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**ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF  
CARIBBEAN AND AFRICAN LITERATURE IN  
FRENCH**



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## ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF CARIBBEAN AND AFRICAN LITERATURE IN FRENCH

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## THIAROYE REVISITED

When presenting "The Thiaroye Massacre in Word and Image" in *ASCALF Bulletin* n° 8 (Spring/Summer 1994), I was unaware of some significant items on the subject, one original, others critical, and in making amends now wish to pay particular thanks to Professor János Riesz, of the University of Bayreuth, who drew the latter to my attention and generously made them available to me. He in turn was prompted by the *ASCALF Bulletin* article signed jointly by Nicola Macdonald and myself to reconsider the role of the Tirailleurs sénégalais and to reach new conclusions in the paper he delivered to the ASCALF conference held in Dublin in April 1995.<sup>1</sup> For my part I welcome such fruitful exchanges and wish simply to share the new information I have rather than to rehearse afresh the historical-artistic nexus centred on Thiaroye.

The publication in 1994 by Présence africaine of Keïta Fodéba's *Aube africaine et autres poèmes africains*, gathering two collections published by Seghers in the 1950s,<sup>2</sup> alerted me to the existence of the title poem. The blurb on the back cover, discreetly anonymous like the other editorial material in the volume, draws attention to it: "la technique de KEÏTA Fodéba est de saisir les échos de faits historiques répertoriés, et de leur donner toute leur dimension dramatique et humaine, en les tirant de la banalité du fait divers, tel le massacre de «tirailleurs sénégalais» à Thiaroye/mer (au Sénégal) sur l'ordre de leurs supérieurs, abattus par ceux pour lesquels ils s'étaient battus contre le nazisme". As, according to private correspondence, the fiftieth anniversary of the massacre seems to have been commemorated in Senegal by no more than the thought of a seminar at the Cheikh Anta Diop University, it is noteworthy that Présence africaine should have published this new edition when it did.

Keïta Fodéba (1921-1969) was perhaps best known for his creation in 1950 of the "Ballets africains", which led to

1 János Riesz, "La Folie des Tirailleurs sénégalais: sujet littéraire de la littérature coloniale à la littérature africaine de langue française", to appear in the proceedings of the Dublin conference, London: Grant & Cutler, 1996.

2 *Le Maître d'école suivi de Minuit*, 1952; *Poèmes africains*, 1958.

ministerial office in his native Guinea, firstly as Ministre de l'Intérieur in 1957, then, on Guinea's accession to independence after the 1958 referendum, as Ministre de la Défense et de la Sécurité, a post he left in 1965 to become Ministre de l'Economie rurale. His popularity attracted the suspicions of Sékou Touré, who had him arrested on 21 March 1969, imprisoned, and liquidated on a date unknown.

"Aube africaine" recounts the peaceful, loving relationship of Naman and Kadia (the characters developed by Boucabar Boris Diop in his play *Thiaroye terre rouge*<sup>3</sup>), their separation during the war, and the grief when Naman's imminent return to his unnamed village is prevented by his death at Thiaroye. The massacre is presented obliquely and briefly through synecdoche, with no reasons given. An unemotional letter from Caporal Moussa to Naman's fellow villagers is quoted: "C'était l'aube. Nous étions à Thiaroye-sur-Mer. Au cours d'une grande querelle qui nous opposait à nos chefs Blancs de Dakar, une balle a trahi Naman. Il repose en terre sénégalaise" (p.84). The text continues:

En effet, c'était l'aube. Les premiers rayons du soleil frôlant à peine la surface de la mer doraient ses petites vagues moutonnantes. Au souffle de la brise, les palmiers, comme écoeürés par ce combat matinal, inclinaient leurs troncs vers l'océan. Les corbeaux, en bandes bruyantes, venaient annoncer aux environs, par leur croassement, la tragédie, qui ensanglantait l'aube de Thiaroye [sic] ... et dans l'aube incendiée, juste au-dessus du cadavre de Naman, un gigantesque Vautour, planait lourdement. Il semblait lui dire: «Naman! Tu n'as pas dansé cette danse sacrée qui porte mon nom. D'AUTRES LA DANSEURONT.» (pp.84-85)

An unfinished sentence closes the text after this terse and muted revelation: "Au village, la nouvelle de cette subite mort se...". However, the whole text is interspersed with musical and choreographic directions, and the spectacle has to be imagined by the armchair reader. In performance there is little doubt that the major impact would come rather from the music and dance than from the text.

3 In *Le Temps de Tamango suivi de Thiaroye terre rouge*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981, pp.145-203. I do not know whether Diop borrowed the names from Keïta or whether both drew on a common historical source.

It had been the purpose of Nicola Macdonald and myself to focus on items entirely devoted to Thiaroye: "Aube africaine" should therefore have been part of our corpus had we known about it. The fact that it is does not figure in a specialised German study brought to my attention by János Riesz is some consolation, however. I refer to Werner Glinga's *Literatur in Senegal: Geschichte, Mythos und gesellschaftliches Ideal*,<sup>4</sup> in which section 4.2.5 ("Thiaroye: Die Hölle des Krieges und der Betrug des Friedens", esp. pp.379-90) is devoted to the Thiaroye incident and literary responses to it. Glinga focuses on Senghor's poem "Thiaroye" and two novels which touch on the Thiaroye massacre: *Morts pour la France* by Doumbi-Fakoly,<sup>5</sup> and Boubacar Boris Diop's *Le Temps de Tamango* which precedes *Thiaroye terre rouge* in the 1981 volume already mentioned.

Despite some egregious errors of fact in Doumbi-Fakoly's account<sup>6</sup> - situating the Thiaroye massacre in December 1945, for example, rather than a year earlier - the injustice is fully recognised, as is its symbolic force:

L'affaire, que les autorités coloniales tentèrent d'enterrer avec les victimes, s'ébruita inévitablement dans la quinzaine qui suivit et passionna les coins les plus reculés de l'Afrique. Car Thiaroye c'était aussi l'Afrique. Dépositaire d'une parcelle de l'autorité maternelle, elle veillait sur les fils d'Afrique, venus de régions diverses et lointaines.

Cette situation embarrassante amena les autorités coloniales à envisager de réagir avant qu'il ne fût trop tard. Si à son tour, le moteur chroniquement enrhumé de la révolution africaine finissait de s'échauffer pour s'emballer irrémédiablement, tout l'empire colonial s'émietterait à l'instar d'un vase fragile au contact d'un pilon. (p.133)

If I mention this work particularly, it is because, surprisingly, it is left out of account in the survey of novels which present "La figure du Tirailleur Sénégalais dans le roman

4 Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1990.

5 Paris: Karthala, 1983. See esp. chapters XVII-XX, pp.120-146.

6 There are also some faults in the author's French narrative which cannot be attributed to characterisation (where he uses *petit-nègre*) or dismissed as *coquilles*: e.g. "Et tous les matins, qu'il pleuvât [sic], qu'il ventât, il se rendit au port" (p.9); "Dabiré Moussa s'asseyait [sic] sur le lit" (p.14).

sénégalais 1920-1985" in a study published by Papa Samba Diop in a wide-ranging volume of which I was again unaware when last writing in the *ASCALF Bulletin* on this subject: «*Tirailleurs Sénégalais*»: *zur bildlichen und literarischen Darstellung afrikanischer Soldaten im Dienste Frankreichs - Présentations littéraires et figuratives de soldats africains au service de la France*.<sup>7</sup> For anyone working on the history or literary representation of the Tirailleurs sénégalais, this is an invaluable work and essential secondary reading.

