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EPISTEME OF NEW TRENDS IN LITERATURE: A READING OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract : New trends in literature encompass the evolving styles, themes, and narrative techniques that shape contemporary writing, mirroring ongoing cultural shifts, changing social values, and rapid technological developments. In the current landscape, writers experiment new storytelling formats, foreground diverse and marginalized voices, explore pressing social issues, and increasingly blur generic boundaries while drawing on digital and multimedia practices. In this context, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* stands as a paradigmatic text which pushes against traditional literary conventions, crafts complex transnational narratives, and offers fresh perspectives on race, migration, gender, and belonging, thereby illustrating the dynamic nature of literature in the twenty-first century. This paper argues that, in this new era of cultural transformation and technological acceleration, literary works are not only fictional constructs but also repositories of historical and social fact, revealing the epistemic frameworks of their time. Mobilizing New Historicism, and drawing specifically on Michel Foucault's approach to criticism and his concern with the ordering of events and discourses, the study interrogates the limits of collective cultural knowledge and the underlying motivations that inform the writer's choices in *Americanah*. It contends that the episteme of this emergent literary trend is intricately woven with creativity, producing narratives that both reflect and reshape social realities. The paper is structured as follows: first it presents new trends and social interaction depicted in *Americanah*, second it articulates how new trends represent a liberal writing strategy and third, it discusses literary new trends as a strategy to life.

Key words: creativity, episteme, literature, new trends, reality

Résumé : Les nouvelles tendances littéraires englobent l'évolution des styles, des thèmes et des techniques narratives qui façonnent l'écriture contemporaine, reflétant les changements culturels en cours, l'évolution des valeurs sociales et les développements technologiques rapides. Dans le paysage actuel, les écrivains expérimentent de nouveaux formats de narration, mettent en avant des voix diverses et marginalisées, explorent des questions sociales urgentes et brouillent de plus en plus les frontières génériques tout en s'appuyant sur les pratiques numériques et multimédias. Dans ce contexte, *Americanah* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie se présente comme un texte paradigmatique qui s'oppose aux conventions littéraires traditionnelles, élabore des récits transnationaux complexes et offre de nouvelles perspectives sur la race, la migration, le genre et l'appartenance, illustrant ainsi la nature dynamique de la littérature au XXI^e siècle. Cet article soutient que, dans cette nouvelle ère de transformation culturelle et d'accélération technologique, les œuvres littéraires ne sont pas seulement des constructions fictives, mais aussi des référentiels de faits historiques et sociaux, révélant les cadres

épistémiques de leur époque. Mobilisant le Nouvel Historicisme, et s'appuyant spécifiquement sur l'approche de la critique de Michel Foucault et sur son intérêt pour l'ordre des événements et des discours, l'étude interroge les limites du savoir culturel collectif et les motivations sous-jacentes qui éclairent les choix de l'écrivain dans *Americanah*. Elle soutient que l'épistème de cette tendance littéraire émergente est intimement lié à la créativité, produisant des récits qui reflètent et remodelent les réalités sociales. L'article est structuré comme suit : il présente tout d'abord les nouvelles tendances et l'interaction sociale dépeintes dans *Americanah* ; il explique ensuite comment les nouvelles tendances représentent une stratégie d'écriture libérale ; et il aborde enfin les nouvelles tendances littéraires en tant que stratégie de vie.

Mots-clés : créativité, épistème, littérature, nouvelles tendances, réalité,

Introduction

Literature essentially is an imaginative work in which a creative writer re-presents the human experiences. The representation does not only heed mere facts, but facts in their depicted varied forms. Despite being shaped into different forms to prevent readers from falling disenchanted of reading literature, some critics viewed the downing of literature, which they called the post-literary age consisting in believing in odd times of literature, superseded by new technologies.

Many fiction writers however, aspire to fully embrace the surge of innovative trends that challenge traditional storytelling conventions and new forms of expression. The new trends touch the nascent styles, themes, and techniques that are more and more influencing contemporary or postmodern writings. K. R. Venkatesan and al. affirm:

literature has faced uncountable changes ever since its existence. Passing through all the ages, it has flourished richly. In the age of cybernetics, literature has become an art form. It's being redefined as per the needs of a younger population. Modern tools have helped literature become an equalizer between the haves and the have-not. SMS has created new room for urban quotations and poems. Stories can now be presented in 140 characters or less. No wonder we say the world is growing smaller. (p.133).

