

# HOMELAND HOSTLAND: THE IMPACT OF DIASPORA EXPERIENCE ON NIGERIAN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

Anaele Ihuoma

## ABSTRACT

*The Diaspora phenomenon has assumed a new significance in Nigerian literature. This paper seeks to interrogate the role of female Nigerian writers in this global phenomenon, including the factors that spur diasporisation and the literatures that diasporisation has spawned. With much higher global visibility, the literature of this relatively small diaspora community receives a disproportionately greater critical attention than its home-based counterpart, thus giving the world what is, in effect, a 'minority report' on Nigerian literature. We aim to show that the output of Nigerian writers in the Diaspora shows a thematic and aesthetic departure from that emanating from the homeland. The study finds a slant towards fantasy genre fiction in the works of US-based writers Nnedi Okorafor and Tomi Adeyemi on the one hand, and an extremist form of feminism in those of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chinelo Okparanta, particularly, Chinelo Okparanta whose *Under the Udala Tree*, main focus of this paper, espouses the disavowal of marriage and an unbridled embrace of homosexuality. Reviewing earlier studies on diasporisation by Sule Egya and others, and drawing from sociological and feminist theories, this paper shows that the aesthetics of diaspora Nigerian literature is influenced by the respective realities of the 'hostland' and the 'homeland'. The importance of this paper includes its evaluation of the extent to which this development is injurious or salutary to Nigerian literature of today and the future.*

*Keywords:*. Diasporisation, Diaspora literature, Radical feminism, LGBTQ, Fiction

## Anaele Ihuoma

Department of English  
and Literary Studies  
Rivers State University,  
Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Correspondence to  
Anaele Ihuoma  
Email. anaeleihuoma@gmail.com

## Introduction.

Black and African writers and socio-political thinkers mostly of a radical vein, from W.E.B. Du Bois to Franz Fanon have, implicitly or explicitly, pointed out a 'double consciousness', or a differently-phrased phenomenon in the personality of Black and African people who find themselves willingly or willy-nilly, in the West. The geographical and cultural displacement from the homeland to the 'host land' generally crystallizes into a Diaspora experience. Among other groups, creative writers, in particular, have x-rayed the twin issues of diasporisation and exile from a vantage point, being, themselves, both participants and observers. Among these is Isidore Okpewho, who differentiates between

'the old African diaspora' and the new African diaspora'. In *The New African Diaspora* published in 2009 and edited with Nkiru Nzegwu, the authors cite a *New York Times* report that “since 1990 more Africans have voluntarily relocated to the United States and Canada than had been forcibly brought (to the Americas) before the Slave Trade ended in 1807”(Okpewho).

Among this new diaspora are some Nigerian writers who migrated to, or were born in, the United States and Canada between the later part of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st. Like those before them such as Adaora Lily Ulasi, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, this new set of diasporans have sought to integrate themselves economically, socially and culturally with their host countries (the hostland) to varying degrees of success. The female members of this group, young Nigerian writers now courting and hugging global limelight, constitute the general coverage of this paper, which will dwell on the following group of (mainly young) female writers: Sefi Atta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nnedi Okorafor, Tomi Adeyemi and Chinelo Okparanta. This paper will focus on the duo of Adichie and Okparanta with particular focus on the latter. Unlike their male counterparts – Ben Okri, Helon Habila, Uche Nduka, Igoni Barrett – these female writers are not only geographically displaced in spatial terms, they are also, in many respects, culturally displaced, to the extent that some of them have become cultural castaways hanging perilously on the periphery of cultural practices some of which are considered unacceptable even in the permissive cultural environment of their host countries.

