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“Half and Half Children”: Third-Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel

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ABSTRACT

The paper looks at seven novels by women published since 2000, and asks in what ways they reconfigure realism and the social text of the recent Nigerian past. Their authors are engaged in a lively dialogue with their literary precursors, male and female, using their interpretation of the past. Though realism is their preferred mode, it is a realism that bears the trace of pre-existing non-realist modes of expression and belief. By reclaiming the traditionally negative icon of the *abiku* child, they effect a retrieval of the feminine repressed, casting the feminine double as shadow or negative to the paradigmatic male protagonist of Nigerian fiction and reinserting it into the postcolonial national narrative. Like one of the protagonists, these novels ask the urgent question: “What was the country I loved? The country I would fight for? Should it have borders?”

In this article, I consider the novels by mostly young women with at least one Nigerian parent, whether domiciled in Nigeria or elsewhere, which have been published since the year 2000: *House of Symbols* (2001) by Akachi Ezeigbo; *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; *Everything Good Will Come* (2005) by Sefi Atta; *Sky-High Flames* (2005) by Unoma Azuah; *The Icarus Girl* (2005) by Helen Oyeyemi; and *26a* (2006) by Diana Evans. By placing them in the context of Nigerian women’s writing as it has emerged since Independence, and by reference to earlier writers (from the 1960s to 1990s), I trace the new directions that fictional accounts of women’s identities are taking in Nigeria. I suggest that the forms of feminine identity evident in earlier women’s writing, constrained by nationalist priorities that privileged masculinity, have given way to a challenging reconfiguration of national realities in which the feminine is neither essentialized and mythologized nor marginalized, but unapologetically

central to the realist representation of a recognizable social world. This constitutes a shifting of the ground of identity-construction in Nigerian fiction away from the fully-constituted masculine self, to a notion of selfhood as split or multiple. The use of twins as a narrative device has emerged in these writers as a means of exploring the repressed feminine in relation to a socially conditioned version of femininity, inflected by issues of exile, hybridity and metissage. These developments lead us to ask *where* their works are taking the Nigerian novel, how they are changing or reformulating it and to what end. What do these largely realist fictions bring to its *form*, and to what extent are they in dialogue with earlier, male- and female-authored fictions?

In the 1980s, as a PhD student at the University of Ife, the response I commonly encountered when I said my research topic was Nigerian women's writing was, "I didn't know there was any." For male academics at that time, since the fathering of Anglophone Nigerian literature by Tutuola, Achebe, J. P. Clark, Okigbo, Soyinka et al., it had been masculine by origin and by definition. With one or two outstanding exceptions, female academics, though they recognized the presence of Flora Nwapa, Mabel Segun, and Adaora Lily Ulasi among the first generation, sought to legitimize their own presence in the academy by studying canonical writers. Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie and Chikwenye Ogunyemi were honorable exceptions, whose work is cited today whenever African women's writing or African feminism are under discussion. My own work here is inevitably in dialogue with theirs, along with feminist commentators like the philosopher Nkiru Nzegwu and the social scientist Oyeronke Oyewumi. Since the 1980s, African women's writing has achieved a level of visibility where it is no longer possible to ignore it or pretend it does not exist, as testified by the increase in critical attention.¹ Understanding the difference in the environment in which "third-generation" writers are finding their voice from that of first and second generation women writers, is crucial to understanding how these late-comers are rewriting the script of national identity-construction.

I have written elsewhere about the relationship of the post-Independence generation of Nigerian writers to the process of constructing a Nigerian post-colonial national identity, and in particular, "Soyinka's project of self-creation as autonomous agent of his own destiny, metonymic of nation-formation, (a)s an informing principle of African autobiography" (see Bryce). I concluded that analysis with the words: "For an alternative vision, and other 'possible types of relation' in the narrative of nationhood, we have to look to the new generation of women writing in Nigeria, to feminist critics, commentators and historians" (Bryce 17) Perhaps, indeed, we should begin with the caveat issued by Ogundipe-Leslie in the introduction to her collection of polemical essays: "[T]here is no such thing as 'the African woman.' She cannot be essentialised in that way; rather she has to be considered, analysed and studied in the complexity of her existential reality . . ." (9). Although made more than a decade ago, this call to the interrogation of seemingly "natural" categories all too often still goes unheeded in critical work on African women's writing. Underlying Ogundipe-Leslie's emphasis on the necessity of uncovering the "real" is a political critique of the primacy of Western academic theory and the consequent marginalization of African commentators; this critique is central to Oyewumi's project in *African Women and Feminism* (2003), where she has assembled a series of contestations of prevailing feminist paradigms, and in

her earlier book, *The Invention of Women* (1997), a sustained attempt at deconstruction of “the imposition of Western gender categories on (Yoruba) discourse” (ix). As the title indicates, we have moved here from empiricism to discourse—the idea, formulated by V. Y. Mudimbe, of Africa as invention, a contested space onto which have been projected a multiplicity of meanings, underpinned by the imperatives of colonialism, race, diaspora, and, in the case of Ogundice-Leslie, Oyewumi, et al., feminism.

But let us not over-state the case: between empiricism and discourse it is not an either/or, but more of a continuum. The “real” returns as the repressed of mainstream discourse, as a primary tool of contestation and reformulation. Among the contributors to *African Women and Feminism*, Nkiru Nzegwu locates her wide-ranging argument firmly in concrete, lived experience. Her interrogation of discursive categories is embodied through the use of proverbs and aphorisms; she and Abena Busia are both concerned with the politics of enunciation, and both their pieces were written for an audience. In the same volume, Chikwenye Ogunyemi speak to the question of how to find an appropriate discourse for the articulation of difficult or negative ideas, a theme anticipated by her survey of first- and second-generation Nigerian women’s writing, *Africa Wo/man Palava* (1996). Such testimonies not only insist on but exemplify alternative methodologies and epistemological paradigms in relation to African gender categories and discursive formulations. How we might relate these to the discussion of third-generation Nigerian women’s writing is part of the problematic of this paper—one I do not claim to have fully resolved.

