

Transnational Ethos in Adichie's *Americanah*

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Abstract

This paper analyses Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah as a transnational fiction that shows how transnational identity is formulated in a liminal space. The issues like trans-nationality, globalization, and home are associated with the issue of identity. To carry out the analysis, we use theoretical insights from Transnational Studies which revolves around the life of people living in a globalized world: we are living in the world where there are no border restrictions and due to technological advancement, people can be present virtually in different places at the same time. This paper analyzes how Adichie's Americanah redefines the notion of immigrant's identity and explores transnational ethos in relation to the concepts of nationality, globalization, home, and culture through the portrayal of two Nigerian lovers Ifemelu and Obinze. Adichie portrays her Nigerian characters like Ifemelu in transnational context not only to critique Western multicultural ethos—policy to encourage transnational immigrants to assimilate to mainstream culture of the hostland—but also to valorize the role of transnational subjects like Ifemelu for the development of their homeland even in the age of 'globalization'.

Keywords: homeland, hostland, nation-state, globalization, diaspora, transnational identity, transnational ethos, agency

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* (2013) revolves around Ifemelu and Obinze, two Nigerian lovers whose goal is to go to the USA. Ifemelu succeeds to go to the USA but Obinze fails because of the strict visa policy of America after 9/11 attack. It was because young men like Obinze from the 'third world' countries were suspected to be 'potential terrorists' in America as Obinze's mother, a Nigerian Professor remarks: "It's the terrorism fears . . . The Americans are now averse to foreign young men" (233). As a result, he goes to England as his mother's "research assistant" (234). Ifemelu settles in America and gets American citizenship but goes back to Nigeria after her thirteen years' stay. On the other hand, her ex-boyfriend Obinze is deported to Nigeria by the British Police for his illegal stay in London even after the date of his visa gets expired. It shows how Ifemelu is in the position of making use of her own agency to make to and fro moves across the borders of her homeland and hostland while Obinze lacks such agency as Maximilian Feldner remarks: "Unlike [Ifemelu], [Obinze] does not have the choice, or the freedom, to move between the countries: Living in England illegally makes it impossible for him to travel to other countries" (195).

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Both America and England were alien lands for both Ifemelu and Obinze respectively in the initial stage. Assimilation in Western culture and lifestyle was problematic for both of them. Slowly and gradually they get used to it. Time and again they are haunted by the memory of their family and homeland. Ifemelu straightens her hair and stops braiding like she used to. She learns American accent and becomes happy when someone compliments about her accent. She forgets Obinze and gets into relationships first with a white American boy Curt and then an African-American man Blaine. Adoption of American culture by her brings about a change in her sense of self. In other words, her identity is changed. Having lived in America for a long time and with the help of her boyfriend Curt, Ifemelu becomes eligible to get an American citizenship. In this sense, being a transnational citizen, she could stay in America forever in case she wanted to or could go back to her homeland. The person who by choice adopts foreign nationality but still remains in contact with the birthplace is a transnational subject. On the other hand, Obinze struggles hard in London for three years: He works as a toilet cleaner, and menial laborer in warehouse and construction sites before his deportation to Nigeria. In the light of this concept, we argue that Adichie in *Americanah* represents her central character Ifemelu as a transnational subject like the author herself. By presenting the central character as a transnational subject and contrasting her with her own agency-less lover, the novelist not only valorizes the role of the nation state even in the age of globalization but also critiques the Western multicultural ethos which is characterized by liberalism and racism.

Difficulty in the formation of identity in the host country is at the heart of the novel. Both Ifemelu and Obinze are destined to follow the Western lifestyle while attempting to maintain their native way of life at the same time. Unlike Obinze, Ifemelu belongs to multiple nations and multiple cultures and ways of life at the same time. Her identity is constructed somewhere in in-between or liminal space. She has not forgotten her original identity, nor has she adopted new American identity completely as a 'mimic man' does: "Ifemelu never wants to claim American-ness. She is not merely content with but proud of her Nigerian background" (McMann 211). However, there are plenty of evidence to show Ifemelu's attempt to become like the Americans in the initial phase of her stay in America. Ifemelu's efforts to master American accent, straightening hair and ignoring the family members are some of the actions taken to become like the Americans. She tries to maintain her Nigerian identity after being disillusioned about hypocrisy and racism in America as she shares her experience with a Haitian poet: "I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America . . . But the minute you step outside, race matters" (290). Adichie highlights such 'changed' form of racist practices in America that was considered to be post-racial society when the novel was written as Maximilian Feldner remarks: "Repeatedly, [Adichie] discloses and criticizes popular notions of a 'post-race' society: a society in which race and racism supposedly no longer play a role or pose a problem" (192). In Adichie's view, such discourse called end of racism in America is just a myth, a false narrative:

Adding to the complexity of racial discourse are contemporary claims when *Americanah* was published, that the United States is a post-racial or color-blind society. . . This is a myth. Instead of overt racism . . . what pervades American society is a kind of omnipresent invisible racism, elided by structures of power and privilege that oppress and discriminate against people of color. (McMann 128)

Despite prevalence of ‘invisible racism’ in her hostland, Ifemelu maintains her relationship with her homeland and relatives. She stays in touch with her country of origin via the means of communication like telephone and internet. Though she stays away from her family and other relatives for time being, she cannot do so in a long run. Ifemelu sends money to her family back home: “She saved money, sent more home. She wanted her parents to move to a new flat” (200). Talking to the family members in Nigeria makes her able to travel back to her home virtually. Though virtual, the immigrants are able to easily travel back and forth to their host country and the country of origin. For them, physical boundary has very limited impact in their life. Physically they are at a distance from their family, but can maintain good relationship with it.

The major contention of the paper is to scrutinize the novel from the lens of Transnational Studies and see the ethos of transnational identity formation process of the major characters. To support our argument, we employ the theoretical concepts of interdisciplinary theorists from transnational studies like Patricia Clavin, Paul Jay, Natasha Garrett, Nina Glick Schiller and Nelson Shake whose ideas help in analyzing the transnational ethos in the novel. In this regard, Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc argue that transnational subjects have connectedness with both the homeland and the hostland:

Contemporary immigrants cannot be characterized as the “uprooted.” Many are trans-migrants, becoming firmly rooted in their new country but maintaining multiple linkages to their homeland. . . Transnational migration is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous, multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. (48)

Their idea intensifies the ‘ethos of connected-ness’ in the life of immigrants. The immigrants get engaged in social lives of both host country and the country of origin. They live in two societies at the same time. Even in America, Ifemelu lives with other Nigerian immigrants. She also hangs out with other black girls more than white ones. However, her selection of friends’ circle as well as the lovers shows her dual nature. She wants to get assimilated with the American culture for which she behaves like the Americans. But at the same time, she hangs out with those people who remind her of her native identity. It is because Ifemelu is Nigerian and American at the same time. In this context, the title of the novel ‘*Americanah*’ sounds to be ironic in the sense that she is not an *Americanah*-- the immigrant who tries to show that s/he is unlike other

natives but like the foreigners (Americans in the context of the novel) -- as such as her close friend Ranyinudo rightly points out: ““You are no longer behaving like an Americanah!” and despite herself Ifemelu felt pleased to hear this” (395). The title of the novel makes a critique of the ethos of Western multiculturalism that encourages immigrants’ assimilation to mainstream Western culture. “The implications of this term within the text are somewhat derogatory as it tends to indicate a softening of indigenous instincts or a loss of authenticity” (Bragg 130, emphasis ours). In this sense, Ifemelu is the representative of transnational subjects who want to preserve the sanctity of their own native values while adapting to positive values from the hostland. To do so, she should not make a choice between America and Nigeria—either Nigeria or America-- as she shows her liking of positive sides of American values while preserving own native values: “I like America. It’s really the only place else where I could live apart from here” (458).

The current situation of most of the ‘third world’ countries is beautifully captured by the novelist. Almost every youth wants to settle in the USA or Canada or Australia, or any other European country. It does not matter whether life is easy or hard in their country of origin; they want to get out of it at any cost. Their desperation is shown through Obinze in *Americanah*: “They would not understand why people like [Obinze], who were raised well-fed and watered but mired in dissatisfaction, conditioned from birth to look towards somewhere else, eternally convinced that real lives happened in that somewhere else” (276). He fails to get visa for the US but he does not want to quit. He goes to the UK thinking that his stay in England will help him go to the USA ultimately. Migration to the foreign land has an effect in the identity of a person. The same effect is also scrutinized in this paper but most importantly this paper closely examines the identity formation of the immigrants especially from the ‘third world’ countries like Nigeria.

