The Greenhouse Effect of Colonial Education in Africa
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Abstract
This paper argues that education in Africa is victim of a colonial and colonising epistemology. Whatever appellation we give it, this epistemology takes the form of science as ideology and hegemony. With rhetoric on the need to be competitive internationally, the elite have modelled education in Africa after educational institutions in Europe and North America, with little attempt at domestication. This journey, endowed with the mission of annihilation or devaluation of African creativity, agency and value systems, leads to an internalised sense of inadequacy. It has compelled Africans to "lighten their darkness" both physically and metaphorically for the gratification of colonising and hegemonic others. The paper argues that the future of education in Africa can be hopeful through a meticulous and systematic creative process of cultural restoration and endogenisation, in tune with the negotiation and navigation of myriad possibilities in the lives of Africans small and big, poor and rich, rural and urban, and in between. If Africa is to be party in a global conversation on knowledge production and consumption, it is appropriate that it does so with the interests and concerns of Africans as guiding principle.

Introduction
Education is the inculcation of facts as knowledge and also a set of values used in turn to appraise the knowledge in question. When the values are not appropriate or broadly shared, the knowledge acquired is rendered irrelevant and becomes merely cosmetic or even violent. In colonial Africa, the right of conquest of the colonists over Africans – body, mind and soul – meant real or attempted epistemicide – the decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies in Africa with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror. The result has been education through schools and other formal institutions of learning in Africa largely as a process of making infinite concessions to the outside – mainly the western world. Such education has tended to emphasise mimicry over creativity, and the idea that little worth learning about, even by Africans, can come from Africa. It champions static dichotomies and boundedness of cultural worlds and knowledge systems. And,

introduced in colonial contexts, it serves forces with ambitions of dominance. It privileges teleology and analogy over creative negotiation by Africans of the multiple encounters, influences and perspectives evident throughout their continent. It thus impoverishes the complex realities of those it attracts or represses as students. To be relevant, education must recognise Africans as creative agents, who are actively modernising their indigenous ways and endogenising their modern ways.

In this paper I propose to show how the values acquired during the colonial era that teach the superiority of the coloniser set the tone for the imbibing of knowledge and continue to dominate education and life in postcolonial Africa. The result is that the knowledge needed for African development is rendered irrelevant by a limited and limiting set of values. Hence, the need for Africa to revisit the dominant colonial epistemological underpinnings that persist and that are not sensitive, beyond lip service, to the predicaments and expectations of ordinary Africans and the endogenous epistemologies from which they draw. "Endogenous" is used here in opposition to the rather limited and limiting notion of "indigenous", to evoke the dynamism, negotiability, adaptability and capacity for autonomy and interdependence, creativity and innovation in African societies and beyond. It counters the widespread and stubborn misrepresentation of African cultures as static, bounded and primitive, and of Africa as needing the benevolence and enlightenment of colonialism and Cartesian rationalism to come alive (Fonlon 1965; p'Bitek 1989; Ki-Zerbo 1992, 2003; Ela 1994; Hountoundji 1997; Crossman and Devisch 1999, 2002; Crossman 2004; Nabudare 2006; Devisch 2007).

Dominant and Dormant Epistemologies

Those who move or are moved tend to position themselves or be positioned in relation to those they meet. Who gets to move why and how determines whose version of what encounters is visible or invisible in local and global marketplaces of ideas. Those with the power to cultivate and enforce ambitions of dominance define and humble in their "culture game" (Oguibe 2004). Hence the African proverb which states that "until the lions [prey] produce their own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter" (Achebe 2000:73). To educate in postcolonial Africa in the 21st century, without making visible the dignity, creativity and humanity of Africans, is to perpetuate Joseph Conrad's imagery of Africa as "heart of darkness", where everything is "very quiet" and where visiting "humans" – *real* humans from Europe, that is – feel like "wanderers on a prehistoric earth" (Conrad, [1899] 1995:90). The production, positioning and consumption of knowledge is far from a neutral, objective and disinterested process. It is socially and politically mediated by hierarchies of

humanity and human agency imposed by particular relations of power (Bourdieu 2004:18-21). Far from being a "liberating force" that celebrates "achievement" over "ascription", education "plays a critical role in the reproduction of the distribution of cultural capital and thus in the reproduction of the structure of social space". It is drawn upon by the elite to stake claims "in the struggle for the monopoly on dominant positions" and serves as a "legitimating illusion". The elite are its primary victims and primary beneficiaries (Bourdieu 1996:5).

Elsewhere, I have raised the issue of unequal encounters between the highly mobile dominant colonial epistemology and popular endogenous epistemologies of Africa in connection with witchcraft and the occult (Nyamnjoh 2001). In an earlier version (Nyamnjoh 2004a) of the present paper, I explored epistemological issues in relation to education in Africa, which issues I revisit here with greater depth and nuisance. The colonial epistemology reduces science to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' preoccupation with theories of *what* the universe is, much to the detriment of theories of *why* the universe is. In the social sciences, it privileges scholarship by analogy (Mamdani 1996:9-16) and the "ethnographic present" – hence the popularity of liberal anthropology as handmaiden of colonialism – over and above historical ethnography and continuity in the lives of the "primitive" "natives" it seeks to enlighten (Wolfe 1999:43-68). By rendering science "too technical and mathematical", this epistemology has made it difficult for those interested in questions of *why* to keep pace with developments in scientific theories (Hawking 1988:171-175) and increased the risk of branding as "intellectual imposture" the appropriation of scientific concepts by philosophers and other "non-scientists" (Sokal and Bricmont 1998). Such a narrow view of science has tended to separate the universe into nature and culture, the physical and the metaphysical or religious, and to ignore the fact that people are ordinarily "not content to see events as unconnected and inexplicable". In other words, this epistemology has little room for popular cravings to understand "the underlying order in the world" (Hawking 1988:1-13). Although science has since moved beyond this limited version to contemplate "the big bang and black holes", and "a quantum theory of gravity" (Hawking 1988), its narrow and hegemonic "certainties" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continue to make waves and inform the social sciences, attitudes, policies and relations in general.

I have argued that this colonial and colonising epistemology has serious weaknesses, especially when compared with the popular and more endogenous epistemologies of the African continent. It tends to limit reality to appearances (the observable, the here and now, the ethnographic present, the quantifiable), which it then seeks to justify (without explaining) with meta-narratives claiming objectivity and a more epistemologically secure truth status. Under this kind of

epistemology, reality is presented as anything whose existence has, or can be, established in a rational, objective manner, with universal laws operating only in perceived space and time. In the social sciences, such a perspective has resulted in an insensitive pursuit of a *physique sociale*, informed almost exclusively by what the mind (Reason) and the hierarchy of senses (sight, taste, touch, sound, smell) tell us about yet another set of hierarchies – those of places, spaces and social relationships.

The science (natural and social) inspired by such an epistemology has tended to celebrate dichotomies, dualisms, teleologies and analogies, dismissing anything that does not make sense in Cartesian or behaviourist terms, confining to religion and metaphysics what it cannot explain and disqualifying as non-scientific more inclusive epistemologies. The world is perceived and presented as dichotomous and in a hierarchy of purity:there is the real and the unreal, and the real is better. The real is the rational, the natural, the physical and the scientific; the unreal is the irrational, the supernatural, the religious, the metaphysical and the subjective. This epistemology's logic is simple and problematic: it sacrifices pluriversity for university and imposes a one best way of attaining singular and universal truth. Those who have "seen the light" are the best guides for the rest still in search of its universal truth. This evokes the image of a Jacob's ladder to Heaven, where those highest on the rungs are best placed to see Heaven and tell everyone else what paradise is, could be or should be. We may all be animated by partial theories—like the six blind men in John Godfrey Saxe's poem "The Blind Men and the Elephant" –, but some are more likely to claim authority and silence others about the nature of the universe and the underlying order of things, in line with the hierarchy of blindness made explicit in this epistemology.

In the social sciences, this dominant colonial epistemology has engendered theories and practices of social engineering capable of justifying without explaining almost everything, from colonialism and neoliberalism, to racism, imperialism, traditionalism and modernism. Whole societies, countries and regions have been categorised, depending on how these "others" were perceived in relation to Cartesian rationalism and empiricism (Amin 1980, 2006, 2010; Ferguson 1990, 1999, 2006).

The epistemology has resulted in social science disciplines and fields of study that have sacrificed morality, humanity and the social on the altar of a conscious or implied objectivity that is at best phoney. It has allowed the insensitivities of power and comfort to assume the moral high ground, dictating to the marginalised and the disabled, and preaching salvation and promising "development" for individuals and groups who repent from "retrogressive" attitudes, cultures, traditions and practices. As an epistemology that claims the status of a solution, there is little room for introspection or self-scrutiny.

Countervailing forces are invariably to blame for "failure". Such messianic qualities have imbued this epistemology with an attitude of arrogance, superiority and intolerance towards *creative* difference and appropriation. The zeal to convert creative difference has not excluded resorting to violence, for the epistemology knows neither compromise nor negotiation, nor conviviality.

Popular epistemologies in Africa are different. Indeed, popular epistemologies everywhere are different. They create room for *why* questions, and for "magical interpretations" where there are no obvious explanations to "material realities" (Moore and Sanders 2001). In them, reality is more than meets the eye. It is larger than logic. Far from subscribing to the rigid dichotomies of the dominant colonial and colonising epistemology, popular epistemologies build bridges between the so-called natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical, rational and irrational, objective and subjective, scientific and superstitious, nature and culture, visible and invisible, real and unreal, explainable and inexplicable. Inherent in the approaches is the recognition of the impossibility for anything to be one without also being the other. They constitute an epistemological order where the sense of *sight* and *physical evidence* has not assumed the same centrality, dominance and dictatorship evident in the colonial epistemology and its "hierarchies of perceptual faculties" (van Dijk and Pels 1996:248-251). The real is not only what is observable or what makes cognitive sense; it is also the invisible, the emotional, the sentimental and the inexplicable (Tutuola 1952; Okri 1991). Emphasis is on the whole, and truth is negotiated. It is something consensual, not the result of artificial disqualification, dismemberment, atomisation or mutilation by a science of exclusion and binaries.

In popular systems of knowledge, the opposite or complement of presence is not necessarily absence, but that which is beyond the power of the senses to render observable. Thus, as Mbembe (1997) argues, understanding the visible is hardly complete without investigating the invisible. We misunderstand the world if we "consider the obverse and the reverse of the world as two opposite sides, with the former partaking of a "being there" (*real presence*) and the latter as "being elsewhere" or a "non-being" (*irremediable absence*) or, worse, of the order of unreality" (Mbembe 1997:152). The obverse and its reverse are also linked by similarities which do not make them mere copies of each other, but which unite and at the same time distinguish themselves according to the African "principle of *simultaneous multiplicities*" (Mbembe 1997:152).

