AFRICAN LITERATURE, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AND EMERGING DIASPORAS: A KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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Introduction

The theme of our conference, to me, has five key words/phrases: "African", "literature", "the English language", "emerging" and "Diasporas". The first four seem reasonably familiar, as I will show, and only "Diasporas" begins to sound confounding and to require further explanation. But how familiar are the first four?

"African" is an adjective of geographical provenance that refers to the geographical continental mass that we all are used to and many of us here belong in. It is traditionally divided into four regions: North Africa, or the Maghreb, includes Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and other countries; Southern Africa includes Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, South Africa and Lesotho; Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and others make up East Africa; and Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Senegal and others constitute West Africa. These constitute the four geographical points of our beloved continent.

"Literature" is the verbalisation of human experience using language. If taken with its adjective, "African," "African literature" would ordinarily refer to the disparate oral and written productions of numerous poets, raconteurs, singers, novelists, dramatists and so on that richly populate the continent, and have produced works and artefacts in African and non-African languages. We no longer have to prove that African literature exists, as was wont to be the case in the fifties, sixties and even the seventies in the twentieth century, when many writers strove to answer the question, "What is African literature?" and to define and explain "African literature" (Sample: Chinweizu, Jemie & Madubuike, 1980; Egudu, 1977; Moore, 1962; Ogungbesan, 1979; Roscoe, 1977; Wauthier1978; and White & Couzens, 1984).

The current narrative is that there are, at least, three generations of African writers across the continent. The **first generation** include, among many others, Amos Tutuola, Thomas Mofolo, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Zeke Mphahlele, Sol T. Plaatje, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek, Taban lo Liyong, Jared Angira, Leslie Ogundipe, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi, Olu

Obafemi, Nadine Gordimer, Dennis Brutus, Peter Abrahams, Bessie Head, Alex la Guma, Sembene Ousmane, Kofi Awoonor, Lenrie Peters, and Buchi Emechata. The **second generation** include Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan, Ben Okri, Tanure Ojaide, Ahmoudou Kourouma, Harry Garuba, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, Chinyere Okafor, Tess Akaeke-Onwueme, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Wumi Raji, and others. The **third generation** makes one think of writers beginning to write in the 21st century: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chris Abani, Segun Afolabi, Sefi Atta, Simi Bedford, Teju Cole, Helon Habila, Okey Ndibe, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Chigozie Obioma, Ike Oguine, Irenosen Okojie, Helen Oyeyemi, Taiye Selasi and Chika Unigwe (See, for instance, Adesanmi & Dunton, 2005, 2008; Ofuani & Okwechime, 2007). However, Emmanuel & Aboh (2015) reject the "generationalisation" of Nigerian literature. The names sampled in the three generations above are an insignificant scratch on the surface as there are bound to be overlaps because African literature has taken its rightful place in the league of world literatures.

"The English language" is the first language of speakers and writers in Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and parts of South Africa. It is used as a second, and colonial, language left behind by British colonialists in many parts of the world, including Anglophone Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Egypt, and so on). It is used as a foreign language in Algeria, Tunisia, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Namibia, Mozambique, and other parts of Africa that have begun to use it alongside other dominant European linguistic heritages like Arabic, French, Portuguese, German and Spanish. The English language, as has become very obvious, has indigenised and metamorphosed into very many varieties and dialectal types ("Englishes") while retaining a common core of base features that have made it remain **English** (from Anglo-Saxon, *inglisc*). These Englishes are, and have remained, at the root of the many different *identities* that have grown around *race* and *racism* in the Diasporas, as we will see.

The verbal derivative modifier "Emerging" will rightly refer to responses that are relatively fresh, new, beginning to be noticed. *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* explains it as: the present participle of the verb "emerge", meaning 'to come out (from); to appear (from); to come out of a less desirable or less developed state to one more desirable or more advanced; to be brought out in discussion or investigation as a fact or logical conclusion; to come to light, be discovered' (308). How many Diasporas have become very obvious?

The term "Diasporas", used as a plural noun in our theme title, implies that these "Diasporas" have developed from many singular forms of the elusive entity called *diaspora*! In my view, **diaspora** is thus the dominant word that requires elucidation. To start, please let us share my encounter with **diaspora**!

I have lived in and taught in three Southern African universities at three different periods. First, between January 2000 and December 2002, I was at the University of Transkei (now Walter Sisulu University) in Mthatha (Umtata), Eastern Cape, South Africa. Nigerians had an "Association of Nigerians" living in South Africa and a central body attempted to coordinate the problems of all Nigerians, irrespective of level of education, profession or trade. The Nigerian Union was based in Johannesburg. The situation was similar when I arrived at the University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni, between December 2007 and June 2009. An "Association of Nigerian Nationals" was responsible for our welfare. The picture, however, changed in February 2016 when I arrived at the National University of Lesotho, at Roma. Two groups of Nigerians visited and welcomed me. An all-embracing and familiar, "Association of Nigerians" visited first. A majority were traders and low-level business owners (artisans, carpenters and furniture makers, mechanics, hair dressers, seamstresses and tailors, music shop retailers and disc jockeys, drivers, bouncers, sex workers, and the like). I wondered if fashion designers and tailors fitted in the group! A string of professionals were also members. That was familiar ground. A second group, **Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO), Lesotho Chapter**, followed the first group. In their words, they should belong to the first group but their specialness was often submerged in that larger amorphous group. 'Diaspora' became synonymous with *professionalism*: medical doctors, academics in colleges, polytechnics and universities, 'high business' people (accountants, auditors and lawyers), and many others. 'Diaspora' thus exuded a severe aura of discrimination, separateness and exclusion. In answer to my question about the need for the second group, I was told that the first group was ineffective because of its *unsophisticated* and/or *unrefined* membership composition. Most uniquely, there were other chapters of the *special* 'Diaspora' groups in different parts of the world, notably the UK, the USA, Canada and other parts of Europe! Its dispersal to these lofty places did not explain my observation that 'non-professional' Nigerians are ubiquitous in Britain, Italy, other parts of Europe, Canada, USA, Central America, Japan and China. Are they not a 'diaspora'?