The Bayreuth project is important for anyone wishing to pursue historical or literary studies on the Tirailleurs sénégalais in general or the Thiaroye massacre in particular, on which sensitivities remain raw and archives correspondingly parcimonious. I am happy to salute the valuable work done there in adding "Aube africaine" to the dossier.

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7 Ed János Riesz & Joachim Schultz, *Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft* Bd 13, Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1989. P.S. Diop's study is on pages 39-56. Six studies in the volume are in French; and the nine in German have summaries in French at the end. Two interviews with "anciens tirailleurs" (one of them Doudou Diallo, Président de l'Association des Anciens Combattants et Prisonniers de Guerre au Sénégal 1939-1945, and a survivor of Thiaroye whose témoignage is quoted in "The Thiaroye Massacre in Word and Image", *ASCALF Bulletin*, 8 (Spring/Summer 1994), p.29, are in French, as is a note on the contents of a valuable Tirailleurs sénégalais archive constituted at the University of Bayreuth.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### De Métissages en créolités

Maryse Condé et Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, eds. *Penser la créolité*, Paris: Karthala, 1995, 320p. ISBN 2-86537-565-X

Daniel Delas et Danielle Deltel, eds. *Voix nouvelles du roman africain, (Littératures francophones I)*, Cahiers du RITM 7, Centre de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur les Textes Modernes, Université Paris X, 1994, 160pp. FF90. ISSN 0766-4214

Alain Ricard, *Littératures d'Afrique noire: des langues aux livres*, Paris, CNRS/Karthala, 1995, 304pp. FF150. ISBN 2-86537-531-5

All these three volumes are concerned in their different ways with issues arising from the cross-fertilisation of different cultures to produce new forms of literary expression. This is most obviously the preoccupation of the collection of papers brought together by Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, but it is also one of the major issues raised in the other two African-oriented volumes. Despite the ideology of cultural nationalism prevalent in most African countries since independence, these two works show how profoundly *métissées* are most of their literary productions, inevitably involving cross-cultural and trans-linguistic negotiations, even in the case of literatures written in indigenous African languages, as extensively documented by Alain Ricard.

To begin with the most obvious debate around the question of *métissage*, this is of course the principal theme of the Condé/Cottenet-Hage volume. This collection of papers is the record of a conference held at the University of Maryland in 1993 and inspired by the well-known manifesto of 1989 by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*. Some twenty short articles by a range of contributors, from Caribbean writers such as Maryse Condé, Emile Ollivier or Ernest Pépin to specialist academic critics like A. James Arnold or Régis Antoine, explore the

implications of the idea of *créolité*, mostly writing in French, but a minority of seven in English. Apart from the aforementioned literary figures, mostly commenting on their own work, the articles refer to a wide range of recent Caribbean literary texts, such as Condé's *La Traversée de la mangrove* (by Kathleen Balutansky) and *La Vie scélérate* (By Marie Agnès Sourieau), Confiant's *Le Nègre et l'amiral* (by Ronnie Scharfman), Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (by Delphine Perret) etc. Others look more broadly at the work of writers such as the Haitian exile Jean Métellus (by Hal Wylie) or even Saint-John Perse, a well-established French poet whose problematic "créole" status is explored by Régis Antoine. Broader themes are tackled by some of the contributors, such as James Arnold on "The gendering of *créolité*", Thomas Sper on the carnivalesque aspects of creole sexuality, or Lydie Noudileno on the "spécularité" of the Caribbean writer. Some contributors, finally, concentrate on specialist aspects, such as Joan Dayan on the legal history of racial differentiation in the French Caribbean colonies of the late 18th century, or Pascale deSouza on the linguistic incorporation of creole language in literary texts.

Inevitably, volumes such as this produce a rather confused and disparate impression, but there is a considerable degree of interconnection between the articles, and for those interested in the complex politics of Francophone Caribbean identity it is an informative and rewarding anthology. Not surprisingly for a collection of conference papers, the coverage of the field is rather patchy: despite many references to the work of Edouard Glissant, no contributor devotes a study to him in particular, and the same is true of Simone Schwarz-Bart. Despite some discussion of Derek Walcott's poetry, little cross-reference is made to the Anglophone Caribbean - a common and inexplicable weakness of accounts of *créolité*. There is however an article by Cora Lagos and Kevin Meehan which provocatively juxtaposes rather than relates to *créolité* a text such as *I Rigoberta Menchù, an Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Another area of *créolité* which is given only a fleeting mention (by Françoise Vergès), despite being explicitly encompassed within the *Eloge de la créolité*, is that of the islands of the Indian Ocean, such as Réunion and Mauritius. In the end, the limitation of the fascinating debate launched by Bernabé,

Chamoiseau and Confiant lies in the narrowness of its frame of reference, which all too often seems to be limited to two fairly small and untypical Francophone islands in the Caribbean. The implications of the notion of creoleness are of course much wider, as both Glissant and Walcott are aware, but in generalising from the particular experience of Guadeloupe and Martinique (Guyane is never mentioned!) the terms of reference seem to shift in ways which this volume doesn't really address. As an introduction to the debate itself, however parochial, this is nonetheless a stimulating collection of essays.

It is interesting to compare this with a similar anthology of articles on recent African fiction in French edited by Delas and Deltel. The coverage is more systematic and better organised, ranging from two articles on Calixthe Beyala (by Ursula Baumgardt and Clément Mbom) to Michel Hausser's narratological analysis of Kourouma's *Monnè*; from Romuald Fonkué's brave attempt to dissect Adiaffi's *Silence, on développe* to Xavier Gernier's analysis of the magical politics of the late Sony Labou Tansi; or Danielle Deltel on Henri Lopes. Less familiar figures include the Guinean novelist Cheik Oumar Kanté, analysed by Daniel Delas, and the historical novelist Tita Mandeleau, Senegalese by adoption, whose novel *Signare Anna* is analysed by Basssirou Dieng. This volume thus provides a selection of essays on most of the major figures of recent African fiction in French, and introduces us to one or two lesser-known ones.

The most obvious figure of *métissage* covered is that of Henri Lopes, who examines the problem of mixed-race cultural identity in his novels and short stories, to conclude, according to Danielle Deltel, with a defence of multi-cultural individualism. Lopes refuses to limit his social and cultural horizons to African ones, and this is probably implicitly true of many of the other novelists covered, but not usually proclaimed as a guiding principle as does Lopes. Calixthe Beyala, for instance, is seen by both Baumgardt and Mbom to develop away from the African, urban context of her earlier fictions like *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* to encompass in her more recent output the problems of the expatriate African community in Paris, in *Le Petit Prince de Belleville*: the themes evoked are certainly Afro-centric, but now clearly situated in a wider

international context. The settings of Sony Labou Tansi's novels, as Garnier observes, are often more perplexing, since their magical quality prevents any clear identification with places or characters. They are nonetheless recognisably rooted in an African imagination: "Le roman-trottoir restera imbattable à tout point de vue. Chez nous, les histoires poussent comme des champignons". At the same time the influence of Latin-American literature is constantly suggested by the frequently Hispanic names given to his fantasy dictators and republics; and Sony has always insisted that the relevance of his nightmarish scenarios is by no means restricted to Africa.

