A GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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ABSTRACT

This article applies a geo-spatial analysis to Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah *and posits that historical memory is culpable in global relationships, especially where it involves blacks and the sites of their colonialisms. The novel charts a route of migration which traverses the Atlantic Ocean and has historical relevance and the potential to define black bodies within a global context. The methodology adopted was a systematic close reading where significant geographical sites were logged and their respective contextual data analysed to reveal their thematic relevance. Findings: the study, through the lens of Digital Geography, reveals a cartographic analysis of realities that are etched on the fabric of home within global consciousness, slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. This study further asserts that the crisscross between Nigeria, America and the United Kingdom adumbrates a cartography of identity, race and agency that is definitive with far-reaching implications. Experiences in the 'new world' forces characters to apprehend race, its rigid borders, its socio-economic implications, and the constraining topography African bodies must navigate in order to become and belong. Crisscrossing the Middle Passage unveils historical and contemporary experiences where blacks become aware of race, identity and agency. Thus, Americanah is a novel that delineates the new coordinates for Black Bodies on the global stage.*

Keywords: Geospatial, Migration, Literary Cartography, Identity, Black, Diaspora, Colonial, Postcolonial

INTRODUCTION

In all ramifications humans are mobile. From the earliest beginnings to the present, mobility eventuates human's essential personality; always moving from one physical space to another, from one essential reality to another, and evolving from one state to another, mobility is an intrinsic part of our humanity. The concept of home has never been defined by 'static'. Home to humans is anywhere acceptable shelter is, anywhere acceptable sustenance is found and anywhere sufficient resources can be found to suit needed purpose.

Humans, therefore, are always in search of home. Home is at once a physical and psychological reality; it is a physical place and a mindscape where acceptable reality is perceived, pursued and eventuated. Most literatures paint a picture of 'home' as perceived or as desired: the physical and the emotional space. The degree to which one succeeds in apprehending these spaces determines one's success in life. The picture of home one

conceives and ultimately apprehends is a direct map of one's emotional, social, economic and physical trajectories, and these illustrate the arcs of one's experiences.

A veritable map of 'home' shows an essentialized topography that is instructive and illustrative of growth; home is never a single location or destination as it is in continuous flux and perpetually creative. Home is at once a topography and a tapestry of memory, emotion, people, places, and connotes, at many levels, comfort and acceptance, sanctuary, nostalgia and longing, family and loved ones, community, self-acceptance, and many more.

Many factors have affected the picture and site of home; economic, social political, and religious factors have often determined where individuals call home, especially where forced displacements necessitate the movement of peoples from their original homes, becoming immigrants in a new location and adopting "a hyphenated condition of identity" (Hassan 180); a new home means a new location, but not just a new home but a new home that is imbued with dual personalities, hence the 'hyphenated' identity. Hassan agrees that the search for home is germane and part of the DNA of our modern world when he asserts that, "the problem of belonging and searching for home is one of the characteristics of our modern mobile world" (173).

Mobility thus is an essential aspect of home in that it engenders and eventuates a rootlessness that is almost endemic in the Global South sites, which sites have traditionally been impoverished by slavery, colonialism, imperialism and racism. These factors stripped inhabitants of these sites of the vestiges of personhood even as they denuded them of capacities needed to create comfort in their traditional home sites. Diaspora, therefore, is a product of a rootlessness that is occasioned by a loss of the determinate properties that allow for the building of a safe and sustainable home. Between slavery, colonialism, imperialism, neo-imperialism and globalization, individuals in the global south have had the comfort of home taken away from them, forcing them to seek pastures new in order to arrive at a measure of livable comfort.

