THE DIASPORA AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract
In this paper, I interrogate the efflorescence of African diasporic literature, insisting that, much as it is welcomed and praised, it has negative implications for knowledge production on the continent. The premise for this conclusion is that literary works produced abroad, especially in North America and Europe, undergo certain material processes of production that undermine the realities of Africa. America and Europe, constituting a powerful literary capital, do demand a certain way of seeing, reading, and interpreting Africa. Their gaze invariably sanctions the kind of literature produced and the kind of Africa imagined, which in most cases is at variance with the reality of the continent. Thus, African diasporic literary works have the tendency to become a discursive formation with a powerful ideological positioning that throws up more questions than answers about Africa. I critically engage Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short story "Jumping Monkey Hills" to illustrate the material processes of production that undermine knowledge production about/in Africa. Herself one of the most celebrated diasporic writers today, her story, I contend, is an ironic instrument for interrogating her works and those of others who are in the process of producing Africa for the Western gaze.

Introduction
At the turn of the twenty-first century, African literature, especially Nigerian literature, has experienced a boost in diasporic writing. No doubt, the diasporic genre has enriched our literature, in that some of the biggest names in African literature today emerged as diasporic writers, and their voices continue to be shaped by the diasporic condition. I refer to writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Vamba Sherif, Aminatta Forna, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Biyavanga Wainaina, Helon Habila, Doreen Baingana, Leila Aboulela, Sefi Atta, Teju Cole, among others. Most of them live permanently abroad, some travel home now and then, but they are evidently concerned about the fate of their continent. But their living abroad throws up a crucial question of geo-determinism: how does their living outside Africa determines the kind of literature they write? (Julien 17-28). This question needs answering, and urgently too, especially in the context of knowledge assessment. We often hear statements such as the best of African writing today is produced outside the continent in the sense that conventional

publishing and processes of knowledge production are extremely weak on the continent (Adesanmi and Dunton 7-19; Shercliff 10-12).[1] Expectedly, the diasporic turn is receiving critical attention through theoretical and analytical categories such as migration, transnationalism, multiculturalism, deterritorialisation, globalisation, hybridity, identity formation, among others. Most of the studies of diasporic literary and cultural production, especially those done in the west (see Okpewho and Nkiru's *The New African Diaspora*, Cajetan and Taylor's *African Migration Narratives*), often foreground how diasporisation has enriched global literary writing and scholarship, although it is obvious that what is often seen as "global" is what appeals to the Western literary capital. But other scholars (Graham Huggan; Eileen Julien 667-700, Amatoritsero Ede 112-129) have also been critical of the diasporic turn, especially in the ways in which it exoticises, singularises and reduces African literature to a single story (to echo Adichie) in the West, and undermines literary production in Africa. While admitting the benefits of the diasporic turn to African literature, I would like to share my critical thought on it. I interrogate the diasporic condition from the perspective of knowledge production in Africa, wondering to what extent the diasporic turn has helped or harmed literary production at home. I am strongly of the view that the production of African literature and knowledge in the diaspora, much as some scholars praise and pose it as the best of African epistemology, has a negative consequence, one that affects both the version of literature produced abroad and the one produced at home. Although the diaspora has existed since slave trade or colonialism, I take the migration phase of the late twentieth century as the diasporic turn with which I am concerned. I use the Nigerian experience as a point of reference. My analytical reference is to a short story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, perhaps the most celebrated African diasporic writer today. Reading her "Jumping Monkey Hill" I make the point, among others, that the Western legitimising machineries which enable and validate African literary production in the diaspora subtly manipulate the direction of African literature in a way many would consider as negative. Consequently, contemporary African writers are confronted with a dilemma that, on the one hand, denies them an opportunity to get properly published at home; and, on the other, frustrates their desire to tell what they think is the authentic African story (contentious as the notion of authenticity is), not one mediated by the Western protocols for worlding continental particularities. Herself an example of a worlded or glabalised literary mind, Adichie ironically offers us a view with which we can rethink the notion of the diasporic mode if Africa is to fully decolonise itself and gain epistemological freedom.