One of the most successful and often quoted examples of cultural *métissage* is that of the style of Ahmadou Kourouma in *Les Soleils des indépendances*, which mingles classical French narrative with Malinke proverbs and expressions. Michel Hausser takes this kind of stylistic analysis further in trying to situate the extremely unstable narrative voice used by Kourouma in *Monnè* - oscillating between a conventional omniscient first-person narrator through an indeterminate "nous" through to a transient first or third-person identification with one or other of the characters. This formal instability, analagous in some ways to the experiments of Glissant, represents another way of coping with the implications of a constantly shifting cultural allegiance. The idea of a de-centered, parodic, referential narrative is taken to its ultimate extreme by Jean-Marie Adiaffi Ade, who attempts, according to Fonkoua, to present an encyclopaedic collage of the multiple narrative discourses on Africa which, as the title *Silence, on développe* suggests, drown out that of any authentically African voice. The slipperiness of this notion of "voice" is explored by Bernard Mouralis in a concluding article: what might it mean in the context of a literature written in a colonial language and drawing on an uninscribed heritage of orality? The parallel with the Caribbean is more obvious here and Mouralis significantly draws several examples from Jean Métellus.

The problematic status of written literatures and their relation to African languages is tackled by Alain Ricard in his immensely wide-ranging and authoritative study of *Littératures d'Afrique noire*. This is no narrowly Francocentric or even Eurocentric account of post-colonial writings: Ricard examines

in detail the various indigenous African written literatures, those using Yoruba, Xhosa, Swahili, Hausa, Sessouto, Gueze or Amhara and transcribed using Latin or Arabic script. He discusses in fascinating detail the problems arising from the inadequacies of this transcription - the almost insuperable difficulty of transcribing tones, for instance - and the way these limitations have restricted the use of many African languages as a form of literary expression. He asserts convincingly that the absence of an agreed norm for transcription has an irreparably damaging effect on the development of a written literature, as with Igbo literature from Nigeria, for instance, insignificant in relation to the monumental Yoruba output because of the lack of an agreed convention of writing in Igbo. This in its turn, he suggests, means that a culture deprived of a significant literary heritage of its own is at a disadvantage when writing in the colonial languages: it is no accident that the first African Nobel Prize for literature should have been awarded to a writer steeped in his own Yoruba culture, Wole Soyinka.

This illustrates very well the significance of this book for all students of African literature in European languages, and it provides much food for thought. Ricard is far from endorsing in a facile way the "politically correct" championing of writing in African languages, whilst showing a healthy disrespect of the cultural militants who campaign for it: he drily observes that the output of Ngugi wa Thiongo represents over 80% of literature written in Gikuyu, and highlights the great difficulty the latter experienced in writing with scarcely any model other than a translation of the Bible. With a similar detachment, Ricard chronicles the emergence of a very early written literature in Xhosa as a result of the convergence of an early Xhosa bard called Ntsikana and the efforts of local representatives of the Glasgow Missionary Society, such as the Wesleyan William Boyce, who published a grammar of Xhosa as early as 1836. This was followed later in the century by the "Lovedale Kaffir Readers" [sic] and translations of the Bible and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which provided models for an indigenous Xhosa literary culture.

Ricard's observations constantly seem to show how even the very earliest manifestations of written literature in Africa are not the result of some pure essence of particular national genius, but rather of cross-fertilisation of different

traditions, such as the example quoted earlier of indigenous oral poetry and the proselytising of Protestant missionary groups who insisted on translating their religious texts into the local vernacular. Even the problem of transcription arises for the inevitable confrontation of an established European or Arabic notation with the complexities of a spoken linguistic tradition. He devotes an admiring and affectionate chapter to those he calls the "passeurs de langue" who write in both their own African language and in a colonial one, such as Hampaté Ba or Okot p'Bitek. It may not be fashionable to praise Senghor, but Ricard is full of admiration for his ability to adapt and mould the French verse form to encompass his own African culture, an essential ingredient in the alchemical formulation of a successful "métissage".

It is as if the contemporary need of many communities, and not only beleaguered minorities, to get back to the "roots" or the "basics" of their particular cultures is not likely to lead to the discovery of some immutable national essence, but rather to an awareness of the complex interactions that constitute any "heritage" worth the trouble. The same seems to be true of literature: attempts to constitute or define a literary "authenticity" seem to be doomed to discover that such purity of origins is in all cases an illusion, and that it is better to explore and celebrate diversity than to promote cultural chauvinism. Perhaps it is the fear of dissolution into a diffuse magma of creoleness which provokes the reaction of cultural nationalism, but it will necessarily lead in the end to an acceptance of the inevitability of *métissage*.

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John Conteh-Morgan, *Theatre and Drama in Francophone Africa: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, xii + 243pp. ISBN 0 521 43453 X

This important study is divided into two sections: the first gives a historical and theoretical presentation of the roots of Francophone drama, the second illustrates the theory through

an analysis of specific plays. Stressing the vigour of dramatic writing in modern Francophone societies, Professor Conteh-Morgan traces in the closely-argued first section many of the underlying premisses of this theatre, particularly as regards performance-idiom, to features of traditional African society, while noting important divergences. Ritual, whether the ritualisation of personal emotion, or that of collective life, is shown to play a central role in African life, frequently becoming performance dependent on music, dance, song, mime, costume and so forth. Conteh-Morgan traces the legacy of this *theatrical* approach in Francophone writing for the stage, distinguishing it, at least in broad terms, from the text-based *dramatic* plays of the mainstream French tradition. He is also aware, however, of the revolution in the French theatre in the course of the 20th century, evoking Artaud's condemnation of the speech-based play, and his espousal, taken up by writers such as Genet, Claudel, and Cocteau, of a modern "total theatre". He is conscious also of the difference in purpose of the ritual, fundamental to the health of a particular society, and obligatory for its members, and the optional entertainment, however serious, which mainstream French theatre has evolved into. This was, of course, precisely what writers such as Artaud and Genet were criticising. In an illuminating comment, Conteh-Morgan observes that ritual becomes theatre precisely at that moment when the belief-system subtending it no longer holds sway, and what he calls "ritual's symbolic language-units" (dance, costume, gestures, music etc.) become "*ends in themselves, as objects of beauty and entertainment*" (p.21, author's italics). Thus Artaud's attempts to ritualise theatre through a series of technical operations was doomed to failure, since ritual assumes "an underlying and shared belief-system which is affirmed and celebrated in performance".