As the novel is critically acclaimed, some critics have written scholarly articles on it through different perspectives. Critical Race Theory, Diaspora and post-colonial Studies and Feminism are the most frequently used perspectives to interpret the novel. To show how the immigrants’ life is full of struggles and how only few of them are able to adapt to the host country, Beauty Bragg brings the reference of Ifemelu and Obinze. Regarding their experience in foreign land, she compares and contrasts Obinze and Ifemelu:

[Obinze and Ifemelu’s] early experiences as immigrants are very similar in that they have difficulty finding employment, find the social norms of the people they encounter alien, and suffer a sense of alienation resulting from both of these facts. Ultimately, though, Ifemelu is able to transcend these conditions by forging first psychic and then physical connections with other black populations. These distinct experiences suggest a reading of the U.S. as a space that enables the development of a diasporic consciousness. (130)

Bragg studies the novel from the perspective of critical race theory.

In the similar line, approaching the novel from the perspective of Critical Race Theory, Ava Landry contends that the novel is based on Adichie's racial experience in America. In her view, the novel has autobiographical overtone and *Ifemelu* is based on Adichie's own life experience: "The novel is somewhat autobiographical, as it loosely parallels Adichie's own experiences on entering the United States as a Nigerian immigrant and learning what it means to be labeled "black" for the first time" (128). Similarly, Shane A McCoy explicates Adichie's racial experience in the novel: "For Adichie, race does indeed matter in the US context, and the ideas, attitudes, and belief systems related to race are underscored by the author as learned experiences" (280, emphasis in the original text).

The afore-mentioned reviewers' attempt is to see the racial identity and black consciousness. They explore the concept of identity but it is based on racial experience, not on transnationality. On the other hand, though few scholarly articles on the novel are written on the issue of transnationalism, the discussion on implication of transnational ethos is yet to be explored. In this context, Tina Steiner opines that 'transnational fiction' is primarily metonymic, not metaphoric: "[M]etonymy functions in contrast to metaphor in transnational fiction . . . As a mode of narration metonymy can better capture the concrete and material realities of migrant characters than metaphor" (437). She approaches this issue from the perspective of Jakobsonian Structuralism. Marking a point of departure from such textualist and binaristic perspective, we claim that perspective of transnationalism allows us to see the issue in a new light and come up with fresh knowledge on the subject. It is because Transnational Studies gives equal importance on positive values of both homeland and hostland. Therefore, there is no relevance of either... or logic of Structuralism. We hope that our findings will contribute in the study of the novel as we are trying to provide a new perspective to analyze the novel to shed light on the issue of transnational ethos at the front.

Since we are mobilizing ideas from Transnational Studies as our theoretical methodology in this paper, it would be better to compare and contrast the issue of the transnational with the similar issue called diaspora. Diaspora Studies explores how the immigrants adopt themselves in a new country or their hostland but transnationalism goes beyond diaspora and studies how the immigrants adapt themselves in hostland and stay connected with their country of origin at the same time. Diaspora is primarily concerned with the study of ethnic group living away from their native land, whereas transnationalism focuses on the study of an individual migrant. To add further, diaspora is the study of permanent migration, whereas transnationalism studies the flow of the migrants beyond the national border as Patricia Clavin argues. Characterizing "transnationalist encounter" as "border crossings" (423), she claims, "[T]ransnationalism is best understood not as fostering bounded networks, but as creating honeycombs, a structure that sustains and gives shapes to the identities of nation-states, internal and local institutions, and particular social and geographic spaces" (421). Diasporic subjects have either very little or every chance of returning

to their country of origin, whereas transnational subjects have a high chance of 'homecoming' to their country of origin leaving everything behind. In this regard, in her PhD dissertation entitled "Transnationalism, Home and Identity: Personal Essays", Natasha Garret quotes Peggy Levitt and Thomas Faist to distinguish transnationalism from diaspora as:

I chose to use the term transnationalism in my study, as opposed to diaspora as diaspora is often used synonymously with transnational community, and much like transnationalism, is somewhat overused or used inadequately. Levitt . . . defines diaspora as groups who were forcibly expelled from their homelands and who remain socially marginal in societies that received them as they waited to return. . . . Faist . . . argues that the term diaspora is appropriate only if the group has suffered a traumatic experience. Diaspora can be called a transnational community if they develop an attachment to the host country. (6-7)

