

MIGRATION AND DISILLUSIONMENT: A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract

This paper studies the main characters in Adichie's Americanah psychoanalytically. Adichie's Americanah is a novel that deals with contemporary issues of global concerns, such as, racism, sexism, gender, and migration. In the narrative text, Americanah, Adichie presents the reader with a story that encompasses love, race, identity and migration. Set across Nigeria, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, the novel presents a multifaceted perspective on the experiences of the characters that face these contemporary issues and how they subsequently transform through such experiences. Americanah belongs to the diasporic African literature genre. It can also be classified as a bildungsroman novel as it "traces the spiritual, emotional and mental growth of its eponymous heroine, Ifemelu, while describing her journey from Nigeria to the United States and back" (Krishnamurthy 54). These developments affect her self-definition, how she initially tries to change her identity, and how she finally comes to the acceptance of her identity to the point that she realizes that her return home will bring the desired solace. This study examines the psychological growth of the major characters and how they shape their identities while sojourning overseas. It will also uncover the various defense mechanisms they unconsciously employ when faced with anxiety or threats, and the driving force that motivates them. To achieve this, this critical inquiry aims to do a study of the main characters in the novel; Ifemelu and Obinze using Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. Attempts have been made in this paper to give form to the "shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealized existence" (Frye, 223).

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Bildungsroman, Migration, Racism, Racial profiling

Introduction

Americanah is not narrated in a chronological form in order to portray the way the lives of the characters transform. The entire story is told by switching from

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the present to the past with an abundant use of flashbacks. Although the story is narrated from the perspective of Ifemelu in America, it frequently turns to that of Obinze as a black man trying to survive in England. He also faces the racial discrimination that Ifemelu faces in America. At the peak of their transformation, they both choose to return to their country in order to be free from racial discrimination. Ifemelu and Obinze start off as childhood lovers, and even though they spend two decades of their lives in different continents, they still return as lovers.

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Americanah has received lots of scholarly attention since its publication. Issues like race, (Yazher 2017), sexism, (Dasi 2019), identity, (Bonvillain 2016), homecoming, (Duckham 2017) politics, (Berning, 2017), and migration (Jini 2018) have all been explored in the novel by the Central to these, is the issue of identity. The growth and establishment of the characters' identities starting from their childhood in their country to adulthood in the Western countries is the main string that holds the novel. In this novel, "Adichie traces the process of self-knowledge and construction bearing in mind the transnational and post-colonial frame in which the characters are embedded" (Laurea 10).

Different theories like feminism, Marxism, post-colonialism, eco-criticism and stylistics have been used to study the development and behavior of these characters. However, the psychological aspect of their development has received less attention, even though it is a crucial aspect to understanding the characters better. The psychological aspect of these characters would entail understanding the personalities of these characters; why they behave in certain manners at different times, the way they behave and the forces that drive them to behave in those ways. The human psyche is also an important factor to consider in order to understand human actions. To achieve this, the theory of psychoanalysis propounded by Sigmund Freud would be applied to study the characters.

Psychological criticism "deals with the work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the state of mind and the structure of personality of the individual author" (Devardhi 437). Tyson notes that "human

beings are driven by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware" (12). Psychoanalysis has always been a prominent approach in the field of literature. It looks at the personality of the character which encompasses everything perceptible in the character. It points to the fact that physical actions are largely influenced by the mental processes of the mind. Freud asserts that the "unconscious part of the human mind harbours forbidden wishes, desires, often immoral that conflict with society's moral standards. The individual represses these unconscious fantasies which become displaced in dreams and other forms of fantasy" (qtd. in Nyongesa 26). It is against this backdrop that the present study aims to carry out a study on the psychological development of the characters of *Americanah* which has up till now received less attention. It will study the personality of these characters according to the tenets of the Freudian psychoanalytical theory, taking into consideration the different mechanisms employed unconsciously by them and the forces that drive them.

Psychological Deconstruction of the Characters

Americanah trails the development of its main characters, Ifemelu and Obinze with particular emphasis on Ifemelu. They both start off as teenagers who discover that they both have striking peculiarities common to them. Growing up in an environment where conformity to the stipulated standards speaks well of one, they both struggle to nurture and stamp their plans for a future together. Unlike Obinze, Ifemelu's mother is a religious fanatic and perfectionist who demands strict conformity to what she considers the will of God for men. Her fanaticism irritates Ifemelu who only pretends to conform in order to please her mum. Her relationship with her mum can be said to be a formal one as she is only at ease with Aunty Uju and learns much about being a lady from her. Obinze, on the other hand, has a cordial and more relaxed relationship with his mum to the astonishment of Ifemelu who thinks it to be weird.

