (Adichie 134)

The excerpt presents Ifemelu's struggle with her sense of self, highlighting the impact of her experiences on her perception of herself. The "dried leaf" suggests a sense of loss, indicating the toll that assimilation and adaptation to American culture have taken on her. This aligns with Frantz Fanon's concept of the "colonised mind," where the colonised internalises feelings of inferiority imposed by the coloniser. The repetition of the phrase "she should not have cowered and shrunk, but she did" emphasises Ifemelu's internal conflict. Despite her previous thoughts about the American twang being "inchoate," she finds herself succumbing to societal pressures and practising an American accent. This reflects the pressure to assimilate and adapt to American cultural norms, echoing Fanon's discussion on "colonial mimicry," where the colonised imitates the coloniser's culture in an attempt to gain acceptance. The mention of "autumn's coolness descended" symbolises a metaphorical "fall" or decline in Ifemelu's sense of self as she navigates her new environment. This represents the fragmentation of her identity under the pressure of societal expectations.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMECHETA'S *SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN* AND ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapters analysed Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* and Adichie's *Americanah*. They examined how race and class impact one's sense of self in these narratives. It is important to point out that contemporary African writers' works do not just present narratives of African immigrants in Western society but also how their identities are reconstructed to grapple with the challenges. This chapter compares the plot, characterisation, setting, style, theme, and other literary elements in the two narratives to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity, race, and class.

5.1 Plot

In *Second Class Citizen*, the story begins with Adah Ofili's journey from Nigeria to England, where she hopes for a better life. The exposition shows her aspirations for education and independence, set against societal expectations and economic challenges. Conflict arises as Adah faces racial discrimination and struggles within her marriage to Francis, a relationship marked by control and oppression. As she works at the British Museum Library, the rising action portrays her determination to defy these barriers and assert her independence. The climax occurs when Adah decides to leave Francis, a pivotal moment that symbolises her quest for personal freedom and dignity. On the other hand, *Americanah* introduces Ifemelu as a young Nigerian woman moving to America for higher education. The exposition details her upbringing in Nigeria and her dreams of academic success abroad. Conflict emerges as Ifemelu confronts racial discrimination and cultural alienation in America, impacting her sense of self.

In the rising action, Adah and Ifemelu experience harsh realities that compel them to reconstruct their sense of self. Adah secures a job at the British Museum Library, marking a moment of financial autonomy that strains her troubled marriage with Francis. Her determination to provide a stable life for her children while pursuing her dreams underscores her resilience in the face of adversity. Similarly, Ifemelu establishes a blog on race and identity, a platform to articulate her observations on racial relations and cultural differences, gaining recognition and influence in academic and social circles. Her growing awareness of the inequalities and her quest for authenticity in a racially stratified society is a poignant struggle for identity.

In the climax, Adah breaks up her marriage to Francis and decides to leave him, reclaiming her independence. Her departure symbolises a transformative moment of liberation from oppression, affirming her to chart her path despite the odds stacked against her. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's decision to return to Nigeria after years of living in America and a tumultuous relationship reflects a longing for home and a desire to reconnect with her roots. Ifemelu's return to Nigeria marks a significant point in her life and signals a new chapter with her evolving sense of identity and belonging.

The falling action in both novels portrays the protagonists' journeys of self-discovery and reconciliation. Adah's quest to overcome societal barriers and provide a better future for her family underscores her resilience and fortitude in the face of adversity. Returning to Nigeria allows Ifemelu to reconnect with her roots and see how her time abroad changed her. She faces the harsh realities of life in Lagos, dealing with relationships and cultural expectations. Reuniting with Obinze, her old love, helps her grow and reflect on what she wants for her life. Ifemelu's return is not just about going back home—it is about finding herself and feeling at peace with who she is, both as a

Nigerian and as someone who has seen the world. Thus, the falling action of both narratives reveals how Adah and Ifemelu struggle to be themselves in a world that tries to define them based on their race and status. Adah and Ifemelu's journeys teach us about resilience, self-discovery, and finding happiness on your terms. Their stories show us that we can find strength and purpose in embracing who we are, no matter the challenges.