Among the many scholars who have studied this phenomenon, Sule Emmanuel Egya compares the past attitude of writers to the present, and observes that : “Years ago, at the inception of modern African literature, Christopher Okigbo's famous outburst that he did not wish to be seen as an African writer was taken as an aberration; but today what appears to be an aberration is to wish to be seen as a 'local' writer, to have an ethnic or national or continental tag” (Egya 144). In his essay “Diaspora Positioning, Identity Politics and the Crisis of Contemporary Nigerian Literature”, Egya makes a case for the rescue of Nigerian literature from 'neo-colonial strategies such as 'diaspora positioning', used by the West, to suppress [it]'(144).

But West-positioning is more than writing for western readership, to win its approval and gain its market. When the West dictates to Africa, for instance, on gay marriage, they are rebuffed by Nigerian government and citizens alike, but when Nigeria's own Chimamanda Adichie or Akwaeke Emezi makes the same case, the opposition is muted and devoid of the fury that would normally attend such messages. Therefore, it can be said that an aspect of West-positioning relates to Nigerian writers doing the West's bidding by declaring with glee, positions that the West could not canvas openly for, for fear of being labelled racist, patronising or of neo-colonialist. In a sense, this implies an employer-employee quid pro quo where the West employs African writers to do its dirty job, with the writers gladly accepting such offers in order to meet their economic needs.

This paper will therefore, in addition, examine the nexus between cultural displacement and the aesthetics of selected female Nigerian writers in the diaspora. It will examine the diaspora experience, its roots and, in particular, its creative and intellectual offshoot. Some of the questions to which we will seek answers include:

1. To what extent, if any, has the diaspora experience influenced the content, style and aesthetics of female Nigerian writers?
2. Does the diaspora experience have a salutary or detrimental effect on Nigerian literature?
3. Does the allure of foreign prizes influence the thematic and stylistic direction of Nigerian literature?

Put differently, part of our burden is an examination of (a) how the cultural and ideological postures adopted by these writers reflect on their own literary works and (b) how the culture of the hostland, directly or indirectly impacts the content and context of these writers in their 'self-conscious' strategic 'diaspora positioning' (Egya 143). Among Nigeria's female diaspora writers, Sefi Atta [b. 1964, Lagos], Akwaeke Emezi [b. 1987, Umuahia]; Chika Unigwe [b. 1974, Enugu], Adichie [b. 1977, Enugu] and Okparanta, [b. 1981, Port Harcourt] were raised in Nigeria but later migrated to the United States. The others, Nnedi Okorafor [b.1974] and Tomi Adeyemi [b. 1993] were born in the United States. Many of them including Adichie and Adeyemi received their university education in American ivy league universities at Yale and Harvard and other top institutions where they must have been acculturated, and possibly taken part in pride parades in support of the LGBTQ community.

## Literature Review

The global nature of migration and diasporization is acknowledged by scholars worldwide. In her review of *Borders and Beyond: Orient-Occident Crossings in Literature* by B. Adams et al, Khedidja Chergui paints the picture of “a world blighted by xenophobia, lack of intercultural dialogue, violence and religiously distasteful manners” as the field where Diaspora phenomena plays out, noting that the reader ends up crossing the border from his own world to the world [the author] creates for his characters regardless of geographical or cultural background (Adams). In the context of African and Nigerian literature in particular, the West-facing phenomenon has been attributed to several developments many of them outside of literature itself. Key among these is the unattractive socio-economic and political conditions in Africa. This is what Egya refers to as “the need for a greener pasture [and] a genuine and often well-defended dissatisfaction with, even hatred for, one's country” (144-45). This is the economic survival factor. Related to it is writer-repression by brutal regimes, especially in Africa of the 1980s, that harassed and hounded writers and intellectuals, a situation that drove people like the Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o into exile. According to the Malawian Jack Mapanje, African dictatorships have an ingrained hatred for the writer and the intellectual. “You did not need to commit any crime to be arrested”, he says, “being in the limelight was sufficient.” (146).

Another major reason why Nigerian writers opted for diaspora haven abroad is 'the collapse of publishing infrastructure, which resulted from the neglect of the education sector (146). This led to a 'brain drain' whereby many university teachers migrated abroad with their families, ultimately raising children who saw themselves as 'citizens' of the hostland, thus enlarging the diaspora population.