What emerged was that Nigerians have begun to re-classify membership of associations of 'Nigerian citizens living outside Nigeria' by applying a '*professional*' content to **diaspora**! Non-professional Nigerians living in those countries are not part of the diaspora? For an English-teaching professional like me, **diaspora** thus included me in an exclusive group. Have Nigerians begun to 'respond' to **diaspora** as part of their 'emerging responses' to the use of the English language? Whither earlier prevalent terms like 'been-to', 'foreign', 'overseas', 'abroad', 'international', '*janded*', and so on? My amusement increased when I listened to two Nigerian musicians, Falz and Simi, sing their single "Foreign" lampooning the popular dichotomy between those living locally

in Nigeria and those living overseas! But **diaspora** is **now** discriminating within the 'group of Nigerian citizens living overseas, abroad'?

My confusion was compounded when I learned that the President Buhari Federal Government has set up a Nigerian Diaspora Commission with Honourable Mrs Abike Dabiri-Erewa as CEO. Is this Commission to concern itself with the interests and welfare of only 'professionals' or of 'all Nigerians living overseas'? How is its task different from those of the high commissions and consular offices set up by the Federal government in many parts of the world? My questions could not be answered by my special visitors in Lesotho.

Is **Diaspora** thus a new word? Or is it an old word that acquired recent resurgence as certain Nigerians 'living outside Nigeria' wanted to be different? Like a Lawino, in Okot p'Bitek's *Song of* Lawino, I had almost asked: What type of animal is **diaspora**?

To assist my presentation, therefore, I will seek, in one form or another, to find answers to the following questions:

i. What is Diaspora?
ii. Who are the African, and so, Nigerian Diasporas? Are they persons
    a. Writing about the Diaspora? Or
    b. Writing in/from the Diaspora?
iii. What are the dominant (thematic) concerns of these writers?
iv. How have these writers responded to the phenomena surrounding migration?
v. What are the linguistic manifestations of/from these Diaspora writers?

The answers to these questions will later be subsumed in a discussion of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* as a representative text. I will also broach the issue of "Afropolitanism", as a matter arising.

What is Diaspora?

To assist me in my quest to identify **Diaspora**, I tried to find answers to the first question: What is **Diaspora**? What does **Diaspora** refer to? I sought assistance from the dictionaries and other sources.

The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language explains **Diaspora** as a noun referring to 'the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian captivity; their dispersion;' and traces its etymology to the Greek word '*diaspeirein*, to scatter' (264). In a similar vein, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* explains diaspora as originating from the Greek '*diaspeirein* to disperse'; its Jewish and Biblical connections are not mentioned.

The word **Diaspora**, as explained on *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, 'is most closely associated with the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel. However, it is also defined as "the dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland".' The other sources I sought recourse to for enlightenment are reviewed in some detail in the next section.

A Review of Diaspora Discourses.

The literature on **Diaspora** is abundant. The following studies constitute an insignificant sample of the total work on diaspora: Kenny (2013); Longley (2019); Adamek (2018) Vinson (2016); Butler (2001); and Palmer (1998).

Colin Palmer (1998) avers that, as a field of study, diaspora studies have gathered momentum in "proliferating conferences, courses, PhD programs, faculty positions, book prizes, and the number of scholars who define themselves as specialists" (1 of 13). As far as he knew, "no one has really attempted a systematic and comprehensive definition of the term 'African diaspora'." He raised further questions: "Does it refer simply to Africans living abroad, that is to say the peoples of African descent who live outside their ancestral continent? Is Africa a part of the diaspora?" (2 of 13)

Palmer explains that the concept of diaspora is not confined to peoples of African descent. There have been many "diasporic streams, or movements of specific peoples" for many centuries: Asians to the Americas; Jewish diaspora beginning about two thousand years ago; Muslim peoples taking their religion and culture to Asia, Europe, and Africa; European penetration of the African continent in the fifteenth century, a process that in time resulted in their dispersal in many other parts of the world, including the Americas.

He posits that there is no single diasporic movement or monolithic diasporic community. He identified "five major African diasporic streams that occurred at different times and for different reasons" that are "characterized by the movement of Africans and peoples of African descent among, and their resettlement in, various societies" (4 of 13). He concludes that "it should be stressed that it is these diasporic streams - or movements of specific peoples to several societies – together with the communities that they constructed, that form a diaspora. The construction of a diaspora, then, is an organic process involving movements from an ancestral land, settlement in new lands, and sometimes renewed movement and settlement elsewhere".

Palmer discusses the characteristics of diasporic communities: (1) Regardless of their location, members of a diaspora share an emotional attachment to their ancestral land, are cognizant of their dispersal and, if conditions warrant, of their oppression and alienation in the countries in which they reside; (2) members of diasporic communities also tend to possess a sense of 'racial,' ethnic, or religious boundaries, to share broad cultural similarities, and

sometimes to articulate a desire to return to their original homeland (5 & 6 of 13). He warns us that "in many respects, diasporas are not actual but imaginary and symbolic communities and political constructs; it is we who often call them into being" (6 of 13).