The last statement is intended not only to cover my back, but to make visible a very real tension in the work of African feminist criticism—between “existential reality” and discursive construction, between materialist and idealist, or, to put it simply, between the “real” and the ideal. We are required perpetually to balance between overtheorizing of African realities, thereby effacing lived experiences and objectifying the very subjects whose agency we claim to promote; and undertheorizing in such a way as not to question received notions of “Africanness,” not to acknowledge that all identities are historically constituted and subject to change. A potent strategy in the attempt to speak of specific realities within a theoretical frame has been the incorporation of vernacular paradigms, as we have already noted in Oyewumi, as when she challenges the feminist truism of a global “sisterhood” as being predicated on the western nuclear family, and proposes instead that, for Africans, “the most profound sisterly relations are to be found in co-mothering [. . .] not reducible to biological motherhood” (*African Women* 13). Other examples are Henry Louis Gates’s use of “signifying” in the *The Signifying Monkey* and Soyinka’s deployment of Ogunnian principles in *Myth, Literature and the African World*. In *African Wo/man Palava*, Ogunyemi has attempted a similar maneuver in her recourse to Igbo history, situating the book as “part of the fallout from the explosive 1929 Igbo *Ogu Umunwanyi*, usually translated as the ‘Women’s War,’” but which she prefers to translate as “women’s struggle, or rather, in the contemporary discursive space, the ongoing African wo/man palava” (*Palava* 11). What this means for her argument overall is that she attempts to place it within a vernacular—Igbo/Yoruba—conceptual frame, from which she draws metaphors to demonstrate the specificity of Nigerian women’s writing. But it is precisely here, in, for example, her exploration of multiple feminine mythological figures and

aspects of indigenous cosmologies—*chi* and *ori*—as tropes for women’s power, that the tension between “real” and “ideal” comes into play. On the one hand, the vernacular concepts she offers illuminate the writing, positing new ways of reading women’s texts and lives. On the other, they indiscriminately recuperate all indigenous cultural tropes and historical figures in such a way as to romanticize and mythologize them. This undifferentiated approach to culture, whereby biological femaleness becomes the undisputed touchstone of all feminine endeavor, is problematic at best: it contradicts, for example, Oyewumi’s theoretical divergence from Western paradigms based on the assertion that gender differentiation does not in fact exist in most African languages and is therefore a Western imposition. Moreover, though they may seem to agree on the question of motherhood as a more appropriate trope than sisterhood, Oyewumi’s claim that this is “not reducible to biological motherhood” (*African Women* 13), appears to be contradicted by Ogunyemi’s counterpoising of “vaginal” and “clitoral discourse”—a biologist if ever there was one! (see *African Women* 232).

One more example to illustrate this tension, in which I too am fully implicated, between the “real” and the ideal. Ogunyemi declares that in her vernacular theory:

Motherhood or mothering will serve as the central trope for a literary theory of the novel under consideration [. . .] [it] engenders numerous connecting threads, resulting in an intricately woven lappa with patterns replicated with slight variations, as with the Yoruba *aso ebi*. The slight deviation in uniformity (difference) stimulates interest to the keen eye without upsetting it too much since the project is still grounded in the familiar. (*Palava* 9)

Citing and playing on Gates: “Signifying . . . is a metaphor for textual revision,” she goes on:

Aso ebi, that is, the signifying of one person upon another through textile revision, the generation of a spirit of togetherness [. . .] enhances our perception of the diversity in uniformity that is a concomitant feature of Nigerian life and the Nigerian novel by women. *Aso ebi*, then [. . .] helps establish womanism as a tradition and a code for communal solidarity. (*Palava* 10)²

The question that presents itself here is, how far can this be applied to novels by Nigerian women post-2000? While I endorse Ogunyemi’s construction of a system of signification that privileges women’s meanings, the difficulty I find is in the need that then arises to fit all women’s writing into her new vernacular framework. In this paper, while indebted to Ogunyemi for her decoding of such semiotic icons as *Mammywata*, *ogbanje*, *abiku*, and *ibeji*, and their tropological significance in women’s texts, I cannot say that I have found it possible to do this. The celebratory impulse that underlies Ogunyemi’s application of vernacular theory to Nigerian women’s writing is responsible, it seems to me, for a slippage at the level of critique. One area that is significantly occluded in Ogunyemi’s argument is that of form—of narrative structure and strategy as signifiers in their own right.

Because we cannot get way from it—recent novels by Nigerian women are predominantly realist, demonstrating little of the iconoclastic tendency we see in francophone women’s writing by authors such as Calixthe Beyala or Véronique

Tadjo, or the stylistic innovation of anglophone male precursors like Kojo Laing or Ben Okri. This is perhaps the most puzzling thing about them—their happy acceptance of the realist imperative to tell a coherent story from a more-or-less unified perspective, in well constructed English sentences. Magical or surrealist elements there may be, but the collective mood is one of conformity to the realist status quo. In this they are in tune with recent works by anglophone West African writers, like Nigerians Mohammed Umar's *Amina* (2005) and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) or the Sierra Leonean Aminatta Forna's *The Devil That Danced on the Water* (2002). The generic experimentation of Karen King-Aribisala's *Kicking Tongues* (1998), the linguistic adventurousness of Obodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* (2005), or the metaphysical alternatives of Delia Jarret-Macauley's *Moses, Citizen and Me* (2005) are conspicuously in the minority. When we look more closely at the novels under consideration, however, we can see that there is more to this realism than meets the eye. *The Icarus Girl*, which has been described as a "ghost story," hovers on the margins of realism, venturing the furthest into what we might call Tutuola-territory—a world of signs rooted in Yoruba cosmology. But in each of them there are traces of an alternative signifying system to that of novelistic realism, however obscured and however tangential. So what does it mean, that the writers have this system at their disposal, and yet on the whole prefer to remain within the realm of realist representation?