While recognising the contribution of African ritual to Francophone theatre, Conteh-Morgan rejects, however, the poetic and tragic vision, propounded by Soyinka, of ritual as a profound awareness of "the cosmic human condition", especially in so far as he appropriates this vision for Africa, assigning a secular tradition of "realistic drama" to the West. As Conteh-Morgan rightly points out, *relaism* is no stranger to the African tradition, any more than the poetic and tragic vision is to Western culture, from Aeschylus to Beckett. The majority



of Francophone plays, he observes, are concerned not so much with "the cosmic human condition" as with man's social and political conditions; its vision, even when infused with a tragic dimension, is naturalistic rather than supernaturalistic. Francophone dramatists are more preoccupied with social and political combat than with "the lyrical celebration of man's tragic destiny" (p.27). The reasons for this Conteh-Morgan sees to be multiple, not simply limited to the post-1789 humanistic and revolutionary influence of the colonising power, France. Islam, with its insistent discreditation of the world of nature-spirits from which ritual proceeds, was also a defining influence.

In his discussion of the influence of tradition on form, Conteh-Morgan is refreshingly direct: in his view, whereas Western drama, after several centuries of formal development which had become increasingly void of spiritual content, could legitimately desire liberation and a resacralisation of existence; Francophone Africa, having had the old structures destroyed by colonisation, suffers rather from a "*surfeit of spirituality*" (author's italics), and a lack of modern, rational procedures of thought and organisation (p.33). Hence the tendency to use certain carefully-chosen elements of performance ritual, while rejecting the vision of ritual. The use of traditional performance-elements of song, music, dance and so forth are shown by Conteh-Morgan to be also a way, particularly post-1980, of circumventing the problem of an elitist, text-based theatre in French, and of returning theatre to the people. He warns, however, against the use of these forms becoming an end in itself, maintaining that the laudable aim of communication presupposes interesting views to communicate. He further warns against assuming a monolithic, "African" culture, where theatre has only to put on a ritual garb to be universally understood by the whole African continent.

In a chapter on the thematic dimension of Francophone theatre, Conteh-Morgan underlines the strong historical sense to be found in traditional African society, *pace* colonialist misreadings on the subject, and looks into the reasons for the obsession with history, especially of the heroic and celebratory type, in Francophone drama. He sees them as being essentially political in origin, the African having learned from his colonial masters the use of history for political purposes. On a less

serious note, he shows the importance of a popular tradition running parallel to the literate theatre of the intelligentsia, of which the Togolese concert-party is a prime example, and where improvisation is an important feature.

As well as demonstrating a clear perspective through closely-reasoned argument of a theoretical kind, this first section contains a wealth of reference to Francophone theatre as such, and to the context out of which it grew, and will be of great value to anyone working in the field. Part II examines a representative selection of texts, many of them, following the stress Conteh-Morgan lays on the use of history in modern Francophone theatre, with a historical theme. Several are self-selecting: *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* could hardly be ignored, any more than *Une Saison au Congo* or Dadié's *Béatrice au Congo*. Conteh-Morgan's reading of them, however, is fresh and informative, giving sufficient analysis for those unfamiliar with the plays, and showing clearly each writer's particular perspective on the historical events depicted, or in the case of Dadié, modified. Césaire, he concludes, is "possessed of a messianic, eschatological vision of politics", his plays "shot through with the idea of a community in a state of (political) bondage and degeneracy, and which can be *saved* from it only through the redemptive suffering and epic actions of heroic individuals" (p.122). Dadié's view of history is shown to be useful for the parallels that can be established with contemporary society, and the lessons that can be drawn from it. Other plays considered, again using historical material, but receiving less detailed comment, include Cheik Ndao's *L'Exil d'Albouri*, Jean Pliya's *Kondo le requin*, and Tchicaya U Tamsi's *Le Zulu*. Throughout his analyses, Conteh-Morgan conveys a sense of the importance of historical reference in the process of nation-building and self-definition.

In further chapters, plays analysed include Zadi Zaourou's *L'Oeil*, openly political in inspiration, and more concerned with criticising the present than evoking the past, experimental too in its effective use of mime, silence, drums etc, and in its use of popular speech in parallel with standard French. The comic tradition is represented by Guillaume Oyono-Mbia's *Trois prétendants... un mari*, a play whose stated aim is to entertain rather than to moralise. Conteh-Morgan is particularly impressed by the originality of Senouvo Zinsou,

represented here by *On joue la comédie*. While to a Western audience the device of a play-within-a-play evokes Pirandello first and foremost - or, more recently, Genet's *Les Nègres* - Conteh-Morgan demonstrates convincingly the play's roots in the Togolese Concert-party tradition of improvisation, and its success in striking out from the Western text-based play. In a final chapter, the Cameroonian Werewere Liking is noted for her use of an esoteric, highly ritualised language, derived from her native Bassa people; her espousal of a resolutely non-realistic theatre sets her apart from many of her contemporaries, and underlines her striking originality. In *La Puissance d'Um*, however, she combines what Conteh-Morgan judges to be a "deliberate and unnecessarily mystifying esotericism" (p.216) with an exploration of important social issues.

After such fullness of discussion of both issues and material, the Conclusion to the book is perhaps disappointingly short: the whole language question, so crucial in the context of Francophone literature in general, could have had a further airing, as could the matter of the political importance, the *power* of theatre, a subject of which Conteh-Morgan is clearly very aware.

On the matter of presentation, while some quotations are given in the original French plus an English translation (whose translation?), most are in English only. Even taking account of the perceived Anglophone readership, it would surely have been appropriate to include in every case, in a footnote, the original French, especially given the inaccessibility of many of the texts. One suspects that this was an editorial decision, governed by a resolutely anti-academic fear of footnotes (there are none) - a decision which in fact frequently encumbers the text with a string of references.

But these are minor reservations in a work which should become a standard reference for anyone interested in the history, development and current state of Francophone writing for the theatre.

J.P. Little  
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Dominique Combe, *Poétiques francophones*, Coll. Contours littéraires, Paris: Hachette, 1995. Pb ISBN 2-01-144955-3

Dominique Combe's study of Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (P.U.F., 1993) has already established itself as required reading for students of the poem as a poem. *Poétiques francophones* links his sensitivity to literature as literature with his interest in stylistics (*Poésie et récit*, Corti, 1989); *La Pensée et le style*, Editions universitaires, 1991; *Genres littéraires*, Hachette, 1992). Accepting the term "francophone" as a flag of convenience and wisely using it in the plural, the study focuses on the status of language for the Francophone writer in all the myriad individual circumstances in which someone is impelled to produce creative literature in French. Principally outside the hexagon wherever French is spoken, certainly, but also within metropolitan France when a foreigner settles there and, temporarily or permanently or even in parallel with his mother tongue, adopts the French language for literary expression.

Patterns emerge from the range of unique cases adduced. Combe methodically distinguishes Francophone writer from Francophone text, reviews mono-, bi- and multi-lingual situations, and charts bilingualism in relation to diglossia, translation and the "tentation babélique". The prestige and attraction of French are set against the dangers of linguistic alienation, sometimes linked with physical exile. A stimulating final chapter is devoted to the polyphonies to which, stylistically, such conditions and considerations give rise; and the conclusion draws together the many strands, insisting that individual choice remains paramount, however circumstances may seem to favour or control that choice. The volume, marred by only very occasional lapses of accuracy, will be valuable for students. It closes with most helpful select bibliography and bio-bibliographies of the main authors treated. Regrettably there is no index of names, as if some idle repetition of thumbnail portraits might have been highlighted by its existence.