Palmer proffers a "tentative definition" of the modern African diaspora: "The modern African diaspora, at its core, consists of the millions of peoples of African descent living in various societies who are united by a past based significantly but not exclusively upon 'racial' oppression and struggles against it; and who, despite the cultural variations and political and other divisions among them, share an emotional bond with one another and with their ancestral continent; and who also, regardless of their location, face broadly similar problems in constructing and realizing them" (7 of 13).

Lastly, Palmers advises that scholars "must be careful not to homogenize the experiences of the diverse peoples of the modern diaspora. There are obviously certain commonalities, but there are fundamental differences born of the societal context, the times, the political, economic, and 'racial' circumstances, and so on" (8 of 13).

Kevin Kenny (2013) explains that **Diaspora** came into widespread usage in the Jewish case when scholars in Alexandria translated the first five books of the Hebrew Bible into Greek around 250 BCE. In this translation, known as the Septuagint, "the verb *diaspeirein* and the noun *diasporá* described a condition of spiritual anguish accompanying the dispersal of the Jews by an angry God". "For 2000 years the term *Diaspora* – with an upper-case D – was associated almost exclusively with Jewish history" (2 of 8).

In the twentieth century, "many other globally scattered groups began to use diaspora to describe themselves. Among the first to do so were the Armenians and people of African descent. For the latter, Exodus provided a central theme" (2 of 8). Kenny notes that "since World War II, the idea of diaspora has proliferated to an extraordinary extent. One reason for this development was decolonization, which forged transnational bonds of solidarity among globally scattered populations, notably those of African origin" (2 of 8). Kevin explains that the term **diaspora** has extended beyond African descent: "Decolonization also led to the expulsion and forcible remigration of many groups, especially those of Asian origin (e.g., ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Vietnam or South Asians in East Africa)" (2 of 8).

As Kenny explains further, "another reason for the increased popularity of diaspora is the international recognition of refugees". The formal recognition by the United Nations brought new attention to the problem. In 2000 the UN designated the 18th of December as **International Migrants Day**. In another way, "the African Union recognises the African Diaspora as its sixth region" (3-4 of 8).

Lastly, "almost every diaspora involves the idea of return. Sometimes return is literal and physical, as in the case of the Zionist movement or the relocation of African-origin people from the Americas. More often, the desire to return is heightened by the knowledge of its impossibility; in these cases, it can assume potent political, cultural and spiritual dimensions. The great majority of Americans, for example, could never hope to move literally to Africa – but this very fact helps explain the efflorescence of Back-to-Africa movements" (4 of 8). Kenny's historical perspective is helpful but not does explain all the facets of the connotative value of diaspora.

Tayo Adamek's blog offers a diminutive explanation of the "African Diaspora". While recognising that the "African Diaspora refers to the many communities of people of African descent dispersed throughout the world as a result of historic movements", it claims that "for Africans in the diaspora, decolonization involves reclaiming their African identity that was stolen from them and dispelling the negative views of Africa they have been socialised to hold under colonization, seeing Africa for its true beauty" (8 of 11). The panacea for achieving this pan-African unity lies in Pan-Africanism: the political doctrine that "holds that Africans and Africans in the Diaspora share not only a history but common destiny" (9 of 11). Adamek does not consider the literary developments that are at the centre of our conference.

Robert Longley's catchy title is more helpful than Adamek's contribution. It offers insights that had not been previously provided. It tells the reader that "diaspora is a community of people from the same homeland who have been scattered or have migrated to other lands. While most often associated with the Jewish people expelled from the Kingdom of Israel in the 6th century BCE, the diaspora of many ethnic groups is found around the world today" (1 of 3).

Apart from reiterating the etymology of **Diaspora**, Longley informs us that "today, scholars recognize two kinds of diaspora: forced and voluntary" (1 of 3). The first is linked to "traumatic events such as wars, imperialistic conquest, or slavery, or from natural disasters like famine or extended drought." In contrast, "a voluntary diaspora is a community of people who have left their homelands in search of economic opportunity, as in the massive emigration of people from depressed regions of Europe to the United States during the late 1800s" (2 of 3). Longley provides further elucidation of the second diaspora type: "voluntary immigrant groups, while also maintaining close cultural and spiritual links to their countries of origin, are less likely to wish to return to them permanently. Instead, they take pride in their shared experience and feel a certain social and political 'strength-in-numbers. Today, the needs and demands of large diaspora often influence government policy ranging from foreign affairs and economic development to immigration" (2 of 3).

Unlike Kenny and Adamek, Longley provides more useful historical information about the growth and dispersals of the Jewish Diaspora, ending with "Today, the Jewish diaspora is spread throughout the world". Longley, also, provides useful details about the African diaspora. The African diaspora predates the slave trade, "as millions of Sub-Saharan Africans migrated to parts of Europe in search of employment and economic opportunity" (3 of 3): "Today, descendants of the native African diaspora maintain and celebrate its shared culture and heritage in communities around the world. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 46.5million people of the African diaspora lived in the United States in 2017" (3 of 3). Longley ends his discourse by explaining the history and growth of the Chinese diaspora.

Many diaspora Africans dominant in some African literary texts are of the second voluntary group espoused by Longley; but do they have or enjoy the maintenance and celebration of shared culture and heritage in communities around the world? Does a preliminary reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, for instance, confirm this: That there are more dimensions to the emerging groups of Africans in diaspora?