Similarly, in *Binding cultures: Black Women Writers in Africa and the Diaspora*, Gay Wilentz finds a commonality of spirit and a quest for “a more integrated Africa-African-American community” among a section of African women writers, including Flora Nwapa and Eflia Sutherland, and their African-American counterparts such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Paule Marshall (Wilentz). The generation of Nwapa, Morrison and Marshall might have laid the foundation for this road to integration, it is the subsequent generations that built upon it. And whereas the 'integration' sought by the older generation might have been more of an economic and social nature, the generation of Adichie and Okparanta has something slightly different in mind— less about bread and butter than emotions, and feelings and degrees of freedom. In his article “Defining Diaspora in the Words of Women Writers: A Feminist Reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* and Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*”, Connor Ryan observes that 'The diasporic family is the site for the struggle against patriarchy and racism, which is cast as the struggle to preserve bonds between mothers, daughters and sisters.’ He further sees the Adichie's and Brand's as presenting African and Caribbean migration as the occasion for redefining women's sites and avenues of resistance' (Ryan) Connor's reference to sites and avenues of resistance as gleaned from his review of Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, published 2009- which is also evident in *Americanah*, published four years later— might point to the positive side of such diaspora-enabled books. This may be so when viewed from a broad prism of the overall benefit to world literature. But many other culture scholars are inclined to see a deleterious effects of the thematic and stylistic exuberance discernible in some of these works.

It is not only Egya that shares strong concerns about the negative impact of the so-called West-facing and 'exogenous gaze' of recent Nigerian literature especially emanating from the diaspora. Niyi Osundare says concerning young writers— those who generally fit our description of diaspora Nigerian writers— that they want to “write like Americans and Europeans so they can get their books published there. ... they have lost faith in Nigeria. Nobody dare blame them but I want to advise them: There is usually a day beyond today” (Osundare).

Similarly, in appraising the heavy feminist slant in contemporary Nigerian literature, Isaac Ogezi, in his review of Maryan Bobi's novella *Bongel*, posits that “It is nearly impossible for a woman writer who has had a firsthand experience of sexual inequalities in her sexist community not to try and 'put in a word' for her sex”.

Ogezi sees feminism in general as a response to the oppression of 'women in society' (Ogezi 233). However, in our view, in the hands of certain diaspora-bred feminist zealots, what should have been a simple matter of 'redressing' wrongs has assumed an extremist feminist posture in which, for instance, the honoured institution of marriage is being desecrated. As we will show later in this paper, Okparanta's views, for instance, align more with western, radical notions of feminism as espoused by Simone de Beauvoir and Adrienne Rich than with the views of African feminists. Rich contends that the institution of marriage is a patriarchal institution established to enslave the woman and render her largely irrelevant in the patriarchal order of things. In their paper, 'An Appraisal of Women Slavery in the Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*', Celestine Chukwuemeka Mbaegbu and Ukaulor Chidimma Stella, cite Beauvoir's contention that "Marriages are not founded in love but are instruments of slavery;" (Mbaegbu and Ukaulor 45) Such views do not seem to be shared by the generality of African women, (or 'woman beings; in Flora Nwapa parlance). And they are equally at variance with the notion of feminism as espoused by African feminist theorists such as Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (Black womanism), Catherine Acholonu ('Motherism'), Marie Pauline Eboh ('Gynism'), Molaria Ogundipe (STIWAnism), Chioma Opara (Femalism), (Gay Wilentz) Afracentrism, etc. Citing Carole Boyce Davies, Opara references an African hue of feminism that is "clearly conciliatory and encompassing in its integrative outlook" (Opara 15). The above notions of feminism generally accept the normative centrality of the marriage institution; any grouse with marriage is usually against unfair practices inbuilt or overlooked by a long history of patriarchy. Also, while making allowance for individual idiosyncrasies, African feminism generally adopts, as the norm, related social practices and behaviours such as heterosexuality and family honour. But as we will see later, works by contemporary Nigerian women writers such as Chimamanda Adichie, Akwaeke Emezi and Chinelo Okparanta accord with Adrienne Rich's position that heterosexuality is a violent political institution making way for the "male right of physical, economical, and emotional access" to women (Rich).