DIASPORA: A HISTOGRAPHY

The history of Diaspora can be traced to the conquest of Judah in about 586 BCE when the Jews were enslaved and dispersed to many nations as recorded in the books of 2 kings 24:14; 2 kings 25:11-12; Jeremiah 52:30; Psalm 137; Ezekiel; Jeremiah 29, 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, etc of the Bible. Later in about 70 CE the Romans destroyed the temple and dispersed the Jewish across the Roman Empire. In the 20th Century we have had the African Diaspora starting with the slave trade to colonialism, imperialism; between 1915 to

1917 the Ottoman Empire instituted a genocide that resulted in the mass killing and expulsion of Armenians; the Irish Diaspora necessitated by the Great Famine of 1845 – 1852; the late 20th and 21st centuries saw a new type of Diaspora resulting from wars, transnationalism, globalization, and post-colonialism. The diaspora of the late 20th and 21st centuries were basically labor, trade, cultural and imperial diasporas whose relocation of home were extrinsic rather than intrinsic; they pursued what the non-native home could offer them which the native home could not. Often times these were pursuit of education, commerce, the golden fleece, and a pursuit of "circulating imaginaries about them" (Salazar 576), which imaginaries are usually written in clichéd literature that attracts and titillates the reader into wanting to experiencing what is detailed in them.

REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

Majority of members of any diaspora are faced with myriads of problems, some of which include trauma, displacement, loss of connectivity, and transnationalism that dislocates rather than locate; Hassan observes that, "the immigrants thought they were going home, but reality appeared to be very different from the myth" (182). The trauma of displacement, mistreatment, racism, loss of connection, poverty, etc. became a fact of life that they needed to negotiate daily. This negotiation sometimes results in a decision to return, either voluntarily or forced. Alatas and Slama offer that, "returns are part and parcel of diasporas. They constitute a special from of mobility, and yet they entail much more than geographical or physical movement" (411). We see characters in most diaspora literatures returning home for one reason or the other; sometimes permanently and sometimes to touch base in order to reaffirm their identity and heal from the trauma of their diaspora experiences.

These returning and re-imbedding do not occur without friction: the reason for wanting to return may result from certain frictions within the diaspora communities, and returning into a native communities may also eventuate frictions; "communities maintain boundaries" (Alatas and Slama 416), boundaries perhaps equivalent to the stages of transition that encompass the three stages of existence in Yoruba mythology which worldview displays three distinct stages of existence, namely the living, the dead/ancestors and the living. These distinct stages are circumscribed by a fourth stage, what Wole Soyinka calls "the Immeasurable gulf of transition" (26) which can only be accessed when humans are "stripped of excrescences" and subject themselves to "transitional memory" (27). Thus, therefore, humans exist in a cyclic continuum that evinces a going and coming. No location is *in situ*; every location exist in transition. Conditions of our humanity create a transit-complex that

ensures that humans are always seeking out sites of relative improved comfort. However, the same conditions that elicit transitions can coax an individual to return to their original sites, either permanently or briefly.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study is integrative where a mixed method geospatial/postcolonial analysis of Adichie's *Americanah* is done; a traditional and systematic close reading revealed locations that were tagged with their associated characters and characteristics. The data retrieved form the geodatabase from where an interpretation of the text is carried out in line with the theoretical frameworks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Immigration of humans from point 'a' to 'b' is geographical as well as economic and social; our humanity is one large laboratory where 'specimens' are planted, replanted and deplanted for economic and geographical reasons. Thus, Literary Geography, an interdisciplinary area of study that straddles literary studies and human geography, is a concept that explores the relationship between places, space and literature; not only does it indicated where stories are, it also interrogates how place affects narrative, character and the meaning that we glean from them. Again, literary geography considers how literature creates and shapes our conception, experience and appreciation of real and imagined places. Doreen Massey posits that "what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massay *Power…* 66). As has been stated earlier, a place is constantly being made and remade as experiences from diverse backgrounds meet and interact, that is, a place is always becoming, always shaped by global forces. An immigrant, for instance, in a limbo and devoid of traditional connection or earthings is imperiled and impeded.