The new trends often reflect the current social values, cultural shifts, and technological advancements. Key aspects developed by these trends include experimental storytelling “that transcend traditional genre boundaries” Crispin Tennent (e-book), explore complex characters crafted with multiple backgrounds, cultures and genders, and social issues, blending of genres, and the use of multimedia.

Admittedly, by pushing the boundaries and challenging traditional literary conventions to create innovative and thought-provoking works, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) reconcile with some of these trends allowing the readers to gain new perspectives, engage with complex narratives, and appreciate the dynamic nature of modern world literature.

This study aims to show how *new-trending* in the framework of cultural shifts and technological advancements substantially preserves both the fictional and the factual features of literature.

New historicism literary approach, which assumes that any literary work is a product of time, place and historical circumstances, is convened throughout the paper to analyze the historical and social phenomena represented in the novel. The methodological approach owes much of its impetus to the work of Michel Foucault (1979) that establishes the scope of collective cultural knowledge and the technique of examining any number of documents in order to epitomize a particular era.

The paper is structured around three sections. While the first section investigates the social interactions in fiction, the second section examines reality in creativity by hallmarking the facts carried by literature. The third section addresses the view of literature as a mirror when it illuminates our journey; i.e., how literature illuminates our journey in life by serving as both mirror and window.

1. New trends and social interaction depiction in *Americanah*

The most natural and genuine link between old trends and new trends can be found in the change over the years in the narrative techniques implying the reverse of reality into fiction, the new arborescence of new technologies, the themes, characters, and characterization. Merrill, as quoted by De Bonald, states that “la littérature est l’expression de la société” (p. 649). He goes on considering “literature as the vehicle of ideology”. This stance highlights the importance of literature in maintaining and enhancing readers scope of critical judgment. César Dominguez and al. think that “given the historical, economic, technological and social circumstances in which we find ourselves [...], there is a sense of the end of an era – above all in what concerns the literary and humanistic tradition” (p. 125). It becoming, obvious that the standards of literature and the writers’ understanding begin to widen. For John Bell Henneman “writings in the sphere of art and philosophy, are specifically based on truth as all investigations seek after truth and end in truth” (p. 165). Truth becomes one of the key factors of fiction writing.

Griswold in *Recent Moves in the Sociology of Literature*, opines:

the engagement of micropractices with macrostructures of social systems, such as institutions distributing power, is being shown to affect not just meaning making, but literary participation in general. Rogers (1991), applying a phenomenological approach, draws attention to the variety of ways the literature world interacts with the everyday worlds of both authors and readers (p. 459).

Most often, writers portray economic and political realities in their pieces. Adichie depicts her own society to the reader almost with no filter or censure.

1.1. Social reality

Social truth refers to realistic and authentic representation of social issues, experiences, and realities of life in fictional works such as novels, films, TV. It is the accurate and authentic representation of social realities, experiences, and issues that affects individuals and communities in society. Much attention is paid to the representation of social realities and this is evident in *Americanah*:

Later, Obinze's mother said, "I understand the students' grievances, but we are not the enemy. The military is the enemy. They have not paid our salary in months. How can we teach if we cannot eat?" And, still later, the news spread around campus of a strike by lecturers, and students gathered in the hostel foyer, bristling with the known and the unknown. It was true, the hall rep confirmed the news, and they all sighed, contemplating this sudden unwanted break, and returned to their rooms to pack; the hostel would be closed the next day. Ifemelu heard a girl close by say, "I don't have ten kobo for transport to go home." THE STRIKE LASTED too long. The weeks crawled past. Ifemelu was restless, antsy; every day she listened to the news, hoping to hear that the strike was over. Obinze called her at Ranyinudo's house; she would arrive minutes before he was due to call and sit by the gray rotary phone, waiting for it to ring. She felt cut away from him, each of them living and breathing in separate spheres, he bored and spiritless in Nsukka, she bored and spiritless in Lagos, and everything curdled in lethargy. Life had become a turgid and suspended film. Her mother asked if she wanted to join the sewing class at church, to keep her occupied, and her father said that this, the unending university strike, was why young people became armed robbers. The strike was nationwide, and all her friends were home, even Kayode was home, back on holiday from his American university. She visited friends and went to parties, wishing Obinze lived in Lagos. (p.111).

From what has been said, *Americanah* is characterized by social facts with lasting strikes, unpaid salaries. The outcome—marked by authenticity, accuracy, objectivity, sensitivity, and impact—reveals a character who is restless, anxious, emotionally detached, bored, dispirited, and overwhelmed. Life becomes turgid and suspended as the narrator tells.