In his contribution to the explanation of "African Diaspora", Ben Vinson explains that the phrase arose to address a problem in the formulation of Pan-Africanism; because Pan-Africanism had "unintentionally (and ironically) homogenized the diversity of experiences that were possible within black internationalism. But 'diaspora', a new concept, divorced from the politically charged meanings of Pan-Africanism, could account for the multiplicities of the black experience, while at the same time stopping short of providing one explanatory, unifying, and homogenizing meta narrative" (4-5). Because the early conceptualisations of the African Diaspora did not materialise as anticipated, for lacking a tight definition, "the concept's fluidity has encouraged numerous readings" (5). Vinson laments that "existing literature has been unable to account for the full complexity of the Diasporic experience" (5-6). He opines that given the political importance attributed to Africans living abroad by the African Union (AU), "a surging interest in 'new,' contemporary Diasporas is attracting more African scholars to the field, signalling greater change to come" (6).

Vinson is convinced that, on the whole, scholars seem to be in agreement that the African Diaspora paradigm "theorizes, documents, and strives to understand the movement of black peoples from their ancestral homelands to a variety of hostlands" (7). Thus Diaspora work seeks deeper explorations into the social, psychic, political, cultural and economic meanings of the black movement, as well as the interrelationships diasporas maintain among themselves, their host societies, and their original homelands. Of course, the dispersion of blacks "is frequently associated with traumatic movement" (7).

Vinson concludes that work on recent diasporas highlights the liminality of the diasporic condition: "the sense of movement, the sense that diasporas are constantly rootless – travelling but never 'arriving,' metaphorically speaking. In this state, instead of seeking assimilation, diasporas retain an inherent 'otherness' within a world seeking homogeneity" (7-8).

Kim Butler (2001) ends our review of a sample of the explanatory discourses on the signification of Diaspora. Butler signalled the need to be mindful of anchoring our studies more specifically related to theoretical concerns surrounding the terminology "diaspora" in its broader sense, such as investigating: (1) the conditions of dispersal; (2) the relationship with homelands; (3) the relationship with hostlands; (4) the interrelationship within diasporic groups; and (5) the comparative study of the Diasporas.

These reviews became necessary to illustrate that no single treatise on diaspora fully caters for the possibilities inherent in the word itself. It has become increasingly clear, therefore, that the word **Diaspora** has meant different things to different people, at different times. We can only hope to throw more light to its variation by considering the next question.

Who are the Diasporas?

The word **Diaspora** has thus been used pervasively to relate human dispersals and human movements in migration narratives – with pleasant and not so pleasant ramifications - that make one recall the experiences of social disasters, wars, oppression, poverty, and insecurity, from the Biblical lore to the modern in diverse literatures.

We think of the Jews in Babylon, and later in Egypt; their return to Palestine; their dispersal worldwide; and their re-settlement in the state of Israel. We recall that even Abraham himself was a migrant to the Promised Land! We recall other Biblical characters like Esther, Ruth, Joseph and his brothers; and Moses and the forty years of wandering in the deserts of the Middle East. We recall John Keats' plaintive reference in his "Ode to the Nightingale" to Ruth's loneliness as she stood in the midst of "alien corns".

In modern history, we recall the migration of Indians to Britain as we think of Naipaul's *Lonely Londoners*. We recall the presence of the migrant Philippine factory workers, nurses and medical personnel in Africa and the Middle East. Of course, we recall Ghanaians in Nigeria and the "Ghana must go!" tragedy. We recall Nigerians' 'brain drain' to the U.S. and Britain from the late 70s and 80s to even till date. Have we forgotten the Nigerian scramble for American and Canadian visa lotteries in the 21st century?

How can we begin to forget the economic disasters that created cheap labour deprivations and exploitations in sugar plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas? Can we begin to forget the tragic separations of Nigerian migrant

workers from their families in Sao Tome, Principe and Fernando Po (Equatorial Guinea)? What about the human trafficking, kidnappings, abductions and deaths that trailed the route from Northern Nigeria, across the Sahara Desert to Libya and Italy, as Nigerian men and women sought 'better life' outside Nigeria? Can we possibly forget the recent tragedies of ethnic/racial hatred and xenophobic attacks in Southern Africa?

These consequences of human migrations have resulted to diverse political, social, economic, literary and even linguistic manifestations. Derogatory and pejorative tags that are evidence of social discrimination have flourished. In the Southern African kingdom of Lesotho, for instance, its Internal Affairs unit responsible for providing visas to non-Basothos has a section for "aliens"! Why not "foreigners"? Names like "kwere kwere" and "shangaans" are used freely to refer to non-indigenes of South Africa. In Nigeria, different ethnic groups have pejorative tags for Nigerians of other ethnic groups.

So, if literature has begun to account for, to verbalise these diverse and often unpalatable effects of migration to and from other geographical locations, then such literatures constitute accounts of the very many Diasporas.

African, and Nigerian, Literary Diasporas.

For the purpose of this address, it has become obvious that several 'strands of meanings' trail the word **Diaspora**. At the African regional level, there are as many Diasporas as there are sub-regions: North, South, East and West African Diasporas. Because the histories of these regional realisations are divergent, so the historical and other causes that propelled the movements are varied and divergent. There are economic Diasporas; social Diasporas; religious Diasporas; and, therefore, literary Diasporas have emerged and are emerging from these Diasporas.