### **Homeland and Hostland: The Cultural Toll of the Diaspora Experience on Nigerian Contemporary Fiction**

Germane to a proper treatment of our topic is an understanding of who a diaspora writer is.

The online encyclopaedia, *Britannica*, defines 'Diaspora' as "the term for populations such as members of an ethnic or religious group, that originated from the same place but dispersed to different locations". (Diaspora). The concept of the diaspora came into use in connection with African migrations in the 1950's and 1960's, having long been associated with the Jews and Greeks (Diaspora). For our purpose we shall generally, use the word interchangeably with 'exile', "immigrant", and "émigré", with which it is semantically related. But "Diaspora" will be in focus, along with its related inflections. In the sense we use it, 'diaspora' also suggests a settled situation: the person in question has adopted the cultural reflexes of their hostland, with no plans of returning home, unlike the exile who could still harbour such thoughts. However, according to Paul Zeleza, "Diaspora is simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning" (Zeleza).

Egya raises the central issues about the diaspora situation when he writes:

"We need to look critically at what Nigerian writers write when they migrate to the West. We need to examine what they write about, how and why they write about such a thing, and if the choice to write about what they write is a form of West-influenced inducements, if they have total control over what they write. Crucially, we need to interrogate the ideological underpinnings of their aesthetic outlook' – (Egya 150).

Some of the issues raised above are already being addressed by the diasporans themselves. For the writer Sarah Ladipo Manyika, born in Nigeria to a Nigerian father and a British mother, married to a Zimbabwean husband and currently living in the United States, the issues have their roots in identity – perhaps

understandably in her case. “The peripatetic nature of my childhood compounded my teenage sense of not quite belonging, nudging me ever closer to books in an on-going search for home’ (Manyika). She further defines herself thus: “Yes I’m an African writer and a British writer and an American writer and a global writer and a female writer and a black writer ... All this to say that my being African is a salient part of my identity but only one part” (Manyika). To underscore the fact of her Nigerianness, Manyika has had to abandon her erstwhile British publishers for the Nigerian outfit, Cassava Republic who in 2009 published her novel *In Dependence*.

This may not apply strictly to Manyika, but a major process through which diaspora writers arrive at their desired 'global' writer status is what I call literary ecdysis, whereby they shed their ethnic, national identities so that in their lifestyles and in the very content of their works, they portray the cultural sensibilities of, in particular, the fringe elements of their host countries. One area in which this ecdysis is evident is what I call aesthetic escapism. Here, whereas the literature of the homeland brims with elements of writer-as-righter and *bole k'ajasocial* engagements, the diasporans find comfort in fantasy and speculative fiction with which they escape into a magical fantasyland far from the socio-political issues that engage their counterparts in the homeland. In this way, they become immune to the sort of harassment recounted by Mapanje above. Writers in this group include Nnedi Okorafor (*Who Fears Death?*, *Remote Control*); Tomi Adeyemi, (*Children of Blood and Bone*, *Children of Virtue and Vengeance*) and Akwaeke Emezi (*Freshwater*, *Dear Senthuran: A Black Spirit Memoir*), all United States-based female novelists. Another form of the ecdysis can be found in these writers' approach to homosexuality and feminism. Here, we see them adopting extremist positions. Indeed, their exuberance with homosexuality and related social tendencies is actually an expression of this extremist form of West-friendly feminism with which African feminism has since parted ways, having largely adopted a conciliatory and cooperative tone towards men. Besides their content, these West-facing writers have spawned an aesthetic consciousness that is part-West and part-African. Individualism is still intrinsic to their art even as they strive to outdo one another in the quest for Western validation.