1.2. Political reality

Political truth refers to the authentic and critical representation of political system, ideologies and power dynamics in fictional works such as novels, films, and TV. In *Americanah* where Ifemelu had heard Ginika's father say, "We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because every day I am organizing strikes and talking about unpaid salary and there is no chalk in the classrooms." (p.78). It is obvious that the narrator qualifies the political regime as oppressive; while examining the chaotic situations many citizens encounter in their countries. Arguably, the historical context of the novel is mainly defining the Nigerian regime under President Goodluck Johnathan. However, before him, there have been other political leaders as the narrator mentions General Sani Abacha. History informs that during the latter's reign, his government arrested, tortured, and executed political opponents. The general and his

companions embezzled a lot of public funds. In 1955, Abacha ordered the execution of the writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and other activists. His ruling was so violent to the point that his government faced international sanctions due to human rights abuses. Furthermore, during his next visit, Chief was his usual garrulous self. “I was Babangida’s friend. I was Abacha’s friend. Now that the military has gone, Obasanjo is my friend,” he said. “Do you know why? Is it because I am stupid?” “Of course not, Chief,” Obinze said. “They said the National Farm Support Corporation is bankrupt and they’re going to privatize it. (pp. 28-30).

1.3.Economic reality

Economic reality refers to accurate and objective representation of economic realities, principles, and laws that govern the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in a society. It reflects the economic realities without distortion or omission. The narrator says “You know, we live in an ass-licking economy. The biggest problem in this country is not corruption. The problem is that there are many qualified people who are not where they are supposed to be because they won’t lick anybody’s ass, or they don’t know which ass to lick or they don’t even know how to lick an ass. (p. 93). Verily, corruption, bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, extortion, money laundry are widespread and deeply ingrained in various countries. There is an inter-connection of political, social and economic truth and realities portrayed in *Americanah*.

2. New trends as a writing strategy in *Americanah*

New forms of literatures are becoming increasingly liberal in the way authors write. Indeed, authors who used to hide the identity of characters now feel free to reveal them. Real people are used to merge reality in fiction. The Presidents’ names in Adichie’s *Americanah* serve as a beautiful illustration of the case in point. The matter of fact is around a discussion between Ifemelu and Blaine who mention some prominent political figures: “one could not describe Obasanjo as a good man, but it must be conceded that he has done some good things in the country; there is a flourishing spirit of entrepreneurship” (p. 247). Similarly; as interaction goes on among Ifemelu, Marcia, Benny and Grace, Obama and Hillary Clinton, two important figures in the American political arena, are also convoked as minor characters in the work. The writer says:

What do you think of Obama, Ifemelu?” Marcia asked, and Ifemelu guessed that Benny or Grace had whispered her name in Marcia’s ear, and now Marcia was eager to unleash her new knowledge. “I like Hillary Clinton,” Ifemelu said. “I don’t really know anything about this Obama guy.” Blaine came back into the room. “What did I miss?” “Shan okay?” Ifemelu asked. Blaine nodded. “It doesn’t matter what anybody

thinks of Obama. The real question is whether white people are ready for a black president,” Nathan said. (p. 324).

The foregoing denotes that Adichie fictionalizes these political figures, thereby prompting the reader’s intellectual curiosity about what they (Obasanjo, Obama, and Hillary Clinton) represent. She provides a contextual description of them. This writing technique serves as a means of displaying facts. From a new historicist perspective, Obasanjo was a Nigerian military officer, politician, and former President of his country from 1999 to 2007. He was also the military Head of State from 1976 to 1979, and he became a prominent figure in Nigeria, known for leading the country back to democracy and initiating economic reforms. Obama, the 44th President of the United States (2009–2017), was the first African-American to hold the office. Hillary Clinton rose to prominence as the 67th United States Secretary of State (2009–2013). She was a member of the Democratic Party and served as First Lady of the United States from 1993 to 2001, during President Bill Clinton’s term. She almost became president when she stood as a Democratic candidate

These transposed characters are contentious peoples with similar traits. One is about shared presidency and another is their abilities to influence their generation. They remain conspicuous in their respective countries and continue to inspire current and future generations. By representing them in the novel Adichie channels the eyes and mind of the reader to consider them elements of creative writing. Any informed reader of *Americanah* regards these figures both as the novelist’s imagination and a direct outcome of societal realities. Thus, this new writing strategy confirms Adichie’s ability to endow her characters with two dimensions: the fictional and the real.