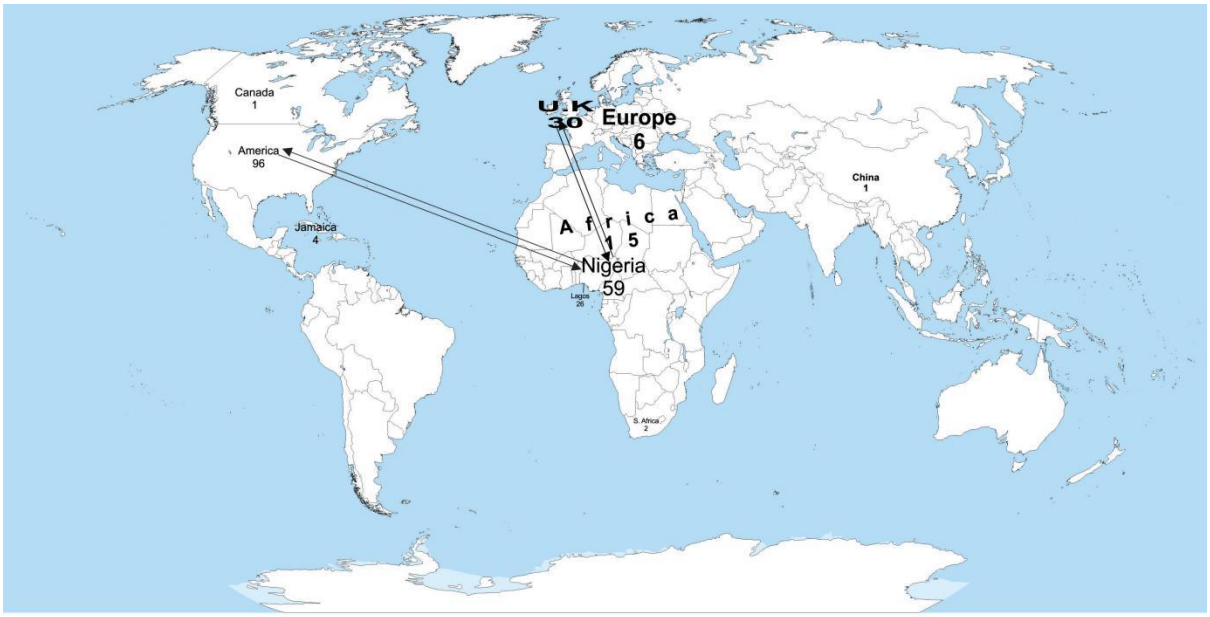
Immigration is a geographic exercise, and its depiction in literature delineates a geographic experience of characters as they move from one point of experience to another, and how each point determines the type and extent of experience experienced. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, Okoronkwo's travails are geo-tagged: his experiences may be studied by his movement from his native land to the site of his exile and back to his native land. Each of these sites elicit and eventuate distinct experiences and outcomes, and thus become not just idle settings but active characters that shape Okonkwo's

psychology and fate. From this we see one essential and poignant detail that stands out, which is that space is not idle nor is it neutral; a welter of tragic interiorization overwhelms Okonkwo in his exile in Mbanta and this intensifies his personal tragedy, engenders a collision of cultures, heightens his sense of humiliation and loss of status. Yi-Fu Tuan observes that "place is a center of meaning constructed by experience" (152) and we see this especially evident in Okonkwo's case, where Mbanta becomes a meaningful location, laden with cultural and personal information that writes an overflow of tragic emotions into the life of an erstwhile impeccable young man .

Where for an immigrant in a racist locale place is tainted by parochial racial prejudices, for the natives, "it is the sphere of everyday, of real and valued practices, the geographical source of meaning, vital to hold on to as "the global" spins its ever more powerful and alienating webs" (Massey, *For Space*… 5-6). The work of the writer is therefore cut out for them to ensure that these records of place, space and experience are carefully annotated since the writer, in the words Robert Tally Jr, "is a cartographer… mapping unknown or poorly known territories for the reader" (5). The writer thus is a cartographer, especially when they use their narrative to create a map of experiences, which map direct the reader's perception, understanding and empathy, just like a map would guide a traveler through an unknown site.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS/ANALYSIS OF DATA

