

## INTERSECTIONALITY IN ADICHIE'S NOVELS "HALF OF A YELLOW SUN" AND *AMERICANAH*; A BLACK FEMINISTIC APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to examine intersectionality which is mentioned in Adichie's novels, *The half of the yellow sun* and *Americanah* by the lens of a black feministic approach. In order to shed light on the difficulties Black women in the half of the yellow sun face, the author of the book describes African society. Adichie's *Americanah* subtly explores feminism through the interactions of multiple characters and their experiences rather than through a single character. The study is qualitative, and the data are presented verbally. Kimberlé Crenshaw's black feminist theory is used in the data analysis. The novels themselves were used as a primary source of data collection, while web pages and other references were used as a secondary source to make this kind of research easier. The novels' context will serve as the basis for the analysis. This study will demonstrate how race, sexual orientation, class, identity, discrimination, and societal prejudice and oppression affect black women.

**Key words:** Race, sexuality, intersectionality, feminism, gender discrimination, class distinction, and self-identity are all examples of intersectionality.

### Introduction:

The intersections of race, sex, and class/gender oppression of black women are examined through the lens of black feminist theory. In the writings of theorists like Kimberly Crenshaw and Bell Hooks, the black feminism theory serves as a lens through which the effects of intersectionality can be investigated. A legal and influential black feminist scholar, kimberlé crenshaw made great contribution to the field of black feminism. In the 1980's her work focused on the experience of oppression faced by Black Women as a result of race, gender and class. The intersectionality of violence against Black women and her essay, "Mapping the margins," demonstrate both. "Ain't I a woman?" was written by Bell Hook, a prolific critic and scholar of race, class, and gender. and "The

determination to change" His research highlights the difficulties and sufferings of Black African women as a result of gender discrimination, race, class identity, and sexism. Chimmamanda Nigozi Edichi portrays Black feminism in her novels "The half of the yellow sun" and "Americanah." This novel, half of the yellow sun explored the hardships and discrimination and sexism which is faced by both illiterate mgbeke and even educated woman Olana. In the novel, each female character is betrayed in her relationships. Though they suffered in many ways but they used empowerment as a key to lead their lives. In contrast, in the novel "Americanah," characters deal with racism, sexism, and colorism while also figuring out who they are as immigrants from Nigeria.

### Research Objectives:

- a) To investigate how the African black women in Edichi's novels "The half of the yellow sun" and "Americanah" dealt with the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality.
- b) To highlight how black women are suffered through sexism and betrayal and their bodies as a battlefield in Adichie's novels, "The half of the yellow sun" and "Americanah".
- c) In the novels "The half of the yellow sun" and "Americanah," African black women are depicted as resisting and overcoming patriarchy.

### Research Questions:

- a) From a Black feminist perspective, how does Half of a Yellow Sun depict the intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, and war in shaping women's lived experiences?
- b) How does Americanah investigate the intersections of race, gender, nationality, and migration in the development of Black female identity in Western society?
- c) How do female characters in both novels negotiate, resist, or redefine intersecting systems of oppression through agency, voice, and self-representation?

### Literature Review:

According to Lewis et al. (2012), purple represents the liberating sense of black lesbian shamelessness that can result from black women's vocal articulation of sexual experiences of the same sex. This goes against the politics of pride that characterized the Black arts movement and stifled black women's sexuality exploration. This novel distinguished the black lesbian shamelessness as an approach to gender, sexual and racial identification. Canis et al., (2014) primarily focuses on feminist criticism of abuse of women and the color purple, two of Walker's most significant themes. Women are viewed as powerless and weak, whereas men are viewed as rulers and the majority of society. In Walker's novel, women are dominated by the male rulers until the one among them realizes her values, stands against the brutality and abuses and declares herself as a powerful women in society. In this context, the novel "The Color Purple" is the focus of this study because of its themes of racism, male dominance, abuse, sexism, and the power of

strong women. Sedehi, et.al., (2014) explained in " In women's time", Julia kristeva argues that women have been underprivileged of linear time for success and improvement. They have been restricted to circular time, which is a circle of repetition. As a result, she requested that the third generation of feminists focus on linear time rather than circular time. She further explained the duty of third generation which is to pay the attention to the individuality of each women.