Pius Adesanmi, addressing "the thematic evolution of the francophone African novel," engages Mbembe's formulation of "age, *durée* and entanglement" as offering a way of analyzing the continuities between different historical moments embedded in fictional texts (Adesanmi, "Entanglement and *Durée*" 229). According to his scholarly exegesis, the three key terms, instead of marking significant breaks or ruptures, signify "multiple, overlapping modes of self-fashioning in which the past and the present function relationally." Of these, *age* constitutes a kind of envelope or "configuration of events," enclosing "multiple *durées*" of 'continuously unfolding fragments of experience'; while these in turn become *entangled* over a period of time (229). The three *durées* he identifies as characterizing the evolution of the francophone African novel are the power *durée*, the feminist *durée* and the diasporic *durée*. Such a formulation liberates us from the strict chronological boundaries of "generation" signaled by the title of this publication, and permits us to deal instead with continuities, "overlaps and interpenetrations" between first-, second- and third-generation Nigerian writers (229). So far, so *aso ebi*. The distinction I would make, however, is that these overlaps and interpenetrations are not limited to female novelists, who can more profitably be seen as part of a larger dialogue with both male and female writers of earlier generations. This intertextuality, to use an earlier and more familiar term, partly accounts, I would speculate, for the continuing realist bent of Nigerian women's novels. Furthermore, what Mbembe terms "the modalities of self-fashioning" (Adesanmi 228) are quite distinct in the writing; which is to say that I see in it a greater emphasis on the construction of individual subjecthood than on "womanism as a code for communal solidarity" (Ogunyemi, *Palava* 10). As the protagonist of *Everything Good Will Come* remarks at one point: "I didn't know how to think like an African woman. I only knew how to think for myself" (294). Neither rupture and discontinuity, then, nor sameness and familiarity serve to define the contours of third-generation women's writing, but rather an historical entanglement, so close as to be filial. From a forest of signs to a web of filiations?

Filial: taken together, these novels embody the effects of forty years of failed democratic rule and military dictatorship, corruption, state violence and war on those who were either children or unborn at the time of the events which would set Nigeria on its postcolonial path. With the exception of Ezeigbo, all the writers have been born since 1960, and thus colonialism, Independence, and the Civil War are “known” only by their reverberations through the subsequent decades. Enitan, heroine of *Everything Good* declares: “I was born in the year of my country’s independence, and saw how it raged against itself” (330). Kambili of *Purple Hibiscus* is born in the decade following Independence and a teenage witness to events of the ’80s; the story of the twins in *26a* takes them to Lagos in the 1980s when they are children; *Yellow Sun* is set before and during the Biafran War; Ofunne of *Sky-High Flames*, born in 1937, is a schoolgirl and young wife in the pre-Independence decade of the ’50s; the story of Eaglewoman (*House of Symbols*) and her family is set in the 1940s and ’50s; only *Icarus Girl* is nonspecific about the time, a generalized computer-age late twentieth century. The novels are, then, predominantly historical, self-consciously recreating specific moments in Nigeria’s recent or pre-Independence past. One reviewer goes so far as to say of Adichie: “I look with awe and envy at this young woman from Africa who is recording the history of her country [. . .].”⁷³ But are these novels history? Patently not. Like all good realism, they are powerfully evocative and convincing fictional dramas of individual characters set against realist renderings of a particular time and place. But if the narratives offer a new perspective—that of the postcolonial daughter—there is still the question of parentage.

Assessing the work of first- and second-generation women writers, Ogunyemi makes a definitive claim for one novel: “*Efuru* is the original on which other Nigerian women’s works keep signifying . . . the fabric whose replication turns the entire Nigerian women’s corpus into an *aso ebi*” (*Palava* 132). Nwapa, the “materfamilias” (132) and Emecheta and Ulasi are three Igbo women writers who “validate women’s role in Nigeria and ensure the emergence . . . of women novelists from other parts of the country”: Fakunle, Alkali, Obong. “Together, they have produced a textual *aso ebi* with their repetitions, modifications and individual signatures, clearly indicating that they belong together” (285). The project of creating an alternative canon of women’s writing is central to feminist criticism, and one with which it is impossible not to be in sympathy, but my task here is to ask: will it do? Does it help to elucidate the texts and the narrative contexts of the twenty-first century novels we are addressing? Is celebratory mystification (seductive as it is) in the cause of gender equality, an adequate response?

The problem here, the sticking point, is the founding of such a critique on sexual difference as a ready-constituted object, such that, enshrined in femininity are certain key characteristics deemed to be unchanging and essential. Ogunyemi’s decoding of feminine iconography in Nwapa et al., by affording the reader a greater degree of cultural competence, genuinely facilitates the task of interpretation. The mantle of *aso ebi* is not, however, thrown over male writers whose iconography is drawn from the same semiotic pool. Water goddesses play as important a role in Okigbo or Amadi as Nwapa, while *ogbanje/abiku* are an abiding motif from Okigbo, through Soyinka to Okri. Ogunyemi’s greatest service is in her detailed exposition of the way women writers have inflected such cultural markers so as to tell another side of the story, but in so doing, they are nonetheless deeply entangled

in the various *durées* of Nigerian fiction: following Adesanmi, the power *durée*, the feminist *durée* and the diasporic *durée*. How otherwise do we account for a feminist text like *I Saw the Sky Catch Fire* (1992), to date the most sustained fictional treatment of the *Ogu Umunwanyi*/Women's War, itself the cornerstone of Ogunyemi's theoretical framework—told partly in a woman's voice from a woman's point of view, and written by Obinkaram Echewa—a man? Whatever difficulties we may have with the homogenizing impulse of postcolonial and deconstructive theory, the idea of gender as *performance*, including linguistic performance, is one we cannot ignore.⁴ As Rebecca Saunders in a recent article on "Decolonizing the Body" suggests, theorists Butler and Bhabha do us (Africanist critics) an indispensable service in "mount[ing] critiques of the assumption of already constituted groups on which both gender and colonialism depend . . . [and] call[ing] for a shift in the object of analysis, which neither presumes pre-existent categories nor subjects representations to 'correction', but rather, traces critically the genealogy of their production" (142)

To return to the question of parentage, then, *Efuru* as ur-text of a women's canon is itself intertextually embedded with *Things Fall Apart*. It is my contention that it is Achebe's novel that provides the ground on which later writers, including Nwapa, endlessly signify, and the latest wave of women's writing is no exception, along with other key canonical texts.⁵ The echoes of Achebe's famous dictum—"I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans, acting on God's behalf, delivered them"—continue to reverberate in contemporary Nigerian fiction even when it departs most radically from the realist template (*Morning Yet on Creation Day*). In her discussion of postcolonial reading and recognition—the impulse to see one's own reflection, however distorted, in a text—Sarah Nuttall takes issue with the postcolonial paradigm of "writing back," the self-explanatory urge which she traces to Achebe:

When Chinua Achebe asks, "What does Africa mean to the world? When you see an African what does it mean to a white man?", the presupposition of the second question . . . is the recognition that a specifically African identity began as the product of a male European gaze . . . what is often at stake in Achebe's attempt to recover the integrity of African culture and to negotiate the forces that block this process is not the nature of African reality itself but how Africa has been represented in European colonial discourse. ("Reading, Recognition" 395)