Rather than draw from these popular epistemologies, however, in constructing modern society, the wholesale adoption of the colonial epistemology has ensnared the dominant class elements of African society to the point that they treat it as some kind of invincible magic. Nowhere is this

more evident than in African attitudes toward the educational systems and values of the European world as transplanted to and reflected on African soils. This begs the question: "What role could less restrictive epistemologies play, in education and development?"

Education as cultural violence, self-hate and mimicry
Colonial Commencements
Colonialism is essentially a violent project. In Africa such violence took the form of brute force and hegemony through a particular form of education – "the simulacrum of an education system". It repressed where it should have fostered, tamed instead of inspired and enervated rather than strengthened. It succeeded in making slaves of its victims, to the extent that they no longer realise they are slaves, with some even seeing their chains of victimhood as ornamental and the best recognition possible (Fonlon 1965:21-28).

Colonial education to disempower – "educating to unman"– was aimed at "total emasculation", at "stripping men of their manhood" (Fonlon 1965:18-19). With their manhood gone, men who embraced it were reduced to a shadow of themselves, thereby making it extremely difficult for them to question the virility and authority of their white masters, who loathed inquisitiveness and preached blind faith from those they lorded over (p'Bitek 1989:62-68). If African men were infantilised and feminised, African women were subjected to education at domesticity, aimed at converting them from the hoe to the needle, and from the outdoors to indoor lives of domestic service and servitude. The male bias in government and mission educational programmes was evident, and in most cases reproduced (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:44-68, 1997:274-322; Hunt 1992; Musisi 1992; Denzer 1992). Even when women were allowed to attend the same schools as men, the tendency was to masculinise them or to render them supra-invisible (Amadiume 1987:119-143, 1997; Imam et al. 1998). Within the hierarchy of humanity introduced by colonialism, whites, in their gender and generational hierarchies came first, then Africans as male, female and children. With the advent of colonial education, Africans were devalued in the same measure and order that Europeans were glorified, which in some cases meant the erosion of self-worth and the power women already wielded in society (Amadiume 1987:119-143, 1997:183-198; Imam 1997:6-7). The involvement of the missionary church in education, created "an unprecedented alliance of State, Capital and Church" that "gave a divine aura and authority to the colonial brainwashing, whitening and subjection" of Africans, mind, soul and body.[1] Together with armed might, the colonialists used education to disarm and silence Africans in body and soul and to reduce their warriors into "cringing cowards". Reserved for

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[1] Rene Devisch, comment, 1 April 2011

the few, colonial education was not out to promote "manly courage and valour". This education privileged pleasure amongst the privileged few and "the hoarding of wealth, of money, as the surest road to pleasure" (Fonlon 1965:18-19).

It made "dead fruit" even of the sons of chiefs, who behaved "like foolish…little children" towards their past and the ways of their land (p'Bitek 1989:12) – including rejecting meaningful local names and adopting "the names of white men" that all sounded like "empty tins, old rusty tins thrown down from the roof-top" (p'Bitek 1989:62). They thereby attracted songs of laughter instead of the songs of praise they ordinarily and traditionally would have deserved. It was an education to cultivate a "bitter tongue" – "fierce like the arrow of a scorpion", "deadly like the spear of the buffalo-hornet", "ferocious like the poison of a barren woman", and "corrosive like the juice of the gourd" – vis-à-vis one's past, one's traditions, one's people, one's relations (p'Bitek 1989:12-14). Just as those who embraced colonial education were emasculated and neutralised by it, so too did they seek to neutralise and emasculate all those and everything around them, fancying and favouring imported thinking and things and with them trying to force neighbours into European greenhouses under African skies.

Colonial education is full of "cultural contradictions that exist between the informal education of family life, with its grounding in indigenous languages, customs, and social values, and the formal education of school systems, which is conducted in metropolitan languages, managed largely by the state, and oriented toward values and jobs that have little direct relation to life in local communities" (Maclure:1997:35[2]). It puts Africans in contradiction with themselves. It is an education to mimic and celebrate white men who package and presente themselves as the "future" and their land and ways as having a glorious past and an enviable present. The colonial subjects recruited as students are commanded to uncritically ignore and disparage things held dear by the Africans they are groomed to insult, laugh at and term "primitive" and "pagan" and to unquestioningly champion and glorify the ways, deeds and dreams of white men and Europe. Beneficiaries of colonial education are expected to aspire to think, look like and be like the white man, to bleach and slim themselves physically and culturally to the point of the ludicrous and the ridiculous (p'Bitek 1989:14-19).

Provoked by "ignorance and shame" in local indicators of value and beauty, Africans so educated turned to "foreign things". They proceeded not only to do as the white man prescribed, but to seek to impress and convert Africans still steeped in and proud of their ancestral ways and wisdoms. This,

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[2] Maclure relied on studies by the following researchers to draw this conclusion:T.A. Lucan (on Sierra Leone), E.J. Essindi (unpublished paper in Cameroon), Y.B. Maganawe (Thesis from Togo), M. Gado, Mémoire from Benin).

to Lawino (p'Bitek 1989:25-41), was unacceptable: "My husband, I do not complain that you eat white men's foods. If you enjoy them go ahead! Shall we just agree to have freedom to eat what one likes?" Lawino commented how Clementine, her husband Ocol's girlfriend, wore "the hair… of some white woman who died long ago".

Limited to an elite few colonial education was ultimately an education at bifurcation, dichotomisation, teleology, zero sum games and caricature. It was an invitation to Africans to empty themselves of their creativity, achievements, traditions and self confidence, and be filled afresh with European ideas, practices, traditions and prescriptions of what it meant to be human, and forced to accept a position as the scum of *that* humanity. In this regard, it was an education to belittle things African and to reproduce mediocrity and myopia, thereby further alienating the very masses colonial education was sought, in principle and rhetoric, to liberate (Fanon 1967a&b; Biko discussed in:Pityana et al.1991; Malusi and Mphumlwana 1996; Mngxitama et al. 2008a). Savage and sterile as colonial education was – "their manhood was finished in the classrooms, their testicles were smashed with large books!" (p'Bitek 1989:95) –, Africans who pursued it were hardly productive as the "castrated" men and "sterilised" women they had become. It was an education for self deprecation, pleasure and sterile consumption, which is no surprise, for colonial conquerors everywhere, as Fonlon (1965:19) argues, have always known there is "hardly a means more insidious, more infallible of emptying a people of manliness and making them willing slaves than to excite, especially in their elite and leadership, an insatiable thirst for pleasure". This inflationary investment in pleasure and mimicry by the emerging elite gives the impression of struggle merely as a vehicle for articulating elite interests and negotiating conviviality between the dominant and dormant amongst them.

Little wonder that Ocol and Clementine – the "modern" educated man and woman in p'Bitek's (1989) *Song of Lawino* – are incapable of producing or reproducing anything of substance, preoccupied as they are with ostentatious consumption (ballroom dances, white people's foods, dressing and speaking like whites, naming themselves after and following the religion of whites) to demonstrate the value of so-called "modern education". The "thirst for ease", "craving for luxury", and "itch to get rich quick" are still "running riot everywhere" (Fonlon 1965:23-26), despite herculean needs for social transformation. Few cases of radical nationalism have survived neutralisation after independence (Fanon 1967a:118-165), as colonialism has always succeeded in staying on despite its formal ending. In South Africa, the achievements of Steve Biko and his "Black Consciousness" movement in using the popular creativity of everyday life (music, song, poetry, etc.) in classrooms, churches, neighbourhoods and townships as effective resources in anti-

apartheid struggles, in the promotion of knowledge of protest history, and in affirming the integrity and humanity of marginalised black masses and their cultures (Mngxitama et al. 2008a; Pityana et al.1991; Malusi and Mphumlwana 1996), seemed to have suffered a major reversal under the new, negotiated post-apartheid dispensation (Ramose 2003, 2004; Mngxitama et al. 2008a&b). This is a fate not dissimilar to that of other anti-colonial and resistance movements in Africa and beyond, where aspirations for liberation and self-determination have almost invariably been watered down to accommodate continuity for the value system and interests of the dominator, who champions divide and rule to compound the predicaments of the marginalised masses.

Far from being useful to family and society, Ocol, who epitomises the post-independence "modern", "progressive and civilised man", can do little more than pour "scorn on Black people" who he says are "primitive", "ignorant, poor and diseased". Instead of bringing about a negotiated and nuanced understanding of the tensions and opportunities of cultural encounters, the fact of his having "read extensively and widely" only alienates him from his folks, making of him a clearing officer for the white man, his ideas and his values in Africa – a sort of stranger or outsider within. He declares himself unable to live with his wife any longer, because she is "a thing", "just a village woman", "an old type" who is "no longer attractive" and "cannot distinguish between good and bad". She is "blocking his progress" and he must clear the way for Clementine, the "modern woman" he loves, and "who speaks English" (p'Bitek 1989:14). This is a recurrent and well known theme in African writing about the betrayal and irrelevance that come with the uncritical internalisation of colonial and colonising yardsticks of being educated and being modern.

Like his counterparts elsewhere on the continent, Ocol becomes dangerous to kin and kith. Instead of forging and promoting relationships that foster life, he "behaves like a hen that eats its own eggs, a hen that should be imprisoned under a basket" (p'Bitek 1989:14). Lawino laments the fact:"When my husband is reading a new book or when he is sitting in his sofa, his face covered up completely with the big newspaper," not only does he look like a corpse in a tomb, he is so silent and so viciously anti-social that he "storms like a buffalo" and "throws things" at any child who cries, saying "that children's cries and coughs disturb him!" This is "the talk of a witch", says Lawino, for "what music is sweeter than the cries of children?" "Who but a witch would like to live in a homestead where all the grown-ups are so clean after the rains, because there are no muddy fat kids to fall on their bosoms after dancing in the rains and playing in the mud?" (p'Bitek 1989:45-51). An education that transforms people into unthinking zombies, kills their sociality, and numbs

their humanity even for their own children can hardly be relevant to social reproduction, let alone social transformation.