Migration and the Writer's Fate

The diasporisation of African literature is largely tied to the phenomenon of migration. That is, a fruitful way of mapping out the diasporic turn is to understand the context of human mobility that enables the idea of living in a place other than home, and producing a literature that reflects that condition. But migration is not a term to neatly unpack, especially as it regards human mobility and knowledge production. Since it is as old as human existence, and humans are almost always in the process of migrating, there is the need to indicate what kind of migration and historicise it in relation to the notion of African diasporic writing. It is also crucial to point out that migration itself does not portend a regression in knowledge production, especially as it relates to epistemological decolonisation. And yet conclusions, such as the one here by Julien, draw our attention to how migration can impact on knowledge production:

> One symptom of the "unevenness" of the current context is that vast numbers of African artist-intellectuals live in metropolises outside of Africa where they typically have greater access to readers and spectators worldwide and to prestigious invitations, awards, and grants. ("The Critical Present" 17)

For me, it is not that "vast numbers" of writers and intellectuals live outside of Africa. In fact, those who live outside Africa may not be even up to one-third of those living and working on the continent. But the real concern, for me, is how the knowledge produced by those outside Africa is privileged over the one produced on the continent. That is, once a writer or an intellectual emigrates abroad, whatever s/he produces tends to be considered superior to what her/his counterpart in Africa produces. This reeks of colonialism, in that knowledges and materials produced at the colonial metropolises have, since colonialism, always been valued more than what is traditional to Africa.

I am concerned with the migration of Africans to the West, namely Europe and North America, especially the United States and Canada, in search of greener pastures. This is informed by the understanding that the West offers a better condition of living, respect for human rights, freedom of expression and worship, among others. While Africans have willingly or unwillingly migrated to Europe and North America, the migration phenomenon reached an unprecedented high point in the 1980s and 1990s (Okpewho 3-30). This was a period of political turmoil and economic downturn, characterised by the devastating effects of the IMF-imposed structural adjustment programmes across the continent. The mass exodus out of the continent was caused by, in the words of Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "economic, political, and social crises and the destabilizations of SAPs. They [included] professional elites, traders, refugees, and students" (36). This is the

period that saw the emigration of many Nigerian writers who, according to Toyin Adewale, "chose to go into voluntary exiles" (iii). Like most African countries, Nigeria was in the throes of despotism as it was experiencing, within the aforementioned decades, its worst military dictatorships under General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and the late General Sani Abacha. Other parts of the continent were also under the oppressive rules of despots such as Arap Moi of Kenya, Hastings Banda of Malawi, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Paul Biya of Cameroon, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, among others. The lives of established writers and thinkers were threatened. They included Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo of Kenya, Jack Mapanje of Malawi, Nurrudin Farah of Somalia, Nawal El Saadawi of Egypt, and Wole Soyinka of Nigeria. Because of their practice as writers as well as their ideological disposition, they faced diverse degrees of torture, detention, imprisonment, and forced exile. It was clear that most of the people who left the continent did so to save their lives, to find a better condition in which to work, to realise their intellectual potentials. As Isidore Okpewho asks, who would be comfortable living in a society where "writers, scholars and journalists are thrown into jail or relieved of their appointments simply because they dared to criticize political leaders and their misguided acts?" (8).

From the foregoing, two points are crucial to the context of the migration phenomenon in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. First, the political repression on the continent forced some people, especially those inclined to political activism, to leave their homelands, to escape abroad, and the gesture was considered imperative as they needed to survive, to live. This may not be seen as a voluntary exile, although the argument may be adduced that activists who jump into exile at a given opportunity may not be genuinely pursuing any worthy cause. And yet, as Okpewho (3-30) stresses, one needs to be alive to be able to confront repression of any kind. To this extent, activists and guerrilla journalists, especially in Nigeria of the 1990s, would have had no option other than to flee the country to save their lives from the maximum rule of Sani Abacha. The dreaded regime of Abacha saw the judicial killing of the writer and environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. Wole Soyinka, Africa's first Nobel Laureate, would have also been killed if he had not escaped from Nigeria in a dramatic manner (see *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*). Second, there were those who were not politically threatened species, who chose to go into voluntary exile most probably for economic reason. Economic migration is one of the oldest types, as people by nature have always sought better living condition. The late twentieth century also offered many Africans reasons to go on economic exile, in that, as I mentioned before, it was a period of economic downturn. In point of fact, economic crises were not unconnected to political repression on the continent. African dictators were notorious for impoverishing their nations by siphoning public funds to private