In *Second Class Citizen*, the denouement follows Adah Ofili's decision to leave Francis and her journey as a single mother in England. After facing racial discrimination and economic challenges, Adah is determined to have a stable life for her children. It emphasises her growth from a marginalised immigrant to a woman who asserts her independence and pursues personal goals despite societal barriers. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's return to Nigeria marks a significant narrative shift, symbolising her renewed understanding of her identity. Returning to Nigeria allows Ifemelu to reconnect with her cultural roots and reconcile her experiences abroad with her Nigerian heritage. Ifemelu's journey back to Nigeria is not just a physical return but a symbolic homecoming that signifies her evolution and acceptance of herself as a Nigerian. Adah and Ifemelu find hope for the future amid their respective journeys. Adah achieves a sense of stability and peace, overcoming domestic oppression and societal prejudices in England. Her resilience and determination to carve out a better life for herself and her children affirm her ability to defy societal expectations and pursue her dreams on her terms. Similarly, Ifemelu and Obinze's reconciliation in *Americanah* symbolises a reunion grounded in mutual understanding and acceptance. Their shared experiences and personal growth tell the enduring nature of their connection, offering a hopeful glimpse into their future together. Ifemelu's journey of self-discovery and cultural

exploration culminates in realising her place in the world, reaffirming the transformative power of embracing one's true identity and reclaiming one's sense of belonging.

While *Second Class Citizen* has a more linear narrative focused on personal struggle and resilience, *Americanah* employs a non-linear structure that includes blog posts and flashbacks, adding complexity to the narrative. The plot of *Americanah* is non-linear, featuring flashbacks and blog posts that Ifemelu writes about her observations on race and her struggles with cultural assimilation. Her return to Nigeria and rekindling her relationship with her high school sweetheart, Obinze, are pivotal points in the story. Both narratives centre on Nigerian women navigating their lives in foreign countries, dealing with identity, race, and belonging issues.

5.2 Characterisation

Adah is the central character, depicted as resilient, intelligent, and determined. Her character evolves through her encounters with racism and domestic abuse. The minor characters include her husband, Francis, who embodies patriarchal and traditional views, and various British individuals who represent systemic racism. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu, the protagonist, is portrayed as observant, outspoken, and introspective. Her character development is intricately linked to her experiences of race and identity in America. Other characters like Obinze, whose experiences as an 'undocumented' immigrant in the UK parallel Ifemelu's struggles, and Curt, Ifemelu's white American boyfriend, who represents the complexities of interracial relationships. The novel also features supporting characters who provide diverse perspectives on the immigrant experience. Adah and Ifemelu are strong, determined women who face significant challenges in life. Adah's character is shaped by her resilience against systemic

oppression and domestic struggles. In contrast, Ifemelu's character development is influenced by her experiences with race and identity in America and her reflections on these experiences through her blog.

5.3 Setting

The setting in *Second Class Citizen* transitions from Nigeria to the United Kingdom. The novel vividly portrays the stark contrasts between Adah's life in Lagos and her experiences in London. The British setting is depicted as cold and unwelcoming, emphasising the harsh realities of immigrant life and the racial barriers that Adah faces. *Americanah*, on the other hand, spans multiple locations, including Nigeria, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Each setting is richly described, emphasising each cultural and social dynamic. The diverse settings in Americanah, each with its unique cultural and racial dynamics, play a crucial role in shaping Ifemelu's experiences and character development. The American setting is central to the narrative, especially in exploring themes of race and identity. The Nigerian setting, both in the past and when Ifemelu returns, provides a backdrop for examining the protagonist's roots and home concept. The setting in both novels plays crucial roles in shaping the protagonists' experiences. The portrayal of London in *Second Class Citizen* underscores the harsh realities of immigrant life. At the same time, the diverse settings in *Americanah* exemplify the different cultural and racial dynamics that Ifemelu encounters.