McDonald's et al. (2018) challenge the notions of whiteness that are prevalent in British and North American leisure and sports by focusing on black feminism and intersectional theory. They place the debates in a critical context. They emphasize the necessity of challenging the most significant social relationship—gender.

Esquivel Cuero, J. Feminist writers have utilized this tactic to deconstruct gender and identity through the use of complex, non-normative characters in contemporary novels, according to M, et al. (2022). Using existing feminist theories about feminine writing and confirming that gender and identity issues are both socially constructed, the purpose of this BA thesis is to investigate how gender and identity issues can be rewritten in postmodern literature. In order to do this, two postmodern novels have been selected: Sexing The Cherry and Mr. Loverman. Rewriting is used in both of them to try to question patriarchal ideas like heteronormativity and gender binarism while also trying to make gender and identity issues more diverse.

Koegler, C, et.al (2022)Female authors of African descent, writing from all sides of the Atlantic and ranging from Toni Morrison to Saidyia Hartman, from Buchi Emecheta to Bernardine Evaristo, have formed a growing polyphonic chorus foregrounding the centrality of black female experience in envisaging history's transformation from Euro-imperial enslavement, displacement, and migration into the postcolonial era. They continue to emphasize concepts like roots, female kinship, and attachments between women as crucial for shaping a sense of self in a postcolonial Atlantic world by bringing together an archive of black female voices from across the Atlantic. Yaa Gyasi's Homegoing (2016), Bernardine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other (2019), and

Manifesto are the most recent examples of these interventions that are discussed, contextualized, and historicalized. Regarding *Never Giving Up* These texts are treated in the chapter as moving examples of how "history" can be made memorable as a jumble of affective herstories and how this forces current readers to relate to African being and becoming, past and present, in new ways.

BENAICH, S., et al. (2022) The idea of womanhood became a topic of study in literary criticism studies because the meaning of the word has changed over time since it was first used. Bernardine Evaristo makes an effort in her novel to deviate from the conventional meaning of the word "womanhood" in her interpretation of the concept. This research investigates characters' experiences, struggles, and stereotypical images as women of colour. The researcher's goal is to disprove the idea that being a woman conforms to stereotypes by employing a variety of approaches, including Feminist Theory, Black Feminism, Womanism, and Intersectionality. A diverse, multilayered, and fluid portrayal of womanhood is made possible by this study's revelation of Evaristo's reconsideration of the concept of womanhood. The characters' choice to challenge and overcome intersectional discrimination by being and becoming anything demonstrates the cruelty of being othered in "white" British society. Moreover, for black women's challenging stereotypical images serves in strengthening womanhood's image of the protagonists as it reshaped their understanding of what it means to be a woman, while society's stereotypes imposed on them urged disobeying such discrimination and helped in reshaping the concept of womanhood'.

Julia Kristeva argues in *Women's Time* that women have been confined to circular time, which is a vicious cycle of repetition, instead of linear time for progress and improvement. As a result, she calls for a third generation of feminists to focus on linear time and establish the foundation for women's social and domestic roles. She mentions that the third duty of feminists is to consider each woman's uniqueness. In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker's female protagonist, Celie, revolts against fixed gender roles. She forms a bond with other female characters and a sisterhood.

The purpose of this article is to concentrate on how the patriarchal system affects women. In addition, it will draw attention to sisterhood and how it shapes women's individuality and social roles. As such, this article intends to focus on Julia Kristeva's notion of women's time and the way Celie intends to follow her desires. Celie learns more about herself by paying attention to her life's passions and goals. Abram, N., & Abram, N., et.al (2020) tell the story of Britain's first black women's theatre company, Theatre of Black Women (TBW). It follows the development of founding members Patricia Hilaire and Bernardine Evaristo from their involvement in drama groups as teenagers to their studies at Rose Bruford College and their national touring of their work, which was supported by Arts Council England, the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Greater London Council, and the Greater London Arts Association. It places TBW in a broader context of other alternative British theatre companies such as the Royal Court, Black Theatre Co-operative, and Gay Sweatshop.