An education to hate questions is hardly one to provide answers. Ocol "has read deeply and widely" to the point of making his house "a dark forest of books", but because he is educated not to engage and question, but to prescribe and dictate deafly and condescendingly, his education is not relevant to African modes of fruitful self-knowledge and self-reproduction. "Ocol has lost his head in the forest of books"; "the reading has killed" him "in the ways of his people" and he has become "a walking corpse" (P'Bitek 1989:91-95). But he enjoys recognition in the eyes of the white man, where he belongs with "the good children", "who ask no questions, who accept everything… like the rubbish pit, like the pit-latrine which does not reject even dysentery". He is liked and patted on the back by his white masters, for asking no questions, for his unconditional subservience (p'Bitek 1989:64).

Lawino on the other hand is full of questions, but the few white men and women she has encountered "never stop a little while to answer even one"; "as soon as they stop shouting" in the name of preaching and teaching, "they run away fast", almost as if afraid to be discovered for what they truly are – "ignorant". And when she is able to catch up with them, "they are angry with me" for asking questions. Even Ocol, her learned husband, dashes her hopes. If Lawino asks him a question, she is "insulting him". Instead of answering the question, "he opens up with a quarrel" and "begins to look down upon" her, saying her questions "are a waste of time", "silly questions, typical questions from village girls", "questions of uneducated people, useless questions from untutored minds". To him, Lawino has "a tiny little brain" that "is not trained" and that "cannot see things intelligently" or "sharply". He claims that even if he tried to answer her questions, she would not understand what he was saying, because she "has not been to school", and "a university man can only have useful talk with another university man or woman". The language he speaks is different from hers, "so that even if he spoke to me in Acoli I would still need an interpreter." But being "a primitive language" of "very few words", Acoli "is not rich enough to express his deep wisdom". Acoli "is not like the white man's language, which is rich and very beautiful, a language fitted for discussing deep thoughts". And so Lawino is forced to "swallow the questions" that "burn inside me", making "my eyes redden with frustration and I tremble with anger" (p'Bitek 1989:62-66). Lawino's frustration and anger have, in other victims of colonial education, resulted in chronic self-doubt, self-deprecation, and self-annihilation.

To be socially visible, those converted within the framework of this education must crave external recognition over internal relevance, and must internalise and reproduce irrelevance through an unjustifiable sense of

superiority and priorities. They "boast in the marketplace showing off to people", instead of proving the merits of their education through real achievements (p'Bitek 1989:68). It is an education for keeping up appearances, for self-delusion and self-belittlement, and for talking without listening (p'Bitek 1989:12-14). Those who embrace colonial education fully soon become like slaves, doing the bidding of capricious and whimsical masters, and looking ridiculously foolish in the eyes of those who have stood their ground in the face of the violence of conversion.

To Lawino, "My husband's master is my husband's husband. My husband runs from place to place like a small boy, he rushes without dignity", doing the bidding of the white man. Rendered blind by the libraries of white men, Ocol has lost his dignity and authority by behaving "like a dog of the white man", lying by the door to "keep guard while waiting for leftovers" from the master's table. He has lost his "fire" and bull-like prowess and has succumbed to living on borrowed food, wearing borrowed clothes, and using his ideas, actions and behaviour "to please somebody else". He may have read extensively and deeply and can challenge the white men in his knowledge of their books and their ancestors of the intellect, but to Lawino, this has come at a great price: "the reading has killed my man, in the ways of his people. He has become a stump. He abuses all things Acoli; he says the ways of black people are black" (p'Bitek 1989:91-96). And if Ocol has chosen the path of passive and sterile subservience, let him not, in frustration, "shout at me because I know the customs of our people", customs that make him feel so desperately inferior to the white man (p'Bitek 1989:46).

The ways of Lawino's ancestors may be good and solid with roots that reach deep into the soil, their customs neither hollow, nor thin, nor easily breakable or blown away by the winds; but this does not deter colonial education and its converts such as her husband Ocol and Clementine, "the woman with whom I share my husband", from despising these ancestral customs and world view, in favour of foreign customs little understood, admired or desired (p'Bitek 1989:19). Neglected, insulted and abused, Lawino reminds her husband without relent that no education makes sense if it turns one against one's people and against the ways of one's ancestors:"Listen Ocol, my friend, the ways of your ancestors are good, their customs are solid and not hollow. They are not thin, not easily breakable. They cannot be blown away by the winds, because their roots reach deep into the soil" (p'Bitek 1989:19). Closely entangled with ideology and hegemony as the education is, it leaves little room for critical thinking even as it celebrates Cartesian rationalism. The result, quite paradoxically, is an emphasis on doing rather than thinking, and all attempts at serious questioning and exploration of alternatives are rationalised

away by the dominant voices of mimicry, conformism, myopia, and "stupid stubbornness" (p'Bitek 1989:95-98).

In his song of response to his wife, all Ocol can do is insist, with a pseudo sense of power: "Woman, shut up! Pack your things and go!" As like someone blinded to the fetters and mimicry that have violated his autonomy and authority, Ocol compares Lawino's song to "the mad bragging of a defeated general", "the pointless defiance of the condemned", "rotting buffalo left behind by fleeing poachers", and "sour sweet", among other negative representations to depict her backwardness and the "blackness, deep, deep fathomless darkness" that "is Africa" to him. He has no time for the "idle giant basking in the sun, sleeping, snoring, twitching in dreams", that is Africa – "diseased with a chronic illness, choking with black ignorance, chained to the rock of poverty", "stuck in the stagnant muds of superstitions" – and cannot understand "why I was born black". He promises annihilation for everything Lawino stands for, everything African:"Put in detention all the preachers of Negritude" and "To the gallows with all the Professors of Anthropology, and teachers of African History, a bonfire we'll make to their works, we'll destroy all their anthologies of African literature and close down all the schools of African Studies". It is imperative, he argues categorically, to "smash all these mirrors that I may not see the blackness of the past from which I came". If independence means an excuse to reinvent the past, then such "uhuru" must never come to pass (p'Bitek 1984:121-151).

Bernard Fonlon compares this extraverted education to the system of education informed by the endogenous African cultural value of producing individuals "endowed with manliness, with virility." The purpose of endogenous African education was "to harden, to instil discipline, fearlessness, endurance", in men and women alike. The quest for virility as an African ideal went hand in hand with the quest for virtue. Without distinguishing between scholar and hero necessarily, endogenous education in Africa tended to emphasise the creation of heroes (physical and moral upbringing) over the making of scribes (intellectual upbringing) (Fonlon 1965:16-18).

Colonial education, like colonialism itself, was not a selfless "mission civilisatrice" at the service of Africa. It was meant to provide colonialism with the local support staff it needed to achieve its hegemonic imperialist purpose. The emphasis on basic literacy, numeracy, vocational training and domestic science favoured the colonial extractive project by underplaying the critical questioning that a more intellectual upbringing would have encouraged. Its tendency to encourage divide and rule, meant that disparities arising from the lack of unified or uniform education offered by different bodies – colonial government and different and often warring missionary denominations within the colonies – set the stage for rising conflicting expectations and inequalities in

education attainment and across different ethnic groups and colonially demarcated regions inherited at independence. Those favoured by the colonial system would at independence, manipulate postcolonial education policy, admission to schools and access to scholarships for further education to the advantage of people from their regions and ethnic groups. The postcolonial state would find it increasingly difficult to balance up the equation, and where it has, those advantaged by the old system have resisted fairness on the pretext of merit or ambiguous claims of human rights and now minority rights. This buttresses the perspective that colonial education was and remains incompatible with the pursuit of real social responsiveness and genuine collective interests.

Postcolonial Continuities: Plus ça change, plus c'est la même

If we take the preceding as a depiction of colonial education, under which Africans were defined and confined, and compelled to conform, one is bound to ask what has changed since independence. For one thing, calls have increased on the need to rethink the colonial educational system. Soon after independence, Bernard Fonlon, in his seminal essay, "Idea of Culture", critiqued colonial education's emphasis on "unmanning" – stripping of dignity and self-worth –, and called for an education system capable of cultivating the dignity and authority of Africans and their ways of life. Such a system, he argued, must, in reality and metaphorically, restore the humanity of a debased people (Fonlon 1965:21-28). Endogenous African cultures "must be the foundation on which the modern African cultural structure should be raised; the soil into which the new seed should be sown; the stem into which the new scion should be grafted; the sap that should enliven the entire organism" (Aimé Cesaire in Fonlon 1967). African cultures – the object of imperialist mockery and rejected – need rehabilitation (Fonlon 1967:21-22). And so does the humanhood – severed by servitude and blind faith in the sterility of colonial education – of elite Africans like Ocol (p'Bitek 1989:96-98).

Joseph Ki-Zerbo (2010 [1972]:40) explained that "quand on prive des enfants de leur racines historiques, on risque de dépersonnaliser les peuples." He, like others, was critical of elite Africans acting as local clearing officers for the importation and proliferation of the "ideas of others". To graduate or break free from European greenhouses and the uneasy comfort of sleeping on "the mat of others" (la natte des autres), he called on Africans to invest in self-knowledge and in scholarship informed by African experiences and perspectives (Ki-Zerbo 1992:1-71). Elite Africans, however enlightened in their extraversion, cannot win an epistemological fight against African masses, however misguided. Their scholarship would continue to resonate mainly with foreign consumers, insofar as it caricatures or frivolously dismisses local

systems of knowing. Hence, Ki-Zerbo's (1990, 1992, 2003) call for the "rooting" of Africa in its endogenous educational systems, to ensure an autonomous collective system for societal reproduction (see also Ela 1994; Hountondji 1997; Ramose 2003, 2004; Nabudare 2006). And the need for researchers of Africa to mingle and comingle with Africa and Africans rather than merely observe them from a distance and continue to draw and circulate incorrectly and insufficiently informed conclusions.

Many have cautioned, as did Fonlon (1967:21-22), that "rehabilitation of African culture cannot be a mere archaeological enterprise". It would be counter productive "to dig up the past and live it as it was". Hence the importance of considering and engaging with African cultures as the dynamic, nuanced, negotiated and open ended realities they are. Few today, except for strategic essentialists, would treat African cultures as bounded and unchanging. "[I]t is imperative to steer clear of two extremes: on the one hand, the imperialist arrogance which declared everything African as only fit for the scrap-heap and the dust-bin, and, on the other hand, the overly enthusiastic and rather naive tendency to laud every aspect of African culture as if it were the quintessence of human achievement" (Fonlon 1967:21-22). This requires seeking conviviality and carefully navigating between Lawino and Ocol, the popular and the elite, the endogenous and the exogenous in Africa. The future is in an educational system premised on the fact that Africans are actively endogenising modernity and modernising their endogeneity in ways that are not easy to caricature, dichotomize or ignore by science informed by empirical reality.

