



RESEARCH PAPER

The Politics of Female Beauty: An Analysis of *Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the politics of female beauty in the novel *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2013) focusing on how the beauty ideals impact the identity and agency of the female characters in the novel. This study is delimited to the intersection of gender, race and diaspora experiences in the contemporary American and Nigerian societies. *Americanah* explores how Western beauty standards influence characters' self-image, social mobility and personal relationships. Through the exploration of the complexities of the appearance of hair and skin, the novel probes the broader themes of assimilation, resistance and empowerment. The research applies a qualitative approach using mimetic analysis technique to relate it to everyday life. The findings suggests the novel critiques the Eurocentric beauty standards imposed on black women and their psychological and physical impacts. Further research should take on a comparative perspective in other post-colonial texts illustrating discourse on intersectional feminism.

KEYWORDS Americanah, Beauty Myth, Capitalism, Feminism

Introduction

The human face is central to sight and attention. Faces are a source of “verbal and non-verbal communication”. Human interest in physical appearance and beautification of themselves dates back to 30,000 years back when our ancestors used to decorate themselves for gods and other fellow human beings. The development and production of glass mirrors were under process since late but back in the fifteenth century, the first glass mirror was produced in Venice and Lorraine which made mirrors available for the bourgeois till the 17th century. From the 18th century, the mirror was a part of every bedroom, furniture, and wall.

Mirrors have shaped the meaning with which people look up to themselves in their reflections. The history of the mirror is associated with human thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, morality, beauty, and appearance. From the mythological accounts to the gods and from fiction to real life, beauty has invariably been shaping the lives and thoughts of individuals. Narcissus, an exceptionally handsome nymph in Greek mythology had a fatal obsession with his appearance when he saw his image reflected in a pool of water. In the novel of Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), the protagonist Dorian Gray's life is dictated by his physical beauty. He uses beauty as a means to assuage his evil deeds.

Beauty is a characteristic not only associated with humans but gods and goddesses as well. Their beauty has been cherished and worshiped by humans. Human has invariably cherished the myths of the deities that represent society in general and the discourse of beauty has been the core of society for ages. The discourse of beauty has been constructed through myths as well. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty is

considered a symbol of physical beauty. Just like a pearl in an oyster shell, she is said to be born from sea foam in the seashell. Her daughter is Cupid who is the goddess of love. This symbolizes that love can be born from beauty or in other words just like modern beliefs beauty can ensure love for one.

The meaning of beauty is not static or rigid rather the concept of beauty is dynamic and changes over time and from different cultures to different places. (Asri et al., 2020). The beauty trends are changing over the years and "What all beautiful women today have in common is an obvious look of health" observed Andrea Robinson, the beauty editor of *The Vague*. The trend 'health-is-beautiful' began some two decades back. In response, some beauty movements like 'Beyond Skin Movement' which advocates the notion that arts and music are sources to build connections beyond racism and skin color, and the Inside-Out beauty movement advocates the fact that it is easy and comfortable to look beautiful under your skin.

This essay analyzes the impact of beauty politics in the novel *Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie applying the beauty myth theory by Naomi Wolf (1991). Naomi Rebekah Wolf is a contemporary American feminist and journalist who has inspired the third wave of the feminist movement with her powerful treatise "Beauty Myth; How the Images of beauty are Used against Women" (1991). As a theorist, her focus has been to construct a commentary on the exploitation of women in the beauty industry.

Naomi Wolf theorizes that women are deliberated into beauty obsession in the modern world with the leading progress in urbanization, industrialization and fashion industry. Women have since long been fighting their part of battle against sexism, patriarchy, marginalization in various sectors of life, but today her fight is against color and appearance. Wolf suggests, "For as far back as women remember, something had hurt about being female. Today, what hurts is beauty" (219).

This idea of beauty discrimination is the core of Adichie's *Americanah*. Nigerian-born author Adichie is an ardent advocate of feminism which is evident in her fictional and non-fictional works. In a TED Talk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveals that by the age of four, she could read and at the age of seven she could write stories. She recalls that the characters of her novels were usually white, but when she was exposed to African writers like Chinua Achebe, her conception of literature changed. She realized that girls with chocolate skin color and kinky hair could also become characters in the story. She grew out to be a great feminist and an anti-racist. She asserts the reason for her being more a feminist than an anti-racist in *Dear Ijeawele or Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017):

[A] writer had accused me of being 'angry,' as though 'being angry were something to be ashamed of. Of course, I am angry. I am angry about racism. I am angry about sexism. But I recently came to the realization that I am angrier about sexism than I am about racism because, in my anger about sexism, I often feel lonely. Because I love, and live among, many people who easily acknowledge race injustice but not gender injustice (p. 9).