Chimamanda Adichie in *Americanah* mentions about forty six (46) major places: 14 in America; 4 places in UK; 4 in Europe; one in Canada; one in Jamaica; 5 in Africa and 10 in Nigeria. Place names are mentioned about 266 times in the text. (See figure below). Some of these places are political sites, while some are educational sites (Princeton and Yale, for instance). The vast canvas of *Americanah* is at once an illustration of travel experience and "a way of charting the world, of imposing a grid on experience, of locating oneself and others in a potentially confusing world" (Tally 5)



Geospatial sites in *Americanah*

Literary geography sees "literary works (as serving) a cartographic function by creating a figurative or allegorical representation of a social space…" (Tally "On Literary …"3).*Americanah* as a narrative evinces a two-dimensional spatiality that is at once physically and subjectively measurable, and both illustrate personal, separate experience and the social construction of space through vicarious personal and communal experiences. The 266 mentions of actual spaces in the novel is essentially "a mere representation of space and place, whose function is to help the … reader or writer make sense of the world' (Tally "On Literary 4). As a map is useful to a traveler so is a novel to the reader; the novel guides the reader to spaces, and in those spaces, illustrate vicarious spatial experiences and their symbolism.

THE SMELLS OF AMERICAN DREAM

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in *Americanah*, deploys a deliberate geographical template to visualize and normatively deconstruct the western notion of immigration as monolithic and the inseparable relationship between immigration, race and identity. As the protagonists keep moving, they keep changing; every new space arrived at, every new experience experienced, is the characters' attempt to negotiate their identity within evolving spaces. *Americanah* is a novel that jostles with space; on the very first page in chapter1, Adichie mentions eleven place names; Ifemela, the protagonist, has vast travel experience and her itinerary sounds like a travel board of diverse experience:

Princeton, in the summer, smelled of nothing…. Philadelphia had the

> Musty scent of history. New Haven smelled of neglect. Baltimore smelled of brine, and Brooklyn of sun-warmed garbage. But Princeton had no smell. She liked taking deep breaths here….
>
> But she did not like that she had to go to Trenton to braid her hair (13)

The map she presents here is an olfactory spread that delineates the various smells of certain American cities; each of these smells and their respective cities represent levels of personal experiences. Princeton has no smell because she came into a measure of financial and social ease there:

> She liked the campus, grave with knowledge, the Gothic buildings with their vine-laced walls transformed… into a ghostly scene. She liked, most of all, that in this place of affluent ease, she could pretend to be someone else, someone specially admitted into a hallowed American club, someone adorned with certainty (13).

Her certainty is a product of a sense of acceptance and contentment with herself and the 'crusade' she is on in her blog, 'Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black.' Her blog opens a veritable vista from where she explores the underbelly of American race predicament and a human condition designed in America for Americans. Princeton had commandeered a life of ease and freedom for her such that she could sit back, kick up her heels and virtually luxuriate in the American dream, "often, she would sit in cafes, or airports, or train stations, watching strangers, imagining their lives, and wondering." This experience contrasts with her experiences in Philadelphia.

Where "New Haven smelled of neglect, Baltimore of brine and Brooklyn of garbage", they each delineate her experiences in those sites: Philadelphia represents financial hardship, degrading job, racial segregation and breakup with Obinze. The breaking with Obinze is particularly traumatic as it was procured in silence; a sudden cessation of communication. A cutting off. A shutting down of a previously viable, though long-distance, relationship. This shutting down makes her distraught and almost desolate, and this compounds her isolation and marks the lowest ebb of her spirit in America.

In Philadelphia she encountered shades of racism, some spiked and open, some veiled and subtle. A case in point, the carpet cleaner who came to clean Kimberly's home (where she was babysitting), thinking she, Ifemela, was the homeowner became hostile but became cheery when he realized she was just a help like himself:

> 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. (193)

Being black and different had made her stick out like a sore thumb and, earlier in her stay in America she had decided to affect an American account in order to blend in. But it did not help because she always found herself in the mix of racism. Ifemela records in her blog post that, "In America, tribalism is alive and well. There are four kinds - class, ideology, region, and race… There's a ladder of racial hierarchy in America. White is always on top… American Black is always on the bottom (216). In another blog post, Ifemela writes, "American racial minorities – blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Jew – all get shit from white folks… so whiteness is the thing to aspire to. (239)

Philadelphia represents many shades of loss: loss of her peace of mind on occasion of 'poverty' and loss of her innocence on occasion of the indelible tryst with the tennis coach that leaves her feeling violated, tainted and depressed, all because she needed to do it to get money to pay her bills.