5.4 Style

Emecheta's narrative style is straightforward and unembellished, reflecting Adah's pragmatic and resilient character. The use of direct and simple language effectively conveys the harsh realities of Adah's life, from the oppressive cultural norms she defies to the blatant racism and class discrimination she encounters. Throughout the text, words like "second-class," "sub-standard," "female child," "inferior," and "black" are

used repeatedly. These words are often set against terms like “first-class,” “male,” and “white.” This deliberate pairing highlights two main ideas in the novel. First, it underscores how society views the female child as inferior, showing how women are often treated as less important. Second, it shines a light on how black people in England are seen as less valuable than white people, revealing issues of racism. These word choices are crucial because they drive home the novel's message about inequality based on gender and race, making readers think deeply about these social issues. Emecheta extensively uses free indirect discourse, a technique that blurs the lines between the narrator’s voice and the character’s inner thoughts. This allows readers to experience Adah’s internal dialogue and emotional responses intimately. For example, when Adah contemplates the discriminatory housing policies with signs that read “Sorry, no coloureds,” the narrative seamlessly shifts to her perspective, amplifying the sense of injustice and frustration she feels. Adichie’s includes code-switching, which reflects the characters' bilingual abilities and their navigation between different cultural and linguistic worlds. This is particularly evident in the conversations between Nigerian characters, who effortlessly switch between English and Igbo or Pidgin.

> **“Adi m ime**, [I am pregnant] she said simply.”
> “Ifem, I don't know what got into me. Ndo.” [I am sorry]
> “Darling, **kedu ebe** I no? Where are you?” [where are you?]
> “Ahn ahn! [an exclamaition remark] O gini? [What?]”
> “But calm down first. It will be okay, inugo?” [take my words, okay?]
> “He reminded her of Obinze's expression for people he liked. **Obi ocha**. A clean heart.” [clean heart]
> “The Zed, **o gini**? What is it? Is it just tiredness?”
> “**Gini?** Ifemelu asked.” [What?]
> “**Ha, o di egwu,** [it is wonderful] for where?”
> “Normal **kwa?** [raising doubt on what is taken to be normal] It's not normal at all.”

The inclusion of Igbo words and phrases, such as “ndi ocha” (clean heart), “*ndi egwu*” (it is wonderful), and “*kedu ebe I no*?” (where are you?), adds layers of cultural

authenticity and richness to the narrative. These linguistic choices help build characters, make the story feel real, and add social commentary. This approach helps her story connect with readers, whether they know Nigerian culture. By blending these languages into her narrative, Adichie successfully shows the diverse identities of her characters and the complex nature of their experiences in a globalised world. Adichie gives readers a more immersive experience of Nigerian culture and language by weaving these terms into the narrative. This approach helps paint a vivid picture of the characters' backgrounds, grounding the story in its cultural context. For instance, Ifemelu's use of Igbo and Pidgin expressions when speaking with other Nigerian characters showcases her cultural identity and strengthens her sense of belonging. It also reflects her internal struggle with identity, especially when juxtaposed with her experiences in America. These lexical items specific to Igbo culture help develop character by highlighting the characters' identities and their connection to their roots. According to Herbert *Igboanusi*, Igbo English is a purposeful and important stylistic choice in novels. This happens because the Igbo language and culture influence how English is used in these stories. Authors create a more authentic and culturally rich narrative by mixing Igbo words, phrases, and expressions with English. This stylistic device reflects the characters' backgrounds and identities and helps readers understand the cultural context better. The blend of languages adds layers of meaning and enhances the overall storytelling, making the characters' experiences more relatable and vivid. This technique showcases the beauty and complexity of Igbo culture while enriching the English language narrative.

Another point worth mentioning is that Adichie adopts a descriptive writing style in the novel.

> Inside, the room was thick with disregard, the paint peeling, the walls plastered with large posters of braided hairstyles and

> smaller posters that said QUICK TAX REFUND. Three women, all in T-shirts and knee-length shorts, were working on the hair of seated customers. A small TV mounted on a corner of the wall, the volume a little too loud, was showing a Nigerian film: a man beating his wife, the wife cowering and shouting, the poor audio quality jarring. (Adichie 14)

In this extract, Adichie describes the room in detail: the peeling paint, the walls covered with posters of braided hairstyles and tax refund ads, and the scene of three women working on customers' hair. She also includes sensory details such as the loud TV showing a Nigerian film with poor audio quality, depicting a man beating his wife and the wife's reaction. These descriptions create a visual image and evoke sounds and even emotions, making the setting feel real and immersive for the reader. Descriptive words —nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs—and other linguistic markers foreground the hostility that African immigrants endure.