Adichie's novel *Americanah* (2013) is replete with the concept of beauty abuse as an integral part of female lives. Adichie's third novel *Americanah* won the US National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction in 2013. *Americanah* is based on the story of a 'romantic and existential struggle of the black girl Ifemelu. As an adult, the protagonist spent her life in the United States as an immigrant writing critical blogs about race.

Americanah reflects diverse and global tension on some key issues like racism, sexism, feminism, beauty, etc. Emily Raboteau's (2013) review of the novel in *The Washington Post* considers Adichie "A hawk-eyed observer of manner and distinctions in the class. She does so with ruthless honesty about the ugly and beautiful sides of both nations".

In capitalist patriarchal societies, women are deliberated into the obsession with beauty to maintain male supremacy (Wolf, 1991). Since literature is the reflection of society in general and individuals in particular, this essay will trace the psychological, physical, and emotional unrest and agitation caused by beauty discrimination that women face in the modern age through the selected diasporic novel of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. This study further analyzes how Adichie has reflected the exploitation of women characters in the hands of the beauty myth and their journey of realization of the meaning of true beauty and the quest for their true identity.

Although feminist research is frequently held on works of fiction focusing on the issue of gender inequality, sexist discrimination, patriarchal suppression, etc. the issue of discrimination wrecked by beauty myth is not frequently investigated. This essay deeply scrutinizes the feminist issues particularly the impact of the beauty myth which objectifies a woman as a 'beauty object' and makes her the center of the male gaze. Kaifa, et. al., (2024). This essay aims to investigate how since the growing industrialization and urbanization, fashion industries and beauty magazines have provoked women to undergo painstaking makeovers and surgeries to survive in the patriarchal and capitalist society and compete for a better social status in the marriage market. This is a thorough scrutiny of the female characters and their political, social, economic, domestic and professional exploitation in the novel *Americanah*.

Literature Review

The framework is based on the basic text of "Beauty Myth: How the Images of Beauty Are Used against Women" (1991) by Naomi Wolf. In the modern world, beauty has obtained a vital space in the lives of people, but expectations from women to look beautiful have been high throughout history. Through beauty myth theory, Naomi Wolf criticizes certain standards of beauty (i.e. thinness, fairness, youth, etc.) that vary from culture to culture and place to place. The race to look beautiful is rapidly giving way to problems like eating disorders, costly cosmetic surgeries, and the rise in the fashion and cosmetic industries (Long, 2016). The beauty myth is a fierce reaction against feminism that uses the female beauty as a political weapon against women's progress. The beauty myth began to take its roots in the eighteenth century when the central institutions felt the 'real fear' regarding 'free women making free progress in free bodies'.

Burcar (2017) argues that the debate of whether beauty is gendered or racialized is pointless; however, certainly, the Eurocentric beauty myth (which is subject to constant change) is a tool used for objectification and disempowerment of the people that are under its threat. Beauty myth targets the female mass by keeping them preoccupied with physical configuration and appearances to hold control of them and depoliticize them. Employing female pleasure, i.e. sex, food, or self-reverence, in the hands of the 'personal judge' directly or indirectly makes the men the 'legislator' of women's preferences instead of the desired mate.

Women would refuse to be judged by a social judge if they have self-esteem and strength of character. The Western projection of the beauty ideal is only meant to yield "A feminine body out of a female one" (Bartky, 2003, 34). Lister (1997) argues that to be feminine means to be weak, passive, and emotional. However, in tough situations like childbirth, child-rearing, homemaking, and even professional fields women have proved their

reasoning, management skills, and strength for ages. Bartky (2003) maintains that Beauty standards are used to construct the weak and passive image of women to uphold male dominance over weak women.