But not all émigrés are cultural castaways. The first group of diasporans including Chinua Achebe, Zulu Sofola, Buchi Emecheta, Isidore Okpewho among others, have remained culturally relevant to the homeland, with Achebe and Osundare a bulwark against cultural bastardization of Nigerian literature. Their exile experiences were largely motivated by ideological differences with the generals that ruled Nigeria in a series of military coups between 1966 and 1999. Even within this period and beyond, Nigerian literature – the literary output of male and female writers alike – still managed to show a resilience that supports the saying that 'a tortured soul makes the best art' as can be instanced by Helon Habila, Ben Okri, Harry Garuba, among others. Similarly, not all home-based writers are home-facing. For some, their works are actually targeted at the Western 'prize' market and, even when it is meant for Nigerian readership, it only serves as a curriculum-vitae enhancer and, in essence, an application to emigrate to the West.

What then constitute the aesthetics of Nigerian diaspora literature? Unlike Alexander Solzhenitsyn's anti-Soviet and anti-communist postures often used to reference Russian émigré literature, no clear cut cases can be made for Nigerian literature-in-diaspora. However certain traits can be isolated. Home based duo Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, and Iquo Diana Abasi's *Efo Riro and Other Stories*, for instance, exude Nigerian-flavoured English spiced with Nigerian idioms and proverbs: 'Tya Femi picked me up with her eyes and threw me to the floor' (Shoneyin 55). Along with Tricia Adaobi Nwaubani, (*I Do Not Come to You by Chance*), the works create an instant atmosphere – and aroma – of 'Calabar' and Yoruba and generally, Nigerian food, fashion, festivals and ceremonies. Home-bred Nigerian fiction regales with stories involving a multiplicity of characters and a babble of code-mixing and code-switching with pidgin.

Diaspora literature is not altogether lacking in the above, though. Most of the novels are still set in Nigeria. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and the part of *Americanah* set in Nigeria (the segment featuring the young Ifemelu and Obinze in Nsukka) for instance, capture the sights and sounds of Nigerian culture as any home-based author would. Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Tree*, our review text, equally shows off very strong Nigerian cultural idiosyncrasies with Igbo songs, idioms and proverbs. In describing the marriage between Ijeoma, the

heroine, and Chibundu, Okparanta captures the full essence of Igbo traditional wedding with the bride decked in 'jigida' as men 'sprayed' her money. However, something is missing when Ijeoma, the bride, talks about 'my bridesmaids' and later makes reference to her mother coming to visit after she gave birth, with nothing said about 'aso-ebi girls' and 'omugwo', lacunae that betray a foreignness to it. But our assessment of Nigerian diaspora literature will be defined more by what it possesses than what it lacks. Using *Under the Udala Tree* as representative text, we find an unhealthy dose of homosexuality and extremities of feminism. Many writers that show explicit sexual content do so merely to gratify the reader's assumed sexual proclivities, without questioning the philosophical and religious injunction against such practices. Okparanta not only shows the lesbian sex act, she goes to great lengths to question the rationale and foundation of the biblical injunction against homosexuality, starting by citing copious scriptural references (Okparanta 75-76).

Oluwole Coker has noted that "for the third-generation Nigerian novelist the imperative of social commitment is natural and seemingly unavoidable" (Coker). This seems not to be the case with Okparanta's novel, which seems totally focused on an LGBTQ agenda. "Eventually our lips met. This was the beginning, our bodies being touched by the fire that was each other's flesh." (117). The author presents the lovers as girls in their early teens from across tribal and religious divides in the shadow of the Nigerian Civil War. The intent is to draw sympathy to them. After she is talked into marriage as a grownup, the heavily pregnant Ijeoma walks out on her husband with their daughter, not to meet another man, but a fellow woman. She makes it all look like Kunta Kinte's day of freedom, even though, if one discounts her husband Chibundu's clamour for a male child, the poor fellow had shown exemplary love and patience towards her. Okparanta thus confirms, through fictive reality, what Simone de Beauvoir and Adrienne Rich had theorized, about marriage.