3. Literary new trends as a strategy to life in *Americanah*

Literacy has helped to transpose peoples’ ways of life into fiction. According to E. Obiechina, (1975, p. 3) “the spread of literacy has been a major source of change in human life”. Kelsey is a female character of American origin in *Americanah*. She prepares to travel to Africa, visiting countries such as Congo, Kenya, and Tanzania. Her goal is to find important information about her past, history, and identity. She believes this knowledge will shape her life. Because she lacks direct sources such as parents, family, or community, she turns to available records. Her first attempt does not give her the answers she seeks. She then looks for other sources to continue her search. She has to say: “I’ve been reading books to get ready. Everybody recommended *Things Fall Apart*, which I read in high school. It’s very good but sort of quaint,

right? I mean like it didn't help me understand modern Africa. I've just read this great book, *A Bend in the River*. It made me truly understand how modern Africa works.” (p. 233).

At that moment, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* did not provide Kelsey with the insights she required. In contrast, Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* proved more relevant. This illustrates how literary works, alongside scriptures, articles, and research studies, serve as valuable tools for teaching, correcting, training, and raising awareness. In a nutshell, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *A Bend in the River* by Laureate V. S. Naipaul exemplify what the Bible and the Coran represent, i.e., the Christians and the Muslims, and how they address issues including culture, politics, economy, migration, environment, corruption, development by enlightening people.

From their research on migration, Agboh and Guelly suggest “based on the immigrants' failure to integrate the socio-economic fabric in their host country's socio-economic environment, the promotion of a return home by emphasizing the benefits for both the countries of origin and the returnees themselves.” (p. 109) The quote recalls the question of migrant's integration to raise particular awareness planners and decisions-makers as for their plights in host countries consolidating the utility of literature in the society.

Hoffmeister's work on the power of reading and how literature has reshaped his life from his teenage asserts that “for my entire life, I've held books in my hands and read the reality of other stories. As a teenager, books showed me the reality of other possibilities, and at eighteen I decided to get off the street and make different choices going forward. In a sense, I wrote a new plotline for my life.” (p. 56) From Hoffmeister's experience with books, it is arguable that books have some power to influence life. They help understand and experience different realities. In one way or the other, books draw readers into other worlds, allowing them to see things through the eyes of characters. The reader's capacity to merge with characters life experience, provides deeper understanding of human nature and the complexities of life. Books introduce readers to different cultural historical eras, and ways of thinking. Finally, they inspire challenging assumptions, broaden horizons and different perspectives.

In social life, where qualification issues are crucial, many peoples choose to read in hard sciences notably, engineering and technology. Admittedly, literature graduates are less considered in a job interview. The case in point is about Ifemelu confronted to an uncomfortable situation. The narrator has this to say:

[he] Ifemelu looked at her résumé on the table. “I’m a communications major, so anything in communications, the media.” “Do you have a passion, a dream job?” Ifemelu shook her head. She felt weak, for not having a passion, not being sure what she wanted to do. Her interests were vague and varied, magazine publishing, fashion, politics, television; none of them had a firm shape. She attended the school career fair, where students wore awkward suits and serious expressions, and tried to look adult-like, worthy of real jobs. The recruiters, themselves not long out of college, the young who had been sent out to catch the young, told her about “opportunity for growth” and “good fit” and “benefits,” but they all became noncommittal when they realized she was not an American citizen, that they would, if they hired her, have to descend into the dark tunnel of immigration paperwork. “I should have majored in engineering or something,” she told Curt. “Communications majors are a dime a dozen.” (p. 249)

The foregoing dialogue between Ifemelu and Curt is evidence of the social level, education and training which become selective proving that some fields are worth recruiting than others, especially in literature. Strategically, to set up a cantor to debunk the stereotypes about literature, the author urges Ifemelu to use communication throughout the narrative to prompt the reader’s imagination about communication which besieges the field of literature.

Furthermore, it is obvious that recruiters select hard science graduates. Nevertheless, it takes love to study literature. Ifemelu finds an alternative to start a career on her own where she will now promote her skills in literature. As a matter of fact, she sets up a Blog: “Her blog was doing well, with thousands of unique visitors each month, and she was earning good speaking fees, and she had a fellowship at Princeton and a relationship with Blaine” (p. 477).