Realism, the medium par excellence of this explanatory turn, has been called into question by numerous writers on the continent, for whom the canonical mode is inadequate for the representation of postmodern Africa, with its lived systemic violence. In francophone writing, according to Adesanmi, this has led to "a radical re-invention of textual idiom . . . the defamiliarisation of reality, the expansion of narrative space, the multiplication of voices to achieve polyphony, the use of neologisms . . . and, most importantly, a recourse to African oral discursive strategies [. . .]" (Adesanmi 233). All these strategies can be detected equally in certain anglophone writers—Nuttall's article offers Yvonne Vera, Nuruddin Farah and Amos Tutuola as examples—whose work is characterised by *unexpectedness* as opposed to familiarity, by being "constituted as living outside the gaze of the

(European) Other" (398) and as a result "the rewriting of the parameters of politics, history and selfhood which Achebe asks for and prefigures has already, at least at the level of consciousness, taken place" (399).

Which returns us to the question of realism and new Nigerian women's writing. I want to suggest that its realist narrative strategies may be read ambivalently, as simultaneously performing new identities and revisioning old ones. The homage to *Things Fall Apart* (*TFA*) may, in other words, be partly ironic since it points to so many absences, even while the template it set up still has efficacy. We see this template most clearly in Ezeigbo's *House of Symbols*, a continuation of the family saga she began in *Last of the Strong Ones* (1996), set in the early colonial period. That novel utilized a communal oral voice as a way of bearing witness to history and providing an Igbo point of view on colonialism. *Symbols* takes off with the rebirth of a fierce precolonial woman leader as the child of a Christian couple, signifying continuity of the historical struggle and women's collective values, despite religious conversion. The novel gives a picture of pre-Independence accommodation with the colonial regimen, including syncretism of traditional and Christian religious precepts and practices. As in *TFA*, Christianity attracts the weak and those ill-served by tradition; in this case, the child's mother has converted to save her twin babies from being treated as an abomination. *I Saw The Sky Catch Fire*, which moves back and forth between present—the early '60s, with the grandson about to leave for education in the US—and past—the Women's War of 1929, as related by the grandmother. *Symbols* incorporates the past in the present through reincarnation, and both novels bear witness to a fully functioning society challenged by a newly imposed system that threatens but does not destroy the indigenous system. Perhaps because of its place in the center of a trilogy, the narrative lacks a novelistic structure, meandering descriptively in the present tense with no apparent end in sight and stopping abruptly without any closure. While this might also be an extension of the oral mode adopted in the earlier novel, the strength of the narrative is in the close attention to detail rather than the drama of event, the leisurely exposition achieving something close to the intimacy of speech. *Sky-High Flames*, set in the same period—the '40s and '50s—suffers similarly from a lack of narrative pace but without the benefit of a confident and well-realized storytelling voice, while awkward style is further exacerbated by poor editing. The novel concerns a young village woman, Ofunne, whose life, wholly determined by other people's needs, is transformed by education.⁶ Trapped by marriage at seventeen to ease her family's fortunes, Ofunne suffers her husband's unfaithfulness, catches syphilis from him, loses her baby, and eventually earns the right to go back to school. Although the ending makes a clumsy attempt at suggesting an intervention by Onishe, the river goddess, there is no sustained use of metaphor, and the "sky-high flames" of the title have no resonance within the text. Although Ofunne's thoughts are at times rendered in italics, the narrative does not offer a deeper level of consciousness that would constitute interiority.

These two narratives, the least successful in terms of novelistic structure and linguistic facility, are nonetheless intrinsically interesting at the level of content. The fact that neither is published by a mainstream/overseas publisher has some bearing on this (*Symbols* is published by Oracle Books, Lagos, *Flames* by PublishAmerica, a print-on-demand US outfit.) As an editor myself, I know firsthand the degree of intervention in and reworking of promising African novels

that publishers can resort to to make them “publishable.” What this means, in effect, is to make them conform more closely to an educated reader’s expectations of the novel form—not only correcting grammar and syntax, but restructuring and rewriting. While I am in no way suggesting that any of the novels under discussion were subject to such treatment, there is nonetheless a conspicuous difference in terms of presentation between these two and the five others (published in the UK and US).⁷ The tributes routinely paid to editors by novelists testify to the importance of a sustaining relationship with a skillful and sympathetic professional—Adichie calls hers at HarperCollins “brilliantly discerning,” and Oyeyemi says she’s “so glad my first novel was edited by someone who is sensitive to what I’m trying to say.”⁸ The machinery of publishing and distribution is an important aspect of the material culture in which books are produced, and determines to a large extent what gets read, reviewed, and taught in the academy. This paper is self-confessedly part of that machinery: as an Africanist scholar based in the Caribbean, I make occasional book-raids in Nigeria, where I grab what I can find in the few bookshops available in Lagos and Ibadan. Otherwise, like most readers outside Africa, my consumption of African fiction depends on the multinational publishing houses and the “discerning” agents and editors who select and publish African writing. Not only is this paper, which purports to deal with third-generation Nigerian writing, shaped by the economic flows of the global marketplace and the demands of (Western) academic discourse, the topic itself is already overdetermined before we even begin to speak. Of the six authors, Ezeigbo and Adichie currently live in Nigeria, Oyeyemi and Evans, children of mixed marriages, live in Britain, and Anuah and Atta have migrated to the US. At least three have benefited from writers’ retreats and programs outside Nigeria, and at least four were educated abroad. It is evident that we are in the purview of the diasporic *durée*, even when this is not explicitly addressed in the work, and certainly the writers are aware of the extent to which class determines perspective. Olanna in *Yellow Sun* muses: “How much did one know of the true feelings of those who did not have a voice?” (250). And Enitan in *Everything Good*, after experiencing prison, concludes: “I promised myself that I would no longer speak for women in my country, because, quite simply, I didn’t know them all” (284). Yet the stories their authors are driven to tell show an acute awareness of multiple perspectives—not only of class, but of generation and gender too. Grace Ameh, the activist journalist in *Everything Good*, declares: “In this state we’re living in, where words are so easily expunged, from our constitution, from publications, public records, the act of writing is activism” (262).