Even Chibundu's seeming obsession with a male child from Ijeoma seems totally contrived. Like Augusta, Kinsley's mum in *I Do No Come to You by Chance*, Ijeoma's mum, Adaora, is presented as morally hollow, but with religious pretensions, a character stereotype also peddled by Adichie. In the epilogue Okparanta comes out fully to declare that "This novel attempts to give Nigeria's marginalized LGBTQ citizens a more powerful voice, and a place in our nation's history" (325). But beyond LGBTQ advocacy per se, Okparanta may be making a point about the need to be accommodating, to accept as also valuable, that which is different from the norm. It is noteworthy that her first work, the short story collection, *Happiness, Like Water*, won plaudits for stories about a trans-Atlantic lesbian relationship.

Adichie and Emezi represent the other two arms of what I may call the castaways of the diaspora culture. In Adichie's epistolary *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*, a work which *The Harvard Crimson* says 'sets a standard for feminism' (Aguilar), the seventh suggestion says, 'Never Speak of Marriage as an Achievement'. To demonstrate this, she makes the heroine in her *Americanah* a femme fatale with marriage-wrecking inclinations Ifemelu is plotting, with Mephistophelian resolve, to seduce her now-happily-married beau, Obinze, and thus wreck his marriage. While the happily-married Chimamanda is concerned about feminism, gender equality and related agenda, Akwaeke Emezi's energies are, like Okparanta's, channelled towards promoting the LGBTQ cause and in Emezi's case, often using the medium of fantasy. Hers is a clear example of the environment affecting one's work. A self-confessed transgender and 'ogbanje', her works are a reflection of her beliefs and social interactions, although it would seem that she identifies more with the libertarian environment of North America than with the conservative spirit of her mixed Igbo-Tamil heritage, her books which include: *Freshwater* (2018), *Dear Senthuran: A Black Spirit Memoir* (2020); *You Made a Fool of Death with Your Beauty* [2022] have won or been nominated for, several awards and television rights.

These include the Women's Prize for Fiction, Stone wall Awards for Nonfiction, Tiptree awards, the Commonwealth short story prize for Africa, among others, and mainly for genre fiction. *Freshwater*, which is slated for television production was nominated for the Lambda Awards which "celebrate the very best in LGBTQ literature", according to its website. Emezi is one of the National Book Foundation '5 Under 35' honorees. In terms of style, *Dear Senthuran*, for instance, is written mostly in social media format: short and punchy chapters, as if she was tweeting to her readers. But mostly, the point of these sharp, concise and punchy style of writing is to court controversy with its audacious content and, ultimately, attain fame.

According to the author. “When I first started writing for a living, it seemed like a decent avenue to accomplish this. I wanted to win all the prizes: a MacArthur, a Booker, a Pulitzer...” (Habiba), The Lambda prize, for which Emezi's *Dear Senthuran* was nominated in the LGBTQ non-fiction category has more than ten other categories segmented by genre, age range of readers and other parameters. Apart from Emezi, other Nigerian writers in exile that have won or been shortlisted for the Lambda Prize include: Okparanta, Tomi Adeyemi and Okorafor. Elsewhere, in the fantasy sub-genre where Nnedi Okorafor thrives, Adeyemi's debut *Children of Blood and Bone* won the Andre Norton Nebula Award.