5.5 Point of View

Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* employ distinctive points of view that enrich the storytelling and deepen the reader's understanding of their themes. In *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta employs a third-person limited narrative point of view, allowing readers to closely follow the protagonist, Adah, while maintaining a broader view of her environment and the societal forces at play. This perspective highlights Adah's struggles and the external pressures as an African immigrant in England. In *Americanah*, Adichie's use of first-person and third-person points of view deepens our understanding of the thematic tensions. Adichie's use of a first-person narrative in Ifemelu's blog posts is a powerful device to address race and identity issues directly in America. These posts provide incisive commentary on contemporary social issues, giving the narrative an additional layer of depth. Again, using a third-person omniscient narrator for the broader narrative deepens one's understanding of the character's thoughts. This technique affords readers

to understand the personal, social, and political dimensions of the immigrant experience. The shifts between first-person and third-person narratives create a dynamic and engaging storytelling style that captures the complexity of Ifemelu's journey and the diverse experiences of the characters around her.

5.6 Thematic Concerns

In *Second-Class Citizen* and *Americanah*, racism is the central idea. Adah realises that the colour of her skin "was something she was supposed to be ashamed of but was never aware of this at home in Nigeria" (Emechata 71). On arrival in America, Ifemelu is surprised about the extent to which people are treated based on the colour of their skin. This means that race was not an issue in Nigeria: "I came from a country where race was not an issue (Adichie 290). Similarly, Ifemelu discusses racism in her blog, stating that it is predominantly found in America, and it is the only form of discrimination that Americans "are most uncomfortable with" (Adichie 350). This implies that Americans prefer not to talk about race; however, they use similar terms like diversity and class to define blacks. This observation likely reflects Ifemelu's perspective on how racism is perceived and dealt with within American society.

Despite their differences, *Second Class-Citizen* and *Americanah* explore how race and class influence one's sense of self in the UK and America. Due to the prospects for self-realisation in Nigeria, Emecheta, Adichie, and their characters migrate to the West. Adah relocated to England in 1962 to have an independent life for herself and her children while overcoming poverty and racial and class stratification. Ifemelu, the protagonist of Adichie's novel, also immigrates to the US towards the end of the 1990s for higher education, where she establishes a blog to expose the racial and class inequality in American society. It stands to reason that the diasporic experiences

described in both texts can be seen as a condition of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that is never-ending.

In Britain, as evidenced in *Second Class Citizen*, racial relations are usually about colour and status. Still, in contrast to the apparent stance of post-racial ideologues, my engagement with Adichie's *Americanah* presents the overarching problem of racial hierarchy and class stratification in American society. The issue of race in America, I argue, is examined from a wide range of complexities. Can we say that the American society of the post-Obama period is a -racial one? Do we now have a colourblind America because of the progress made since the post-civil rights era? Is the African immigrant experience of racism so minimal and marginal that we can stop focusing on race? If race is still prevalent, in what ways can it addressed? (Oniwe 71). These are a few questions that are inferred in reading the novel. Hence, it can be contended that *Americanah* answers these questions on how race is constructed through class in American society. In this sense, Adichie uncovers the true essence of America and dispels the idea that it is a "Promised Land" where equality of opportunity and multiculturalism are fundamental principles. Thus far, the racial systems and class status in America are not as pervasive as compared with England.

In *Second Class Citizen*, Francis reminds Adah that Britain ignores the Nigerian class system and treats all Africans as second-class citizens when she first comes to England. In the class structure, black immigrants occupy the lowest position. For instance, Adah previously belonged to the aristocratic class in Nigeria. However, in England, she is compelled to share an apartment with those "Nigerians who called her madam at home" (Emecheta 36), emphasising the sharp contrast in terms of class status in England. The implication here is that, in Britain, all blacks are put on the same status, no matter their wealth. It is essential to point out that African immigrants are perceived to be of lower