I want to look now at this activism and consider the narrative strategies through which it is dramatized. Ogunyemi closes her book with a prescription and a call to action:

The palava is not whether people should be liberated, for that point is taken for granted by the writers’ courage in tackling different manifestations of oppression of women, men, and children. The moot points are how to free the children from the trauma of racism and ethnicism, stem the terror of militarism, totalitarianism, and political chaos, tackle the poverty engendered by international economics, and eliminate the waste in human resources resulting from sexism. (330)

This is a heavy burden for a writer to carry, but there is no doubt that underlying the novels is a protest against what Nigeria has become—"a lawless outpost of modern sensibilities" (Adeeko 4), ruled by a corrupt self-seeking elite. By the mid-'90s, Enitan can say: "There were times when I felt my hand leprous bringing out my Nigerian passport . . . what was the country I loved? The country I would fight for? Should it have borders?" (*Everything Good* 299). The titles of earlier novels by women already indicate the extent to which the power *durée* and the feminist *durée* are entangled—*The Stillborn* (1985), *Kicking Tongues* (1998), *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996)—but the new novels take the critique of patriarchy further. In these novels, we see Ogunyemi's catalogue of "moot points" played out on the bodies and in the lives of women who no longer have anything to gain by dissembling, by avoiding confrontation. They offer a subjective, individualized point of view on the violent distortions of the body politic, meeting visceral pain with clear-eyed pragmatism.

Nduka Otiono, reviewing Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, says: "Two historic experiences have continued to dominate the consciousness of contemporary Nigerian writers . . . The first is the Nigerian Civil war of the 1960s and the second, the reign of military dictatorship, especially in the 1990s" (70). At the same time, Biyi Bandele Thomas, asked about his screen adaptation of Achebe's *Girls at War*, replies: "I think that in recent Nigeria history, the Civil War certainly holds a key to a lot of things and . . . all too often what we have done, especially as writers, certainly as a society, is we have tried to unremember it . . . we have to kind of open those wounds and look at things, study them very carefully and we can move on" (21). Although *Yellow Sun* is the only one of these novels to treat of the Civil War head on, their location in the 1980s speaks clearly to an examination of the historical forces that have brought about the distortions of the present. *Purple Hibiscus* takes the form of a bildungsroman set in a society in which attitudes have hardened, where violence that was external has become entrenched in the family. The opening sentence signals its entanglement with Achebe and his project of reclamation, but relocates it firmly in the home: "Things started to fall apart at home" says Kambili, "when my brother Jaja did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room [. . .]" (3). Kambili's story is one of disquieting domestic horror, with a father who, while maintaining the love and respect of his community, beats and tortures his wife and children to a point where his wife is driven to an irrevocable act of self-defence. Whereas in *TFA*, Okonkwo's beating of his wife is an abomination against Ala, for which he is taken to task by the elders, in Papa's case, there are no outside checks and balances. His god-like status in Kambili's eyes is bolstered by his role as publisher of the one truly outspoken newspaper in the country. When his editor, closely modeled on *Newswatch* editor Dele Giwa, is blown up by a letter bomb, Papa is a broken man who takes out his rage on the body of his daughter, beating her almost to death. The novel offers two possible alternatives to patriarchal violence: Mama's passive aggression, and Auntie Ifeoma's happy, harmonious family in Nsukka, where she struggles as a low paid academic. In thus pinpointing two of the key sites of resistance to the excesses of military rule—journalism and the universities—the novel suggests at least a possibility of change. This is important considering that it closes with Jaja in jail for his mother's crime, clearly indicating that the price of patriarchal power politics is being paid by the next generation.

The purple hibiscus of the title, which grows in Auntie Ifeoma's garden, is counterpoised with the red hibiscus of home. It is metonymic of a series of oppositions on which the novel is structured: silence and speech, repression and spontaneity, state violence (for example, public executions) and family abuse, censorship and press freedom, harsh and gentle versions of masculinity. In particular, it offers the first of a series of child pairs we find in these novels: Kambili and her brother Jaja, whose relationship, though twin-like in its closeness, is distorted by the violence visited on them both: "His eyes are too full of guilt to really see me, to see his reflection in my eyes, the reflection of my hero, the brother who tried always to protect me the best he could" (305). In an article in which she discusses the role of children in postcolonial (mainly Indian) literature, Sujala Singh posits that while the child's point of view

becomes a means of commenting on violence legitimized at the level of the nation-state, often through compliant parental or familial silences [. . .] the relationship between self and society is far from straightforward as the "self" of the child marks a rupture between adults and nation states. It is the bourgeois family or bourgeois adults who mirror the often corrupt, communal, casteist values of the nation state. (15)

In particular, we note that *God Of Small Things* "privileges the central consciousness of . . . twins" (14), in a narrative that closely parallels the concerns of *Hibiscus*. The brother-sister dyad in these two novels widens the scope of subjectivity so as to include both genders, rather than privileging either femininity or an individual consciousness. Together, they bear collective witness at an intimate level to what befalls each of them, and their survival is predicated on the survival of the other.

The recurrence of the motif of twins, or a twin-like relationship, as the predominant trope in five of the seven novels under discussion is so insistent as to require a pause. When the Zimbabwean writer Dambudzo Marechera claimed for himself the role of "doppelgänger" in African literature he signaled his sense of his own difference from the political and literary establishment, from canonized writing and from all sanctioned and "official" forms of culture (see Marechera). What is the role of the doppelgänger/twins in the writing of third-generation Nigerian women? In most of them, with the exception of *The Icarus Girl*, the doppelgänger is far from being an unsettling and disturbing stranger, rather the intimate other half of a protagonist in quest of her own identity and self-hood. It embodies the use of the feminine double both as shadow or negative to the paradigmatic male protagonist of Nigerian fiction, and also as double of the self. The doppelgänger, in other words, comes in from the margins of consciousness to inhabit the body of the protagonist—both literally and figuratively—while at the same time, the text of contemporary social reality is haunted by traces of a repressed past. That past is preeminently the Civil War: its legacy of violation, both of people and democratic forms of organization. It is also the elevation, through violence, of a patriarchal elite on the backs of ordinary Nigerians, but especially women.

Reviewing *Icarus Girl* as "a too cleverly-told tale," Bruce King remarks crossly that it confuses two myths, that of twins and that of *abiku*: "The difference between these two myths does not trouble Jessie nor, seemingly, Oyeyemi" (73). But this confusion, while it may not be deliberate, can be read as a transformation of sorts.