Clearly there is a thriving 'market' for which these diasporans write – market in terms of readership, but mainly prizes. Apart from the many diasporic Nigerians who write genre fiction or speculative fiction, many others including Chika Unigwe, (*On Black Sisters Street*) Sefi Atta, (*Everything Good Will Come*) Chibundu Onuzo, (*The Spider King's Daughter*) and, arguably, the gem of them all, Chimamanda Adichie (*Americanah*) have all embraced and been embraced by Western readers and publishers. Apart from the allure of prizes, these diasporans have, individually, also been influenced by the writings of western liberal authors such as E.L. James (*Fifty Shades of Grey*) and Margaret Atwood whose *The Handmaid's Tale*, with a lot of graphic content, has also been serialised on public television.

There is hardly a doubt that the projection of Nigerian writers abroad has some salutary, even if mere, trickle down, effects on Nigerian literature in terms of the visibility which impacts even home-based writers, as the world comes to terms with the vibrancy of Nigerian literature. Home-based Nigerian publishers also benefit by way of republishing contracts. But there are other perspectives to this phenomenon, as per this picture painted by Atta, one of the oldest of Nigeria's diaspora writers:

“The publishing world here [the West] encourages African women writers to speak out about the oppression that we face” [in Africa]. They can't get enough of those stories and yet they refuse to hear what we have to say about their own racism and sexism ... 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” (Egya 150).

This western 'market' which draws many diaspora writers with Nigerian roots is arguably responsible for the 'West-positioning aesthetics' with which Nigerian literature is bedevilled, or blessed, depending on where one stands. For scholars and critics like Egya, Eileen Julien and Graham Huggan, it is more of bedevilment, given the “extroverted novels penchant for intertextuality with “hegemonic global discourse” (Egya 151).

## CONCLUSION

Extroverted literature from Nigeria to the West appears to be a two-edged sword, with one edge sharper. Focusing energies on giving the West its literary menu may mean that the home market is starved of its proper literary nutrient, something that amounts to literature brain drain. But could there be a hint of what is known in Nigerian parlance as 'bad belle' (jealousy or what-you-can't-have-you-scatter syndrome)? Perhaps to some degree. Consider Egya's position: 'The endorsed kinds are given publicity, projected as great writing from Africa, the writers enjoy celebrity status and thus become the most respected public intellectuals of Africa' (152). The 'bad belle' argument could be made by those who see the strongest purveyors of this viewpoint as writers themselves, those who are (arguably, less 'successful' (Atta and Egya, for instance, may not boast a trophy cabinet as large as Adichie's.) Still, even if this were to be the case, we believe that it should not detract from the merit of Atta's and Egya's basic argument. Indeed, whatever may be the merits of Nigeria's more celebrated novelists – and they are many such merits – their' global acclaim may not be easily divorced from the fact of their being hoisted on western literary pedestals.

Furthermore, many will share Egya's sentiment here, and their point may be that in its unreserved embrace and lionisation of these writers as the face of African intellectuals, the West may be overlooking the distinction that can often be made between a creative writer and a public intellectual, terms that may not necessarily be interchangeable. Therefore positioning someone at the pinnacle of the Burj Khalifa of intellectualism on

account of their creative writing output may not show enough acknowledgement of the rigour and research that go into producing the sort of public intellectuals who did not emerge through the creative writing route. But what Egea, an intellectual of high pedigree decries the most is that 'the canon-making machineries of the West powerfully influence intellectual conclusions about Nigerian literature' not only in the West but also even in Nigeria (155).

We tend to share Egea's viewpoint here. Our reason is that with the reality of globalisation and closer interaction across virtual borders, the talented and productive creative writer who suffers economic hardship in Africa but sees the huge financial rewards of his diasporan counterparts may, even if still home-based, begin to tune his writing to feed the cravings of the West in order to meet her own economic cravings. After all, the home-based may argue, one needs to be alive before they can choose what to write.

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1. The arguments are interesting and the author/authors obviously researched extensively around the topic before writing.
2. They should however pay attention to the use of diaspora/diasporan in the paper especially when it is used immediately after Nigerian.
3. The work is publishable with minor corrections most of which I have already pointed out.