Though diaspora and transnationalism are sometimes used interchangeably, the excerpt shows how the two are different from each other. In her view, unlike the transnational move, diasporic dispersal is exclusively forced and is therefore full of traumatic experiences. In the context of the novel, unlike transnational subject Ifemelu's relatively comfortable move across the borders, Obinze's dispersal is forced and traumatic. It is because diaspora is characterized with the sense of dislocation, loss and identity crisis. In this regard, though Augustine Nwanyanwu makes a contradictory generalization in her claim that immigrants from Americanah suffer from traumatic experience, her idea is specifically more applicable to diasporic subjects as such like Obinze than to transnational subjects like Ifemelu: "This paper discusses the novel's presentation of its agency: namely its concern with emigration/exile and its traumatic effects on emigrants' lives and identities" (387). It is because lack of agency produces traumatic feelings in immigrants like Obinze, not trans-migrants like Ifemelu who can use their agency.

Thomas Faist also shows how transnationalism and diaspora are similar to and different from each other. Thomas Faist in "Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance Partner?" points out the differences between them:

Although both terms refer to cross border process, diaspora has been often used to define religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas transnationalism is often used more narrowly-- to refer to migrants' durable ties across countries-- and, more widely, to capture not only communities but all sorts of social formations such as transnationally active networks, groups, and organizations. (9, emphases in the original text)

Faist reinforces the statement that transnationalism focuses on cross border relationship. Faist's statement fits to describe the cross border activities of Ifemelu, not Obinze in the novel. She has strong ties with her country of origin, Nigeria.

The identity of Ifemelu and Obinze, the first and the second main characters of the novel respectively, is shaped by the language they speak. When they were in Nigeria, they spoke typical Nigerian English, which sounds totally different due to the accent and emphasis to certain sounds. Both of them speak in English and it becomes the primary language of communication in their respective hostlands. Whenever they talk to their family members back home, they talk in their native language. Their identity is as diverse as their language. They do not confine themselves within one language or identity. Their identity and language keep on fluctuating from one to the other based on where they are and what they are doing. While talking to her parents and sending them money, Ifemelu becomes a Nigerian, and soon becomes a global citizen afterwards. When she talks to the Nigerians, she has Nigerian accent. Nationalism without fixed nation and identity without fixed sense of self is a rapidly growing phenomenon in the globalized world. It has shattered the preexisting notions of identity and nationality. In this context, in *Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha argues against the desire to maintain single authentic identity. He writes, “[T]he very idea of a pure, ‘ethnically cleansed’ national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex inter-weavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood” (5). In the contemporary time, people do not have single identity or even nationality. In this regard, Maximilian Feldner rightly points out the fertility of the liminal space of the transnational subjects like Ifemelu: “Ifemelu’s position in-between does not only allow for her contrapuntal awareness, but also makes her an exemplar of Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridity” (193).

Arjun Appadurai contends that identities are increasingly liminal and hybrid as people, capital, commodities, information, technologies, images and ideologies circulate across the borders due to “five dimensions of global cultural flows which can be termed : (a) ethnoscaples; (b) mediascaples; (c) technoscaples; (d) finanscaples and; (e) ideoscaples ” (296). The native identity gets redefined when the protagonist of the novel feels alienated and is far from home. Transnational subjects try to divert their fear and desperation and create the identity in new place. In the globalized world, things are much more complicated as they keep on getting mixed up with the other. Identity and nationality are not confined to singularity. Identity and nationality of the protagonist is jumbled. She does not have single nationality, nor does she have single identity. In her hostland, she has different identity from the identity she had in her country of origin. Regarding the identity in transnational context, Nelson Shake opines that identity is much more complex and layered in the present time. He writes, “While transnationalism focuses on issues of identity, it emphasizes complexities of identity . . . [and] examines identity on a much larger scale by discussing the changes that are happening to the structure of the nation and how that affects people” (9). For Shake, the issue of identity in transnational setting is very much complex.