Such calls to rethink education in Africa are yet to be translated into action in any significant way. The continent continues to be characterised by educational institutions modelled closely on the colonial idea of education, and its epistemological traditions have gone largely unchallenged in practice. The critical theoretical rhetoric has not been translated into practical action. The colonial education epistemology, which continues to dominate the scene, takes the form of science as ideology and hegemony. Under it, education in Africa and for Africans continues to be like a pilgrimage to the Kilimanjaro of metropolitan intellectual ideals, but also the tortuous route to Calvary for alternative ways of life (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986; Mazrui 1986, 2001; Mamdani 1990, 1993; Copans 1990; Rwomire 1992; van Rinsum 2001; Ramose 2003, 2004).

The value of education in postcolonial Africa can be understood in comparison with the soft currencies of the continent. Just as even the most stable of these currencies is pegged and used to taking nosedives in relation to the hard currencies of Europe and North America, so has the value of education on the continent. And just as African presidents prefer to beg and

bank in foreign currencies—ignoring even banknotes that bear their own faces and stamp of omnipotence –, so is their preference for the foreign intellectual and expert over homegrown expertise. With rhetoric on the need to be competitive internationally, the practice since independence has been to model education in Africa after educational institutions elsewhere, with each country drawing from the institutions of the immediate past coloniser, and from the USA and Canada (Crossman and Devisch 1999:20-23; Mazrui 2001:39-45). Universities are internationally rated using criteria which few universities in Africa have contributed to establishing, but to which they subject themselves. African universities push lecturers to publish in international journals yet do little to promote journals of the continent. In selecting a university, students consider the universities where their lecturers obtained PhD degrees, and (in South Africa) may consider criteria like catering and parking services, but hardly the relevance of curricula to local needs. Jonathan Jansen (2011:10-11) acknowledges and warns against "the crisis of having two school systems in a sea of inequality" in South Africa – "a small, elite, well-functioning system for the black and white middle classes, and a massive, dysfunctional, impoverished system for the majority of poor black children".

The elite have, just as in colonial times, "often in unabashed imitativeness" and with little attempt at domestication, sought to reproduce, even without the finances to sustain their efforts, the Oxfords, Cambridges, Harvards, Stanfords and Sorbonnes of England, the USA and France (Mazrui 2001:39-8). Some, like the late Presidents Banda of Malawi, and Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, sometimes carried this craving to ridiculous proportions, seeking to be identified by europhilia in education and consumption. Education in Africa has been and mostly remains a journey fuelled by an exogenously induced and internalised sense of inadequacy in Africans, and one endowed with the mission of devaluation or annihilation of African creativity, agency and value systems. Such "cultural estrangement" in the place of cultural engagement has served to reinforce in Africans self-devaluation and self-hatred and a profound sense of inferiority that in turn compels them to "lighten their darkness" both physically and metaphorically for the gratification of their colonial and postcolonial overlords (Fanon 1967:169). Nyang has described this predicament as "a pathological case of xenophilia", whereby Africans are brought to value things foreign "not for their efficacy but simply because of their foreignness" (Nyang 1994:434) and persuaded to consume to death their creativity and dignity, their very own humanity (Soyinka 1994). This is carried through by students privileged to be part of exchange programmes involving African and European or North American universities. In these programmes, African students are only too ready to downplay their home institutions and professors, as they shop up for

recognition by their European counterparts. The inverse experience of European and North American students is equally telling.

This culturally uprooting of Africans has been achieved literally by uprooting children of the well-off from their communities and nurturing them in boarding schools, "almost like potted plants in green houses" (Mamdani 1990:3). In the long run, neither the children of the lowly and poor, who in effect cannot afford the same chance to excel in this type of xenophilia, nor the children of the well-off schooled in such appetites are in a position to contribute towards reflecting the complexity, dynamism and creativity in being African.

African universities have significantly Africanised their personnel, but not their curricula or pedagogical structures to any real extent (Crossman and Devisch 1999:11). The assumption has been that because one *is* or *appears* African, one is necessarily going to be critical of the colonial intellectual traditions, rituals and *habitus* in one's teaching and research, and offer a menu sensitive to local realities and endogenous epistemologies. But this is far from the case, as the hundreds of universities created after independence have stayed "triumphantly universalistic and uncompromisingly foreign" to local cultures, populations and predicaments (Mamdani 1993:11-15). There has been little effort at domestication or "an epistemological shift" informed by the "awareness that the site – or community-specific knowledges tie in with the grammatical and lexical structures of a given language, local cosmologies and worldviews" that "must be allowed to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the universalistic stance and some of the essentialist fixities of modern science" (Devisch 2002:7).

A classic example of excellence at irrelevance in education was provided by the late Kamuzu Banda's Malawi. I was fortunate, as a doctoral student in the United Kingdom (UK) to watch, with ethnographic instincts, a BBC television documentary on the extravagant mimicry and irrelevance of education in Africa. Broadcast at 9.30 pm, Tuesday, September 8, 1987, Malawi was singled out as an example of a country which had established a school that resembled Eton of England. The school, named Kamuzu Academy, was situated in the Kasungu District in the Central Region of Malawi, President Banda's home area. This school, nicknamed by some critics "Eton of the Bush", was built in 1981, and imported all its education equipment from the UK and South Africa. When the school was short of chemicals or other equipment, those concerned had to drive for at least five hundred miles for replenishment. The school had cost no less than 15 million British pounds to build and needed not less than 1 million pounds a year to run. The students, whose table manners would put many a working class Briton to shame, were, just like Ocol in *Song of Lawino*, made to believe that no one is truly educated unless s/he knows something about the ancient world, which should not be mistaken to mean the ancestral world of the African student (pregnant with primitive savagery and to be treated with disdain), but the world of

his imported European teachers – the world of Julius Caesar, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates and other founding fathers of European intellectual traditions. Thus, whether educated at the heart of the African periphery or at the very centre of the European metropolis, postcolonial education, like its colonial counterpart, is an impoverished menu of unequal encounters between Africa and the west.

If ancestors are supposed to lay the path for posterity, inviting Africans to forget their ancestors the way postcolonial African leaders like Banda did and have continued to do, is an invitation for Africans to be born again and socialised afresh, in the image of Europe, using European and North American type academic institutions and rituals of ancestral worship. This renewal, in tune with (neo)colonial values and institutions is achieved, by the west:

> *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to [its dominance]; *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself (Eagleton 1991:5-6, original emphasis).

Through such strategies of legitimation and delegitimation, (neo)colonial education wiped "the blackboard clean" and turned its African students into slaves of colonial definitions (van Rinsum 2001; Okolo 2007). As nobody is ever "*wholly* mystified" or "a complete dupe", an ideology can only succeed if those it characterises as inferior actually learn to be inferior. "It is not enough for a woman or colonial subject to be defined as a lower form of life. They must be actively *taught* this definition, and some of them prove to be brilliant graduates in this process" (Eagleton 1991:xv, original emphasis). Even then, people are always capable of unlearning what has defined and confined them to passive submission.

To actively teach, define and confine, absolute and meticulous care is taken in choosing teachers and determining curricula. A strategy for which Banda's "Eton of the Bush" remains a classic example. All teachers in the Kamuzu Academy were white, recruited directly from Britain, and,of course paid British rates at a time when few local teachers could make ends meet with their own salaries in the soft local currency. In the 1980s and in 1990, in the period the BBC documentary was broadcast, researchers found that teachers in Togo "did not consider education as a process that could generate social change, and few saw themselves as agents of change". Researchers in Ghana noted the "mental stress suffered by teachers and the tendency to absent themselves from classrooms during school hours to engage in commercial activities" (Maclure 1997:52). Commitment and a sense of vocation were dwindling among teachers in Africa, who were "often underpaid and in some countries they were not paid at all for

months on end", and were sometimes forced "to look for moonlighting opportunities to give them an additional livelihood" (Mazrui 1986:204). Meanwhile, in Malawi, imported teachers on three-year contracts lived in European-style bungalows with salaries in hard currencies. The same is now said of professors and other expatriates from African countries suffering economic downturns working in African countries with better economies such as South Africa and Botswana by the citizens of the host countries, who do not always see the Africans in question as relevant and efficient (Nyamnjoh 2002, 2006).

Things seem to change, just as they stay the same throughout Africa. Almost everywhere, the consultancy syndrome has triumphed over academic values such as excellence in teaching, research and publication. University professors who have failed to migrate are forced to postpone academic excellence. Even the most inspiring of them are working under extremely difficult conditions for relevance creativity in teaching and research (Onyejekwe 1993; Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004a&b). That this remains a growing problem and concern can be seen in the regularity with which the matter was discussed by the Scientific and Executive Committees of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) from 2003 to 2009[3]. During that time, CODESRIA published several books on the challenges facing African universities in the 21st century, and the responsibilities of African intellectuals and African governments in the face of these challenges (Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004a&b; Mkwandawire 2005; Mamdani 2007). The *Journal of Higher Education in Africa* was launched and rapidly become an archive on many of the issues. In this regard, CODESRIA, as a pan-African scholarly network keen on promoting the production and consumption of knowledge informed by African perspectives and epistemologies, is playing a crucial role in re-enlivening and revalorising dismembered and disenchanted beliefs and systems of thought in Africa.

Postcolonial education has continued to privilege colonial languages (English, French, Portuguese, German, Spanish), paying little more than lip service to mother-tongue education in endogenous African languages (Chumbow 2005, 2009; Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2005). In studies from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo a "common thematic thread… is the striking discontinuity between French language use in formal education and the use of maternal languages in common everyday speech… In effect, the researchers have shown that when formal education is conducted in a language that is foreign to the children's environment, it can actually *retard* their capacity to learn" (Maclure 1997:33-34; original emphasis). Turning again to our classic example, English was and still is the main language of instruction at the Kamuzu Academy. Not only is the national language Chichewa not taught, students are forbidden to speak it in

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[3] when I worked with the Council in Dakar as director of publications

the Academy. In his book, *Prisoners of Freedom*, Harri Englund (2006) highlights the connection between education, lifestyle and language among human rights fundamentalists in Malawi. Postcolonial instructors in Kenya who inherited condescending British attitudes toward local languages continued "to ban African languages in schools and to elevate English as the medium of instruction from primary to secondary stages" and did not hesitate to mete out corporal punishment to and extort fines from students "caught speaking their mother tongues" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1997:620). Leading by example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o Ngugi writes and publishes his novels in Gikuyu, his mother tongue, and only then has them translated into English. He speaks metaphorically of colonial languages as a third leg and compares Africans' adoption of them as having to "borrow a third leg" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2005).