The literary manifestations of Diaspora are far from being homogenous or monolithic:

a. They include writers of all genders who write about, have written about, and are still writing about the Diasporic movements and streams;
b. These writers may have lived in their regions before moving abroad, where 'abroad' means any location outside of their homelands, and not necessarily 'overseas' (in reference to spaces outside Africa: the Americas, UK, and Europe);
c. These writers may have returned to their 'home' locations, or are in the habit of moving to and from their home locations;
d. The writers are concerned about the traumatic and non-traumatic circumstances that cause their characters to migrate abroad and, on many occasions, return to their homes; and

e. Some of these writers have been born abroad, and may or may not have visited the homelands of their parents but have an emotional connection with those homelands and make their welfare or concerns the subject of their creative literary endeavours.

With these strands in mind, then **African Diasporas** include writers as diverse as 'first generation' writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, Okot p'Bitek, Taban lo Liyong, Phanuel Akubueze Egejuru, Omolara Leslie-Ogundipe, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o who commenced writing from their home countries but have had to live and write abroad, with the possibilities of always returning home or writing about characters who return home. We call to mind the fact that Obi Okonkwo of Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* had sought the 'golden fleece' in England where he acquired a degree that gave him an expatriate's job, salary and airs on arrival in Nigeria. Another dimension to going overseas is present in Wole Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation." We do not miss the tragic sense in Buchi Emecheta's autobiographical accounts of her life in *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second Class Citizen* (1974). This is just a sample.

Many 'second generation' writers are in the category of African and/or Nigerian Diasporas: notably Niyi Osundare, Ṭanure Ojaide, Ben Okri, Tess Akaeke-Onwueme, Chinyere Grace Okafor, Kola Omotoso, Rashidah Ismaili Abu-Bakr, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu, Toyin Adewale-Nduka, Ifi Amadiume, and many others. We adopt Niyi Osundare as representative of this group. Niyi Osundare's *City without People: The Katrina Poems* chronicles the not very pretty "events that provoked them." We do not miss the reverberations of overwhelming hopelessness in the "Water, Water!" lament of the title of the first part of this five-part collection that reminds us of Samuel Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Marinere." The poet, a migrant scholar in New Orleans who experiences the tragic losses and consequences that a natural disaster, the Hurricane Katrina, wrought on a city, refuses to give in to despair because "This City Will Not Die" for "New Orleans Is". The existential use of the present tense in the last two poems conveys the indomitable and unconquerable spirit of the strong!

The 'third generation' is more intriguing because of its heterogeneity. This group typically includes:

(a) Nigerians: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, John Obioma Chigozie, Helen Olajumoke Oyeyemi, Helon Habila, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe, Chris Abani, Uwem Akpan, Uchendu Precious Onuoha, Adaobi Tricia Obinne Nwaubani, Lola Shoneyin, Chinelo Okparanta, Chibundu Onuzo, Akwaeke Emezi (Elizabeth Winja), Tomi Adeyemi, Ayobami Adebayo, Samira Ahmed, Nnedi

Okorafor, Unoma Azuah, Taiye Selasi, Sarah Ladipo Manyika, and Tope Folarin (who was born in Ogden, Utah in the United States of America and has not lived in Nigeria);

(b) **Ghanaians:** Yaa Gyasi, Yaba Badoe;
(c) **Cameroonians**: Imbolo Mbue;
(d) **Zimbabweans**: NoViolet Bulawayo (real name: Elizabeth Zandile Tshele), Petina Gappah;
(e) **South Africans**: Lauren Beukes;
(f) **Ethiopians**: Maaza Mengiste; and
(g) **Others**: Aminata Forna, Jay Bernard, Bernadette Evaristo, Warsan Shire.

This generation also includes Ebehi Igho Imonlega who has lived, studied and worked in Nigeria. Her *Evenfall* (2017) is dedicated to "Iziengbe, who waits in the hope that someday ..., Amadasun her husband would return ... for her" and narrates the matrimonial problems encountered by Omonye whose husband Lucky's eight-year stay in the US attracts several discomfiting distractions. As in the other groups, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) is given more discussion space in the penultimate section of this address.

The Economic Value of Nigerian Diasporas

Many of the Nigerian diaspora literary items depict citizens who flee the country because of harsh economic conditions, among many other reasons. It is pertinent here to mention that the Federal Government of Nigeria, like its many citizens whose relatives have moved overseas, heartily welcomes the financial and other economic dividends of Nigerians in Diaspora.

Olatuyi, Awoyinka and Adeniyi (2013) conducted an empirical data-based research on the key reasons for the migration of Nigerian students and professionals to Ghana and South Africa. The key reason for the migration was "to search for a better environment for improving their life conditions" (xvi). Few students migrated in pursuit of uninterrupted higher education. They found that though most Nigerian diaspora members expect their stay in host countries to be temporary but very few were not sure about the estimated time for their permanent return. Some cited corruption, lack of opportunities, poor political, economic and social governance, unemployment, insecurity, and health related issues as barriers over the decision to return on a permanent basis (xvi). The key finding of the study "is that the Nigerian diaspora profile in South Africa and Ghana is similar to that of Nigerians in Europe and North America in terms of migration push and pull factors, remittance behaviour, identification with *'home'*, aspirations and desire to succeed, and return to Nigeria" (xv). More than 76% of

the diasporas interviewed have university bachelors and master's degrees. The respondents remitted significant amounts of money to Nigeria: average of USD 2,880.82 per annum. "In South Africa, an annual estimate of more than USD 3,300 remittance is recorded compared with an annual estimate of USD 2,470 from Ghana" (xvi). More than half of "the respondents ha.. strong feelings of 'belonging' to their homeland and participate in the activities of home town associations and the national diaspora unions of their country in the host communities" (xvii).