Abiku, with its association with death, is a negative icon in Nigerian literature, from Soyinka and Clark to Okri. For the latter, it metonymically represents Nigeria itself, the “*abiku* country” as Azaro’s father calls it, which, “like the spirit child . . . keeps coming and going.” (Okri, *Famished Road* 478). In these novels, the *abiku*—the child who appears and disappears—becomes the child who appears unexpectedly and stays, as, for example, Enitan’s unsuspected brother in *Everything Good*, or Baby in *Yellow Sun*, the child borne by another woman and mothered by Olanna. And in *Icarus Girl*, the *abiku* that haunts Jessie is grounded through the use of *ibeji*, the Yoruba twin statues whereby a dead twin is placated, thus freeing her of her doppelgänger so that she can be herself. Possibly what we are seeing is the beginning of a process of revisioning the tragic fate of the “*abiku* country” through the feminization of the realist novel and the insistence on another way of seeing. *Everything Good*’s Enitan describes herself as “a reborn spirit, like my brother” (10). Left an only child by her brother’s death, she doubles with Sheri, the girl next door, who, like Jessie (*Icarus Girl*), and the twins Bessi and Georgia in *26a*, is a “half-caste.” Ogunyemi points to the recuperation of power by childless women in Nigerian fiction through identification with the *Mammywata* myth, a syncretic version of the indigenous water goddess, exhibiting features associated with the colonizer: “The emerging figure of the *Mammywata* encapsulated the perception of the biracial girl as the epitome of beauty and the bringer of the good things of life” (29). Biracialism here, the merging of two cultural identities, becomes another facet of the twin phenomenon; biracial children, like twins, can be seen as “half and half children,” alternately split and doubled.

Everything Good is a bildungsroman that follows the development of two girls, Enitan and Sheri, from 1971 to 1995. Like *Hibiscus*, where “things fall apart” on a particular day, on “the third Sunday of September . . . everything changed” (12). This change is a result of the meeting between Enitan and Sheri as children, which leads, later, to Sheri’s rape in the park, and to an adult relationship in which the consequences of this rape are played out. Sheri, infertile as a result of self-aborting the pregnancy that ensued, equates to the childless woman of earlier women’s fiction. But where this has hitherto been seen as a tragic loss recuperable only by the woman dedicating herself to a powerful goddess (*Efuru*), or persuading her husband to have tests (*Behind the Clouds*), here it is not only irrevocable but incontrovertibly the fault of male perpetrators. While Enitan struggles to realize herself within marriage, Sheri unashamedly becomes the mistress of a powerful man who doesn’t require her to have children. Both find the strength to change their condition, though not before Enitan has asked herself some hard questions and articulated her conclusions:

I’d seen the metamorphosis of women, how age slowed their walks, stilled their expressions, softened their voices, distorted what came out of their mouths. They hid their discontent so that other women wouldn’t deprive them of it. By the time they came of age, millions of personalities were channeled into about three prototypes: strong and silent, chatterbox but cheerful, weak and kind-hearted. All the rest were known as horrible women. I wanted to tell everyone, ‘! Am! Not! Satisfied with these options!’ (200)

In spite of discontent and disillusion, the tone of the novel is upbeat and joyful, so energized as to be infectious. Atta’s dialogue is witty and plangent, the narrative

pace quick, inner and outer worlds interwoven through the sheer juxtaposition of events, told through a series of aphorisms—proverbial wisdom as smart-ass storytelling. The novel ends with a reversal that fundamentally rewrites the script of Nigerian pessimism, the lament for the “*abiku* country.” Enitan, rejoicing at her father’s release from detention, dances at the side of the road, attracting the attention of a *danfo* driver. When he reprimands her: “Nothing good will come to you!” she turns the pidgin curse back on him: “Tell him, *a da*. It will be good. Everything good will come to me” (335). To appreciate how much this is a statement of faith and a refusal of despair, we have to keep step with Enitan as she traverses Nigeria’s post-Independence history in its entirety. Born at Independence, she is seven at the outbreak of the Civil War, and all subsequent events in her personal life are shadowed by the disruptions and upheavals in the body politic, so that her experiences are throughout a jumping off point for pithy comments on the state of the nation. The Civil War, however, though a foundational crisis, remains shadowy and tangential, and though Enitan is aware of its importance, she also confesses to ignorance. Though her father talks about his friend, Uncle Alex, “how he’d known beforehand there would be a civil war; how he’d joined the Biafrans and died fighting for them even though he hated guns” (10), it is only much later, when she has an Igbo lover, that Enitan acknowledges the gap in her understanding:

It was terrible that we’d had different experiences of the Civil War. In university, I finally acknowledged the holocaust that was Biafra, through memoirs and history books, and pictures of limbless people; children with their stomachs bloated from kwashiorkor and their rib cages as thin as leaf veins [. . .] atrocities of the human spirit that only a civil war could generate, while in Lagos we had carried on as though it were happening in a different country. (86)

This frank admission is all the more startling when Atta reveals in an interview that her aunt was married to Christopher Okigbo, of whom “Uncle Alex” is the merest trace (see Atta, “Something Good Comes”). Adichie’s second novel, *Yellow Sun*, fills in this gap, being an ambitious attempt at a fictionalization of the Civil War years, from the point of view of several characters living in Biafra. The novel signals its entanglement with previous fiction in its epigraph taken from an Achebe poem, and in the page of references at the end. Though the “Biafran novel” has been something of a rite of passage for Nigerian writers of the two previous generations, Adichie is the first to approach it entirely as *historical* fiction. Buchi Emecheta, while not having experienced the Civil War first-hand, is old enough to remember it, and her *Destination Biafra* imagines an alternative and more conventionally “heroic” role for women in it. The world imagined by *Yellow Sun* is a smaller one, of incremental retreat, minute daily adaptations and personal accommodations that, taken together, spell a story of collective hardship and suffering. The novel’s method is similar to those previously discussed in moving backwards and forwards between present and the recent past: the late and early ‘60s, and its shifting chronology is mirrored in shifting points of view. The central consciousness is that of Olanna, the beautiful one of a pair of twins, whose sister, Kainene, undergoes an *abiku* fate (or *ogbanje* in Igbo iconography), disappearing at the end of the novel never to be seen again. These two are carefully balanced by their male partners, Odenigbo, a radical lecturer, and Richard, an upper-class Englishman who speaks Igbo and longs for assimilation. Point of view is focalized through

Olanna, Richard and Ugwu, a young village boy who becomes Odenigbo's servant and the ultimate witness to the war. This is accomplished through a sleight of hand cleverly reworked from Achebe's *The History of the Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, the district officer's version of Okonkwo's story at the end of *TFA*. The main narrative is interspersed with excerpts from a different, parallel narrative-in-process known as "The Book," which, since he is a writer, we at first attribute to Richard. On the last page, however, we realize that the story is Ugwu's, pieced together from all the stories that collectively make up the novel, its title appropriated from Richard: *The World Was Silent When We Died*. This device allows Adichie gracefully to relinquish her position as narrative authority, in favor of a spokesman for the voiceless—which she does not claim to be.