English and other European languages are given status by associating them with civilisation and enlightenment, while every attempt is made to reduce African languages to gibberish and chase them out of the mouths, ears and minds of African students born into these languages. African intellectuals who want to take the valorisation of endogenous African languages seriously have found themselves swimming against the tides. Invited to address the OAU (now AU) at Addis Ababa, Ali Mazrui insisted on doing so in Kishwahili, but there was neither translator nor switch button envisaged for one of Africa's most widely spoken languages. "You needed to see how the Heads of States were bewildered, but I had passed my message across" (Mazrui 1986 BBC *The Africans* series). Unlike Somalia, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Botswana and South Africa, many an African country has yet to demonstrate in principle and practice that literacy, even at primary school level, does not necessarily mean knowing how to read and write a European language.

Only a few African countries have bothered to adopt policies that encourage education in African languages. And even these countries tend to confine the importance of local languages to adult literacy training and to primary and secondary school education, thereby accentuating the remoteness and irrelevance of universities to the bulk of the population. With perhaps the exception of Tanzania, there is hardly a single sub-Saharan African university that "offers a full diploma programme with an African language as principal medium of instruction" (Crossman and Devisch 1999:7; Chumbow 2005, 2009). In many countries, there are ongoing debates on use of mother tongue in the early years of schooling. In some where state policies already exist encouraging mother tongue education, these policies are yet to be effectively implemented. There is resistance from parents who believe mother tongue education will dilute education standards, as students are called to operate in a globalised world and may eventually proceed to universities where instruction is almost invariably in the colonial languages. Cosmopolitanism, a common national citizenship and

mobility have meant increasing spatial integration for peoples of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, thereby posing the question of whose mother tongue qualifies where? Moreover, children of policy makers attend private schools that follow, not the national curriculum, but the so-called international curriculum of European and North American schools. Without a personal interest in mother tongue education and national curricula, it is hard to see how policies in favour of endogenisation can be implemented.

Most African university libraries are underfunded, struggle to keep pace with the latest publications of relevance, and are often desperately understocked and at the mercy of donors dying to dump old and outdated publications as a sort of intellectual "toxic" waste. Libraries that are well stocked even with material of direct relevance to critical scholarship informed by African perspectives and predicaments, may find such books and journals under-consulted because of curricula and scholarly traditions that pay scant attention to African sources. This was the case in the 2008 film *Nothing but the Truth* directly by playwright and actor John Kani in which the chief assistant librarian and main character Sipho Makhaya dreamily dusts off the collection of African literature on a bottom shelf and imagines, if promoted, of elevating it to a central space within the library.

The consequence in educational systems of inadequate and inappropriate resources combined with neglect and indifference produces graduates ill adapted to the African condition and market. "We've gone through systems that have destroyed rather than enriched us or enabled us" (Ezra Mbogori in Mama and Hamilton 2003:23). Graduates are often quite unaware – until much later in life – that their elite education "within this insular environment that cordoned us off from the reality of our country" was devoid of any real sense of place and left them "incomplete."[4] Ki-Zerbo (2010:39) wrote about the "insular school" in Africa in 1972: "On a parfois comparé l'école actuelle à un bois sacré où n'entreraient qu'un certain nombre d'initiés chargés d'opérer des rites ésotériques échappant à tout le monde. Même sans clôture on sent qu'il y a une enceinte invisible…" Universities are "sterile bubbles" in which, according to Okwah Abagi, "most of us tend to be conditioned to think for the west". Takyiwaa Manuh explains that "the wellsprings of our intellectual thoughts are often so divorced from the realities of the lives of our people…" (Mama and Hamilton 2003: 28&26). The coming of internet and its possibilities for uploading and downloading content, together with the rise of digital and open publishing, means greater prospects for and access to African perspectives and perhaps a mitigation of the book famine in Africa. It also means possibilities for "crossing" and

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[4] See "Incompletely me" by Zimbabwean poet Fungai Machirori in South Africa's *Mail & Guardian*, March 18 to 24, 2011, pp. 45-46; see online at http://mg.co.za/article/2011-03-18-incompletely-me.

creatively negotiating those physical and invisible boundaries that have cut schools and universities off from the world around them.

Even when the finances are there, there is no guarantee that African political and intellectual leaders have the will to do what is right for African education. By way of example yet again, at the Kamuzu Academy, where the neo-Etonians were trained to recite Shakespeare and glorify the classic philosophers of the metropolis, the library that housed the classics was deliberately designed in the image of the Library of Congress in the United States of America (USA). There was European influence everywhere. In a debate about whether or not western influence corrupts, 67 students "felt" that it did not, while 55 "felt" it did. Perhaps by the time they had imbibed an awful lot of Latin, Classical Music, Western History, Literature and Etiquette, and consumed enough McDonaldised entertainment television, not as many as one of them would "feel" any longer that western influence corrupts. As the presenter of the BBC documentary observed, the students knew more about Europe than they did about Malawi, so much so that once in a while, the teachers had to organise field trips with the students "partly to bring their own country home to them". Parents, he went on, sacrificed too much for their children to acquire values and an education, which were alien to their cultures of origin. This, of course, is hardly news to other Africans who have drunk from the well of "modern education" in similarly western-styled institutions modelled on the colonial educational system (Mazrui 1986:233). Instead of dwindling and withering away, such neo-Etonian schools are on the increase, as the need to provide an education adapted to and in tune with the needs of globetrotting expatriates and frequent flyer Africans with an appetite and ambition for global consumerism grows. But then, this criticism could well be exaggerated. Commenting on a draft of this paper, Ignatio Malizani Jimu, associate professor of Geography at Mzuzu University in Malawi, agrees the Academy was no doubt an expensive venture but maintains the school was not built for the elite:

> It was established to make elite of the non-elite given that while Banda ruled, selection into the Academy was not based on being monied but being brilliant. At that time Malawi's post primary schools were clearly hierarchized and the Academy was one of the rungs on this ladder. It is even exaggeration to suggest that students were spoiled. One of my brothers passed through the Academy and many of my friends too, but they are just cool guys. To some degree this critique reflects the patronizing attitude of the west (Ignatio Malizani Jimu, comment, 26 March 2011).

There are basically two ways of journeying to the west. One can undertake the journey physically or one can do so psychologically (through fantasy, admiration and desire) with facilitation from education and the media. Either way, one still succeeds in imbibing European influences. European-style training at Kamuzu Academy-type institutions is not just to compensate for the real Europe and North America where these students have not yet been. It is seen as preparing them for these places, where they ultimately go or yearn to go to make use of the skills they have acquired. Thus, if at the Kamuzu Academy they were being taught all about Sunday barbecues, swimming pools, table etiquette, the classics, suits, ties, horse riding and straw hats (or how to be the complete gentleman or lady *à l'anglaise*), this was to purge them of that presumed backwardness that has qualified Africa to be termed "the Dark Continent" par excellence, and Africans as people desperately in need of salvation from a *mission civilisatrice* (Magubane 2004; Schipper 1990a&b).

It is hard to imagine African students, who have gone through all these stages of westernisation, returning home voluntarily to bear the misery and poverty of un- or underemployment with a stiff upper lip, however English they have become. Brain drain has been an inevitable consequence, even if not every brain drain has been a brain down the drain. As Mamdani observes, in its craving for centres of learning and research of international standing, Africa has produced researchers and educators with "little capacity to work in surrounding communities but who could move to any institution in any industrialised country, and serve any privileged community around the globe with comparative ease". The failure by educational systems in Africa to contextualise standards and excellence to the needs and conditions of Africans has resulted in an intelligentsia with little stamina for the very process of development whose vanguard they claim to be (Mamdani 1993:15). A situation compounded by the commercialisation of higher education, heralded by the World Bank and its neo-liberal market logic (Mamdani 2007). A streamlined or McDonaldised educational system is too standardised, uniformised, technicised, depoliticised and detached to be in tune with the predicaments of ordinary and marginal Africans thirsty and hungry for recognition, representation and upliftment (Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004; Mama 2007).

The quest for western academic symbols of credentialism –sometimes termed *diplomania* (Robinson 1981:176-192) – and veneration of qualifications obtained abroad have characterised postcolonial Africa. Instead of seeking autonomous creative social reproduction through education – not easy to come by in any case (Bourdieu 1996:1-6) –, African elites are still very much dependent on ill-adapted colonial curricula, sources and types of knowledge that alienate and enslave, all in the name of modernity. Sometimes it does not matter whether or not school libraries are empty, since a full library may well be of little relevance to

the pressing problems and specificities of the continent. Education for Africans has, in the main, tended to be an exercise in self-evacuation and devaluation of all that took pre-colonial generations wisdom, cultural creativity and sweat to realise. The fact that Africans have placed and continue to place a very high premium on getting educated in the west or in local variants and franchises of European and North American institutions has only compounded the problem.

In South Africa for example, despite numerous local universities and a relatively long history of university education, a doctorate from Britain or the United States of America is still valued higher than anything obtained locally. Like other Africans, South Africans instinctively ask one another or others: "Where did you do your degree?" Depending on the university you name, you could be treated as a superior, an equal or an inferior by a fellow academic. Some Africans would rather graduate from Oxford, Harvard or the Sorbonne, even if this means changing their specialisations to accommodate the limited academic menu offered in these heavyweight western universities. Africans continue to flood Europe and North America to research aspects of their own countries, mostly for the prestige and status that studying abroad brings, only to end up as "disillusioned" (Nyamnjoh 2007) and "incomplete" Africans. Parents continue to send their children to Europe, North America and elsewhere for education, with the conviction that a degree even from a commercialised and second-rate western university is worth a lot more opportunities than one from a purportedly top university in Africa, unless such African universities are those generally perceived to be western universities in Africa, such as some in South Africa. Could this extraversion and xenophilia in matters educational explain the inability to radically transform curricula even when their irrelevance is widely recognition? Could this also explain the often ludicrous obsession with maintaining without problematising inherited "standards"? And could this explain as well why struggles amongst academics over appointments and promotions sometimes have very little to do with the scholarly merit of what is endorsed or contested?

That said, there is the challenging problem of inadequate capacity to accommodate all students qualifying for university, even with the growing number of private universities (Zeleza and Oluksohi 2004a&b), with more and more governments turning to controversial quota systems in public universities to introduce some semblance of equitable access, especially in countries where education and opportunities are largely perceived to be dominated by minorities along geographical, racial, ethnic, class or gender lines (Jua and Nyamnjoh 2002; Nyamnjoh 2002; Werbner 2004).