In a second study, Rufai Olanrewaju (2019) laments the exodus of "thousands of young Nigerians who have relocated to Europe, East Africa and most notably, Canada" (1 of 6). Regrettably, many of these departees are professionals in finance, technology and medicine. The flipside of this migration is that Nigerians living abroad remit (send) money to friends and family back home: "In 2017, the diaspora remitted U$D 22 billion back to Nigeria" (2 of 6).

The relevance of these two studies, particularly the first study, lies in their very close similarity in the catalogue of reasons provided for the emigration and the type of persons who migrate compared to the profile and reasons provided by the characters in Adichie's *Americanah*. Where *Americanah* is fictional, these studies are empirical. It can be argued that literature is neither history, nor social sciences and economics, but the closeness between the contents of the empirical studies and the literary piece is very significant. Thus, *Americanah* remains a very important verbalisation of the experiences of the human beings that make up its 'imaginary' Nigerian cosmos that is very closely tied to the realities of the true Nigerian situation reflected in the empirical studies.

We note here that the two empirical studies did not consider the definition of diaspora an important omission in their works. To them, "Nigerian diasporas" has become a household
phenomenon that does not deserve terminological clarification.

An Analysis of the Presentation of Diasporas in *Americanah*

As remarked in section 6 above, an almost uncanny closeness exists between the real-world descriptions of Nigerian Diasporas in the two empirical reports and the fictional world of *Americanah*.

There is no doubt that the urge to leave Nigeria for the United States and its attendant effect of foreignness and distance gave 'birth' to the word '*Americanah*'. Ginika's parents, university academics defeated by poor salaries and constant strikes, decided to leave for the United States. The thought saddened Ginika and her friends. Like the choral voice, Ranyinudo wondered if "She'll come back and be a serious Americanah like Bisi" (65). The omniscient narrator explains that Bisi was "a girl who had come back from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending that she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a

slurred **r** to every English word she spoke" (65). It is from this perspective that Ranyinudo constantly echoed the word as she welcomed Ifemelu back to Nigeria:" Americanah!"; "You are looking at things with American eyes. But the problem is that you are not even a real Americanah. At least if you had an American accent, we would tolerate your complaining" (385). In Ranyinudo's bedroom, Ifemelu is mimicked and chided as "Haba! Americanah!" on complaining about the heat (390). Later, she was told, "You are no longer behaving like an Americanah!" (395) and this pleased Ifemelu. She therefore does not mind being off-handedly referred to as "Madam America" by Tochi (398).

Adichie's *Americanah* is a third-person narrative about the dithering love relationship between the two main characters, Ifemelu and Obinze. It commences towards the end of Ifemelu's stay in the United States, as she considers going back to Nigeria **after thirteen years**. She leaves upbeat Princeton to braid her hair in lowly Brenton. All sorts of tensions beset her as she reflects on her decision to go back to Nigeria. In a masterful use of expositions and flashbacks, the story takes us to different times in Ifemelu's life.

The hair-braiding salon in Brenton provides an opportunity to trigger her reflections about the problems of the African Diasporas, represented by her, a Nigerian; Mariama and Halima are from Mali; and Aisha and Boubacar (a Wolof professor who moved from France to the US) are Senegalese. Their fellow-feeling on first meeting is reflected in Ifemelu's interpretation of the significance of Halima's smile: *"a smile that, in its warm knowingness, said welcome to a fellow African"* (11). She had felt the same way about Boubacar's laugh, *"a familial laugh; he would not laugh like that with an American"* (340).

As the narrative progresses, more reasons for the intra-regional and international movements are highlighted. Ifemelu and Obinze had dropped their admissions at the University of Ibadan to move to University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for their undergraduate studies. Obinze's mother had gone on sabbatical to the University of Lagos from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Ifemelu left Nsukka for Princeton to beat the incessant strikes and irregular university annual calendar. Aunty Uju, a consultant medical doctor, had run to the United States to avoid the General's angry relatives when he had died in a military putsch. After graduating from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Obinze's mother had reluctantly placed him on her travel list to the United Kingdom. He had always preferred the United States but was deported to Nigeria after a failed transactional sham marriage in London. A mysterious intervention ('deus ex machina'!) had made him rich working for the Chief on the introduction of Aunty Nneoma. All the other migrants to both the US and UK went for the same reasons: political misrule (military, non-military), better educational opportunities (steady university calendar not marred by constant strikes by university staff over poor wages),

social expectations (better life); and many more. References to past Nigerian military leaders (Babangida, Abacha, and Obasanjo) responsible for the "brain drain" and the "checking out" syndrome abound (28): we do not miss the reference to "General Buhari's soldiers were flogging adults on the streets" (232) as additional fodder to the discontent in the country. No wonder, then, that Obinze's youthful imagination had conjured America as a place where "bottles and bottles of Fanta were to be had, without permission" (233) from his lecturer-mother who could no longer afford the luxury of a cheap soda drink!

Ginika's friends (Ifemelu, Ranyinudo, Priye, Tochi), and the Big Guys of the school: "Kayode, Obinze, Ahmed, Emenike, and Osahon" (65) represent the Nigerians from many ethnic extractions that populate the novel - mainly Igbos but including persons from the North and South of Nigeria. The list is long! Nigerian place names define its major intra-regional locations (*Lagos, Ibadan, Nsukka, Awka, Abuja, Onitsha, Enugu,* etc) before the international names and places in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe become theatres of inter-ethnic and inter-racial relationships.