Roshan, K. M., and Wen, X., et al. (2023) investigate transgender women's identity struggles and social and linguistic issues in American novels. *The Danish Girl* (Ebershoff, *The Danish Girl*, 2000) and *Nevada* (Binnie, Nevada, 2013) are the two selected works that talk about the social and linguistic challenges that trans women face on their life journey. The novels show how gender performance is linked to intricate social and linguistic relationships. The relationship is embedded in the fields of anthropology and linguistics, around sexual orientation and its multiple layers. It is essential to investigate the issues that women face on a daily basis. Critical gender, language, and anthropological-linguistic theories serve as the lens through which these anthropological narratives examine trans women's voices in depth. To sum up, these two chosen novels are a depiction of the journey of a transition between gender in the context of gender consciousness and sexual orientation alongside gender consciousness of identity in the male to female gender. This study could conclude, on the basis of these novels, that trans women face difficulties in coping with the (trans) gendering transition, as Lili and Maria in the novel illustrate.

### Research Methodology:

The novels *Americanah* and *The Half of the Yellow Sun* are taken from the digital library. It will be learnt and information gathered. The "Black feminism" theory will be used as a basis for the in-depth analysis of the collected data, so a qualitative approach will be preferred. We will investigate the reasons why women of different classes and religions are subjected to discrimination and the strategies they use to overcome it through women's empowerment. The novel's textual and thematic analysis will be the focus of this deductive method study. The novel will be analyzed deductively and the intersectionality and feminisms will be shown.

Resilience and critical brilliance are at the heart of the term "black feminism," which refers to women at the intersection of race, class, gender, and social discrimination. Kimberlé Crenshaw is an influential black feminist scholar who made great contributions to the field of Black feminism which is recognized in her essay "Mapping the margins" and coined the term intersectionality and she highlighted how class gender and race interthread to create a unique experiences of oppression for black women.

### Analysis:

The book "The half of the yellow sun," which was nominated for the orange fiction prize in 2004 and won the common wealth writer's prize for the best book of 2005, has received widespread critical acclaim. The novel's significance stems from its examination of racial issues and its depiction of Black African womanhood. When it comes to addressing the problems facing society, it lauds women's strength and brutality.

### Analysing "Half of the yellow sun" With textual references:

#### 1. Intersection of Oppression:

Race and Gender:

However, in unexpected ways, this war, this endless war, was also a woman's war" (Pg. 159).

The quote illustrates the intertwined conflicts that women in Africa face. They are subjected to the terror of war and displacement.

The male officials' decision to fire Olanna: "How can a woman lead men? (Pg. 156).

Gender-based inequality affects women in their communities. The viewpoint of Kainene regarding marriage: "Marriage would kill her spirit" (Pg. 282).

Social expectations, sexual "modesty," and motherhood are dealt with by Olanna and Kainene. Violence and aggression are the outcomes of the male characters' struggles with male insecurities.

#### 2. Reclaiming Agency and Resistance: Defiance and Resourcefulness:

"No market," shouted the Umuofia women in unison (Pg. 208).

Women are portrayed as agents and resilient in this book. They take on the roles of men.

He responded, "Olanna running the refugee camp: "The whole camp seemed to hum with her energy" 311), when someone asked him how alive the camp was. African women demonstrate the empowerment of women. They organize camps and organize protests. Olanna's defiance of society reflects her act of resistance.

*Alternative Power Sources:* Odenigbo was sustained by Olanna's emotional power: "His strength came from her" (Pg. 398).

Ugwu's silent presence and caring of Odenigbo: "She fed him hope" (Pg. 407).

The prevailing conceptions of power are illustrated by the following quotes. Women are powerful because they are emotionally strong and can live their lives. A potent resistance comes from Ugwu's refusal to cook or take care of Odenigbo.

#### 3. Body and Sexuality:

A feminist perspective on sexuality and the male gaze.

"She wanted him, fiercely, unashamedly" (Pg. 7) describes Kainene's exploration of her desires with Richard. 110).

Accordingly, Olanna's decision to leave Odenigbo was "her escape, her defiance" (Pg. 474).

Female sexuality is shown in Adichie's work in a way that defies male expectations and male approval. Kainene and Amala, for example, freely express their desires. The Body as a Battlefield:

"Beatrice's rape: "They tore like hyenas" (Pg. 351).

"The war had taken her baby first": Olanna's miscarriage (Pg. 464).

As the female body is violated and her sexism and violence are shown, war oppression is depicted. These quotes also showed that the novel depicts the act of childbirth powerful assertion of life and resistance against the forces of war.