Women are socialized to act a certain way to look feminine or in other words 'beautiful' that's why De Beauvoir (1974) says "One is not born a woman, but rather become one" (301). They are also expected to look differently more like a female than a human. Her lips ought to be redder, lashes extended, etc. (Freedman, 1986). Notwithstanding, women are always introduced by the newspaper and TV shows with regards to their looks as the Rocky Mountain News described the Republican candidate (Governor in Colorado) "having a great biography and a Barbie Doll figure. She's produced three grown children, but still looks as though she stepped out of a department store window" (Scot, 1986, 17) which boosts up the beauty myth. Bartky (2002) assumes that the changes in body politics would emerge from a consumerist capitalist set-up. In the future the transformation of bodies and identities would be an integral part of the cultural beliefs which would be necessarily applied to men along with women and the standards of beauty would be revised and defined with new aesthetics. He suggests that the radicalization of beauty standards emerge only in a radically democratic culture.

Beauty in manner and appearance has always been deep-rooted in the core of the various parts of society (Vela & Meyrasyawati, 2016). Whether it be to get married or get a job, in everyday life, society weighs women against various beauty measures. Beauty myth has not only affected the lives in reality but it has influenced the literature as well. Through literature, women are represented as beautiful objects, desirous to look beautiful.

Material and Methods

The researcher has applied a qualitative approach in the analysis of the beauty politics in the novels *Americanah* by Adichie to construct a deep and insightful understanding of the experiences, context, and phenomena in the novels. Qualitative design is purposively chosen to understand why the individuals in the novels behave, think, or feel a certain way in a particular context. This study has used the mimetic analysis and weighed the novel against reality. The data will be collected from the novel *Americanah* as source of primary data and secondary data are traced from books, research articles, newspapers, YouTube, and other internet sources. For the analysis of the data, the content of the text has been scrutinized to develop an understanding of the two novels.

Results and Discussion and

In *Americanah*, the storyline begins with Ifemelu traveling from Princeton to Trenton to braid her hair. In the novel, hair is a very significant component of beauty and grace that is essential to good looks. The salon where Ifemelu goes to do her braids is the place that represents the propagation of beauty myth through characters like Ayesha who is a true market woman, immune to the niceties of American customer service" (11), and Ifemelu who has come from Princeton to braid her hair because there are no salons for Black people in the neighborhoods with the White majority. In addition, Aisha, the hairstylist, seems so greatly influenced by the consumerist market that she would prefer relaxed hair over natural braided hair as she is unable to "understand why anybody would choose to suffer through combing natural hair, instead of simply relaxing it" (10).

As beauty standards vary from place to place, Ifemelu and other characters too seem to adopt the beauty standards of the place where they live i.e. initially Africa and then America. When Ifemelu decides to return to Africa, she goes "to braid her hair". She would spend ample time for just getting her hair braided because in Africa braids were a fashion. However, doing the braids was a time-consuming and painful fashion that a non-black might find weird. When Ifemelu is done with the long hour of braiding labor, "her head was aching and the hair at her temples, even though Aisha had not twisted too tightly, still caused a tugging discomfort, a disturbance of her neck and nerves" (349).

Adichie's narrative in *Americanah* rejects the caste system based on beauty which seems as if it descends from an eternal truth (Wolf, 1991). When Ifemelu goes to get her eyebrows waxed in a spa near Curt's childhood home for his cousin Ashleigh's wedding, the Asian woman on the counter of the salon tells Ifemelu, "We don't do curly" (280) to which her surprise knew no limit. It is a Eurocentric beauty myth that curly hair is different and hard to do and it is because they have not done curly hair before, but have developed this false conception that curly hair is different and hard to wax.

Even in African society, with the advancement of urbanization, the social gatherings of the upper class have been a means of promoting beauty trends and products. In the novel, the party of the Obzine's Chief is a platform that women use to show off the leading beauty trends and appear to harbor a furtive feeling of animosity and jealousy towards each other. Kosi, the center of all attention at Chief's party, compliments a women's hair and another's dress as if those women are decorated pieces of art. Beauty has been so deeply internalized in the lives of the people that their conversations comprise of the questions like "What cream do you use on your face?" (26). A woman further questions Kosi in an accusing tone "How can one person have this kind of perfect skin?" (26). This demonstrates the obsession of women with beauty and their desire to look more beautiful than the other women. Kosi's pride in her look is obvious in her gracious laugh.