From Philadelphia she moved to Baltimore, Maryland, which she had said "smelled of brine"(13), and according to her, "when she arrived in Baltimore knowing she was going to live there, and not merely visiting Curt, she thought it forlorn and unlovable" (240). Baltimore assured her Independence, academic life, connection, analysis of race, assimilation. In her blog post titled "Why Dark-Skinned Black women – Both American and Non-American – love Barack Obama, (249) Ifemela analyses and tries to understand the depth and complex nature of racism in America, with its various strands of 'Indian', " Full-Blooded Negroes", White Greek, Italian, half-Chinese, splash of Cherokee, Non-Black American Blacks, mixed races, all jostling for recognition and superiority. This jostling is essentially because, not succeeding in being white, by skin tone, accent, dress, straightening of hair, the best and only option for non-whites is color-bashing and region-bashing; many non-whites are caught protesting the strand and locale of their 'color' in such expressions as "stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian"; "Don't call me black, I'm from Trinidad" (235). These protestations are basically evidence of color bleeding and validation due to the region of your color. The Trinidadian feels superior to the West African black and would be quick to assert that superiority.

Baltimore is where her race analytics tools are brought to bear on the great American race issue and the nuances of American culture *vis a vis* 'other' cultures, speech and identity within her burgeoning sense of self and agency in the diaspora. Her blog becomes the lab through which she assays the racial conundrum that America is. She is well positioned to analyze race and racism because she lives it and has to deal with all of its strands on a daily basis.

LONDON: LOSS OF AGENCY AND IDENTITY

London rears its head up in a chance encounter between Ifemela and Kayode, one of Obinze's friends back in Nigerian. While waiting for her boyfriend, Curt, to bring around the car to pick her Kayode identifies and tries to rekindle memory. While discussing with him she learns that her former boyfriend, Obinze, is in London. London is cold, grey, full of cagey behavior, and false marriages, and for Obinze, London represented failure, first, of his dream to live in America, second, of his mother to stick to her uprightness by lying to ensure that he got a UK visa as her research assistant when he was not, and third, his failure to realize anything worthwhile in the three years of his living in the UK.

Obinze discovers, as Chika and Bose his cousin's wife's friends tell us, that London is a leveler:

> But it's not his fault, it's because we are in London. He is the kind of man I would never even look at in Nigeria, not to talk of going out with. The problem is that water never finds its different levels here in London.
>
> London is a leveler. We are now all in London and we are now all the same, what nonsense (282)

Within the constraints of being black in unprepossessing London, we find evidences of class-consciousness even among the blacks. Chika disparages an Onitsha man because, "he is so bush. He grew up in Onitsha and so you can imagine what kind of bush accent he has" (282); while struggling with racism they are busy with understated striated social classism.

London is stark, noncommittal, dispassionate, and everyone is struggling with one form of challenge or the other. London is loss of identity; Obinze becomes Vincent in order to use Vincent's national Insurance number to work. His adoption of a false identity is an act of necessity occasioned by his need to find employment that would help him pay his bills and this route is charged with inherent perils as, from an intrinsic perspective, it produces an "alienation of vision and the crisis of self-image" (Ashcroft 9). Of course, his status as an

illegal immigrant had warped any vision of sanity he had had; he had become flotsam on a rough sea of abjection, loss of agency and invisibility.

At a dinner in Emenike's home, in the company of Emenike's British wife, Georgina, and her friends, Obinze discovers the difference between racism in American and Britain. Emenike informs the gathering that, "it seemed to me that in America blacks and whites work together but don't play together and here (Britain) blacks and whites play together and don't work together" (316). Obinze informs the gathering that:

> A white boy and a black girl who grow up in the same working-class town in this country can get together and race will be secondary, but in America, even if the white boy and black girl grow up in the same neighborhood, race would be primary (316).