social status. Thus far, no matter how hard African immigrants try, they are seen as a 'poor thing' who can never climb the social ladder. Although with one's hard-earned certificate, one may be conditioned to believe that "the middle-class black in England is the one who is lucky enough to get the job of bus conductor" (Emechata 37). This, to an extent, reinforces the idea that being a well-educated African might not always matter in England, and one's educational qualification may not be necessary, taking into account the racial and class realities in England. Contrastively, in *Americanah*, Adichie brings to bear that race is just an overhyped word and that the only way to get over this is to climb the social ladder. Following this, one can say that race is about class in America: the haves and the haves not. Suffice it to say that the limits placed by race and class impact how individuals construct their identities. Buchi Emechata's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* present the psychological effects of racism on people's sense of self, particularly on African immigrants. Ifemelu is aware of the challenges of living in America as a black woman and a person of colour in a predominantly white culture. She is initially surprised by the notion that she will be treated unfairly because of her colour. Ifemelu believes that

> …race is not biology; race is sociology. Race is not genotype; race is phenotype. Race matters because of racism. And racism is abused because it is about how you look. Not about the blood you have. It is about the colour of your skin and the shape of your nose and the kink of your hair. (Adichie 337)

The implication here is that in Africa, race is never an issue, but in America, it is the set standard by which African immigrants are judged.

It is also significant to note that these two novels equally discuss the issue of how African immigrants are continually viewed as being at the bottom of the social hierarchy both in England and America. For instance, in *Second Class Citizen,* Adah

learns that all Africans, men and women alike, are treated as second-class citizens in Britain. In *Americanah*, female immigrants, in their quest to earn a living, face systemic racism. Adichie believes the American immigration system is strict. Lack of documents defines one as an illegal migrant and could lead to repatriation. Because of this, most immigrants land in low-paying jobs and uncomfortable places. The three African women braiders Halima, Aisha, and Mariama are a clear example of the problem of economic exploitation; even though it affects most characters, they do not have access to basic amenities and are compelled to live in poor areas.

Both Adah and Ifemelu project a plethora of problems African immigrants confront in England and America. In the novel, Adah challenges the hierarchical traditions and marginalisation of Nigerian women by challenging patriarchal and colonial discourses. On the other hand, Ifemelu uses her blog to share her experiences with racial and class struggles meted out to African women immigrants. Ifemelu uses her blog to educate her audience about the historical and cultural conditions in America. Both novels exhibit a sense of belonging that enables readers to relate to and compare the characters' conditions and people's experiences. To this end, the texts used in this study thus indicate a variety of ways in which contemporary African immigrant writers of different generations demonstrate the influence of global and multicultural notions on Africans' experiences and sense of self.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations. The conclusions drawn highlight key patterns and connections uncovered in the study, shedding light on how race and class compel African immigrants to reconstruct their sense of self. Based on these conclusions, recommendations have been proffered.

6.1 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Adichie's *Americanah* by examining how race and class influence African immigrants' sense of self in Euro-American cultural spaces.

6.1.1 Racial Discrimination in Second-Class Citizen and Americanah

In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah's struggle against overt racial prejudice is evident through her experiences with accommodation and work. For instance, Adah faces rejection from landlords solely based on her race, illustrating the overt racism that African immigrants encounter in the UK. This observation implies that racial discrimination African immigrants face is often deeply entrenched in societal structures. Adah's experiences are emblematic of the broader historical and social context described by Floya Anthias, who highlights the systemic barriers immigrants confront in the UK, such as limited access to quality housing and employment opportunities (557). In *Americanah*, Ifemelu's encounters with racism are more nuanced, reflecting the subtle and insidious forms of discrimination prevalent in America. Her blog posts, such as those discussing aggressions and cultural misunderstandings, serve as a narrative device to critique these experiences. For

example, Ifemelu writes about how being asked, "Where are you really from?" highlights the persistent questioning of her identity despite her Americanization (Adichie 187). This perspective means that racism is often masked under the guise of politeness or curiosity. Ifemelu's experiences also align with Ajiboye's findings on the complexities of racial identity and discrimination in the diaspora, illustrating how African immigrants reconstruct their sense of self amidst systemic racism (69-70). The narratives offer a deeper understanding of how racism operates, reinforcing previous research findings on racial discrimination; I contend that racial discrimination transcends geographical boundaries. By examining both overt and covert forms of racism, the narratives show that racial discrimination is not only a relic of the past but also a persistent and evolving challenge in the present. This understanding calls for addressing explicit and implicit societal biases to create more inclusive and equitable environments for all individuals, regardless of their status.