Yellow Sun is a complex work that deserves more space than I can give it here, so I will return to the question of realism and iconography which links these novels together. The middle-class personae of the novel are resolutely materialist, regarding metaphysical explanations—as when Ugwu warns against witchcraft—with unconcealed impatience. Nor is there an obvious metaphorical substratum to prompt a symbolic reading, which, indeed, the narrative seems rather to steer us away from. While we must, therefore, beware of imposing on the novel a reading which seems to be discouraged at the level of both form and content, it is nonetheless possible, by placing it in dialogue with other texts, to discern a level of meaning or entanglement which emerges intertextually. Turning once again to Ogunyemi for a glossing of the Igbo *ogbanje* figure, she explains:

"*Ogbanje* refers to the iconoclast, the one who runs back and forth from one realm of existence to another, always longing for a place other than where s/he is. It also refers to the mystical, unsettled condition of simultaneously existing in several spheres" (62). The writer Catherine Acholonu adds to this: "A child is referred to as *ogbanje* when his behaviour is ambiguous, when he is difficult to deal with, and above all when there are indications of a dual personality" (103). According to her, the poet and Biafran soldier Christopher Okigbo was a quintessential *ogbanje* who exhibited all its features—most obviously a sudden and violent death, but also being the reincarnation of a water spirit, and therefore "gifted with extraordinary beauty, height and charm [. . .] very strong and often exhibits great artistic talents" (104).

Okigbo was, of course, a devotee of the water goddess Idoto, and his poetry is filled with images of water spirits, including a love affair with the "water maid." Okigbo can be discerned in *Yellow Sun* in the figure of Okeoma, the poet who visits Odenigbo in Nsukka and is captivated by Olanna's beauty, describing her as a "mermaid" and taking her as his muse. Like Okigbo, he is killed fighting for Biafra. But *ogbanje* characteristics are shared by other characters in the novel. Acholonu tells us that "an *ogbanje* child possesses a pact with the underworld called *iyi uwa* . . . his 'life-secret' and it may be a smooth, round pebble, sand, rags, hair or other peculiar items, hidden under the earth" (108). Richard's manuscript, *The Roped Pots*, hidden in the ground by his houseboy when he escapes from Nsukka, possesses this iconographic resonance, being also his "life-secret" in the sense of his quest to make sense of his life through writing. But it is Kainene, above all, who ventures across enemy lines at the end of the war and never returns, who signifies *ogbanje*, both in the suddenness of her disappearance and in its ambivalence. Much as they search for her, no trace of her is ever found, and Olanna is left with no resort but

the metaphysics of traditional wisdom. When she consults a *dibia* and performs the prescribed actions to no avail, Odenigbo, in conformity with the prevailing realist tone of the novel, reproves her: "That *dibia* was just hungry for goat meat. You can't believe in that," to which she retorts: "I do believe in it. I believe in everything. I believe in anything that will bring my sister home" (433). Perhaps here we see a deliberate chink in the realist edifice which Adichie has built around her fictionalized projection of the war. In the end, she seems to say, realism cannot account for everything people experienced then, or since. Atta seems to come to the same conclusion: "Anyone who experienced such a trauma would understand. The aftermath could be a reincarnation. One life was gone and I could either mourn it or begin the next. How terrifying and sublime to behave like a god with the power to revive myself. This was the option I chose" (*Everything Good*, 333). *Yellow Sun* concludes with a woman wandering in search of the lost part of herself, casting around for ways of surviving this truncation of the spirit. The novel serves as a subjectivization of the violent distortion of "customary practice"—the basic norms governing human interaction—brought about by postcolonial wrangling over the emperor's cast-off clothes. It does not analyze, it dramatizes the emergence of new, postcolonial identities, while holding on to the possibility of something surviving from the past. "Our people say that we all reincarnate, don't they?" asks Olanna. "When I come back in my next life, Kainene will be my sister" (433). Thus, a belief taken for granted in *Symbols*, whose protagonist is a reincarnated spirit, is painstakingly worked for in *Yellow Sun*, whose protagonist must undergo the failure of rationalism before she can accept alternative spiritual possibilities.

If with *Yellow Sun* we are taken into the heart of the malaise of contemporary Nigeria through a confrontation with the past, with the two final novels, we move into a new sphere: that of the diasporic *durée*. In *Icarus Girl* and *26a*, the motif of twins, of halving and doubling, is complicated further by the motifs of migration, displacement, and metissage.⁹ The doubling effect of biracialism simultaneously presupposes a loss of the spiritual link to Nigeria through physical displacement. Both these novels are set in London, and both contain interludes in Nigeria when the characters are brought face to face with troubling aspects of their own identities. For Jessie (*Icarus*), it is the figure of TillyTilly, the ghost child who follows her to England and haunts her with increasingly destabilizing results, eventually revealing that she is Jessie's dead twin sister and wants to take her place in the world of the living. For Georgia and Bessie, it is Georgia's near rape by the gate-man of their Lagos home, of which she is unable to speak, and which triggers a depression to which she ultimately succumbs by taking her own life. For a period of a year, Bessi too is haunted, feeling her twin settle inside her in a reversal of Tutuola's "half-bodied baby," until she is ready to inhabit the spirit world. The spiritual realm is comfortably accommodated in these two diasporan novels, stretching the realist frame in directions which irresistibly bring Tutuola to mind. For example, *26a* makes use of an embedded folktale, told by the grandfather when Bessi and Georgia are taken to visit their grandparents in Aruwa, Benin State. He tells them that "a long time ago" people believed twins were fathered by the devil on witches, and goes on to illustrate with the story of Onia and Ode. "Ode was second—they set her on fire. When Ode was burnt . . . Onia got sick and wouldn't eat at all until Ode's ghost entered her body . . . But Ode could only stay for one year because that's how long it took for the soul to be ready to leave the earth"