From the flow of the conversation, perhaps aided by inebriating spirits and cocktails and rich and affected gourmet dishes, racism and classism are cloaked in double-speak and lethargic labels with even blacks like Emenike deeply immersed in it in other to be accepted by the 'owners' of the land. Emenike, for instance, evinces a vapidity and insouciance that is disheartening and disconcerting; realizing the profit of being vacuous in his ass-licking, he reaches new heights by totally transforming into a 'Brit' without the blood or perhaps it is his "While people are watching us"(391) personality, that forces him to be white.

After her breaking up with Curt, Ifemela traded Baltimore for New Haven for her personal growth, her love life, her finance, her confidence, and brought an upscale almost academic tint to her life. New haven and Yale presented an academic aura that Ifemela relished and feared. Blaine's friends were at once welcoming and critical of her person; they viewed her not really as an outsider but as a butterfly which flew at the periphery of their academe. From Blaine's friends and colleagues, to Shan's 'Salons' Ifemela is given first hand recipes of the race situation in America and grist for her blog which centers on racism and being black in myriads of typical American case studies. Obama's electioneering and the race hoopla it raises is topical in private as well as public discourses and a blog post titled, "Is Obama Anything but Black?" illustrates this acutely:

> So lots of folks – mostly non-black- say Obama's not black, he's biracial, multiracial, black-and-white, anything but just black. Because his mother was white. But race is not biology, race is sociology. (387).

What is apparent, like the post shows, is not the shade of black or white that you are. What is really important is how you are socialized. Even the tiniest percentage of black blood in your

vein taints you and paints you as a black, "if a random black guy commits a crime today, Barack Obama could be stopped and questioned for fitting the profile. And what would that profile be? "Black man" (387). A character in Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents,* Allen, is described thus, "it's that white thing. It just eats him up that he's not all white" (25). How white or how black you are on the color spectrum can determine your fate and how much of the human dream you can aspire to realize. Even within the black streak of the spectrum there is disagreements as to who is most authentic and relevant; Blaine's tiff with Boubacar is essentially a quarrel steeped in provenance. While many equate Boubacar's essential intelligence as fey, Blaine sees it differently, "it's interesting how he says ordinary things and thinks they are pretty deep" (388), perhaps affronted by an African black receiving such adulations while he an American black does not.

Beyond this light-hearted scrimmage and petty jealousies, is the more fundamental George Floydesque tragedy that plays out when Mr. White, a black security guard at the library, is criminalized in a stereotypical manner all because he is black. Mr. White's hellacious experience displays white knees flush on the necks of non-white 'others', especially blacks.

New Haven thus offers Ifemela a more nuanced access into epistemological racism with its dialectics, streams, trajectories and discursive elements. Racism in New Haven is more discursive and academic because important, highly socialized members of the black community can look at it from the vantage of privilege, without the priority of experiencing it; there is a one-way-glass experience that allows them to see others experience racism while they 'academicize' its effect and social implications, hemmed in with subtle jibes, self-deprecating anecdotes and nuanced responses.

LAGOS: LOUD AND UNAPOLOGETIC

It is in Lagos that Ifemela is christened Americanah. Lagos is loud in its protestation of serenity. It is defiant in its commerce: its exuberance is flailing, virulent, and protuberant; "Ifemela stared out of the windows, … thinking how unpretty Lagos was, roads infested with potholes, houses springing up unplanned like weeds. Of her jumble of feelings, she recognized only confusion" (438). Lagos is effusive in its display of wealth. Ikoyi is wealth and money, Onikan is "faded splendor" (454). Lagos highlights a change in Ifemela's personality as "she always heard the unnatural high pitch of her voice" (455). Lagos harbors many streams of people: "young women... with unknown sources of wealth... who live lives they can't afford"(478); "...DSTV images would get grainy, phone networks would clog, the

roads would flood and traffic would snarl"(482); "gaudy garlands of security at the entrance(s)" (483) at banks; Lagos is "a transactional city... Depressingly transactional. Even relationships, they are all transactional "and bombastic" (487), Lagos is full of "exaggerated politeness, exaggerated praise, even exaggerated respect that you haven't earned at all, and it's so fake and so garish" (488); a place of confidence but no dignity" (488); Lagos is about love, infidelity and the resolves in between; "the painting in Lagos always looks crooked, never hung straight" (513) and "Lagos is about hustling"(35).