pockets. It follows that political migration and economic migration are entangled or interdependent. African thinkers, writers, scholars, and professionals mostly chose to go into exile to better their lots, the rationale being that the continent had failed to offer them the avenue to pursue their careers and realise their full potentials (Ojo-Ade viii-ix). Whether or not they end up realising their potentials as migrants in the West has become a crucial discourse in need of proper interrogation. Femi Ojo-Ade, for instance, writes of how his going into voluntary exile resulted to his leaving behind his "family and friends and fears, all of whom and which never ceased to haunt [him] and inhabit the space of [his] dreams and desires" (ix). But by far, the real-life narrative that complicates the claim most made by African migrant writers that the West enabled them to realise their full potentials is the story of the late Nigerian writer Esiaba Irobi. Rather than provide an avenue for him to become the great dramatist that he had dreamed to be, the West turned out to be quite hostile to his dreams. So much so that Irobi had an open running battle with the institutional and cultural powers of the West, historicised in the few literary works he managed to produce in the West (Oguibe 1-19; Diala 256-278). The case of Irobi is an indication that not all African writers succeed in the West.

But others have succeeded where people like Irobi did not. Adichie is one of them. The case of Adichie is particularly interesting because her success is not entirely due to her literary prowess, which is of course not in doubt. It is also due to her identity politics, anchored on her inclination to self-staging through polemical discourses largely centred on her feminist perception. She is able to negotiate between the symbolic realm of fiction and the pragmatic realm of political positioning from which she gains entry and currency in contemporary discourses, aided by the hyperreality of modern-day media. While this option appears to be open to African writers in the West, not many of them take it. The choice a writer makes in this regard – that is, the writer's identity politics – is undoubtedly a significant index in her/his success or failure in the Western literary capitals (Ede 112-129). One may therefore reach a cautionary conclusion that Irobi's failure may have been due to his inability or refusal to embark on an identity politics that could have earned him a favourable position in the cultural landscape of his hostland. Beyond the identity politics, which is of course within the control of the writer, there is the condition of possibilities for African literary production in the West, one that the writer is not in control of, and yet one that over-determines her/his reception in the West, and invariably sanctions the knowledge s/he produces. It is to that condition I now turn.

The West, Knowledge Production, and Power

To successfully land in the West does not automatically make one a writer of note. In fact, there are writers of note in Africa who emigrated to the West and

sank into oblivion. The Nigerian Olu Oguibe and Afam Akeh are two examples. These were brilliant emerging voices of note who went abroad and became quiet. It seems that to be a writer of note in the West, the African writer has to fit herself/himself well into the design the West has constructed for the African writer. This involves subjecting one to the knowledge production protocols of the West regarding what it desires to know about Africa. In other words, it does not really matter what Africa is or should be. What matters is the kind of Africa or Africans the West desires to know. Diasporic knowledge of Africa therefore becomes mediated by subtle but penetrative forces that reshape Africa for the Western gaze. To this end, the West has continued to invent an Africa, a project that started from the colonial time as V. Y. Mudimbe describes in his book, *The Invention of Africa*. The Western gaze, therefore, remains a colonial instrument or an imaginary through which Africa perpetually suffers neo-colonisation. It is no less crude, given its latitude to imagine and frame Africa often with a total disregard for the dynamic realities of the continent. But it comes in a more benign form, given the fact that this time it is not Europeans who document the imagined Africa; it is Africans themselves, bred and financed by the generous Western literary capital. When an African is given a great publishing offer, gently subjected to editorial protocols, and is reminded of the market forces that must drive her/his book into great fame, there is implicitly something of neo-colonialism in it. The African may have just been recruited to produce the kind of Africa that meets the Western imagination.[2]