In *Americanah*, Adichie has corroborated the evidence of the propagation of beauty myth through the magazines and TV Shows as well. As a young girl, Ifemelu has been quite neutral and unaffected by the leading influences of the beauty standards promoted by the fashion magazines, but as she grew older Auntie Uju would 'pore over' various fashion magazines to select different styles together. "Auntie Uju taught her to mash an avocado and spread it on her face" (49). It is quite obvious that as girls grow, the myth keeps its focus on the female body (Wolf, 1991).

The magazines and fashion industry don't only feature beautiful women but also are biased against Blacks. When Ifemelu and Curt (her boyfriend) walk to the book store, Ifemelu shows Curt different magazines featuring only white women. Ifemelu shows Curt a Women's magazine of two thousand pages featuring only three or four Black women. Ifemelu protests the White supremacist beauty projections in the magazines and says, "Not one of them looks like me, so I can't get clues for makeup from these magazines..." (284). This substantiates Wolf's claim that women's magazines spread information regarding beauty products in a "self-censored medium" to gain the attention of the desired consumers.

A woman's preoccupation with her appearance and the social pressure to look up to the standards of beauty causes grave hostility in her relations. If a man loves her and sees her as his equal, it becomes fathomable. Though Curt loves Ifemelu and tries to understand her yet their arguments make Ifemelu feel alienated. Curt knows her as a

confident and mature girl but finds her coming home with a failed haircut and weeping from the embarrassment of the wax. Whatever he tries to say to comfort her would hurt her more. If he calls the matter trivial by saying that her hair is bold and she looks beautiful no matter what, Ifemelu feels that he does not understand. If he agrees with her that the matter is serious, the consequences are even worse. Throughout this misunderstanding and turmoil, Ifemelu feels un-understood by Curt. Ultimately, Ifemelu expresses herself to Wambui in an e-mail "about the bookstore, the magazines, the things she did not tell Curt, things unsaid, unfinished" (284).

The beauty myth also lays its focus on what a woman eats and how she maintains her body size. A slim body shape is the desire of the modern world. It has led people to a diet that has ultimately resulted in eating disorders. However, women are so conscious of their body shape that to call them fat would be like an insult no matter if they are a little fat. Women hardly accept themselves the way they naturally look. On her way to the hair salon on the train, Ifemelu is struck by the fact that most of the "slim white people" got off at the Manhattan Stop, and the rest of the people on the train were "Black and fat". Though Ifemelu did not think of them as fat because to use the word 'fat' in America was as bad as the word 'bustard', she instead thought of them as 'big'. This kind of internalization of the beauty consciousness is obvious when Ifemelu says that she has completely erased the word 'fat' from her lexicon until after thirteen years when a man in a line in the supermarket whispered to her "Fat people don't need to be eating that shit" (4) which greatly offended her. Ifemelu ruminated over the matter that how this stranger has concluded that she was fat and thought of writing a blog under the title "race, gender, and body size" which did well on the internet.

The Eurocentric standards of beauty have dominated the rest of the world after the rise of urbanization and industrialization. Wolf has been a great opponent of the dieting trends that give way to problems like anorexia and bulimia. When Ifemelu meets Ginika in America, the prettiest girl in Nigeria who used to have a big bun (something every girl in Nigeria desired) has started losing weight as soon as she came to America (though she too is new to America) because here girls with a thin body and big breasts are liked. Ginika reveals that she started to diet to an extent that she "was even close to anorexia" (118). This demonstrates how beauty standards differ geographically, culturally, and socially. In America word like 'thin' is used instead of 'slim' and losing weight is taken as a compliment. Gineka tells Ifemelu "You know at home when somebody tells you that you lost weight, it means something bad. But here somebody tells you that you lost weight and you say thank you" (118).

Aunty Uju who is the mistress of the General is financially well off. She adopts "the beauty standards that are socially correct regarding class" (Montes Moll, 2020, 9). Western beauty standards of fairer complexion and straight hair are observed even in Nigeria as well since Aunty Uju would avoid "the sun and used the sun creams in elegant bottles so that her complexion, already naturally light, became lighter, brighter, and took on a sheen" (69). Though Aunty Uju has naturally radiant and fair skin she would still want to look more beautiful because she is deliberated into the obsession with the beauty and class consciousness by a patriarchal set-up as she wants to look beautiful for General.