What people don’t know about literature studies is the students’ ability to shift and adapt to circumstances almost easily. Often their inspiration develop their creativity. The author says:

... the blog had unveiled itself and shed its milk teeth; by turns, it surprised her, pleased her, left her behind. Its readers increased, by the thousands from all over the world, so quickly that she resisted checking the stats, reluctant to know how many new people had clicked to read her that day, because it frightened her. And it exhilarated her. When she saw her posts reposted on another site, she flushed with accomplishment, and yet she had not imagined any of this, had never nursed any firm ambition. E-mails came from readers who wanted to support the blog. Support. That word made the blog even more apart from her, a separate thing that could thrive or not, sometimes without her and sometimes with her. So, she put up a link to her PayPal account. Credits appeared, many small and one so large that when she saw it, she let out an unfamiliar sound, a blend of a gasp and a scream. It began to appear every month, anonymously, as regular as a paycheck, and each time it did, she felt abashed, as though she had picked up something valuable on the street and kept it for herself. She wondered if it was from Curt, just as she wondered if he followed the blog, and what he thought of being referred to as The Hot White Ex. (p. 305)

The aforementioned depicts the new activity started from her literature background and how eager she could feel. She started to live and take care of herself. This is clearly a matter of passion and love. A blog is a piece of literature meant to promptly addresses current issues of the society in a short and sharp way that people can access quickly online. Often, it aims to disclose an idea in a narrative:

... she wrote a blog post titled “Understanding America for the Non-American Black: What Hispanic Means.” Hispanic means the frequent companions of American blacks in poverty rankings, Hispanic means a slight step above American blacks in the American race ladder, Hispanic means the chocolate-skinned woman from Peru, Hispanic means the indigenous people of Mexico. Hispanic means the biracial-

looking folks from the Dominican Republic. Hispanic means the paler folks from Puerto Rico. Hispanic also means the blond, blue-eyed guy from Argentina. All you need to be is Spanish-speaking but not from Spain and voilà, you're a race called Hispanic (p.109)

With such a title, the blog probes Americans' awareness of poverty and the most vulnerable. It is arguable that to raise an issue to the level of the public in general is very challenging and require, talent, courage and a high sense of responsibility. In literature, nevertheless, before any publication, the editor has to ensure their content is relevant and worth releasable. Sometimes, the reading or scientific committees play an important role in scrutinizing each content before releasing it. Blaine and Ifemelu do not stand in line as they discuss:

... at first, thrilled by his interest, graced by his intelligence, she let him read her blog posts before she put them up. She did not ask for his edits, but slowly she began to make changes, to add and remove, because of what he said. Then she began to resent it. Her posts sounded too academic, too much like him. She had written a post about inner cities "Why Are the Dankest, Drabbest Parts of American Cities Full of American Blacks?"—and he told her to include details about government policy and redistricting. She did, but after rereading it, she took down the post ... "Remember people are not reading you as entertainment, they're reading you as cultural commentary. That's a real responsibility. There are kids writing college essays about your blog," he said. "I'm not saying you have to be academic or boring. Keep your style but add more depth. (p. 313)

The foregoing elucidate the real capacity of people to speak freely and access information to richly transform ideas of many voices, and encourages real participation and debate on how to solve crises in ways that truly reflect communities' needs and worries. To "keep your style but add more depth" technically creates space for people to name the things they are afraid of, the injustices they face, and the hopes they quietly hold, instead of pretending those feelings do not exist. When conversations are open, those who are usually silent, i.e., the migrants, the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, young people, can finally insist on being seen on their own terms, rather than being spoken for. In that kind of honest, sometimes uncomfortable exchange, solutions are no longer abstract policies designed from afar, but living ideas shaped by the everyday realities of the people most affected, and this makes any response to crisis not only more effective, but also more dignifying.

Conclusion

By educating, inspiring, and connecting people, literature acts as a light on the reader's path. Through its myriad genres—including novels, poetry, essays, and plays—literature guides readers through life's journey, illuminating their understanding of the world. This topic resonates deeply in discussions and analyses of literature's role in society and in people's lives. While acknowledging stereotypes vis-à-vis the literary world, this article offers a reading of

Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* as a portrait of the under-acknowledged continuities in literature.

The research has debunked the danger of a single story about literature by analyzing various patterns of new trends. The first section, on how imagination interacts with society, shows that the writer does not conceal the identity of characters but freely reveals their real identities and characteristics. The second section entitled New Trends as a Writing Strategy has examined how writers transpose fact into fiction by merging real people with imagined narratives. Finally, the third part Literary New Trends as a Strategy to Life in Americanah has analyzed how literature provide insight into the complexities of human realities and experiences. All in all, the study debunks the danger of a single story about literature.

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