The lure of a return to the homeland not only affects Ifemelu and Obinze but many others who are playfully referred to as members of the "Nigerpolitan Club" (405). Referred to as *"returnees", "a bunch of people who have recently moved back, some from England, but mostly from the US"* (405), whose *"voices burred with foreign accents"* (407), they were described by Ifemelu as: *"They were sanctified, the returnees, back home with an extra gleaming layer"* (408). This group is re-visited in the next section, where we interrogate the closeness between "Nigerpolitan," (and "Afropolitan") and "Afropolitanism".

We cannot shy away from discussing the special position of the English language as a medium of communication in the diverse multilingual settings explored in *Americanah*. First, in the fictional Nigerian setting, several positions exist: English as a second language for the intercommunication function between persons of diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. The major characters that are school-educated use Standard English. They also use Nigerian Pidgin as a secondary means of communication in addition to their individual Nigerian languages. Thus Ifemelu and Obinze communicate majorly in English. They use Nigerian Pidgin in songs (***"Your love dey make me yori yori,"*** 441); in communicating with persons not very confident in English, like the fried plantain hawker [*"what **about akara, aunty? I make am now.** Very fresh"* (443)] and with Esther [*"Aunty, your hair is **jaga jaga**"* (415)].

There are crucial moments when a local Nigerian language is used to convey very intense emotions that the user thinks the English language is incapable of conveying. When Dike drinks excess Tylenol and is taken for dead, Aunty Uju called Ifemelu especially in Igbo: ***o nwuchagokwa,*** *Dike*

anwuchagokwa, 'He is almost completely dead. Dike almost completely died' (365).

Code-switching is manifest at different levels. In the fictional Nigerian situation, this pervades the novel. In many situations, the special strategy of cushioning Nigerian local words (in italics to depict them as foreign), particularly Igbo words, with their English language glosses or translations, is common: *Darling, **kedu ebe I no**? Where are you* (21); ***Asa ugo! Sunshine in the evening!*** (22); ***Ha, odi egwu**, for where?* (24); ***Obinze ma ife** ... Obinze is not like some of these useless boys with money. This one is not stupid* (456); *The woman with **obi ocha**, a clean heart* (457); and the occasional Hausa, ***Haba! We don't behave like that please*** (472).

In the US, foreigners like Aisha, who are not very conversant with Standard English, use a 'Broken English' that is neither English nor Pidgin, that shows an imperfect mastery of the standard form because of grammatical, systemic deviance: *"me, I try an American when I come, to marry. But he bring many problems, no job, and every day he say give me money, money, money"* (363).

In a similar situation, Blaine converses solely in Ebonics with Mr White, the Library doorman in Yale. As he explains to Ifemelu, *"I guess I've become too used to my White People Are Watching Us voice . . . And you know, younger black folk don't really do code-switching any more. The middle class kids can't speak Ebonics and the inner-city kids speak only Ebonics and they don't have the fluidity that my generation has"* (342). This differentiation is part of the sociolinguistic setting in Black American communication.

These situations are different from the comical attention given to Ifemelu's father's pretentious highfalutin bombastic English: *"It is the final infantilization and informalization of America! It portends the end of the American empire..."* (397).

A lot of space is given to the manifestations of differences in the production and specific nuances of varieties of English usage – British, American, Nigerian, Francophone, and other "accents." This pull reverberates through many parts of the novel. There is a major debate about correctness and aptness between British and American usages. Ifemelu gives a comical presentation of her first day encounter with Cristina Tomas as a freshman at Princeton. Cristina had had to pronounce words as separate sentences without due cognisance given to the appropriate isochronous rhythm of the English sentence. Ifemelu had half smiled in sympathy, "*because Cristina Tomas had to have some sort of illness that made her speak so slowly, lips scrunching and puckering, as she gave directions to the international students*" (133). When Cristina Tomas repeated the process on her return with the appropriate form, Ifemelu "*realized that Cristina Tomas was speaking like that because of **her**, her foreign accent...*"

(133). She had always spoken English, led the debating society at school and "*always thought the American twang inchoate*" (133). Feeling slighted, "*she began to practice the American accent*" (134).

Ifemelu pondered the differences between British (or Nigerian) usage with the American forms, at many levels. She made a list: *halfcaste* vs. *biracial* (122/123); *thin* vs. *slim*; *to have issues* (124); *kobo* vs. *ten cents*; *rats* vs. *mouse* (125); *I am not sure* vs. *I don't know*; *Ask somebody upstairs* vs. *You might want to ask somebody upstairs*; *Sorry* vs. *Are you okay?* (134); *beautiful* for *black* (146); *perfect butt* vs. *flat ass* (195); *knickers* vs. *shorts/underwear* (253); *removed* vs. *deported* (279); *friend* for *boyfriend* (307); *toilet* vs. *ladies*; *take* vs. *drink* and *On the light* vs. *Switch on the light* (405). She did not miss the differences in phonological realisations: the tragic consequences of the Nigerian pastor's "beach" sounding like "bitch" (349).

The African Students Association at Princeton comprised Nigerians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Ghanaians, South Africans, Tanzanians, Zimbabweans, one Congolese and one Guinean "*who sat around eating, talking, fuelling spirits, and their different accents formed meshes of solacing sounds*" (139). Racial tags and slurs were rife. Ranyinudo "*smelled of Nigeria*" (386); she has "*a Nigerian walk. A walk, too, that hinted at excess, as though it spoke of something in need of toning down*" (389). Doris, a returnee, was described as a woman who "*spoke with a teenage American accent that made her sentences sound like questions, except for when she was speaking to her mother on the phone; then her English took on a flat, stolid Nigerianness...*" (402).