Ifemelu and Obinze both portray some level of development and maturity as the novel develops. Apart from the much obvious physical development, their psychological development is worth taking notice of as they both grow out of their forced conformity to being independent and following that which they know is right for them, regardless of what people think of them. At a tender age, Ifemelu displayed traits that suggest she would not be a blind follower to what others say is right or be foolishly obedient as is expected of every woman. Growing up under the tutelage of a religious mother, she is

expected to mirror the life of her mother and believe that things that happen are due to the miraculous power of God or wheeled by the evil power of the Devil. Ifemelu, however, only pretends to conform so as not to fall out with her mother: "Ifemelu was uninterested in church, indifferent about making any religious effort, perhaps because her mother already made so much. Yet her mother's faith comforted her; it was, in her mind, a white cloud that moved benignly above her as she moved" (59). She is one character that is very much interested in paying attention to life, she does this through several ways which sexual exploration is one of them. Ifemelu pays good attention to other characters in the text.

The Ego as a Reality Complex Checking the Id

The circumstances surrounding Ifemelu's relocation to America seem to be one that she could have changed if she had the power to. Due to the unsteady educational system in Nigeria, she relocates to America to continue her schooling. In Nigeria, she has always seen herself as strong-willed, different and troublesome. However, her relocation to America awakens in her aspects that she never thought existed. She comes to find out that she is helpless in a society that thinks of her as a lesser human being and less-privileged. Her psychological development truly begins in America. The thirteen years she spends, moulds her into a better and more self-conscious person.

Ifemelu's father does not agree with her mother but always urges Ifemelu to obey her mother to make her happy. As a child, he scolds her for being "recalcitrant, mutinous, intransigent, words that made her little actions seem epic and almost pride worthy" (63). She is always reminded to obey blindly and not say all that comes to her head. She conforms to this and continually struggles within herself about what she knows is right and what she is expected to accept as right. An instance is when she challenges Sister Ibinabo at church one fateful Sunday:

"Join that group, Ifemelu," Sister Ibinabo said. Ifemelu folded her arms, and as often happened when she was about to say something she knew was better unsaid, the words rushed up her throat. "Why should I make decorations for a thief?" Sister Ibinabo stared in astonishment. A silence fell. The other girls looked on expectantly. "What did you say?" Sister Ibinabo asked quietly, offering a chance for Ifemelu to apologize, to put words back in her mouth. But Ifemelu felt herself unable to stop, her heart thumping, hurtling on a fast-moving path. "Chief Omenka is a 419 and everybody knows it," she said. "This church is full of 419 men. Why

should we pretend that this hall was not built with dirty money?" "It is God's work," Sister Ibinabo said quietly. "If you cannot do God's work, then you should go. Go." (66)

Ifemelu has always joined in the making of fluffy garlands for church members who contributed greatly to the church with their money like Chief Omenka. She has even joined in the receptions afterwards. She has until now looked at Sister Ibinabo in the same light as her mother, as "a person who denied that things were as they were and who had to spread the cloak of religion over her own pretty desires" (67). But on this particular day, she has grown out of her shadows and cage. It seemed choking and harmful to her now and she refuses to continue to conform. This has been a great source of internal conflict to Ifemelu. It can be seen as her Ego trying to create a balance between her Id and Super Ego.

In order to get a job to support herself, she realizes she has to deny her true self and take upon someone else's identity. This is the first confirmation she realizes of the white not considering a black person as being unique and an individual, they see the blacks as being the same and no different from another black, which accounts for why they see all blacks to be criminals. Auntie Uju explains this to Ifemelu:

"I don't even look like her at all," Ifemelu had said when Auntie Uju gave her the card. "All of us look alike to white people," Auntie Uju said. "Ahn-ahn, Auntie!" "I'm not joking. Amara's cousin came last year and she doesn't have her papers yet, so she has been working with Amara's ID. You remember Amara? Her cousin is very fair and slim. They do not look alike at all. Nobody noticed. She works as a home health aide in Virginia. Just make sure you always remember your new name." (143)