Readers of the *ASCALF Bulletin* will of course find references here to familiar writers in French from sub-saharan Africa (7), the Caribbean (7) and the Maghreb (13). But the

main interest for us is the broader perspective in which their commitment to French (full or partial, permanent or occasional, with other languages being glossed, footnoted or taken as read) is set. Combe allows us to see more clearly in context the impulses behind the hypercorrectness and purism of some and the baroque ebullience or macaronics of others, to consider the specificity of a given African or West Indian author not only in his or her particular circumstances and development, but also in comparison with writers from other Francophone areas of the world with which we might be less acquainted: Belgium, Canada, Lebanon, Switzerland... (Asia and Polynesia do not figure). Any discussion of the language dilemma faced by a francophone writer will benefit from the careful survey and considered reflections which this volume offers. Combe summarises the range of questions it addresses in his conclusion (p.152):

Chaque situation, individuelle ou collective, fait apparaître des contradictions que l'écrivain francophone, sans doute comme tout écrivain plurilingue, doit résoudre: entre langue et citoyenneté, entre langue seconde et langue première, entre langue d'écriture et langue courante, entre culture d'adoption et culture nationale, entre formes importées et tradition littéraire nationale, entre écriture et oralité etc. Ces contradictions intensément vécues surgissent de la condition «multi-culturelle» et plurilingue de l'écrivain francophone qui vit, pense et crée dans l'«entre-deux», quand ce n'est pas l'«entre-plusieurs». Pareille position ... est certes inconfortable...; mais elle constitue aussi un trésor inaliénable, une inépuisable richesse intérieure, qui est une source de créativité.

Roger Little  
Trinity College Dublin

## AFRICAN FILM

Souleymane Cissé: *Waati* (Time, Mail-France, 1994, colour, 140 minutes)

Although it is centrally a film about apartheid, *Waati* is also far wider in scope than this would suggest; and, as one would expect from Cissé, extraordinarily beautiful. What the film explores is in part the place of human beings in the temporal as well as the spatial dimension of the universe. It opens with a Bambara ideogram, a circular shape surrounded by a circle, signifying, as Cissé explained in an interview in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, "toute la cosmogonie de l'univers, de l'existence du monde et de l'au-delà".<sup>1</sup> There follows a lengthy silent sequence in which the camera overflies a desert landscape, and this gradually merges into the recounting by an old South African woman of the creation of the animals. The plot follows the growing-up of a South African girl, Nandi, who witnesses the full brutality of apartheid from a very early age on the white farm where she is born. Driven into exile as a teenager, she goes to university in the Ivory Coast, and it is here that for the first time she is able to go beyond resistance against white tyranny to positive reflection on her identity as an African. This appreciation is deepened during a period of humanitarian work among the Touaregs in Mali. At the end of the film Nandi returns to a South Africa nominally free but apparently little changed in reality.

The real heroines of the film are South African women collectively, rather than Nandi as an individual. Nandi's story is traced in brief, disconnected incidents and this jerkiness heightens the sense of her as an exemplary figure rather than a rounded individual character. In the South African sequences, the men are largely secondary characters, cowed by the brutal conditions of their employment (Nandi's father) or simply absent (the young man who helps her to escape to exile says that hitherto he has mainly helped boys). It is the women who, time after time, insist that one day things will be different, and

<sup>1</sup> Souleymane Cissé, entretien avec Jean-Marc Lalanne et Frédéric Strauss, *Cahiers du Cinéma* No.492, p.58.

in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview Cissé confirms that he sees the women as having been the chief agents of change, adding significantly: "Même si évidemment des hommes y ont participé".<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, in South Africa, Ivory Coast and Mali, there is a loving creation of the gravity, beauty and strength of older women.

As one expects from Cissé, the evocation of the depth and richness of African culture is central. Even without being familiar with the cultures discussed, one is nevertheless drawn in by the atmosphere created. For outsiders, the film creates a thirst to know more: the remarkable mask-ballet which accompanies Nandi's *soutenance de thèse* is clearly synthetic in the best sense of the word: but where in Ivorian culture should one situate the *soirée des Rastas* with its wonderful chiaroscuro effects, the carefully-staged arrival and departure of the lion, and the mixture of religious ceremony, moral teaching and social gathering? "C'est quoi, la Soirée des Rastas?", asks Nandi beforehand, and her friend replies: "Si tu viens, tu verras". The same readiness is demanded of the viewer; as with *Yeelen*, one is content to open oneself to the experience, accepting that this world goes beyond what one understands or knows.

In any case, such scenes fall into place within the structure of the film, helped by Cissé's use of light, movement and space. The circular movement of the scene on the beach, which brings to breaking-point Nandi's awareness of her rejection within her own country, is picked up in the *soirée des Rastas*, which marks a decisive point in her sense of belonging as an African. The ambivalent symbol of the lion in the Rasta scene draws the spectator back to that other firelit scene in which Nandi's grandmother tells of the lion's rise and fall, while the father carves a lion pendant for Nandi.

However, it is difficult not to feel some disquiet about the film's ideology. It reposes on the thesis of a shared Africanity, apparently rejecting any idea of nationhood. The centrality of the *soirée des Rastas* suggests an identity built on a shared inheritance rather than, indeed exclusive of, shared experience or action. While no-one would deny the importance

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2 *Cahiers du Cinéma* N° . 492, p.58.

of inherited cultural values, Cissé seems here ultimately to deny the possibility of a distinctive South African identity. The result is that black South Africans are recuperated by Africa (which, in turn, seems to be recuperated by West Africa). Whatever in South African experience cannot be assimilated to this Panafrican vision, ceases to exist.

There is a series of scenes of great beauty and gravity as, increasingly, Nandi takes form as an adult with an awareness of herself: the hair-tressing; the university campus; the brief but symbolically-charged meeting with a village woman in the midst of an empty main road; the ballet accompanying the *soutenance de thèse*; the desolate beauty of the Sahelian landscape in the Touareg sequences; and the selfless dignity with which the Touaregs face disaster. All of this becomes a part of the mature Nandi.

Aesthetically, there is a hitch to this. The sleight of hand consists in our never seeing Nandi, before she leaves South Africa, as a full individual. She is angry and resistant, but a child glimpsed more through what happens to her than through what she does. The solidarity of the other students and the strength of the women are no more than a backdrop. South Africa is a disaster area, a place of unimaginable suffering and unconscionable brutality: a place in which it is impossible to find oneself. The political transformation, which takes place in Nandi's absence, is unexplained. Is it due to the school students' actions? To the often-reiterated determination of the women? The question is not treated. Cissé has quite deliberately not set out to make a journalistic film about the South African situation, and there is no reason why he should do so. But the lack of any suggestion of the combination of popular protest, political organisation, international solidarity and economic collapse which went to bring about the change in South Africa has important consequences for the film.