In the upper-class society, women paid a great amount of money for straight hair or even a shiny hair extension. When Aunty Uju went to her expensive hair salon with Ifemelu, "It startled Ifemelu, how much a relaxer retouching cost at Aunty Uju's hair salon" (72). Moreover, the beauty salons were a place of discrimination between the customers of the variant classes that they belonged to. The haughty hairdresser looked

up to each customer from head to toe “to decide how much attention she was worth”. Because Auntie Uju was General’s mistress they curtsied her, over-praising her handbags and shoes. All these beauty makeovers that Auntie Uju undertakes are because she feels the competition and a struggle to maintain a better social status in the patriarchal society. She proudly tells Ifemelu that there are girls who don’t know which man to impress and how to impress. She finds herself “lucky to be licking the right ass” (72).

After the death of General, however, Auntie Uju does not enjoy the same social status as before. She migrates to America and there she cannot maintain her appearance as she used to. When Ifemelu meets her for the first time in America, she finds something different about her. “Her roughly braided hair, her ears bereft of earrings, her quick casual hug, as if it had been weeks rather than years since they had last seen each other” (99). It is not just her looks but her behavior has been affected as a diaspora. Now she would not buy things she need but what is on sale.

As Naomi Wolf points out that in the modern world, beauty is treated as a qualification and a tool used as discrimination against women’s talent and skills in the professional sphere. Initially, when Ifemelu went to America, she was taken aback by the fact that Auntie Uju had decided to relax her hair because braids are considered “unprofessional” in America. Auntie Uju reveals that America is a country that is not their own. These Eurocentric beauty standards are an exaggeration of the racist approach that Americans and Europeans as a whole had towards the Black for ages because they consider themselves a superior race. The perfect example of racial prejudice propagated by beauty myth is when looking for a job, Auntie Uju tells Ifemelu to use the ID card and license of an unknown person with the name *Ngozi Okonkwo* who is ten years older than her and looks pretty different in her facial features, but Auntie Uju, familiar with the racist approach and beauty discriminations of the country, tells Ifemelu “All of us look alike to white people” (115).

The real physical and emotional pain comes to Ifemelu when she also loses her braids on Ruth’s advice because she thinks braids might be a risk in her getting the job. Adichie notices that in different professions the beauty ideologies are different. For a backup singer in jazz, it is fine to have curly hair but not kinky. However, for the kind of job that Ifemelu is applying even spiral curls are considered unprofessional. Considering the risk of not getting the job, Ifemelu, firstly, tries to relax her hair on her own. She buys a range of hair products from a drugstore and carefully smeared the gel on her hair in the bathroom. She put on gloves on her fingers because the products are hazardous to her skin. The smell of these products is so offensive and piercing that it “reminds her of chemistry lab in secondary school” (195). It ought to be a great concern for the feminist narrative since in the modern age many people endorse and promote products free of chemicals and cruelty to the animal but yet women use high chemical bleaches and other products that can cause various skin diseases including cancer. This process of relaxing the hair is not only physically and mentally disturbing but also financially heavy on the pocket and time-consuming as she “times the process carefully, washing off the relaxer in exactly twenty minutes, but her hair remained kinky, its denseness unchanged” (195).

The hairdresser suggests that Ifemelu goes to a professional as she believes that people might think that relaxing their hair at home would save them money, but it does not. When Ifemelu goes to the salon, she experiences physical suffering of burning, swelling, and rashes. It is not only physical suffering but an emotional embarrassment and loss. In the process of relaxing the hair, Ifemelu first feels a burning sensation when

the hairdresser rinsed out the relaxer, "Ifemelu's head bent backward against a plastic sink, needles of stinging pain shot up from different parts of her body, back up to her head" (195). Ironically, Ifemelu goes through all this painstaking financial, physical, emotional, and mental trouble only to make her hair look straight and swingy like the hair of a white girl. The hairdresser's remark, "Just a little burn, but look how pretty it is. Wow girl, you've got the white-girl swing!" (195), comes to her as a joy.

Dasi (2019) observed that in competing for resources, women are constantly expected to maintain their looks and beauty even at the cost of years of physical pain and emotional loss. In the salon, when the hairdresser irons Ifemelu's hair, Ifemelu feels "the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss" (195). Notwithstanding, when the hairdresser begins to stroke her hair, she jumps with the pain of the scar (keloid) that she had behind her ear: "a small swelling of the scalf, which she got after Auntie Uju relaxed her hair when she was in secondary school. Ifemelu endures the scar and pain of straightening the hair, but at the same time feels "excited by the prospect of straight swingy hair" (196) because of the social pressure and beauty expectations.