Ifemelu becomes Ngozi Okonkwo in America in order to get a job and survive. She also realizes that she needs to have an American accent in order to settle in well and fast with the Whites. As such, she begins to practice an American accent pushing behind her true identity:

She hungered to understand everything about America, to wear a new knowing skin right away: to support a team at the Super Bowl, understand what a Twinkie was and what a sports "lockouts" meant, measure in ounces and square feet, order a "muffin" without thinking that it really was a cake, and say "I 'scored' a deal" without feeling silly. (159)

Ifemelu allows the American lifestyle to permeate into her. She spends more time in the library trying to read and master everything about this new country she has come to stay in. She holds America in high esteem and has great expectations from it. She begins to slowly let go of her African identity and sometimes feels sorry to have come from Africa, to be the reason the whites show pity and concern for Africa. She straightens her hair in order to get a job after graduation. She does this knowing full well that although nobody mentions stuffs like that, they truly matter.

At the peak of Ifemelu's development comes the realization that she has to find her lost self and become more authentic. Upon reflection, she noticed that "the accent creaked with consciousness" (204) as she could easily forget it if she is in a panic or she is caught unawares. She decides to stop faking being American and project her African identity the more. She begins to feel homesickness and each time she hears of a young person who has recently moved back to Nigeria, she "felt the dull ache of loss, as though they had prised open her hand and taken something of hers. They were living her life" (17), and soon "Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil" (17). She becomes tired of America and everything associated with it to the extent that she quits blogging which has already made her famous, her job, and ends her relationship with Blaine. Eventually, she returns to Nigeria where she starts a new life, free and reborn.

Obinze, having lost his father at the age of seven, grows to be close and almost inseparable from his mother. His relationship with her did not take the familiar shape of one with a parent and their rapport was fluid; "free of restraint, free of the fear of consequences" (87). His character could be said to have been shaped by his mother's. She, as a female professor, refuses to be bullied by her male counterpart and demands to be treated equally because she is equally human. She strikes Ifemelu at first encounter to be an intelligent unrelenting woman. Obinze is no different from his mother, as he projects himself as someone who would not settle for less or conform to a particular issue because others are doing that. He falls in love with Ifemelu because her personality appeals to him. He loves someone challenging and different.

Ifemelu's relocation to America and her shutting him out of her life cause a great change in the path he expects his life to take. After his university graduation, he tries to get into America but is denied a visa. He finally goes to London with the hope of crossing over to America from there. In London, he realizes that his dignity as an individual has been stripped off him. Africans

reduce themselves to doing all sort of illegal things in order to survive in London like marrying older white women or impersonating as someone else. Obinze loses his identity and takes up the identity of Vincent Obi in order to get a job and survive. Obinze, the non-conformist and highly principled person is now one who lives in the shadow of himself: "Do you live in London?" he asked Obinze. "Yes," Obinze said, but that yes did not tell his story, that he lived in London indeed but invisibly, his existence like an erased pencil sketch; each time he saw a policeman, or anyone in a uniform, anyone with the faintest scent of authority, he would fight the urge to run. (297)

Since his visa expired, he has been on the lookout for anyone or anything that might implicate him. He decides to have a sham marriage with a young girl who has her complete papers in order to avoid being deported. He only realizes he has lost himself and his sense of reasoning when he gets nabbed and put in prison. At this point, he chooses to salvage the remnant of his dignity by returning to Nigeria. While in detention, he feels ashamed being in a cell with people of decayed morals.

On getting back to Nigeria, he starts life afresh and becomes a successful businessman. He gets married to Kosi with whom he has a daughter. However, he knows deep down within himself that he should not have married Kosi. Kosi is in every way different from Ifemelu. She is too conforming, ready to please and apologize to everyone. Obinze did not like the fact that she is not challenging or dynamic. A part of him longed for Ifemelu but he still gets married to Kosi. When Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, they come in contact and old passion became rekindled. It is at this point that Obinze can no longer endure the psychological torture he has locked himself in. He knows he has been pretending to love Kosi and remain married to her. At the peak of his development, he decides to shun whatever the society or church may say and follow what he knows to be right. He leaves his wife and daughter and goes to unite with Ifemelu.