Epistemological Xenophilia and Dependency

The extraverted nature of African education in general has favoured the knowledge industry of Europe and North America tremendously. It has allowed their intellectual traditions and practitioners to write themselves into the past, present and future of Africa as civilisers, saviours, initiators, mentors, arbiters (Fonlon 1967; Chinweizu 1987; Mudimbe 1988; Schipper 1990a&b; Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1977; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997a; Crossman and Devisch 1999, 2002; Mbembe 2000a:7-40; 2001:1-23; Magubane 2004). Europe and North America have for decades dominated the rest of the world with their academic products and cannons of knowledge production (Gareau 1987; Ake 1979; Zeleza 1997; Canagarajah 2002; Nyamnjoh 2004b; Mama 2007).

In the social sciences and humanities, under which most of African studies falls, the west has been consistently more advanced and expansionist than underdeveloped and dependent regions of the world. In the late 1980s, Frederick Gareau (1987:599) remarked that American social science, in its "unrelenting one-way traffic", was able to penetrate countries with cultures as different from its own as those of France, Canada, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea. This penetration has given American social science a "privileged position" with "a very favourable export balance of communications" or "talking without listening". Not only is there little importation, American social scientists ensure that "incoming messages are in accord with American socio-cultural norms". This approach and practice to scholarship not only demonstrates American power to define and determine the knowledge systems of the world. It also "betrays an ethnocentric, inward-looking fixation", with little preference for anything foreign:"if foreign, a preference for the Anglo-Saxon world; little concern for Continental Europe, and indifference or hostility towards the Second and the Third Worlds" (Gareau 1987:598-9). In another study focusing on International Relations, Kim Richard Nossal (1998:12) reached similar conclusions. Nossal notes that text books in this area "portray the world to their readers from a uniquely *American* point of view:they are reviewed by Americans; the sources they cite are American; the examples are American; the theory is American; the experience is American; the focus is American; and in … [some cases], the voice is also explicitly American" (see also Zinn 2010). Similar "single story" [5]observations could be made of almost every other discipline.

In this context, perspectives sympathetic with the predicaments of Africa have suffered a great rejection rate by university curricula, reviewers for publishers, and academic peers who stick to their conceptual and methodological spots however compelling arguments to the contrary (Ake 1979; Nyamnjoh 2004b). Given that recognition as knowledge is very much a function of the

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[5] See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The dangers of a single story", July 2009,
www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html0

power to define and prescribe (Bourdieu 2004:18-21), European and North American scholars are only too aware that they can ignore with impunity what is done in peripheral sites like the African continent, while any African scholar who similarly ignores western scholarship puts his or her professional competence at issue (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:27). Little wonder therefore that disciplinary debates even in the 21st century can be so uneven across geographies, between African and Africanist scholars, and among various racial and social categories.

Understood in terms of the centre-periphery perspective, the favourable "export balance" for American social science is explained by the spread of American political, economic and cultural values after World War II. Following the war, America, as a superpower exported its cultural values, through educational aid and the social sciences. "In this way, the US exported its social science sects abroad both by training social scientists in the homeland and by sending experts abroad. The expense incurred was often borne by the United States government or by private foundations" (Gareau 1987:602). In this way, America has been able, over the years, to use its doctrine of Free Flow of Information as a "highly effective ideological club" to promote its political, economic and cultural values by whipping "alternative forms of social organization" into ridiculous defensiveness (Schiller 1977). In Africa, America's ideological club has managed to dwarf the cultural legacies of former colonialists from Europe, including in higher education where American nomenclature and *manière de faire* have gained prominence (Mazrui 1986:247-8). The advent of the internet and its purported equalising potential for the developing world does not seem to be achieving much in *significantly* redefining unequal flows of information and cultural products between the west (epitomised by America) and Africa, the internet's remarkable impact and opportunities notwithstanding (Nyamnjoh 1999; Olorunnisola 2000; Beebe et al. 2003; van Binsbergen 2004). Cultural creativity and innovation made possible by accelerated mobility under globalisation are both liberating and confining, with "no absolute winners and losers" as the cultural field continues to be an uneven playing field (Hall 2010).

In Africa, intellectual dependence is further exacerbated by lack of resources for research, and the fact that even the available resources can be wasted, underused, or badly used. And without serious investments in research, western informed curricula is recycled, and teaching and learning remain void of African perspectives and ignorant of in depth understandings of African realities. African scholars are doomed to consume not books and research output of their own production or choice, but what their affluent and better placed counterparts in North America and Europe produce. Cooperation takes the form of North American and European universities calling the tune for the African pipers they have paid. Collaborative research has often worked in the interest of European and North American partners who, armed with assumed

theoretical sophistication and economic resources, often reduce their African collaborators to data collectors, research assistants (Amadiume 1997:183-198) and token citations or inclusion in course syllabuses (Nnaemeka 2005:55). The tendency remains to relate to scholars from "more marginal regions of the world" as if they were "simply producers of data for the theory mills of the North" (Appadurai 2001:5).

This concerns even the field of African studies, where Africanists appear as gatekeepers and Africans as gatecrashers (Mkandawire 1997; Berger 1997; Zeleza 1997; Prah 1998; Mama 2007). Because the leading journals and publishers are based in Europe and North America and controlled by academics there, African debates and perspectives find it very difficult getting fair and adequate representation. When manuscripts by Africans are not simply dismissed for being "uninformed by current debates and related literature", they may be turned down for challenging conventional wisdom and traditional assumptions about their continent (Cabral et al. 1998; Mkandawire 1997). African academics who succeed in penetrating such gate-keeping mechanisms have often done so by making serious sacrifices in terms of the perspectives, methodologies and contextual relevance of their publications and scholarship (Prah 1998:27-31). Unlike Steve Biko who courageously stuck to writing what he liked in his audacious quest for "self-actualization" and "a radical refusal to be a willing accomplice" in his own oppression (Mngxitama et al. 2008b:1-20; Malusi and Mphumlwana 1996; Pityana et al. 1991; Mngxitama et al. 2008a), many an African scholar has had to conform rather than lose internationally mediated visibility by daring to defend what Achille Mbembe (2000b) has provocatively termed "African modes of self-writing", even at the risk of appearing like Ocol, Lawino's husband, whose testicles have been smashed by the white man's books (p'Bitek 1989). The situation is hardly facilitated by the infighting amongst senior and well connected scholars, who indulge in backstabbing, delight in frustrating others and using them as stepping stones. It is common for academism to pave the way to political activism, not necessarily to advance the development of knowledge but rather ambitions of dominance outside the academy.

Migrating to Europe and North America might bring desired international recognition and exhibition as "Hottentot Venus of the Academy", but often does not help, and could indeed exacerbate the problem of the irrelevance of the knowledge produced and consumed on Africa. The tendency is for Africans scholars in the diaspora to shop "up" for northern sources, not "down" for local scholarship on what they write and read on and about Africa. Little wonder therefore, that the most prominent voices in African studies today are "diasporic intellectuals" whose "inspiration comes perhaps more from nicely subtle readings of fashionable European theorists… than it does

from…current local knowledge of the cultural politics of everyday life in the postcolonial hinterlands" (Werbner 1996:6). And little wonder that the study of Africa continues to be dominated by perspectives that privilege analogy over the historical processes that should qualify Africa as a unit of analysis on its own terms (Mamdani, 1996:12-13; Imam 1997; Amadiume 1997; Nnaemeka 2005; Oyewumi 2005; Mama 2007). Even when a project is meant to study endogenous knowledge systems in Africa, the tendency is for the African researchers involved to start by drawing on "theorists" elsewhere whose relevance can at best only be indirect, as the empirical realities that shaped their theorising were everything but African. The suggestion to study and understand Africa first on its own terms is easily and uncritically dismissed as an invitation to celebrate African essentialism and exceptionalism. There is little patience with anything African, even by Africans. There is little discourse on Africa for Africa's sake, and the west has often used Africa as a pretext for its own subjectivities, fantasies and perversions. And no amount of new knowledge seems challenging enough to bury for good the ghost of simplistic assumptions about Africa (Mbembe 2000a:10-21, 2001:3-9; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997b:236-322; Schipper 1990a&b; Magubane 2004; Nnaemeka 2005; Oyewumi 2005; Mama 2007).

In this sense, a colonial epistemology that marries science and ideology in subtle ways for hegemonic purposes has dominated social science in and on Africa, and coloured perceptions of Africa even by Africans. This dominant epistemology has not always been sensitive to new perspectives that question the conventional wisdom and myopic assumptions of the coloniser. It has stayed largely faithful to a type of social science induced and informed more by fantasies, prejudices, stereotypes, assumptions, ideologies or biases about Africa and Africans. Given its remarkable ability to reproduce and market itself globally, this epistemology has emptied academia of the power and impact of competing and complementary systems of knowledge (Mudimbe 1988:x-xi). "Even in the most explicitly 'Afrocentric' descriptions, models of analysis explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly, refer" to "categories and conceptual systems which depend on a western epistemological order", as if African beliefs and African traditional systems of thought are "unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality" or "epistemological locus" (Mudimbe 1988:x). Although research on and in Africa has shaped the disciplines and our convictions of a supposedly universal truth (Bates et al. 1993:xiii-xiv), the quest for such universality has meant the marginalisation of African possibilities. The outcome has been nothing short of an epistemological imperialism that has facilitated both a colonial intellectual hegemony and the silencing of Africans even in the study of Africa (Copans 1990:305-395; Ake 1979; Zeleza 1997; Obenga 2001; Nabudare 2006;

Nnaemeka 2005; Oyewumi 2005; Mama 2007), making of Africans intellectual outsiders in their own land (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2005).

Under the dominant colonial epistemology, most accounts of African cultures and experiences have been generated from the insensitive position of power and quest for convergence and homogeneity. Explicit or implicit in these accounts is the assumption that African societies should reproduce colonial institutions and European ideals regardless of feasibility or contextual differences. Few researchers of Africa, even in African universities, have questioned enough the theories, concepts and basic assumptions informed by the dominant epistemology. The tendency has been to conform to a world conceived without them (Chinweizu 1987; Mafeje 1998:26-29). Missing are perspectives of silent majorities with vibrant but untold stories. The dominant epistemology is thus deprived. It is littered with defective accounts of voiceless communities recounted by others. Correcting this entails paying more attention to the popular epistemologies from which ordinary people draw on a daily basis, and the ways they situate themselves in relationship to others within these epistemologies. Considering and treating the everyday life of social spaces as bona fide research sites entails, inter alia, an ethnographic, participatory approach of active immersion in the popular in truly democratic, interdependent and interactive ways. It also means encouraging "a meaningful dialogue" between these epistemologies and "modern science", both in their old and new forms (Devisch 2002, 2007). However, because the popular epistemologies in question have been actively discouraged and delegitimized since the colonial encounters, there is need to revalorise them and the supposedly silent majorities shaping and sharing them. To avoid the limitations of blanket assumptions, there is need for systematic and critical non-prescriptive research into these silent epistemologies of silent majorities.