Cissé says in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview that it is important to counter the media-driven White image of Africa as being dominated by malnutrition. This is true enough, although one suspects that unfortunately the audience for African films in Europe is probably limited to those who have already got the message. The problem is that in revalorising the image of Africa, Cissé projects onto South Africa the very miserabilism he complains of:

En Afrique du Sud, toutes les cultures locales ont été balayées. Dans aucun taudis, on ne trouve encore quelque chose de fondamental pour ces Africains noirs. Il ne leur reste plus que leur langue. Lorsqu'on va en Afrique du Sud aujourd'hui, on a l'impression d'être dans un Etat des Etats-Unis. Les habitants noirs ont été dépossédés de leurs racines. Alors, quand on raconte une histoire sur ce pays, on ne peut que traiter de la violence (my italics).<sup>3</sup>

One could set against this Ezekiel Mphahlele's intemperately-expressed indignation, as long ago as 1962, about the négritude movement's failure to comprehend South African culture:

Lately, *Présence africaine* has, unfortunately, been too preoccupied with anthropological creepy-crawlies to devote enough attention to the artist in his [*sic*] present predicament. It worried me a lot that such a useful institution did not seem to be aware of cultural cross-currents that characterise artistic expression in multi-racial societies. They seemed to think that the only culture worth exhibiting was traditional or indigenous. And so they concentrated on countries where interaction of streams of consciousness between black and white has not taken place to any significant or obvious degree, or doesn't so much as touch the cultural subsoil.<sup>4</sup>

Quite apart from the question as to whether Cissé has overstated the extent of deculturation in South Africa, his stress on the purely African, on roots, has consequences for the general politics of the film. The difference between the distress of the Touaregs and the opulence of the Abidjan bourgeoisie appears in the film as being non-antagonistic because the bourgeoisie retain their Africanness in the form of both artifacts and human warmth. Their wealth, viewed by the Touareg orphan Aïcha, is a cause of wonderment, not alienation. Cissé has consciously opted to show the positive side of African culture, and to show it continuing and developing.

But there is an immobilism in this picture of South Africa. To return to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview: "Il me

3 Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image*, London: Faber and Faber, 1962, p.54.

4 *Cahiers du Cinéma* N°492, p.54.

semblait important de demander si les vrais problèmes avaient été évacués (avec la démocratisation)". Of course they have not, far from it: in such a situation neither attitudes nor material situations can change overnight. What is disturbing is that the question should even be put in this way - who, knowing anything about apartheid, would expect that the problems should have been solved? Is that any reason to conclude that nothing has changed? The final sequences of the film (Nandi's encounters first with the white farmer's daughter, and then with the racist immigration officials) are only too plausible in themselves, but in creating them Cissé has sold the South African situation short. Taken with the Pan-Africanist approach to African culture, they point to a complete rejection of South Africa's uniqueness. What distinguishes South Africa as a country, and South Africans as a nation, is not only the unparalleled horror of the sufferings inflicted by apartheid; it is also the contribution made by all races to the liberation struggle, the supreme effort at reconciliation now being made, and the rich mix of culture which has grown up as part of that process.

Whatever other readings of the film are possible, this one seems to be inescapable. This is in no way to underrate the depth of what Cissé has done in the rest of the film, or to dictate what the film "should have" said. However, one of the jobs of the critic is to point out what it *is* saying.

Anna Ridehalgh  
Southampton University

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### Bayreuth Table Ronde

Second Round Table on "Problématique(s) de la littérature dans les situations de contacts de langues: concepts et instruments d'analyse" (University of Bayreuth, 30th June - 1st July 1995)

Before the close of the stimulating discussions at the first "Table Ronde" held at La Baume-les-Aix on 22-23 June

1994 on the initiative of Michel Beniamino, Université de la Réunion, Professor János Riesz generously invited the participants to reconvene this year at Bayreuth. With the support of Alain Ricard, and in the presence of a welcome number of African graduate students, another rewarding two days of exchanges took place, exploring the concepts implicit in a wide range of "Francophone" literary situations.

Four possible directions of analysis were invoked by Professor Riesz to guide our thinking: the sociolinguistic model of diglossia applied to literature, the sociological notion of "champs littéraires" associated with P. Bourdieu, the hermeneutics exemplified in Ricard's recent *Littératures d'Afrique noire: des langues aux livres*, the notion of the palimpsest developed by Chantal Zabus. Alain Ricard then opened the debate, stressing the centrality of a linguistic awareness of the functioning of literary, and particularly poetic discourse within African literature in African terms. He recommended the work of Henri Meschonnic on the role of rhythm in destabilising the sign to found a dynamic and evolving "poétique" located in its time and space. Karim Traoré then presented Moussa Konaté's *Fils du Chaos*, pointing to its subversive approach to clichés of African childhood, and situation in relation to the complementary distribution of the novel in French and Mande orality. In a very thorough exposé, Anne Piriou then spoke on "Vocation littéraire et changements sociaux: éléments pour une histoire critique de la littérature au Burkina Faso". Of particular interest was her analysis of the status of certain "indigènes lettrés" of the colonial period, a topic which connects with one of the strengths of African studies at Bayreuth.

Saturday's programme was called to order by Michel Beniamino redirecting our attention to theoretical models grouped broadly into the more diachronic historical approach versus more linguistic synchronic analyses, but developing especially the topic of textual analysis. The traditional canon of French academic criticism, based on an often restricted corpus of texts and authorities, proves ill-equipped to deal with situations of language contact, where for example (pluri-) linguistic variation or unexplored parameters of the social context may destabilize the production of meaning. Often the language resources at issue are under-described and available

instruments (dictionaries, histories, etc.) partisan. One of the examples cited by Beniamino, Patrick Chamoiseau, also figured in a paper by B. Jones: "Une parole insaisissable: le langage du théâtre antillais". Publishing policies, usually politically determined, created a hierarchy where a small number of "international" but not necessarily representative writers attracted critical attention. The move from the "contestation" of French by militants of the 1970s to a more conciliatory staging of "l'imaginaire créole" often led to a considerable variation of language use in performance. Another theatrical opposition between centre and periphery was treated by Hans-Jürgen Lusebrink in his amusing paper on two Quebec examples of "réécriture": R. Ducharme's *Le Cid Maghané* (1968) and R. Gurik's *Hamlet Prince du Québec* (1967), examples of "writing back" impertinently (*avec l'accent*) against both French and British icons of imperial culture. Véronique Porra gave a useful review of "Législations françaises en matière de langue", setting out clearly the issues culminating in Toubon's bill ("Elle interdit que l'on interdise en France l'usage du français"). Jean-Michel Dévéa next took us through the textual modulations of a short extract from Sony Labou Tansi, "Un grand trou dans le ciel", inevitably now read in relation to his tragic early death. Pierre Halen's paper on the Belgian writer, Marie Gevers, allowed an upbeat ending to the formal sessions, the heroine's "dualité" (between French and Flemish) "favorable au rêve dont je nourrissais mon âme" - marginality and shifting between linguistic codes as a stimulant and positive resource.

In the evening the group was entertained by Senouvo Zinsou and his talented group of musicians and mimes in a selection of folktales charged with meanings for contemporary rulers and their abuses of power.