The Application of Freudian Principles

Throughout the novel, there are obvious developments that have taken place in the lives of the characters, especially Ifemelu and Obinze. Their lives have not been static and have hit many rocks. They behave differently when they face different experiences. However, their reactions to some experiences are similar like when they both lose their identities and take on the identities of other people. At the peak of their development, they realize that to regain their dignity and previous stance, they need to walk out of any situation, person or

place that seems to cage them. They both resolve to be both authentic and non-conforming.

During their psychological growth, there are times when the psychic structure of their personalities comes to play, and there are also certain defense mechanisms they unconsciously apply when faced with certain experiences. These are observed at different levels of their consciousness. The tripartite psychic structure of the human personality; id, ego and superego influence human actions to a large extent. In her conscious state, Ifemelu always wants to satisfy her Id, which is the pleasure-seeking aspect of her personality. The first misunderstanding she has with Obinze is due to her giving in to the demands of her Id: "Ifem, what is going on?" She sighed. "Ceiling, it's nothing. I'm just curious about him. Nothing is ever going to happen. But I am curious. You get curious about other girls, don't you?" (112)

Ifemelu always tries to satisfy her curiosity without thinking of the repercussion, especially when it has to do with the opposite sex. This same act of curiosity costs her near-perfect relationship with Curt when she sleeps with her neighbor just to satisfy her curiosity. She would often fantasize about things that seem weird to the outside world. Whenever these fantasies come, she damns all consequences to fulfill her wish. During her misunderstanding with Blaine, it gives her pleasure to eat chocolate he would not approve of.

Throughout the novel, Ifemelu sinks from her conscious state into her pre-conscious and unconscious states. Her pre-conscious state provides her with memories that are readily recallable just like when she breaks up with Curt and would always remember how sweet he was whenever she sees a loving couple together. Meanwhile, her unconscious state is filled with buried memories that often come to mind even though she makes efforts to put them behind her just like when she tries to bury all memories of Obinze, and even though she succeeds for a while, the memories often come by. It can be said that while Curt lives in Ifemelu's pre-conscious, Obinze lives in her unconscious. When faced with threatening situations that unavoidably causes her anxiety, Ifemelu pulls up some defence mechanisms, although unknown to her. During her early years in America, when she is broke and frustrated from her fruitless job hunting, she would displace her anger into something or channel it to someone else. She has almost slapped her roommate Elena at one point out of frustration:

Ifemelu had wanted to slap her dissolute roommate not because a slobbering dog had eaten her bacon but because she was at war with the world, and woke up each day feeling bruised, imagining a horde of

faceless people who were all against her. It terrified her to be unable to visualize tomorrow.... To be here, living abroad, not knowing when she could go home again, was to watch love become anxiety. (179)

At that point in her life, she lives in fear and uncertainty and takes up this defense strategy to ease of her stress. Subsequently, she is constrained to go and work for the tennis coach as his bed warmer for a hundred dollar a day. When she goes home, she is emotionally depressed for what she has done. She feels anger, disgust and dirty, and dined in her self-loathing until she eventually shuts Obinze out of her life. She is unable to control her emotions and would not tell anyone about it. To her the best strategy to use is displacement, which she eventually does.

Racism is a thing Ifemelu becomes conscious of when she comes to America. It is here that she realizes that she is black. She becomes aware of the prejudice towards the black. This bothers her all through her stay in America, and she unconsciously resorts to adopting sublimation to deal with it. Sublimation is the highest level of ego defense and consists of a redirection of certain impulses into socially valued activities (Morgan 589). She knows that coming out to talk about race in America would be unacceptable; she then channels it into a blog. She starts blogging about race and the prejudice the black face in America. By so doing, the issue of race is presented in a more acceptable way and she also feels relieved by it.

At some point when faced with unpleasant experiences in her life, Ifemelu would regress into being childish. When Curt breaks up with her, she cries. After the break up, when her parents visit, she is still visibly shaken by the turnout of events in her life that she does not feel any excitement or joy. When her mother makes a comparison between women and flower being ephemeral, she does not laugh as usual:

Before, she might have laughed dismissively, and told her mother that she did not at all feel like a flower, but now she was too tired, it felt too much of an effort. On the day they left for Nigeria, she collapsed into her bed, crying uncontrollably, and thinking: What is wrong with me? She was relieved that her parents had gone, and she felt guilty for feeling relief. (347)

When angry, Ifemelu prefers to project her emotion by blaming someone else for it. One day, she meets Kayode at a mall in Maryland. They exchange pleasantries and he then asks her about her relationship with Obinze. She

brushes it aside and quickly leaves to meet Curt. However, emotions and memories that she has tried to bury across the years suddenly come up and she is angry that Kayode has brought back Obinze into her life. She holds him guilty for the emotions she feels. She feels the same way towards Shan, Blaine's sister whose book has not been successful. Ifemelu finds herself not sympathizing with Shan because she holds her responsible for not wielding her power over Blaine to let him know he was overreacting during their fight.