(26a, 63). By this means, he foretells what will happen to Georgia, the second twin, and Bessi, whose body her ghost inhabits after death. But the Tutuolan element in these novels is more than the embedding of “folktale” or the incorporation of iconography. As Sarah Nuttall proposes: “Rather than starting with the self and the concept of recognition is the possibility that through reading one might be taken to a self. One modality of this trajectory . . . is ghostliness” (400). She goes on to ask, “Where do ghosts fit into the dynamic of self and otherness?” and suggests they offer “a self as unconstrained by conventional modes of writing the self” (400). The ghostly twin in these two novels, then, offers the possibility of change, of access to a realm outside the material where selves may be remade. It also powerfully embodies the *haunting* of the diasporic Nigerian, whether exile or half-and-half child, by the place from which they have been ousted. Given that Nigerian emigration in the last decade has been driven by the political and economic breakdown of the society during the Abacha years, this haunting is more than sentimental or nostalgic, denoting a very real dissatisfaction with the condition of migrancy.

If *26a* and *Icarus Girl* paradoxically hold out a more confident hope of spiritual regeneration than *Yellow Sun*, is this because they have shifted ground from Nigeria to a diasporic experience contingent on the forging of new identities? For it is evident that both are concerned with the extent of a possible diasporic identification with Nigerianness. In Lagos, Bessi asks her mother, “Are we proper Nigerians now?” to which she replies: “Half your blood is proper Nigerian, and blood is more than skin.” Bessi then asks Georgia, “How Nigerian shall we be then?” (26a, 58). For Jess, the whole conundrum of both being split and having a double “all STARTED in Nigeria” (*Icarus* 6). She describes the feeling as “like . . . being stretched” and says: “I don’t want to be changed that way; I can’t be. It might hurt” (*Icarus* 242). But the most hurtful experience she has to undergo is TillyTilly’s taunting her: “There is no homeland—there is nowhere where there are people who will not *get* you . . . Stop looking to belong, half-and-half child. Stop. There is nothing. There is only me and I have caught you” (*Icarus* 236). As the ghost of Georgia says as she struggles to insert herself into her living twin, “Inhabitation is not an easy thing” (26a, 209). Conversely, Jess struggles back from the spirit world into her own body from which she has been ousted by TillyTilly, “back into herself. Jessamy Harrison woke up and up and up” (302). Where there is no homeland, inhabitation becomes the painful alternative: denied the right of “belonging,” ghostly presences and haunting are intrinsic to the diasporic condition.

The cumulative result of reading these seven novels together is to allow us to draw some tentative conclusions about third-generation women’s writing as it is emerging in Nigeria. We learn from them that identity is far from being a given, that older identities are more of a hindrance than a help to negotiating a postcolonial reality. That women’s determination to negotiate this reality through fiction is unstoppable, and that they do so in full recognition of the fictions which have preceded them and have, so far, defined the terrain on which articulation can take place. Rather than contesting or opposing this definition, they enter into a dialogue that allows them to redefine it, using the terms and techniques of preceding generations while calling into question their interpretation of the past.¹⁰ Though realism is their preferred mode, it is a realism that bears the trace of preexisting nonrealist modes of expression and belief, however deeply buried. Above all, through these novels we come to understand the price being paid by the present generation for

the failure of the founding fathers and their inheritors. That this is not exclusively a feminine project is evident—Helon Habila's second novel, *Measuring Time* (2007), also about twins, is described as “the story of a community in northern Nigeria in the 1980s and early 90s [. . .] woven into a wider sociopolitical narrative, touching on education, responsibility, the colonial inheritance and the mythic substratum of folklore” (Giles Foden 2). But the fact that more women than ever before are writing, getting published and being read, in Nigeria and outside, means that this time around, the story of Nigeria will not be gendered masculine.

NOTES

1. For a taxonomy of African women's writing, see Arndt. Her categories—“reformist,” “transformative,” and “radical” tendencies in African women's writing—point to an increasing outspokenness and explicitness in addressing social issues affecting women, but take as their defining criterion the writer's position in respect to men/male characters. I prefer to avoid imposing such a narrowly defined boundary on the discussion of women's textual production, and to pay attention rather to narrative *strategies*. In this, I am indebted to Pius Adesanmi's scholarly exposition of Mbembe's terms “age, *duree*, entanglement” as offering a way of analyzing the continuities between different historical moments embedded in fictional texts. See Adesanmi.

2. “Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom [. . .]. Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power [. . .]” (72).

3. Comment on cover of Fourth Estate edition of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, 2006, by Edmund White.

4. I'm thinking here of Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex.”*

5. It is not to be overlooked, however, that Sefi Atta refers to Flora Nwapa as “an icon” and Buchi Emecheta as “the most renowned Nigerian woman writer internationally.” She also describes herself as “writing from the perspective of their daughters.” See “Something Good Comes to Nigerian Literature,” her interview with Ike Anya.

6. As a narrative of feminine self-realization through education it recalls Flora Nwapa's *Women Are Different* (1986) and Zaynab Alkali's *The Virtuous Woman* (1987), as opposed to education as a tool of cultural distortion, as in Simi Bedford's *Yoruba Girl Dancing* (1991) and the recently published *The Book of Not* by Tsitsi Dangarembga (2006).

7. See www.absolutewrite.com/forums/showthread/, which claims that Azuah's US publisher operates on a print-on-demand basis and does not edit: “In reality PublishAmerica does not read the submissions they receive and will publish anything sent their way” (14/2/07).

8. See Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Author's Note, 436; and Oyeyemi, *The Icarus Girl*, Acknowledgements, 305.

9. Ogunyemi, indeed, describes *Kehinde*, a novel by the second-generation diasporic writer Buchi Emecheta, as celebrating an alternative diasporic world, in which “[t]he *ogbanje* enigma conflates with the been-to phenomenon in the duality of *Kehinde*, the character, and *Kehinde* the novel” (283). *Kehinde*, it hardly need be pointed out, is the name given by Yorubas to a younger twin.

10. Adichie says in an interview, “Many of the stories we tell have already been told. It is the freshness we bring to the re-telling that matters.” See “A Hibiscus Blooming under the African Sun,” her interview with Adaure Achumba.

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