

## Preface

TWO YEARS after 're-imagining African literature' in ALJA3, we have chosen to revisit recurrent issues regarding established and newer literatures and reexamine their all-expansive African heritage in spite of regional or national groupings. This latter move is somewhat aimed at substantiating the cultural uniformity of Africa in terms of literary and cultural movements and, also, lending some inter-disciplinary insights on Africa's prolific body of literary writings as a whole through the complex course of its twentieth century history. In the words of Babacar M'Baye (USA) in his notable contribution to this volume, 'recognizing such complexity of Black cultures will help us better understand the cultural, economic, and political relationships between Blacks of Africa and of the Diaspora.' M'Baye's review of the problems of African modernity in relation to Gilroy's concept of the 'Black Atlantic' definitely makes an impressive finale for this journal volume.

An exemplar of imaginative critical evaluation comes in Amanda Grants's (CANADA) 'eclectic approach' to Chin Ce's oeuvres which, with her inclusion of hitherto mutually exclusive forms (poetry and fiction) as one whole movement of 'dialogue,' 'transition' and 'memory,' adds an important dimension to the understanding of that remarkable voice from Africa.

We have chosen two promising papers out of a good number of 'post-colonial' discourses that appear to fascinate Western college departments of African literature. Both readings from Lewis (UNITED KINGDOM) and Nesbitt (USA) would beat the Achebean (*Things Fall Apart*) track with an interesting sidebar

coming at the point where that principal African work of fiction is set against the younger novels of Dangarembga and Vassanji.

Readers may find Kenneth Usongo's (CAMEROUN) reading of *Things Fall Apart* and *Macbeth* a work of controversial, if not problematic, scholarship not by his comparison of Achebe and Shakespeare but rather in his insistence on applying the term 'superstition' on other belief and culture systems that are not entirely in conformity with the Christian religion. However, this does not totally invalidate the comparative relevance of the paper which is of greater concern in this respect.

A counterpoint of the year's re-imagining of comes up in the entries of Nkengasong (CAMEROUN) and Emezue (NIGERIA) which differ in their opinion of the vision and craft of two post-colonial writers of Indian and African ethnicities. While the Nigerian scholar appears empathetic even with Mongo Beti's artistic limitations in *Mission Terminie* (*Mission to Kala*) and argues that the alienation of the hero in both narrative and action serves a satiric purpose that bears upon an essentially colonial precedent, she spares very little to commend the West Indian writer Naipaul in the latter's 'thwarted' vision of history and struggle. Similarly, Nkengasong disdains claims of Wole Soyinka's indebtedness to Brecht in *The Swamp Dwellers* arguing, spiritedly, that in spite of the play's obvious imitation of *Waiting for Godot*, both works mythically interpreted, tap from a collective mythic imagination.

We have added Gyimah's (USA) essay on the treatment of the male characters in Ama Ata Aidoo's fiction. Gyimah's is, perhaps, in keeping with Feminist readings of literature. While contrasted with the very original study of masculinity in Ghana's home video stories by Argode (USA), both entries propose a valid complement in developing the artistic historiography of the Ghanaian nation

state.

Erik Grayson (SOUTH AFRICA) revisits Coetzee's *Disgrace* dubbing it a work of 'existentialist maturation.' Grayson's work is important in the two ways with which it gently knocks the pedestrian interpretations of critics, like Swales and Savran, before him, yet offering a mildly coterminous but yet distinct popular approach to that novel.

With the reviews of the Anezi Okoro's (NIGERIA) novel, *The Flying Tortoise*, and Judith Coullie's (SOUTH AFRICA) women's life writing *The Closest of Strangers*, in addition to Bettina Weiss's contemporary perspectives on Southern African literatures, *The End of Unheard Narratives* –thanks here to the efforts of our regional representatives– this volume concludes our published CFP entries on re-imagining African literature that had begun in 2003.

While expressing our gratitude to all our contributors for their hard work, co-operation and near-infinite patience with us in the long and arduous process of our putting this edition together, we would add that our success would have been wholly impossible without the assistance of members of the collegiate board of IRCALC. Very many thanks to the continued patronage of Progeny which has singularly prepared the stage for our world network of contributors to continue the chart of Africa's literary creeks in future volumes of JALC (ALJ) International.

IRCALC Editors  
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