In “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Stuart Hall opines that cultural identity can be defined “in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self, hiding inside

the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (393). Both Ifemelu and Obinze seek for what they found in their native land but not in the US or England. They are trying to find the ‘oneness’ among the people they meet. Both of them feel comfortable being surrounded by people sharing similar beliefs. Both Ifemelu and Obinze were not much concerned with their national and cultural identity while they lived in Nigeria. They realize that they are Nigerians when they find it difficult to adapt in new place with different cultures. Both the characters ask different questions that they never asked when they were in their native country. The questions were raised interrogating the existence itself: ‘who am I?’ Both of them wonder who they actually are. In other words, they were in existential crisis questioning what they were doing in alien lands where they could not become what they had been their whole life. In such situation, identity is constructed through nostalgic memories. The characters try to create their identity based on their past and present experiences. The past experiences are closer to them rather than the new ones, so they try their best to find a balanced identity which has to be based on who they were along with who they are.

The construction of cultural identity for the immigrants like Ifemelu and Obinze is possible by forming a group of people having the same or similar culture and practices. In foreign land, they can feel like being close to their culture as they try to celebrate in an old-fashioned way in new place. The sense of belonging to a culture or nationality is more condensed than that of living in a fixed territory and celebrating it. For Ifemelu, meeting a Nigerian in Nigeria was not a big thing but in the US when she meets her friend Kayode DaSilva, she gets really excited and her memories of her homeland make her nostalgic: “They hugged, looked at each other, said all the things people said who had not seen each other in many years, both lapsing into their Nigerian voices and their Nigerian selves, louder, more heightened, adding “o” to their sentences” (222). This scene shows how delighted Ifemelu becomes for her meeting of a friend from her homeland.

In contemporary era, transnational migration is a common phenomenon. The traditional borders are being shattered and are less significant. However, love and attachment towards homeland has never decreased. It is noticeable in the central character’s ‘homecoming’ even after getting American citizenship. In this respect, Benedict Anderson defines nationalism as “an imagined political community . . . It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Both the characters Ifemelu and Obinze did not know most of the citizens of their homeland when they stayed in Nigeria but as soon as they moved to the US and England respectively, they started considering the people of their country of origin as close relatives. Despite having lots of differences, once they internalize themselves as immigrants, the person who was non-existent few days ago becomes the closest friend in the hostland.

Ifemelu simply wanted to go to America and live with Obinze there. She did not have any fixed goal to get settled or live there forever. Despite having lived for thirteen years in America, she goes back to Nigeria. Her goal seems to be clear at the end of the novel. She wants to be with Obinze not in America, but in Nigeria. It took her thirteen years to figure it out. Maintaining purity in culture is almost impossible when one lives amongst the people of another culture and lifestyle. In *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, Paul Jay argues, “[T]here are no such things as pure, autonomous cultures that are not ‘contaminated’” (3). Both Ifemelu and Obinze think that their culture is ‘contaminated’ which was once ‘pure’. It is the reason why both of them were reluctant to assimilate themselves in new culture in their initial days. As immigrants living in new places, both of them realized that maintaining cultural purity is almost impossible and slowly they begin to change their lifestyle which inherently changed their perception of culture.

Judging the accent and name, Ifemelu’s identity is mistaken but in a positive way. It was actually a compliment for her. But the same compliment made her identity more complex to perceive. It raises a question whether she cherished being labeled as American or hates it. Her conversation with the American telemarketer shows how nice she feels when she is complemented and guilty at the same time:

... “May I ask who I’m talking to?”
 “My name is Ifemelu.”
 He repeated her name with exaggerated care. “Is it a French name?”
 “No. Nigerian.”
 “That where your family came from?”
 “Yes” . . . “I grew up there.”
 “Oh, really? How long have you been in the US?”
 “Three years.”
 “Wow. Cool. You sound totally American.”
 “Thank you.” (175)

When the conversation takes place, she picks up the American accent. She speaks in the accent and when complemented she feels guilty: “Only after she hung up did she begin to feel the stain of a burgeoning shame spreading all over her, thanking him, for crafting his words “You sound American” into garland that she hung around her own neck. Why was it a complement, an accomplishment to sound American?” (175).