As opposed to Ifemelu, Obinze often succeeds in creating a balance between his id and superego. He usually lets his ego choose which part of the id to satisfy. Hence, he finds Ifemelu inclination to gratifying her id to be abnormal. When he goes to London, he realizes he has to break certain boundaries like getting married illegally to get green card. Although he chooses to get married illegally, he still feels his conscience prick him about it. There is a constant interplay of his psychic structure and he takes care not to fully give in to his pleasure aspect or become too strict with himself.

Other characters also at some point put up some defense mechanism when faced with certain threatening anxious experiences. Auntie Uju displaces her frustration to those around her. Ifemelu comes to America expecting to meet the lively Auntie Uju she has always known but is shocked at how cold and withdrawn she has turned out to be. She shouts at everybody at the slightest provocation. It is only when Ifemelu asks her what the matter is that she voices out:

"I have never failed an exam in my life. But they weren't testing actual knowledge, they were testing our ability to answer tricky multiple-choice questions that have nothing to do with real medical knowledge." She stood up and went to the kitchen. "I'm tired. I am so tired. I thought by now things would be better for me and Dike. It's not as if anybody was helping me and I just could not believe how quickly money went. I was studying and working three jobs. I was doing retail at the mall, and a research assistantship, and I even did some hours at Burger King." (131)

Kosi, Obinze's wife is also one of the characters that unconsciously pull up a strategy when faced with anxiety. Her best form is reaction formation. Before she gets married to Obinze, she goes with him to visit his mother in Nsukka. She offers to do something for everyone like helping in serving the food, putting ribbons on his nieces' hairs. It is obvious that she is only putting up a facade as "there was something immodest about her modesty: it announced itself." (41). She perfectly pulls up a good defense upon her inherent offence.

She knows she is paranoid and insecure about her husband, but she tries to put up an appearance of one whose husband is perfect and can never cheat. Instead, she tries to avoid all occasions that may cause her husband to come in contact with any young single lady.

Curt, Ifemelu's white ex, also pulls up a facade of what he is not when faced with anxiety. He tries to hide his fear and insecurities with a facade of pride and wealth. In his relationship with Ifemelu, he constantly needs to do something for her so he can reassure her that he is capable, much to Ifemelu's contempt:

"Do you like that? Do you enjoy me?" he asked often. And she said yes, which was true, but she sensed that he did not always believe her, or that his belief lasted only so long before he would need to hear her affirmation again. There was something in him lighter than ego but darker than insecurity, that needed constant buffing, polishing, waxing. (241-2)

In psychoanalysis, there are two forces that drive or motivate a human being. The first being Eros and the second Thanatos. Eros is the sexual or creative drive as opposed to Thanatos, which is the destructive drive. The Eros is otherwise called the 'life instinct' and the Thanatos, the 'death instinct'. While the later is associated with negative emotions such as fear, hate and anger, which lead to anti-social behavior, the former is associated with positive emotions of love, and hence pro-social behaviour, cooperation, collaboration and other behaviours that support harmonious societies. The actions of the characters in the novel have a driving force behind them. Ifemelu's actions are predominantly motivated by the creative drive. She seeks to do things that would foster unity, progress and happiness. This accounts for why she usually tries to satisfy her id. But at one point in her life, the destructive drive takes over. This happens when she is frustrated and unsure of what the future holds for her in America. She exhibits negative emotions like anger and hatred, and it is at this point that she shuts out Obinze, shutting out love and the reason to live. However, this is only for a short period of time as she soon returns to the lively and lovely person she is. The creative drive is what motivates her to return to Nigeria to start a new life in a society that is not hostile to her because of her race.