The diasporic African writers themselves are aware of this Western gaze, and often feel the pressures to satisfy it. Not long after he gained international acclaim, the late Kenyan writer Biyanvanga Wainaina published an essay in which he explicated the condition for producing an Africa that met the Western literary taste. Entitled "How to Write about Africa", the essay is a formula that most writers living in and having to publish in the West struggle to adhere to in order to be relevant in the Western literary capital. One of the expectations is, in Wainaina words: "Among your characters you must always include The Starving Africans, who always wander the refugee camp nearly naked, and wait for the benevolence of the West."[3] A work of literature that does not conform to this expectation, which does not dramatise the suffering and precariousness of the continent, is likely to have no market in the West. Sefi Atta, in a roundtable discussion, corroborated Wainaina's point, when she said this about publishing her work in the West: "I win a prize every time I have a protagonist who is some sort of a victim. That is the reality. I have stories of Nigerians in everyday situations that no one wants to publish." The implication here is that to continue to be published and be relevant in the Western literary market, an African writer has to understand the formula of presenting the literary diet consumable in the West. To tell the story the West desires to read is a way of producing a

knowledge controlled not by the writer herself/himself, but by the circumstances in which s/he writes, external circumstances, often having to do with economy and market forces, which are totally outside the control of the writer. Although the notion of authenticity in knowledge production is problematic, the question to pose here is to what extent does the story the writer tells, the knowledge s/he produces, under the control of the West reflect the reality of the African continent? One may argue that the West has always controlled African writing from its inception. But it is noteworthy that, as Julien (17) points out, many African writers have relocated abroad and have considered it the standard to live and write abroad for the sake of being relevant in the global literary capital. This was not the case in the early days of African literature.[4] Besides, in the 1970s, when the second generation of African writers emerged, there was a conscious debate, even a move in Nigeria, to relocate African literary production to Africa. Femi Osofisan was one of the proponents of this move. In his essay "An African Experience of Publishing in Africa," Osofisan explains his position:

> I began as a member of a small group of aspirant writers who met in Ibadan in 1973, and decided for a number of reasons to publish and promote our works uniquely in Nigeria. We took this decision because first, we believed that writing had, or ought to have, a direct political purpose, and therefore publishing outside the country would divert us from this noble purpose. The foreign publishers, we reasoned, would be obliged to ask the author to tame his or her work for foreign readers, whose concerns, naturally, would not be the same as those of our people. (32-33)

This position was widely held by most writers and intellectuals in the 1970s and 1980s, and had even begun tc gain momentum as a practice before it sank under the weight of the economic crisis of the 1990s across the continent. A few examples of indigenous publishing firms under the rubric of this ideology are Abiola Irele's New Horn Press (which published Niyi Osundare's first collection *Songs of the Marketplace*), Osifisan's Opon Ifa (which now publishes all Osofisan's works), Odia Ofeimun's Horbill House (which now publishes all Ofeimun's works), and Ayi Kwei Armah's Per Ankh (which now publishes all Armah's works). But as it turns out, indigenous publishing have continued to remain quite weak in the discovery and promotion of especially new talents. The consequence is that the Western literary capital, with its alluring publishing packages, has continued to publish African "best" writers thereby determining the kind of knowledge that Africa produces.

Notice that both Wainaina and Atta are referring to the novel genre in their statements above. The point they make is about storytelling: the story to tell

to be acceptable in the West. The novel form of storytelling appears to be the favoured genre in the West. This puts in a disadvantage position other genres such as poetry and drama. We hardly hear of the other two traditional genres (poetry and drama) succeeding in the West. This is a function of the Western literary capital's privileging the novel genre even in European and American literatures. African poetry and drama are hardly recognised. The Nigerian writers I earlier mentioned who went to the West and drifted into oblivion wrote poetry and drama (Irobi, Oguibe, and Akeh). If they were novelists and were able to present the kind of characters the West desired to see in an African novel, they would have perhaps become famous writers in the world today.