Bridget Jones  
Roehampton Institute, London

### The Drumcondra ASCALF Conference

The Drumcondra Conference (Saturday 8 to Monday 10 April), masterminded by Roger and Pat Little at St Patrick's

College, Dublin, covered a wide area of francophone writing. The Saturday sessions centered on the Caribbean, the Sunday on Africa, Mauritius and the Maghreb ending with Theatre on the Monday.

The conference opened with Henriette Levillain (University of Caen) on "Les Békés vus par eux-mêmes autour des années 1900". She examined the current re-appraisal of the "békés" in literature, the central character no longer being the creole woman but the plantation owner. In spite of the persistence of stereotypes, as in Confiant's *Eau de café*, there are signs of reconciliation in the novels of Glissant, in the reclaiming of Saint John Perse as a Guadeloupean novelist or in the recent publication of Elodie Jourdain's memoirs *Le Sablier renversé*. During the discussion, Jean Derive (University of Chambéry) suggested that in *Eau de café*, Confiant may have intended the stereotypical view of the "béké" to reflect the bias of the narrator.

Next, Bridget Jones (Roehampton Institute) in "Aspects du théâtre antillais" surveyed 25 years of theatrical activity in Martinique and Guadeloupe to show how creole, used in the drama of the '70s by heroes of the Independence movement as a kind of ideological hallmark in contrast to French, the discourse of power, is gradually evolving toward a less systematic polarisation. Bilingualism in the theatre has shifted from political to cultural (even folkloric) motivation and from expressing rebellion to being a comic device. However, plays relying heavily on the use of creole seldom attract publishers, unless they are transcribed in a neutral register.

The question was raised of whether the bias against creole was still political or merely financial.

After tea, Angela Chambers (University of Limerick) argued in a paper entitled "Universal and culturally specific images in the poetry of Aimé Césaire" that accepted interpretations of Césaire's work aim to resolve the tension between the universal and the specific in his poetry by demonstrating that the cosmic vocabulary and imagery are to be seen as an expression of the universal in order to be made accessible to the ex-colonised. She sees Césaire's syncretic use of language as linked to "his colonial cultural heritage", using French as an international language to communicate with Africans as spokesman for the Third World while referring to

the specificity of his Caribbean experience of nature as relaying his lost African heritage. She then gave a detailed reading of a poem to refute politically motivated alternative interpretations (negritude/surrealist) and to show where Césaire's true originality lies. In the ensuing discussion, she denied any historical validity to Confiant's views on Césaire, the latter refusing the concept of "créolité" because he finds it too restrictive.

The Caribbean session ended with "A la recherche de ... la quête de Maryse Condé" by Marie-Dominique Le Rumeur (University of Cantabria) who used a quotation from Maryse Condé: "all literature is an attempt to find one's place in the world" as a guideline to the parallel paths of Condé's life and oeuvre. These led her first to Africa in search of her roots, then to Europe, to the States and back to the West Indies, finally to realise the fallacy of looking to the past when hope lies with the belief that men can choose their future - the message delivered by her latest novel - *La Colonie du Nouveau Monde*.

After the evening meal, a video projection of Ousmane Sembène's most recent film, *Guelwaar*, served as a fitting end to the Saturday sessions on Africa.

Sunday morning was divided into two parallel sessions. Michaëla Mongelard-Edelin (Roehampton Institute) on "La Problématique du père dans l'univers romanesque massonien", placed the ambivalent relationship of Loys Masson with his father at the centre of his work, where the autobiographic common denominator is the absence or inadequacy of the biological father and the search for substitutes. She came to the conclusion that this, in turn, was a metaphor for the relationship of Mauritian society with its colonial past as well as the reason for Masson's self-imposed exile.

Pat Corcoran (Roehampton Institute) presented in a paper entitled "Fathers and children in African fiction: an overview" his research on fatherhood in the context of African fiction, taking three novels each corresponding to a stage of the evolution of African societies vis à vis colonisation. He showed that, apart from the idealised father figure in Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir*, biological fathers are seen as inadequate, destabilised by the colonial context, while role models are sought elsewhere.



Meanwhile, in the parallel session, the role of the father (as evoked by Pat Corcoran in relation to *L'Aventure ambiguë*) was also taken up by Houssine Affoullous (University College Dublin) in "Deux écrivains francophones face à l'Islam: Driss Chraïbi et Cheikh Hamidou Kane". In his paper, however, he laid the blame on Islam for the despotic figure of the father in *Le Passé simple*, a view shared by all francophone Moroccan writers, whereas Kane alone shows Islam in a positive light.

John Conteh-Morgan (Ohio State) saw the contrast in terms of traditional versus modern outlooks and János Riesz (University of Bayreuth) attributed it to the different Islamic contexts of Moroccans and Toucouleurs.

After the coffee break, Dominic Thomas (Yale University) presented his paper on "Aesthetics and Ideology: the performance of nationalism in recent literary productions from the République du Congo". He questioned the validity of "national consciousness" built on artificial borders which are legacies of western powers in Africa. He took Senghor's definition of "patrie/nation/état" to underline, in the case of the Congo Republic, the failure of the emerging African states to build nations, and their reversion to tribalism and to the crushing of minorities in order to establish an artificial unity. The state created the "Union nationale des artistes et écrivains" to promote an official discourse, giving government posts to writers, like "griots", and harnessing them to spread the dominant discourse, which condones sub-standard literary production.

Peter Hawkins (University of Bristol) enquired about the status of dissident writers, such as Soni Labou Tansi and Tati Loutard. They are tolerated because only the official writers are published in the Congo; furthermore, their works, available only in Europe and reaching only a minority, can be ignored.

Before lunch, the Sunday proceedings were enlivened by the intervention of Francis Bebey from Cameroon, who explained, tongue in cheek, that he would never have written a single line, had he not happened upon the typewriter which enabled him to turn writing into a rhythmic transcription of speech in the manner of a talking drum. Europeans, he said, have forgotten what life is really about because they commit

their memory to books and have invented clocks to control time.

The Sunday afternoon session opened with Jean Derive (University of Chambéry) on "Une deuxième vie pour la poésie négro-fafricaine traditionnelle, la traduction en français? Problèmes de poétique et de lectorat". He speculated on the usefulness of translating African poetry at all, given that it is essentially oral and linked to extra-linguistic factors, such as intonation, melody, alliterative jingles and other dramatic devices. However, these publications, whether bilingual or not, serve to establish a hierarchy amongst existing variants and, accompanied by a recording of a live performance and a critical edition, can contribute to the understanding and preservation of a rich heritage.