Lagos is the site "of the almost rich in the presence of the rich, and the rich in the presence of the very rich" and it is a place of "repulsion and longing" (38). It is the place of affected love and love born out of sympathy like we have in the Union between Obinze and Kasi. Beyond these, Lagos possesses an inchoate class hierarchies that foreshadows and eventuates what Ifemela and Obinze experienced abroad. Ifemela's return to Lagos opens up a contrasting vista of place and experience. Between Baltimore, Philadelphia and New Haven Ifemela experienced a compounding reality that paints those cities in their respective lights; they are what they are and no attempt is made to say otherwise. Lagos, on the other kind is a compact and vibrant concatenation of everything. Lagos is an experience. A pulsating, extreme contrast of a city. The commanding wealth of Obinze contrasts with the subdued middle class pretentions of Ifemela. The eclectic hustle and bustle interspaced with both poor and rich, who are both indentured by the ubiquitous go-slow of Lagos, emblematizes the euphoric kaleidoscope of colorful Danfo buses, symphonic car horns, unreliable electricity supply, loud music blaring from vengeful loudspeakers placed in the center of the earspace, abrasive demanding, challenging, pungent, warm, salty, smoky and unparalleled creativity. Lagos is a large canvas of colors, sounds and opportunities. This is what draws Ifemela back home.

THE GEOSPATIAL NARRATIVE

The novel *Americanah* is at once a travelogue and a novel of experience. It is an immigrant's tale as well as a Nigerian tale; a novel that crisscrosses spaces and identities and culture and social politics that tilt towards race. Ifemela's blogs, 'Raceteenth or the Various Observations About American Blacks …' highlights the racial tint of Ifemela's perceptive realities: the black experience and the black immigrant experience are central to the discursive peculiarities of the novel.

Her experiences from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Baltimore, Maryland, to Brooklyn, New York, to New Haven, Connecticut, to Princeton, New Jersey highlight her

outsiderness even in the translucent and almost passive inclusivity of race relations. Each site offers her customized racial experiences; as she travels deeper into American culture her experience of racism changes. Between Philadelphia and New Jersey Ifemela matures from the vulnerable, naive newly arrived immigrant who is forced into a tryst in order to pay her bills to a self-confident CEO of a viable blog who pays her own bills and can take the decision of whether to remain in a relationship or not, someone who can decide to stay or not stay because she has a measure of stability.

This picture contrasts with Obinze's trajectory of Lagos to London and back to Lagos. Obinze's sites are situate in marginal spaces, peripheral almost carcéral sites with their restrictive and erase personalities. When finally he lands in the Detention center, his American dream stutters and finally is extinguishers. His deportation is a forced, involuntary and shameful experience that contrasts with Ifemela's legitimate, though emotionally charged trajectory through America.

Where Philadelphia emblematizes a 'lived race,' Maryland highlights an 'outside the race spectrum' condition. Where Princeton represents 'theoretical race' London represents lived, illegal and fractured race for Obinze. For both Ifemela and Obinze Lagos represents an absence of race and a gathering of reckless abandon, sexual titillation, gratification and a bustling hustle that leaves both characters gasping for breath, and inching towards a decision that would change both their lives.

In the affection map, Lagos symbolizes the site of young love and, at the end, the site of risky, reckless, selfish and gratifying love. In America, Ifemela's love map shows Philadelphia - commodification of love; Curt-love and stability, wealth and dissonance, Blaine - love, intellectual connection and also pressure. For Obinze: UK –Clothhide - love for papers, and Lagos - love of convenience and status.