The Western fixation on the novel form is one of the ways in which African knowledge production is undermined. Julien presents this problematic in her essay "The Extroverted African Novel, Revisited: African Novels at Home, in the World" in which she blames the West for "lack of readerly curiosity and lack of availability or access to 'hidden' African texts" (4). The result is that, in her words, "Some African stories effectively go unseen because of a steady diet in the North of clichéd fiction [...] the narrow novelistic diet to which the North had grown accustomed [offers] only a partial truth" (4). The West, it is clear from the foregoing, is not interested in any truth from Africa; it is rather interested in producing its own truth about Africa. The writers and other knowledge producers in the diaspora become the instruments with which the West produces its truth about Africa, a way of inventing the continent to satisfy what they think about it. It seems that the writer who wants to be known and celebrated in the West cannot avoid being used as an instrument. Graham Huggan is emphatic about this in his book *The Postcolonial Exotic* in which he says "African writers are often caught between the desire to achieve recognition [in the west] – and the financial rewards that come with it – with a wider audience and their awareness of the constraints this might place on their writing and the ways in which it is perceived" (35). In other words, the control, or what Huggan calls "constraints," forces the writer even against her/his wish – as Sefi Atta points out about herself above – to produce an inauthentic or at best partial knowledge about her/his continent.

"Jumping Monkey Hill": The Constraint of Knowledge Production

Here, I read Adichie's "Jumping Monkey Hill" from *The Thing around Your Neck* to illustrate the process of undermining African knowledge production. I take the ironic perspective that Adichie, who has enjoyed nearly all the glitters that come with being a diasporic writer, takes a critical position on the ways in which the West controls African knowledge production by restricting writers.[5] Adichie presents a literary workshop scenario that looks like the type organised by the Cain Prize for African Writing whereby those shortlisted for the prize are

brought together in a workshop aimed at giving them the opportunity to hone their skills. But also, it provides visibility and opportunities for the writers who are usually said to be the best selected from the continent. The point about the Cain Prize is crucial in that Adichie had entered the prize before, been shortlisted (though she did not win) and attended the workshop organised that year. Could Adichie have fictionalised her experience during the workshop in this short story? Whether yes or no, Adichie stands in a good position to dramatise the system of Western control that undermines African knowledge production, given that she has lived and worked in the West, and her being celebrated is a function of what she presents in this story and in her TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story." Her case, I would like to contend, is that of she who wears the shoe knowing exactly where it pinches.

"Jumping Monkey Hill" tells the story of Ujunwa, an emerging Nigerian writer, who finds herself in a writer's workshop where young African writers, like her, are gathered to be taught how to write. Although the location is South Africa, it is totally westernised, and the workshop facilitator is Edward, a European professor of African Literature at Oxford who magisterially claims to know everything about how creative writing in Africa should be, how writers should represent Africa. The young writers want to write the stories of their everyday experience. For instance, Ujunwa writes about her experience in Nigeria in which she is sexually assaulted while seeking for job in a bank. But Edward thinks their experiences cannot make a good African writing, even though he insists they should write "a real story about real people" (114). In other words, what is real to him, the real Africa he knows, is not the one portrayed in the stories presented in the workshop. For him, the stories presented lack verisimilitude. For instance, he dismisses Ujunwa's story with these words: "Women are never victims in that sort of crude way and certainly not in Nigeria. Nigeria has women in high positions. The most powerful cabinet minister today is a woman" (113-114). He dismisses the Senegalese writer's story because it is about homosexuality, saying "homosexual stories of this sort weren't reflective of Africa really" (108). A lesbian herself, the Senegalese has written about what had actually happened to her friend, also a lesbian. Edward chooses the Tanzanian story about killing in the Congo "from the point of view of a militiaman, a man full of prurient violence" (109) as the lead story of the workshop collection. That is, the story that portrays Africa as a zone of violence is the one Edward approves as the best story from Africa (notice how this tallies with Wainaina's formula above). That is, Edward decides what is best for African writing, the best knowledge to come from Africa.