6.1.2 Class Stratification in Emechata's and Adichie's Narrative

In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah's lower status severely limits her access to accommodation, employment and social mobility. Her struggle is a clear illustration of how class and race intersect to perpetuate inequality. This depiction is supported by Niyi Akingbe's analysis, which underscores the economic struggles that African immigrants in the UK face, highlighting the harsh realities resulting from both racial and economic discrimination (Akingbe 75). In contrast, *Americanah* presents a more nuanced view of class stratification. Ifemelu's initial experiences in America are marked by financial hardship and social dislocation, reflecting the difficulties many immigrants face. However, her eventual rise to middle-class status through education and building social capital illustrates the potential for mobility in the U.S. despite the pervasive racial barriers. This aligns with John Arthur's perspective on the varying

degrees of economic success among African immigrants, where factors such as education, social networks, and individual resilience play crucial roles in overcoming class-based obstacles (Arthur 112). The implications of class differences in both novels portray the critical role of socioeconomic status in shaping opportunities and life trajectories for African immigrants.

Hence, *Second Class Citizen* and *Americanah* demonstrate that while class mobility is possible, it is often fraught with challenges that are exacerbated by racial discrimination. The burden of class struggle is further emphasised by Amonyeze, who explores the compounded effects of these factors on immigrant experiences, underscoring the systemic nature of the inequalities faced by African immigrants (Amonyeze 7).

6.1.3 Race and Class as drivers in the reconstruction of African Immigrant's Sense of self

Race and class significantly influence African immigrants' sense of self, as portrayed in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*. Both novels explore how systemic racism and class disparities shape the protagonists' identities, offering a rich narrative on the intersectionality of these social constructs.

In *Second Class Citizen*, we learn that Adah, the protagonist, grapples with her identity in the face of racial and class discrimination in the UK. Her status limits as an African immigrant makes her inferior. Adah's struggle with her identity is further compounded by the racial prejudice she encounters, which manifests in discriminatory housing practices and employment discrimination. This is consistent with Miraj U. Desai's research on the psychological impact of racial discrimination on immigrant identity, emphasising how systemic racism affects the psychological well-being and self-

perception of immigrants (Desai 87). Emechata's narrative highlights the intersection of race and class, illustrating how these factors impact her sense of self.

In contrast, *Americanah* explores racial and class tensions as the factors that propel African immigrants to reconstruct their sense of self. Ifemelu, the protagonist, navigates the complexities of her Nigerian heritage and American racial dynamics. Her journey reveals the subtle but insidious forms of discrimination in contemporary society. Ifemelu's blog serves as a medium for exploring these issues, providing a platform for self-expression and critique of racial norms. This resonates with W.E.B. Du Bois's "double consciousness" concept, where African Americans reconstruct their identity through the perspective and lens of a dominant white society. Through her blog, Ifemelu articulates the internal and external conflicts she faces, offering insights into her evolving sense of self. Ifemelu's rise to middle-class status in America contrasts with Adah's continued struggle with poverty and marginalisation in the UK. This difference underscores the varying degrees of economic success among African immigrants, depending on factors such as education and social capital. Ifemelu's experiences reflect the potential for social mobility in the U.S. despite the pervasive racial barriers. The challenges faced by Adah and Ifemelu deepen our understanding of how race and class influence one's sense of self.

It stands to reason that racial, economic, and social contacts occur in transcultural spaces. These women use writing as a tool to exercise their agency, analyse their experiences of transnational migration and condemn racial and class inequality in England and America. It is significant to note that the diasporic experience is described in both texts as a kind of journey that is never-ending. Hence, for Emecheta and Adichie, travelling overseas is an intersectional experience that enables African

immigrant women to break away from the challenges they face in their communities and learn about different perspectives.