For a novel as dense as *Americanah*, with very many layers of possible interpretations, the above analysis is like scratching the surface. We are, however, consoled that scores of published articles on Adichie's works, including *Americanah*, exist in libraries and electronic sources. The attempt here has been to illustrate its deep representative involvement with problems that beset the Diasporas.

Matters Arising: Afropolitanism

I do not intend to comment deeply on "Afropolitanism" because it constitutes a sub-theme for this conference and I hope that many closely analysed presentations will have done justice to the topic. I raise it as a matter arising because of the very close morphological similarity between the 'Nigerpolitans' of *Americanah* and the word 'Afropolitan', and hence 'Afropolitanism'! Is Adichie drawing a satirical link between her presentation of the Nigerpolitans and the 'new' debate about Afropolitanism?

One reason I bring this up here is that Aretha Phiri (2016) reports that the celebrated Ghanaian writer and academic, Ama Ata Aidoo, has no time for "Afropolitans," a notion "popularised by the self-described 'multi-local' author

Taiye Selasi. Afropolitans are a current, cosmopolitan generation of 'Africans of the world'" (1 of 3). She informs us that Aidoo believes that Afropolitanism is 'evidence of self-hatred'; and that its proponents use it as a 'fancy moniker' that tries to 'to mask the terror associated with Africa' (1 of 3). Is this a tug between the first generation and third generation of African writers? Is her response really part of a widespread, global call for the decolonisation of institutionalised cultures?

But what is **Afropolitanism**? Maximilian Feldner (2019) explains that "'Afropolitan' is a term often used to refer to members of the Nigerian diaspora, including novelists such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Teju Cole, and Taiye Selasi" (127). We are quickly informed that "Adichie does not consider herself an Afropolitan" and that like her predecessors in a long line of African cosmopolitans, "she identifies as African as well as being critical of the notion that African cosmopolitanism cannot just stand as unqualified cosmopolitanism" (128). Should Ifemelu's response to the members of the Nigerpolitan Club be taken as a pointer? How should we rate Ifemelu's love-to-hate (want-and-avoidance) feelings for America; her feelings that her American passport will shield her from "choicelessness": **"She should always leave; she did not have to stay"**? (389). What about the affectations of the "been-to" now referred to as *"returnees;" "people, all dripping with savoir faire, each nursing a self-styled quirkiness"* (407)? Her disgust for the group was not veiled. She merely tolerated them; her distance reflected in terms like "the New Haven woman" (409); she could not help feeling there was something "dubious" about Fred, the MBA-type returnee at the Nigerpolitan Club (410).

Feldner avers that Taiye Selasi is an exemplary Afropolitan and thus an apt spokesperson for Afropolitanism. She was born in London, brought up in Boston by a Nigerian-Scottish mother and a Ghanaian father, has studied in Oxford and Yale, and has lived in various urban centres across the globe, including Accra, New Delhi, Paris, Rome, and Berlin. Professionally, she is known for her creative output as a writer, photographer, fashion icon, cybernaut (128).

Sandra Sousa's (2019) analysis of the Nigerian Diaspora in the United States and Afropolitanism in Sarah Ladipo's *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* (2016) is the last contribution on Afropolitanism that I leave with you because Sousa thinks that the novel is "one of the most innovative novels of the Nigerian U.S. diaspora, from the perspective of Afropolitanism". Because it occupies a unique place within African diasporic writing, "the novel does not conform to the traditional understanding of Afropolitanism as the celebration of cultural hybridity and transnationalism" (39). Sousa thinks that insofar as its portrayals focus on the individual identities and lives of its African and other non-Western characters and their families, "the novel further departs from the

conventions of earlier Afropolitan narratives, which tendentially center the whole national or racial community" (39). Because *Like a Mule bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* rejects the kind of caricature that passes for life in many works of African diasporic literature, "it voids the Afro-pessimism of previous Afropolitan novels, in which the transnational movement of characters occurs as a result of precarious conditions in the home countries, and which forms part of the search for a dream that could be fulfilled by the modernity and the advancements of technology in the host western country" (39). For Sousa, instead, "Manyika's novel asks readers to dissect meanings between the lines and peel off the dense layers of signification" (39).

So, there are two clear sides to the Afropolitan debate. On which side is the mantle of successful defence of perspective tilting? I invite more comments from presentations on Afropolitanism in the African and Nigerian diasporic literatures.

Concluding Remarks

We commenced our address by drawing attention, in very many words, to the problems of defining, identifying, classifying and documenting **Diasporas**. As our address progressed, it became obvious that, whether in the Bible, in historical documents, and in economic treatises, the term **Diasporas** has very many different significations. It also became clear that literature, African literature, attempts, in diverse fictional and imaginary formats, to present a realistic picture of the lives of the peoples of the different cosmological configurations they depict. We saw, for instance, how empirical studies have analysed the phenomena called **Diasporas** in the real space of the countries affected directly or indirectly. We see, too, that these emerging discourses, or responses, are very clearly related to the fictional reality of the worlds that their personae create in fictional creations. Whether this is in Niyi Osundare's *City without People: The Katrina Poems*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*, Teju Cole's *Open City* (2014), Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), or Sarah Ladipo Manyika's *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun*.

Our point is that Africans, and Nigerians, and the rest of the world, for that matter, have experienced **Diasporas**. Their literary creations, from the Bible, through the Romantic literature of John Keats, to the more recent creations of African (and Nigerian) writers of all generations, have foregrounded and made prominent their different and, most often, divergent perspectives of human experience and reality.

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