With the story-within-story technique, Adichie uses Ujunwa's story to undercut Edward's egoism, largely hinged on his partial knowledge of the continent he claims he is an authority on. Ujunwa's story is written in the third

person point of view, a strategy to distance herself from the story that is about her own life. Of course, its fictional status demands a reading that would not insert the author in the narrative. And yet, Adichie's critical position against the self-appointed messiah of African writing, represented in Edward, pushes the boundary of fictionality. As it turns out, almost all the writers – from Senegal, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya – prefer to write about what they have experienced or what someone close to them might have experienced. The vivid portrayal of gender inequality and sexual abuse in Ujunwa's narrative is not rich enough to invent for Edward the kind of Africa that meets his westernised gaze. Not even the stigma that homosexuals suffer, as we see in the story of the Senegalese writer. Nor the issues of witchcraft raised in the story of the Zimbabwean writer. According to Edward, all those are not big issues enough. Big issues deserving of Western gaze are the ones dealing with hard-core violence in which Africans are, on the one hand, shown as bloodthirsty killers and, on the other, as helpless victims of violence in need of urgent help from the West. It is instructive that Edward and the West he represents do not see everyday struggles to live in Africa as worthy of being emplotted in a story (recall what Atta says about publishers in the U. S. where she lives not being interested in everyday stories of women in Nigeria). And yet, Edward admonishes the young writers to write about real people. For him, the real people cannot be the type presented in Ujunwa's story. The anti-climax is that Ujunwa blurts out that there cannot be a story more real about her life, as a real person, than the one she has told in her short story. "A real story of real people?" Ujunwa asks Edward sarcastically, "The only thing I didn't add in the story [which is real about myself] is that after I left my coworkers [sic] and walked out of the alhaji's house, I got into the Jeep and insisted that the driver take me home [...]" (114). The reality Edward faces is that here he wants Ujunwa to tell a story about real people and she has told one and yet he dismisses it as untenable and unrealistic. That is to say, Edward is not really concerned about the real story of real people, as he puts it, but rather about the *real people* as he imagines they should be. In his imagination, which is a function of the Western gaze, women in Nigeria do not go through what Ujunwa's character, and ipso facto Ujunwa herself, has gone through.

Edward's position on Africa, unrealistic as it is, is not challenged by the young writers, except that Ujunwa keeps grumbling about it. This is because the writers look up to him for validation and development. According to the Tanzanian writer, much favoured by Edward and caricatured throughout the narrative, "Edward was connected and could find them a London agent; there was no need to antagonize the man, no need to close doors to opportunity" (113). In other words, they look up to Edward to assist them gain opportunity in the Western literary capital, such as a publishing deal or Western literary award,

which will eventually lead to their movement to the West, a sure way of diasporising them and their writing; a sure way of eventually staging them as the best of African storytellers. Edward himself is aware of this and takes advantage of it. For instance, he sexualises the young, eager to be validated writers by making sexual advances and lurid remarks at them. "At first," the narrator says, "Ujunwa tried not to notice that Edward often stared at her body, that his eyes were never on her face but always lower" (106). Ujunwa immediately senses the sexual undertone when Edward jokingly says, "I'd rather like you to lie down for me" (106). Ujunwa will later realise, to her consternation, that other participants in the workshop are aware that Edward has been leering at her. "[The] Zimbabwean said Edward's eyes were always leering when he looked at Ujunwa; the white South African said Edward would never look at a white woman like that because what he felt for Ujunwa was a fancy without respect" (109). The undertone of sexism and racism, as we see here, runs throughout the narrative. With this, Adichie achieves a parallelism between the main story and the story-within-story, in that in both stories a female character seeking to develop herself, to get a means of livelihood, is being abused sexually. In both stories, the male figure, one that is all-imposing with patriarchal power, stands in the way of the young woman from achieving her dream in life. Edward turns out to be a double-edged anti-hero, used to dramatise sexual exploitation, on the one hand, and to demonstrate the bastardisation of African knowledge production, on the other.