Obinze at almost every point in his life is driven by the force to live. Being a challenging and different person, he likes to go after things and people of like mind. This accounts for his going for Ifemelu instead of Ginika. In

London, he never backs down. He always tries to survive, even to the extent of paying for an illegal marriage to get his green card. He decides to return to Nigeria where he starts a new life and finds love. However, he soon begins to "feel bloated from all he had acquired--the family, the houses, the cars, the bank accounts" (34) and he longs to be free. His life at that point is one that he could predict. He did not like the fact that his wife is so agreeable and predictable. He realizes that in order to be happy and make progress, he needs to free himself from his family. He finally leaves his family to reunite with Ifemelu and start a new promising life.

Both forces drive Ifemelu at one point or the other in the text. When Ifemelu meets with Obinze first at Kayode's party, she is driven by this force. He put an arm around her shoulders and pulled her to him gently; it was the first time their bodies had met and she felt herself stiffen... She rested her head against his and felt, for the first time, what she would often feel with him: a self-affection. He made her like herself. With him, she was at ease; her skin felt as though it was her right size... They had known nothing of each other only hours ago, and yet, there had been a knowledge shared between them in those moments before they danced, and now she could think only of all the things she yet wanted to tell him, wanted to do with him (48).

This force drives Ifemelu to satisfy her id and she does that by first asking for a kiss having known she feels something different for him. This force also drives Ifemelu when she could no longer hold her emotions about the way her mother and sister Ibinabo labels everything 'God's work'. She cannot hold the anger she feels when sister Ibinabo instructs her to go on and join the other girls in the decoration, she blurts out:

"Why should I make decorations for a thief?"...Sister Ibinabo stared in astonishment. A silence fell. The other girls looked on expectantly. "What did you say?" Sister Ibinabo asked quietly, offering a chance for Ifemelu to apologize, to put the words back in her mouth. But Ifemelu felt herself unable to stop, her heart thumping, hurtling on a fast-moving path. "Chief Omenka is a 419 and everybody knows it," she said. "This church is full of 419men. Why should we pretend that this hall was not built with dirty money?" (41)

The anger she feels watching these two people, her mother and sister Ibinabo deny reality just to maintain their religious stance pushes her to give in to this force and pour out her anger without hesitation and even when given a chance to apologise, she seems not to notice and persists reacting exactly as she feels

inside without feeling guilty. From the foregoing, this research has done its best in psychoanalyzing the characters, Ifemelu and Obinze based on Freudian principles. It is observed that first; these characters have a psychological root which when deconstructed shows that their life development hinges on their psychological development. It is also observed in the study that the ego, as a reality principle plays crucial role in checking the id as a pleasure principle. Furthermore, it is deduced that there are several forces which drive man's actions like eros, thanatos, etc. which determine man's relationship with his socio-cultural realities.

Conclusion

The main characters of *Americanah*; Ifemelu and Obinze portray some level of psychological development as the novel spans across more than two decades of their lives. They both start off as promising lovers with strong non-conforming personalities. Later in their lives, they are separated across two continents and get cut off through communication. Ifemelu, is the pleasure-seeking type who likes to satisfy her Id, an action that costs her almost perfect relationship with Curt to be broken. She says things as it comes to her head and does things that seem right to her. When faced with uncertainty and frustration, she shuts Obinze out of her life and he sinks into her unconscious memory. She finds it difficult to create a balance between the Id and the Superego, always preferring to go with the Id.

Obinze, on the other hand, is less of a pleasure-seeker. He is aware of the responsibilities he has and always tries to create a balance between his id and his superego. Before doing anything or saying anything, he weighs the consequences of it ahead. Ifemelu remains in his conscious mind even though he gets married to Kosi because he has to. He tends to do things that would not bring regret later in the future which explains for his ending his marriage with Kosi because he does not want his daughter, Buchi to grow up only to realize that he has been pretending in his marriage.

An examination of the personality traits and psyche of the characters has revealed why they behave in certain ways at different times in their lives. It is obvious therefore that even if two characters have almost similar personalities as seen in Ifemelu and Obinze, their reactions to experiences, especially life-threatening ones, differ. When faced with life-threatening experiences, most characters prefer to inflict it on those around them like Ifemelu and Aunt Uju which shows their low tolerance for threats. The study uncovers that both Ifemelu and Obinze have strong non-conforming

personalities while in their home country. They however lose it as they find themselves in a strange land and have to survive by all means.

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