In between, for both Ifemela and Obinze, Lagos and America and UK, is the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic Ocean is the site of the middle passage where slaves were transported from Africa to the plantations in the New World. The Atlantic Ocean is a chasm, deep and inviolate but stained with the blood and stories of Africans transported in harsh conditions and those who travel with their hearts in their mouths seeking a new experience and a path out of the poverty of African leadership, experience and world. The Atlantic Ocean is a site of transformation, of loss and re-invention; an individual leaves home a legal entity and transforms to an illegal immigrant in the UK, hiding away and erased.

As the Atlantic watches them emigrate, it watches them return and, like Ifemela and Obinze discover, they can never be the same after experiencing the West. Both Ifemela and Obinze had left home to search for another 'home' outside the shores of their comfort zone. Both had experienced the arbitrary vectors of visas and border and discovered that home is not static, but evanescent, always changing, always evolving, even as identities become fluid.

Why do they deign to return? For Ifemela returning to Nigeria is not borne out of a simple desire to return home, it is a complex migration laden with complex rationales with a deep apprehension of the requisite implications. At her return she discovered that a lot had changed. Homes that were once luxurious, which she had relished and wished she could reside in became sites of squalor and repugnance. Ifemela is "astounded by how much it had declined. The paint was peeling on buildings, the streets pitted with potholes, and the whole estate resigned to its own shabbiness."(481). The once famous estate is dilapidated and gone to the dogs, and this represents the shabbiness of the Nigerian condition where we see, from a far distance, an edifice of glorious proportion only to discover, at close inspection, a decrepitude that rankles. The illusion of home turns sallow and sour in the mouth as one tastes the reality of home. Home branded her an Americanah because she had changed in subtle and loud ways; she is hybrid, a mestizo, and the space she inhabits is a hybrid site of contentious reality. Thus, a trajectory that causes one to traverse the middle passage cannot allow one to be the same; it changes one.

CONCLUSION

A geospatial mapping of Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* shows that far from being a linear immigration narrative, the novel is a cartographic analysis of realities that are etched on the fabric of global consciousness; between a history of slavery perpetuated through the watery presence of the middle passage, Ifemela and Obinze re-enact the trauma and travails of many Africans who were ferried across the Atlantic ocean in the worst possible manner, and who endured the worst possible fate. In their crisscross of the ocean – from Lagos to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Princeton, Yale and back to Lagos, on the one hand, and Lagos to London and back to Lagos, on another hand, there is a palpable feeling that it is not about departures and arrivals; it is a map of a network of relationships fostered in individuality, identity, and perception, and all of these taken within racial and class consciousness.

Where in the original Middle Passage blacks went on a unidirectional trip of forced displacement, trauma, slavery, marginalization, privation, the second middle passage is a

personal choice, though borne out of existential privations and social dearth. Even in this personal journey history is a veritable shadow, as the templates crafted in the first Middle Passage are still in operation during the second middle passage; Ifemela and Obinze, and others of their class and race are constrained to carry on from where the slaves of the new world had stopped. Both characters, replanted on a foreign soil face a racism they never imagined in their country of birth. Between Ifemela's racial journey in America and Obinze's illegal status in London, we apprehend the almost inviolate rigidity of borders and economic hierarchies that the black body has to navigate within global contexts

Though Obinze's return to Nigeria is forced, and Ifemela's return is her personal decision, what is apparent is that the return journey is a geospatial mapping of self-discovery, self-awareness, and reclamation of agency. It is at once a rejection of the Western allure that pulls the formerly colonized to come to the 'metropole' in order to be 'civilized' but which ends with trauma, depression, loss of agency, and angst. The characters, Ifemela and Obinze, seem to say that the Middle Passage must be breeched, but its breeching must be carried out within the contexts of Black awareness of home and the constitutive elements of a new reality that redefines, reconfigures and reasserts home and belonging. The difference between Lagos and Philadelphia and London is longitude and latitude; any individual can become, belong, and reclaim wherever they find themselves.

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