In adopting the Western notion of beauty particularly relaxing her hair for her social acculturation and professional success she experiences mental and emotional trauma and physical pain. At night she struggles to position her head comfortably on the pillow due to the pain of the burns and three days later the wounds 'oozed pus'. When the wounds healed as she expected them to, she successfully triumphed in her interview and was told she was a "wonderful fit" for the job. It raised questions in her mind if she would have had kinky hair, would she still be the perfect match for the company. However, Ifemelu's traumatic journey of loss continues and she loses all her hair due to the heat and the chemical side-effects of relaxing the hair. She experiences a loss of freedom and says "Relaxing your hair is like being in prison. You're caged in. your hair rules you. You did not go running with Curt today because you don't want to sweat out this straightness" (200).

In the struggle to comply with the standards of hegemonic Western notions of beauty, Ifemelu is reduced to the kind of person who loses her radiant self. She ends up cutting her hair completely, but "At best she looked like a boy; at worst like an insect" (200). She thinks of wearing a wig but hesitates as it would cause her anxiety and fear of possibly "flying off your head" (200). Curt insists that her look is brave, but she protests, "I don't want my hair to be brave" (201). Ifemelu's entire journey of relaxing her hair, to fit into the canon of the beauty expectations, brings her more pain, anxiety, and financial turmoil. Her hair becomes the talk of the town in the office; some took it as a political agenda some other looked for other meanings. Consequently, she had to leave the job after three years.

In the novel, Adichie develops a discourse that rejects the so-called beauty trends of the time. She disapproves of the wigs and the chemical alteration of the hair. A user on the website with ID Jamilah1977 writes; "I love the sistas who love their straight weaves, but I am never putting horse hair on my head again" (205). Ifemelu also regains her natural self and enjoys her freedom; she looked in the mirror, spread her fingers into her hair, dense and glorious, and she could not imagine it any other way. Adichie's protagonist in the real sense becomes a threat to the so-called beauty myth ideologies when she gains consciousness and love for her natural self.

Living in America, the characters were conscious of their behavior, their ways of speaking, and their accent because adapting to American mannerisms would make their behavior look standardized and Americanized. When Ifemelu first goes for her registration to university, Christina Thomas speaks to her in a manner as if she does not know English well. In the following weeks, she would begin to practice an American accent and tries to adapt herself to the new environment. On a sunlit day in July, she realizes that she has perfected the American accent by watching friends and newscasters carefully. "The blurring of the *t*, the creamy roll of the *r*, the sentences starting with "so", and the sliding response of "oh really" but the accent creaked with consciousness, it was an act of will" (167). She realized that if she was in a panic she would not be able to produce the accent.

Withal, when a telemarketer calls her once for selling International telephone rates and asks her about where she belongs and how long has she been here, she is delighted to hear the compliment that she sounds American despite her short stay here in America. Adichie articulates the notion that the American accent is a garland worn around the neck that beautifies one's etiquette. That's why Ifemelu feels a sense of triumph with this compliment. She instantly thought she has great achievements and now Christina Thomas would talk to her normal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Beauty's discrimination has become necessary in today's world for the capitalist patriarchal and consumerist culture to become prominent. Literature, for ages, has mirrored the realistic reflection of society. In this regard, the writings of Adichie in *Americanah* presents, through a feminist narrative, the discrimination and objectification of women due to beauty myth. *Americanah* focuses on beauty discrimination based on racial prejudices and consumerism.

Adichie highly opposes beauty discrimination in the professional sphere. Adichie's protagonist Ifemelu struggles for the job in her career for not being able to match the beauty standards that are considered important otherwise. She constantly tries to improve her looks and appearance, but end up in situations where her original identity is shrouded in the artificial and so-called beauty embellishment. She struggles and bear physical objectification of maintaining her appearance according to the identified beauty ideals that are taken as a requirement or a qualification.

Adichie is an enthusiastic opponents of the consumerist culture that sell chemicals to women at the risk of their health. This risk is trivialized by the fact that women enjoy it because they choose to look beautiful and want to become the center of attention for the world. However, Adichie rejects this notion. Ifemelu is a consumer of beauty products. Initially, she is quite ignorant of her position in a consumerist world until they both suffer the consequences of physical and psychological objectification.

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