As the story shows, the diasporic turn is marked by a politics of knowledge production whereby the best of African knowledge is determined by the West or crudely invented in Western imagination. In the end, the question to ask is: can the diasporic Africa be the real Africa? And what is even more troubling is how scholars and intellectuals in Africa accept this invented Africa from the West. We at home easily praise and endorse a book or a writer because such a book or writer is produced in the Western literary capital. To undermine literary production in Africa, no matter how imperfect, and praise the one produced in the West is a way of continued colonisation of African literature, a colonisation that should have been coming to an end by now. In the end, Ujunwa is fed up with the workshop since she gets nothing from it other than sexual exploitation and an ignorant reading of her short story. She gets re-educated about the notion of seeking foreign validation. Unlike the other young writers, especially the Tanzanian, Ujunwa no longer cares about the weight of Western influence that Edward represents.

Returning to the irony earlier hinted, how much of Ujunwa can we say is Adichie herself? With this story, her clear declaiming against what she calls the single story, and her fervently anti-Western stance in her novel *Americanah*, Ujunwa's cynicism is invariably Adichie's. The difference is that Adichie is not able to walk out of the Western gaze as Ujunwa does. It is hard to see any

African writer in reality who can walk out of the Western gaze, given its impressive protocols of inducting African writers. With conventional publishing premised on good editorial work, a royalty package, a suite of media coverage and publicity, and an array of literary prizes the book is sure to rake home, African writers, old or young, can hardly escape the process of inventing Africa in the West. Even some of the contemporaries of Osofisan, with whom he had made a move to decolonise by ways of establishing indigenous publishing, are living and publishing in the West today. That is, the decolonisation process started by Osofisan and his contemporaries got truncated, especially as post-Osofisan writers today prefer to migrate to the West for relevance. That Ujunwa literally tells Edward to go to hell with his expectations of her as an African writer, fiction, we can surmise, is stronger and more liberating than reality. It is hoped that we will in reality reach that point we can say to hell to the machineries of the West that use our writers to invent an African for the West.

Conclusion

My main argument has been that the diasporisation of African literature, much as it is praised in the present time, has its negative consequences on African knowledge production. The premise here is that creative writers are involved in fashioning African epistemological system, and as such the knowledge contained in their literary works about Africa can project the continent. For writers based outside the continent, or living on the continent but patronising Western publishers, what they produce of Africa needs interrogating. This is because they are put under pressures by the publishing protocols of other continents, especially the West. Knowledge production in Africa can only attain epistemological confidence and freedom if machineries and protocols for literary and cultural productions are based on the continent. Contentious as this conclusion may be, it remains one of the crucial methods with which Africa can attain full decolonisation, which is a panacea for the kind of development the continent needs to favourably compete with other continents of the world.

Notes

1. A related matter is the notion that the African audience of African writing is not as robust as the Western audience. Olabode Ibironke debunks this by arguing that "what remains a puzzle for most observers of the development of African literature is why, despite the rise of the black studies programs and the establishment of African studies centers in the United States, a viable market could not be found to sustain publications like the African writers series" (48).
2. Ibironke, however, is of the view that "writers resisted, sometimes with a measure of success, the pressures brought on by these [Western]

transnational institutions and even manipulated them for their own purposes" (41). He does not give even a single example of such writers. As the example of Sefi Atta, which I quote below, shows, it seems to me, contra Ibironke, that the writers appear helpless in the face of the pressures exerted by the institutions.

3. Wainaina, Binyavanga. "How to Write about Africa," *Granta* 92, 19 January 2006, https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/ (accessed 23 May 2017).

4. Great African literary writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Okot p'Bitek, to mention just three, wrote to world acclaim while living in their countries. Although Heinemann, their publisher, was a Western institution, it came to discover them in Africa, and its decision that made Achebe editor of the African Writers' Series, one might surmise, was one step towards ensuring a measure of epistemological decolonisation.

5. Invariably, I extend this irony to myself. With my first novel *Sterile Sky* published by Pearson, a UK-based publisher, and winning the 2013 Commonwealth Book Prize Africa Region, and with my turning around to interrogate the same machineries I had benefitted from, Adichie's condition is not quite different from mine. Indeed, from the beginning of African literature to the present, the argument may be made that it is those who benefit from the Western literary capital that vehemently interrogate it. This is, in my estimation, a function of postcoloniality, the condition that the postcolonial subject is perhaps the best voice against the postcolonial empire. The Caliban has learned to speak and it must speak against his master, after all.

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