#### 4. Complexities and Nuances:

##### Beyond Stereotypes:

"Olanna's intellectualism: *"Her voice resonated with authority"* (Pg. 97).

"Kainene's pragmatism: *"She was no woman, not in the way men thought of women"* (Pg. 282).

In emphasizing the persistent black womanhood experience, Adichie has highlighted the following. The characters of the novel have different personalities, ideologies and reactions to the war. The novel depicts the conflict in the class, gender and ethnic.

#### 5. Interrogating "Womanism:

##### Beyond Western Feminism:

When Olanna inquires if Richard still does not comprehend, Richard responds, "Not all of us are the same." 105).

This is an illustration of how the book could be analyzed from the point of view of "womanism," a black feminist ideology that places an emphasis on the experiences of women. This framework makes it possible to understand discrimination based on race and gender. Make use of textual evidence to examine *Americanah*: Instead, the other novel in *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is ripe for investigation into Black feminism and the novel format. Black women's experiences of crossing borders in the context of racial, class, and gender inequities are highlighted in this framework.

##### Double Consciousness and the Gaze:

She always lived in two cultures: you saw herself through American eyes and you saw America. You saw Nigeria through the eyes of a Nigerian." (p. 7).

W.E.B., a black feminist scholar, coined the term. Du Bois uses the term "double consciousness" to describe the protagonist Ifemelu. She is viewed by Nigeria's judgmental eye and America's frequently racist eye.

#### 2. Beauty Standards and Hair Politics:

"Americanah. They gave us that name. because we were both Nigerians and Americans in Nigeria. "Neither here nor there" on page 14 The novel is about how black women are pressured to conform to eurocentric beauty standards. Ifemelu has experimented with natural hairstyles in the United States, where her hair is considered "political," whereas straight hair has some sort of status in Nigeria. Black feminists criticize a beauty industry that devalues black features in this statement.

#### 3. Education and Economic Empowerment:

The opportunity to be someone else was one of America's offerings (p. 87).

The black feminist principle of self-determination is demonstrated by Ifemelu's pursuit of an education in the United States. She has access to education, which enables her to improve her life and defy stereotypes about black women.

#### 4. Sisterhood and Negotiating Class Differences:

We were both outsiders in this location, but our outsiderhood was different" (p. 183).

The variety of Black female experiences is brought to light by the complicated relationship that Ifemelu has with her American-born Black friend Kimberly. In keeping with the Black feminist movement's recognition of the diverse experiences of Black women, class differences cause tensions even when people share the same skin color.

#### 5. Gender roles and The "Strong Black Woman" trope:

*Americanah*. Independent. Strong. Black. Female (p. 394).

The portrayal of the "Strong Black Woman" as a stereotype is challenged and bolstered by the book. Ifemelu is a strong and tenacious character who also craves emotional connection and is vulnerable. The notion that black women are only strong and emotionless is, in a sense, disproved by this complexity. The intersections of intersectionality and colonialism: The feeling of being crushed under and crushed alongside others, of being oppressed and oppressed (p. 44).

Adichie talks about how colonization changed gender roles. Ifemelu notices that some

Nigerian men have a tendency to believe that women should follow traditional gender roles, even though they have access to education as well. This underscores the racial, class and gender dynamics of black women's experiences.

### 7. Black Love and Finding Home:

They were at home to each other, somehow (p. 453).

The ending twist - Ifemelu being reunited with her childhood crush, Obinze - provides a complex look at black love. Their contact is far from an idealized love, and represents the complexities of loving across borders and personal development.

### Conclusion:

In conclusion, Adichie's novels "The half of the yellow sun" and "Americanah" provide excellent examples of black womanhood by intertwining the stories of sexuality, displacement, identity, class discrimination, and race. Through an intersectional Black feminist perspective, the novel's focus on a black woman's strength and resilience transcends the war narrative. The novel confronts and experiences the dynamics of power, the diversity of womanhood, and conventional roles. It is a thorough examination of black women's experiences. Both novels depict human conditions by examining identity, displacement, sexism, discrimination, resilience, and gender differences. A black feminist approach can help us comprehend their suffering as well as their strength in their struggle against the various oppressions. The war's oppression is symbolized by half of the yellow sun, and Americanah investigates the nuances of migration. Even in the midst of displacement and a world that is always changing, both novels celebrate the human spirit's ability to overcome obstacles and discover one's identity.

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