The possibility of such work is evidenced by research and/or critical thinking – ranging from the "Afrocentrism" of scholars such as Molife Kete Asante (2003) and Marimba Ani (1994), to Dani Wadaba Nabudare's (2006) "Afrokology", through philosophy (Appiah 1992; Eze 1997; Bell 2002; Hountondji 2002), popular culture (Barber 1997; Edman 2010), history, legal and political processes (Ake 1979, 2000; Amadiume 1987; Mamdani 1996; Falola and Jennings 2002; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006), and gender relations and identities (Imam et al 1997; Amadiume 1987, 1997; Nnaemeka 2005; Oyewumi 2005; Mama 2007). What is needed however is not so much pointing to isolated individuals perceived to be doing the right thing, but a critical mass of scholars and non-scholars networking and working together strategically towards achieving the valorisation of marginalised humanity and the creative diversity of being African. In the quest to re-anchor and endogenise education on African realities, through the critical rethinking of curriculum, the work of

Paulus Gerdes of Mozambique calling for cross-disciplinary conversations and joint initiatives between natural and social scientists is instructive. Gerdes (1999, 2007, 2008; Djebbar and Gerdes 2007) has researched and published on mathematics, geometry and logic long practised by Africans in productive and decorative activities like mat and basket weaving, ceramics and sculpting, and in riddles and storytelling, and often illustrated by design patterns drawn on the ground and reflected in infinitely complex and varied dance steps, drum rhythms and melodies. Equally instructive is research into local notions of time and calendars, ecological knowledge, farming, fishing and pastoral techniques, taxonomic knowledge in fauna and flora, pharmacopoeias and medical aetiologies, and diverse traditions of healthcare.

Epistemological restoration and conviviality entails moving from assumptions to empirical substantiation of claims about Africa. Hence the importance of questions such as: Who are these ordinary silent people? What do they do for their living? What is the nature of their epistemologies? Where do Africans, brought up under and practising the colonial epistemology, position themselves? How ready is the elite to be led by the silent majorities, further silenced with our elitist discourses? Until we know what these epistemologies *actually are*, we wouldn't know where and how, or with whom to dialogue. The angel may well be in the belly of the beast, just as the beast may well be in the belly of the angel.

The colonial epistemology has survived in the continent more because it suits the purposes of the agents of (neo)colonialism than because of its relevance to understanding African situations. Those who run educational programmes informed by this epistemology are seldom tolerant of challenge, stimulation, provocation and competing perspectives at any level. They protect their intellectual spots jealously, and are ready to deflate all "saboteurs" and "subversives". They want their programmes to go on without disturbance. They select as trainers and lecturers or accept and sponsor only those research questions and findings that confirm their basic assumptions on scholarship and the African condition. But African universities, academics and researchers have the responsibility to challenge such unfounded assumptions based on vested interests, hidden agendas or the *habitus* of colonial hierarchies of humanity and human agency.

Challenging and changing a system of thought is by no means an easy task, especially because scholars in Africa rely on these very agents of cultural devaluation of Africa to fund and disseminate their research. Few in positions of power and control would accept research critical of their ideas and practices, especially in a context where relations of unequal exchange with the outside world have already considerably diminished negotiating power and control of African scholars. They are more likely, therefore, to sponsor only research that

would produce results that justify their position and help them in their defence when challenged. Researchers genuinely seeking the de-establishment of science narrowly construed, the democratisation of education and research, and the reversal of systemic and systematic intellectual poverty in Africa are more unlikely to find mainstream support and funding.

It matters little, as Susan George (1992:109-171, 1997) has argued, how many "mistakes" mainstream researchers or theorists make or how insensitive to the predicaments of ordinary people they are, for "protected and nurtured by those whose political objectives they support, package and condone, they have a licence to go on making them, whatever the consequences." Through the institutions they create and fund, the powerful are able to perpetuate their ideologies by ensuring that only people with the "correct" ideas are recruited and/or retained to work there. Neo-liberals and their institutions of legitimation, know only too well that in order to penetrate people's heads and acquire their hearts, hands and destinies, they have to make their ideas part of the daily life of people and society, by packaging, conveying and propagating these ideas through books, magazines, journals, conferences, symposia, professional associations, student organisations, university chairs, mass media and other means.

Providing for Popular Epistemologies

Domestication as a dialogical epistemological shift can only begin to take shape if research by Africans critical of conventional wisdom in academia is greeted with recognition rather than censorship, caricature or derision (Obenga 2001:49-66). Only by creating space for African scholarship based on Africa as a unit of analysis in its own right could scholars begin to correct prevalent situations whereby much is known of what African states, societies, economies and individuals "*are not*" (thanks to dogmatic and normative assumptions of mainstream scholarship) but very little of what "*they actually are*" (Mbembe 2000a:21, 2001:9). Accepting the research agendas of African scholars may not just be "a matter of ecumenism or goodwill", but also the beginnings of a conversation that could enrich and enliven scholarship globally (Appadurai 1999:235-237). Forging such mutuality, in a spirit of partnership and interdependence, would help re-energize African scholars and allow for building a genuinely international and democratic community of researchers. In this regard, Appadurai sees a future of profound internationalisation that invites academics across the globe to a conversation about research wherein "the very elements of the ethic could be subjects of debate, and to which scholars from other societies and traditions of inquiry could bring their own ideas about what counts as new knowledge and about what communities of

judgement and accountability they might judge to be central in the pursuit of such knowledge" (Appadurai 1999:237).

Global conversations and cooperation among universities and scholars are a starting point in a long journey of equalisation and recognition of marginalised epistemologies and dimensions of scientific inquiry. But any global restructuring of power relations in scholarship can only begin to be meaningful to ordinary Africans through educational institutions and curricula and pedagogies in touch and in tune with their predicaments. In this connection, academics and researchers from and on Africa cannot afford to be blind to the plight of African scholarship whatever the pressures they face and regardless of their own levels of misery and need for sustenance. Nearly three decades ago Fonlon (1978) made a plea for African universities as spaces for genuine intellectuals dedicated to the common weal. For African universities and researchers to contribute towards a genuine, multifaceted liberation of the continent and its peoples, they ought to start not by joining the bandwagon as has been their history, but by joining their people in a careful rethinking of African concerns and priorities, and educational approaches (Copans 1990, 1993; Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004; Mama 2007).

Mohamed Salih refers to embedding African universities "in African societies and African values... entrenched and born in the African soil" (Mama and Hamilton 2003:35). Mamdani (1993:19) also refers to rooting African universities in African soil, and Mafeje calls for a move away from "received theory or contrived universalism", to an "intimate knowledge of the dynamics of African culture[s] in a contemporary setting" (Mafeje 1988:8). Such "endogenisation", Crossman argues, cannot take place within the colonial model of education, and therefore "should not only imply a freedom from dominant narratives and their methodologies but also the capacity for original and critical intellectual production by means of relatively autonomous research and educational institutions, methodologies, perspectives and choice of subject matter" (Crossman 2004:323-324; see also Crossman and Devisch 2002; Okere et al 2005). Here, as with popular epistemologies, the way forward is to encourage carefully thought through research, which from inception brings out endogenous African methodologies and perspectives. And one cannot assume methodologies and perspectives are African simply because those doing the research and the thinking *proclaim* themselves African or *look* African. As Obioma Nnaemeka (2005:57) argues, "insiders can also be alienated from their own culture", and "A Western-educated African who teaches African culture also speaks from a position of alienation which may not necessarily be as profound as that of the outsider."

Hope for the future of higher education in Africa depends on meticulous and creative processes of cultural restoration and endogenisation even as African scholars continue to cooperate and converse with intellectuals around the world.

For scholars and writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2005) not to be "intellectual outsiders" in their own universities, insightful scrutiny of current curricula is needed. What are the origins? What assumptions underlie the content? What practicability and outcome? Through greater reconnection with and adaptation to local and national socio-cultural contexts African universities might overcome functional and philosophical difficulties and make themselves more relevant to the needs of the countries and communities of peoples they serve (Crossman and Devisch 1999, 2002; Crossman 2004; Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004a; Olukoshi and Zeleza 2004b; Devisch 2007; Mama 2007). Initiatives for reconnecting universities to lived life and embedding research in African communities should be encouraged.

If Africa is to be party in a global conversation of universities and scholars, it is appropriate that this is done on its own epistemological and methodological terms, with the interests and concerns of ordinary Africans carefully negotiated, navigated and blended with those of the elite, in the African tradition of accommodation and appropriation. These epistemologies and methodologies need systematic researching and consolidation into publicly accessible repertoires to be drawn upon by institutions and individuals, for scholarly and popular endeavours. Knowledge production and consumption in Africa remain incomplete without the systematic integration of all conflicting and complementary epistemologies, and space for scholarship and perspectives of all persuasions.

As I conclude this paper, I can hear many of my readers screaming with frustration and inflamed by burning questions. When shall it end, this blame game that African intellectuals play relentlessly – that has become a way of life? When the best scholars in and out of the continent have since independence ended their papers and books the way I have, who do we expect to come up with the appropriate epistemologies and methodologies we are recommending? We speak of the masses and ordinary Africans, who exactly are they? And how frozen in time and space have they been since before colonialism? How often do we create time and space in our busy frequent flyer schedules to get to know "our" ordinary Africans, and not simply imagine or assume them the way we are akin to doing? When shall we begin to put our action where we put our rhetoric? When shall we graduate from mourning to doing? Who is to effectively mobilise whom around the crystallisation of these epistemologies and methodologies? Is it the young and upcoming generations that fascinates the world with their infinite abilities to navigate and manipulate myriad identity margins? Or is ours merely a case of preaching without practice, text without context? If that, how honest are we about this decision to keep ourselves distant from what we write about or bring to the market place as African knowledge? Do we hasten to correct those who, knowingly or not, label us and our scholarly merchandise "African" or

"Afrocentric" not from what we do, but simply from what we claim and write? How can we be taken seriously by ordinary Africans, our students and our peers locally and globally, if we continue to sound like a broken record, stuck at the point when colonialism was in town? Hasn't the complexity and nuance of being African passed us by in our broken record stupor? The test of our theoretical prescriptions must be in the practical implementation. Why has it taken me, Professor Francis Beng Nyamnjoh, this long to admit something this obvious? May someone less blinded by sight, someone less keen on keeping up appearances, step forward with leadership on this thorny resilient issue that makes Africa always a winner in the blame game.