6.1.4 The Generational Gap between Emecheta and Adichie

Buchi Emecheta, as a second-generation writer, wrote *Second Class Citizen* during a time when the struggles of African immigrants in Europe heightened. Emechata unveils the harsh realities of racism and classism faced by African immigrants in the UK during the mid-20th century. Adah, the protagonist, experiences racial discrimination in the UK. This reflects Achille Mbembe's analysis in *Critique of Black Reason* of the existential challenges postcolonial subjects face in hostile environments (77). This approach reflects the therapeutic and transformative nature of art, as it becomes a tool for social critique and a means of fostering a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience. Thus, Adah's struggles highlight a period when African immigrants were navigating their identities in a predominantly hostile environment with limited support systems representation. Emecheta's narrative is direct and confrontational, emphasising the immediate and personal impact of racism and classism on the individual's sense of self.

On the other hand, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as a third-generation author, provides a more nuanced exploration of racism and classism in *Americanah*. Ifemelu's experiences are depicted through her blog, which provides her with the hiatus to critique and analyse the systemic nature of racial dynamics in America and the UK. The blog becomes a space where she asserts her voice, free from the constraints of mainstream media. Adichie's use of digital media, specifically Ifemelu's blog, significantly departs from Emecheta's more traditional narrative style. The blog allows Ifemelu to engage in public self-reflection and social commentary, providing a platform to discuss and

dissect the harsh realities she faces. Using digital media as a narrative tool aligns with Shola Adenekan's *African Literature in the Digital Age*, which discusses how contemporary African literature employs digital spaces to explore identity and social issues (119). Hence, the generational gap between Emecheta and Adichie offers a rich lens through which one explores how African immigrants' identities are reconstructed as a result of racial and class tensions. While both authors depict the significant impact of these factors on the sense of self among African immigrants, their different temporal and social contexts result in distinct narrative approaches and thematic emphases.

Another point worth noting is that in *Second Class Citizen*, the focus is primarily on Adah's experiences as an adult immigrant, with limited exploration of the generational impact—however, the potential differences in experiences between Adah and her children. Adah's children, who grow up in the UK, may face challenges and opportunities different from their mother's, reflecting the evolving nature of immigrant identity across generations. In *Americanah*, the generational gap is more explicitly explored through characters like Ifemelu's cousin, Dike. His struggles with identity and belonging as a second-generation immigrant exemplify the different challenges faced by younger African immigrants. Dike's experiences reflect the pressures of assimilating into American culture while maintaining connections to his Nigerian heritage. The generational differences in both novels underscore the importance of considering temporal and social contexts in understanding the immigrant experience.

6.2 Conclusion

The study has sought to explore the constructs (race and class) that compel African immigrants to reconstruct their sense of self. Fanon's key concepts in *Black Skin, White Masks* were theorised to understand the issue of sense of self and the psychological manifestations that propel African immigrants to reconstruct their identities due to

racial relations and class stratification in England and America. Through close reading, contextual analysis, and textual evidence, it comes to light that Buchi Emechata's *Second-Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* present issues regarding African immigrants who migrate to the Global North. Adichie demonstrates the pervasiveness of digital technology and social media networks, which play a significant role in the worldviews they depict. Thus far, the migration experiences of Adah and Ifemelu could be understood as "processes of becoming" (Bakhtin 21). Given that they are African immigrants, their identities and ways of thinking are shaped by many factors.

As second and third-generation writers, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provide a comprehensive understanding of how race, class, and identity intersect across different times and cultural contexts. More importantly, Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* depicts the overt racism and systemic discrimination faced by African immigrants in the mid-20th century UK, emphasising the harsh realities and personal struggles of her protagonist, Adah. In contrast, Adichie's *Americanah* explores various forms of racism encountered in contemporary America. Adichie's use of digital media provides a platform for self-expression and social commentary; Adichie's digital blogging in *Americanah* enhances the narrative by providing deeper insights into Ifemelu's internal world. It exemplifies the transformative power of digital spaces in shaping identities and fostering social change. This digital impact underscores the evolving nature of immigrant experiences, highlighting the critical role of technology in contemporary discussions of race and class.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the analysis of Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, this study developed key concepts such as

the role of digital media in self-expression and the intersection of race and class in shaping the sense of self of African Immigrants. Given these insights, further research could explore how these concepts are represented in other African and African American literary texts.

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