As the immigrants, the identities of Obinze and Ifemelu are in flux. As they are in ambivalent situation, they are not sure on whether to stay stuck to their old identity or totally adopt new identity. So, they tend to linger between old and new identity all the time. Such fluctuation in identity is shown by Ifemelu many times. Ifemelu’s identity becomes complex. The new identity overlaps with the old one. The word ‘Americanah’ is a Nigerian slang for referring to people who ‘pretend to be’ or ‘are really’ Americanized. The singular identity of Ifemelu as a Nigerian citizen changes as soon as she migrates to the US. Even after returning to Nigeria after her thirteen

years' stay in the US, she is still considered to be an 'Americanah': "Ameicanah!" Ranyinudo teased her often. "You are looking at the things with American eyes. But the problem is that you are not even a real American. At least you had an American accent we would tolerate your complaining!" (385). It clarifies that whatever identity Ifemelu held has drastically changed. She is not a Nigerian like other natives anymore, nor is she an American like mainstream American. She is somewhere in between— Nigerian American, both Nigerian and American at the same time. In the same line her ex-boyfriend and would be life partner Obinze is in the process of becoming a transnational subject when the novel ends as he is going to marry Ifemelu, a transnational subject after he divorces his wife Kosi. More importantly, he no longer has obsession with America. He shares his disillusioned view about America to Ifemelu: ". . . [America] lost its shine. When all I had was my passion for America, they didn't give me a visa, but with my new bank account, getting a visa was very easy. I've visited a few times. . . It's wonderful but it's not heaven" (434).

The construction of identity in a foreign land can be linked to the concept of 'feeling of nationalism without nation' as well. Krzysztof Jaskulowski defines nation not as a "cohesive and real group with clear boundaries, but a set of signifying practices and discourses... a nation is a social construction" (13). This concept is applicable in case of Ifemelu and Obinze. They are living away from their places of birth but still have attachment with it. They introduce themselves as Nigerians whenever someone asks about their nationality. When Ifemelu is in saloon braiding her hair, she introduces herself as a Nigerian. At that time, she had already lived in the US for more than a decade. She still considers herself a Nigerian despite the fact that she is eligible to become an American citizen. Due to cross-cultural migration, similar people gather. The only similarity they share is the nationality or their motherland. They are bound together by the fact that they were born in the same country. Beyond that relationship, there is nothing more to bind them. People enjoy psychological, emotional and spiritual advantage of their country but not physical one as they are living miles away from it. The concept of 'feeling of nationalism without nation' is quite oxymoronic as the people consider a country to be their own country which is hundreds and thousands of miles away from the place they stay but at the same time they have co-feeling of nationalism for the country they are living in.

To sum up, Americanah narrates the story of immigrants who try to reformulate their identity in the Western countries. Ifemelu is represented as the transnational subject who moves from her native country to America. As a transnational subject, Ifemelu is able to identify herself as an American along with the internalization of the fact that she is Nigerian by birth. Ifemelu adapts western way of life without forgetting her native culture and tradition. She can travel back and forth between her homeland and hostland which shatters the conventional borders that separated homeland and hostland. The physical distance is also shattered by the availability of means of transportation. And with the help of means of communication, she contacts with relatives back in homeland which is a virtual movement from hostland to homeland.

She is present in both places; physically present in one place while virtually visiting another place. This connection with the place of birth helps her retain her old identity in her new sense of self or subjectivity so that she can form new transnational identity. The identity of the transnationals is also shaped by the language they speak. Ifemelu speaks in American as well as Nigerian accent which makes her carry both identities together.

We have tried to explore the implication of transnational ethos in the novel. The transnational subjects like Ifemelu hold multiplicity of identities in almost every aspect. She has multiple identities, multiple families, and multiple lives. As a transnational subject, her identity is based on what she was and what she is. Since identity formation is an important issue in Transnational Studies, we have explored the same throughout this research paper. Ifemelu lingers between two identities, she cannot totally forget what she used to be in her homeland in the past and cannot incorporate fully what she has and is trying to become in the foreign land. She lives a double life. Ifemelu tries to fit in America as someone whom people around them recognize. When she left Nigeria, she had already lost her old identity and did not have the new one. Lack of identity motivates her to construct new identity which defines what she is along with her past. In short, through the portrayal of Ifemelu as a transnational subject, Adichie challenges Western liberalist multicultural ethos and glorifies the role of the nation-state especially in the 'third world' countries like Nigeria. It is because unless and until the nation-state becomes strong, it cannot counter Western hegemony in general and contemporary American neo-imperialism in particular. So, Adichie advocates for a 'brain retain' or a "brain circulation", to borrow AnnaLee Saxenian's phrase, (qtd. in Quayson and Daswani 13) of the immigrants in the 'third world,' not a 'brain drain' in the West.

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