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I have received over 30 comments from students and colleagues since circulating the draft of this paper from the paragraph above upwards. Some, like Kwesi Prah of Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Cape Town, have been full of praise, describing the paper as "rich, racy, encompassing and encyclopaedic in breadth and inspiration" and "refreshing and masterly" in its "disciplinary and ideational eclecticism".[6]

Others have commented on the epistemological concerns. Ana Deumert, associate professor of Linguistics at the University of Cape Town (UCT), appreciated the "notion of 'popular epistemologies' which articulates concerns of humanity not logic!!" and the "comments on the use of language", that "fit beautifully with my Namibian work where speakers creatively play in informal spaces with exactly this type of mimicry that was demanded of them!"[7] Artwell Nhemachena, a Zimbabwean PhD student in social anthropology at UCT, found the paper "interesting and challenging: reading it I imagine Africans conscripted and loaded onto rockets of bondage moving at terrific speeds. And the question is how do they disembark or creatively negotiate for freedom: peacefully lest they plunge the rockets while they are on board."[8] To some like Tatah Mentan, a Cameroonian academic at the University of Minnesota, who drew my attention to Anibal Quijano (2000) and Dani Wadaba Nabudare (2006):

> What concerned African scholars MUST do is to reject these imperialistic epistemologies which deem all non-European thought as unscientific, mythical or magical. Any African scholar offering asylum to this imperialistic garbage called 'scientific knowledge' will be thrown into the dustbin of history (Tatah Mentan, comment, 1 April 2011).

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[6] Kwesi Prah, comment, 5 April 2011
[7] Ana Deumert, comment, 30 March 2011
[8] Artwell Nhemachena, comment, 15 April 2011

Strong though Tatah Mentan's position might appear, his subscription to Nabudare's "Afrokology" means he is less interested in throwing the baby of colonial epistemology out with the bathwater than in seeking recognition and representation for an approach to knowledge production "which encompasses the philosophical, epistemological and methodological issues, all… part of the process of creating an African self-understanding that can place Africa in today's global world, and in which it is recognised as a full partner and forebear of much of the human heritage" (Nabudare 2006:7).

To others like Anne Schady, a German PhD student in social anthropology at UCT, to term the dominant epistemology "western" is to ignore the realities of its western victims:

> I feel as dominated and oppressed by the dominant epistemology as you describe Africans have been and to a large extent still are. I see 'African' and 'western' in the way you describe them as different sides within myself… Ultimately, I think, we want to overcome the dichotomy of the approaches and find a way of integrating them in a way that allows us to draw on the strengths of both of them (Anne Schady, comment, 12 April 2011).

As René Devisch[9] of Katholieke Universiteit Leuven argued in his 3-paged comment, "the colonial endeavour was part of Reformist modernity's project of the late 19th century European elite (highly educated upper bourgeoisie) and a few aristocracies", and therefore not a project of the European masses who, like Africans, had popular epistemologies of their own disregarded. The colonial endeavour drew on "Enlightenment ideals and engineering/industrialising science-in-the-make" to export itself to and extract from the tropics as part of European "social and material engineering" through state bureaucracy, school education, paid labour in industry, individualisation, commodification and cash economy. Seen in terms of interconnecting hierarchies of knowledge systems, the popular epistemologies of Europe or the west were just as much a victim as those of Africa, even if the hierarchy of races meant that the ordinary people of Europe and North America rightly or wrongly identified or were identified with the simplistic dualisms implicit in the elite epistemologies

My final paragraph provoked a lot of comments. For Catherine Louise Jackson, an MA student in social anthropology at UCT:

> Regarding your final paragraph which conveys a sense of doubt as to the next steps forward, I think that the value of this paper lies in the fact that

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[9] René Devisch, comment, 1 April 2011

it acknowledges the problem and joins the conversation about it… It lays the foundations for future research and action and illuminates the 'unmanning' potential of this type of education, so that those educated may be forewarned and therefore be less susceptible to the uncritical internalization of the values and information that they are force-fed. I also think this provides a starting point for a very interesting ethnography (Catherine Louise Jackson, comment, 13 April 2011).

To Ifi Amadiume of Dartmouth College, "I note your despair in the last lines of your concluding paragraph, and the admission that you are coming to this late! Isn't that what your two books *Insiders and Outsiders* (2006) and *The Disillusioned African* (2007) are about?"[10] It is impossible for a single person to capture the complex challenges facing Africa and Africans in today's world.

Rightly or wrongly, some felt this essay does not add much to what was already been accomplished by Biko and his Black Consciousness movement in South Africa, apart from perhaps "opening South Africans up to references from the rest of Africa". M.B. Ramose was "struck by how similar to Biko were Fonlon and P'Bitek in their writing against colonial debasement of Africans".[11] Firoze Manji,[12] editor-in-chief of *Pambazuka News*, wonders "if this essay really takes us much further than the great Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino?" He challenges me "to move this debate further" for "a lot has happened in the last 50 years which needs critiquing". What he has in mind is to move away from a critique of colonial inheritance to a critique of neoliberalism and developmentalism that have dominated intellectual discourse. He writes:

> How did the radicalism of the past get wiped out? Where is it re-emerging? Where is new creative and transformative thinking taking place and why? And can decades of neo-colonial education prevent the outbreak of struggles that we have seen in Tunisia, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Swaziland, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, etc.? …I am really pleased that you are rehabilitating p'Bitek who has been forgotten by many – and probably not discovered by any in South Africa who usually think that the Mediterranean begins at the Limpopo! (Firoze Manji, comment, 24 April 2011).

This questioning reinforces the complexity of challenges facing Africa and the importance of historical ethnographic approaches to investigating current predicaments – neoliberalism, developmentalism or otherwise –, to ensure that

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[10] Ifi Amadiume, comment, 5 April 2011
[11] M.B. Ramose, comment, 27 April 2011
[12] Firoze Manji, comment, 24 April 2011

continuities are not mistaken for disjunctures, and the naming and labelling of processes are grounded in history and experience. The comments by Manji question the extent to which one can hope to redress the herculean challenges touched upon in this paper, using conventional vehicles of scholarship – journal article, book chapters and books. The issues of the neoliberal grip and prevalence of developmentalist thinking on Africa (Ferguson 1990, 1999, 2006; Amin 2006, 2010), I have touched on elsewhere (Nyamnjoh 2006a &b). The purpose of this paper is to make the point that as long as the colonial and colonising epistemologies remain the dominant framework, the mere passage of time or changing nomenclature ceases to bring about fundamental shifts in unequal relationships between Africans and the epistemologies that shape their realities. Even when the conceptual rhetoric is right, it must be translated into practice.

Way Forward
These reactions reiterate the central concern of the paper: what way forward? If one were to opt for restitution, what are its possibilities and challenges? What lessons could we draw from truth and reconciliation processes in Africa? Or from yet-to-be-fruitful demands by some African leaders that Africa has to be compensated for slavery? If colonial and colonising education can be regarded as another form of slavery, how possible is it to effectively demand for restoration? If encounters with difference are to be treated as ambivalent – capable of enriching just as they are impoverishing to Africans (mind, body and soul) what approach to the domestication of such encounters with difference best guarantee that Africans are not eternally "people more sinned against than sinning" (Ali Mazrui 1994:134), people keener to forgive and forget than to exact restoration and rehabilitation? In other words, if hybridity and multiple identities are the logical options in a globalised and interconnected world, isn't it important to establish the extent to which everyone involved is challenged to make genuine sacrifices in accommodating, respecting, recognising and representing the creativity and integrity of the other? Still in other words, the extent to which genuine hybridity and negotiated identities are possible would depend on how ready Africans and non-Africans alike are to challenge a world where identities are claimed and denied through an emphasis on exclusion, not inclusion.

If Africa is dancing in a circle of intellectual captivity, how do Africans break the circle to set the terms in research processes? If the way forward is to question in theory and practice the dualisms at the heart of the colonial and colonising epistemologies, by seeking to reunite knowledge and belief, nature and culture, the natural and the supernatural, the visible and invisible, the elitist and the popular, the west and Africa, modernity and dignity, what conceptual

and methodological frameworks are imperative to achieve this end? Might it be possible to think with scholars advocating Africanism without throwing the baby of African dynamism and creative encounters with difference out with the bathwater of white supremacy?

How, and to what extent, should regional and pan-African organisations play an effective part in the elaboration and implementation of new and relevant educational policies and ethics? Is it also possible to think of the role of what has been called nonformal education? What roles beyond tokenism can families, neighbourhood groupings, local and regional common initiative associations, local and global social and professional networks, NGOs and advocacy forums, mainstream and social media play in the creative restoration processes? Colonial education started uprooting Africans right from primary school. The colonial school imbibed with colonial epistemologies put Africans in greenhouses on their own soil. Reconnecting them to Africa and African ways must happen at multiple levels.

How does the academy effectively come to terms with the fact that "There exist, on one side, modalities and topics of specialist knowledge transmitted uniformly and hegemonically worldwide through 'uni-versity' education programmes and high-tech, and on the other side, the 'di-versity' of locally shared knowledge practices and cultural productions that are professionally, historically and socioculturally anchored"?[13] If one argues to the effect that it is the role of universities to promote themselves in as well balanced a manner into "multi-versities", how does this affect the way they conduct their mission? Could fostering the production of international associations within and between professional colleagues, disciplines and fields of study and promoting debate on creative platforms among colleagues, researchers, experts and artists from the surrounding communities and through a plural partnership involving North–South and South–South networking be a way forward for such multi-versities? In this regard, what lessons could be learnt from pan-African organisations such as CODESRIA, which is yearly 40 years old?

Could the integration of local knowledges into curricula envisage not merely seeking to apply standard scholarly methods on local realities but the careful negotiation and blending of epistemologies? How many scholars are ready to seriously consider genuine co-production of knowledge with people who may not have been to school in a formal sense but whose knowledge of the world simultaneously feeds and challenges knowledge produced within the framework of the dominant epistemologies projected and sustained by resilient colonial education? Options should be informed by an attitude of tolerance and

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[13] René Devisch, comment, 1 April 2011

accommodation, in recognition of a world where there are no final answers to perplexing questions, and where we are all variants of John Godfrey's six blind men, desperately seeking to fathom the elephant. This is not to say sighted the blind would necessarily *know* the elephant, for reality is much more than meets the eye.

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