János Riesz pointed to the importance of the research carried out by M. Parry on Homeric verse. Camara Laye's *Le Maître de la parole* was also evoked as a successful transliteration of the Sundjata epic, with key passages in bilingual version. In his own paper, Professor Riesz (University of Bayreuth) drew on his recent publication, *Les Tirailleurs sénégalais* (1989), to examine the phenomenon known as "La Folie des tirailleurs sénégalais", documented in both colonial and post-colonial Francophone African literature and based on cases recorded among men enlisted during the 1st and 2nd World Wars (e.g. Sembène's *Vehi Ciosane* and *Camp de Thiaroye*). The theme is used to bring out dramatically the disruption caused within African societies by conflicting lifestyles and the recurring pathetic figure of the war veteran with his tatty greatcoat and his medals are a metaphor for the failure of the "mission civilisatrice". After tea, Marion Thomas (IUT, Strasbourg Sud) argued in "Wit, whip and wisdom in Bernard Dadié's prose writing (1956-68)", that Dadié, by taking the candid outsider's view in his travel chronicles such as *Patron de New-York*, uses the Scriptures as a framework of reference on the assumption that Africans are more receptive to it than Europeans, in order to criticise the values of the West, adopted only too readily by the new African states. She illustrated this argument with examples (i.e. America as the temptation of the Big Apple), showing that the success of Dadié's method lies with the deceptive lightness and variety of his stylistic approach. The session ended with Unionwam



Edibiri (Centre of Black and African Arts and Civilisation, Lagos) on "A.M. Fantouré's *Le Récit du cirque de la vallée des morts*: the limitations of stylistic innovation", who chose to illustrate the dilemma faced by those African writers who attempt to move away from conventional narrative modes. *Le Récit*, pulling out all the post-modernist stops (mixed genres, graphological devices to highlight parts of the text), addresses the international community in the belief that help must come from outside Africa and that indifference is worse than injustice but may completely alienate African readers.

Wole Soyinka and Werewere Liking were mentioned by Peter Hawkins as examples of this dilemma which faces an increasing number of African writers in exile.

After the evening meal, Francis Bebey, in his *concert-causerie*, gave an impressive demonstration of his musical talent on the flute and the sanza (thumb-piano) to accompany an evening of story-telling which drew very warm applause.

On Monday 10th, the first morning session was again split up between Section A, on Ousmane Sembène and Section B, on women writers.

David Murphy (Trinity College, Dublin) talked about the "architecture secrète" of *Voltaïque*, aiming to reassess Sembène's achievement as a writer on the grounds that the effectiveness of his critique of post-independence Senegal in *Voltaïque* depends as much on the structure of this collection of short stories as on its social and political contents. Most stories are open-ended so that the reader is involved in the conclusion: the question "Lecteurs, qu'en pensez-vous?", ending the last story, serves as a framework for the whole collection. Choosing to speak for the inarticulate and marginalised in Senegalese society, these texts wage a guerilla war against the authority of the official discourse and offer a wide-ranging critique of Islamic society.

Next, Anna Ridehalgh (University of Southampton) demonstrated with her analysis of "Ousmane Sembène's *Guelwaar*: modern politics and classical thought" that Sembène is keeping pace with the problems facing Senegal. The familiar opposition between tradition and modernity is reworked, focusing this time on the Third World's dependence on Aid, starting from a "fait divers" about a Christian buried by mistake in a Moslem cemetery. The political resonance of the religious

conflict between marginalised Christians and dominant Moslems is thoroughly explored, but at all levels (corruption, power struggle) the divide is between dogmatic and flexible attitudes. Sembène points to the hope of drawing inspiration from a living tradition by having his modern "Guelwaar" hero figure quote Koce Barma (whose name is still used, according to Jean Derive, to introduce any aphorism): "If you wish to kill a proud man, supply all his needs and you will turn him into a slave".

The session on women writers opened with Melanie Feeney's discussion of "Questions of Race in Mauritian Literature", which centred on Marie-Thérèse Humbert's *A l'autre bout de moi*. This novel was presented as exemplary of the intense colour-consciousness which prevails in Mauritius, and as a truthful portrayal of this consciousness. Social relationships are depicted through the eyes of the mulatto Anne and her twin sister Nadège, who provoke deep crises in their family through their liaisons outside their racial group. As one character observes, race takes the place occupied by social class in France in the categorisation of individuals. It was suggested, however, that this situation was on the point of change, given the evolution of the racial question in South Africa and elsewhere, and writers should therefore become increasingly prepared to confront the issue.

This paper was followed by Nicki Hitchcott's analysis of "Female Sexuality and Family Romance: Tanelli Boni, *Une Vie de crabe*". Taking as her point of departure the Freudian intertext to the novel, she showed how Boni rewrites the Oedipal scenario in an African context, broadening her scope to consider the whole question of African women's sexuality. Boni further links the destiny of the main female character, Léti, whose solitary literary production never sees the light of day, with the destiny of writing by African women, most of which is suppressed by the patricarchal system. Far from accepting the patriarchal symbols woven into the texture of the novel, however, Boni suggests that African women should act to transform them, thus taking control of their destinies.

After the coffee break, the conference ended with two papers on African theatre.

John Conteh-Morgan (Ohio State University) "On the sources of theatrical creativity in contemporary Francophone

Drama" took two plays as examples of the rejection of the text-based literary tradition, when African playwrights such as Kouyate in *La Mort de Chaka* emulated French theatre in the 20s and 30s. Senouvo Zinsou's *On joue la comédie* (1975) offers a parody of the oral epic tradition. The celebration of Chaka, an illustrious ancestor, combined with a referential function to a reality obscured by colonialism presupposes a finality expressed by the device of actors trying to stage a play in discussion with casual spectators. This open-ended structure (the concert-party) is used to debunk the nationalist phase. Likewise, Werewere Liking subverts a N'gue myth, using an initiation ritual out of context to show that some aspects of tradition could be salvaged to construct a new society. This performance-based type of drama is meant to renew contact with a popular, not necessarily literate public.

Finally, Carole Ann Upton (University of Hull) with "Words in Space: filling the empty space in Francophone theatre" physically demonstrated various techniques, such as Werewere Liking's use of the circle for encouraging active audience participation in *Orphée d'Afrique* or Simone Schwarz-Bart's creation of imaginary space through the use of disembodied voices in *Ton beau capitaine*, by moving around the lecture theatre. She brought the conference to an upbeat but unfortunately rushed close, as the excursion to Glendalough planned for the afternoon had to start on time.

The conference was well attended (63 participants, 30 of whom were students). Thanks to the warm welcome and organising skills of Pat and Roger Little, everyone enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere in the pleasant surroundings of St Patrick's College and indulged in the full Irish breakfasts, heedless of the consequences.

Denise Ganderton  
University of North London

## Culture and Colonialism

University of Galway, 22-25 June 1995.

This massive conference, a feat of organisation by the committee of staff from the Departments of English, Politics, Sociology and Economics, offered over a hundred papers over three days, with international keynote speakers from each of the different disciplines involved, and nearly 200 delegates from all over the globe. The papers were grouped into loosely thematic workshops involving three or four papers, so that most of the time it was possible to choose panels according to one's particular interest. Inevitably, I can only comment on the papers I chose to attend, which will give an extremely selective view of the event, but it will at least reflect the interests of ASCALF members.

Quite apart from the outstanding beauty of the surrounding area - Connemara to the North, the Burren to the South - Galway itself and its adjacent University campus offered a charming and vibrant setting for the conference. In the evenings the streets of Galway were packed with a lively and friendly crowd of drinkers gathering round the pubs and the open-air live music, coming more from the Irish show-jumping championships held there that weekend than from the well-attended conference.

The University of Galway is this year simultaneously celebrating the granting of its charter in 1845 and commemorating, with a bitter irony underlined by the Vice-President in his opening address, the anniversary of the beginning of the Irish potato famine. This convergence was presumably one of the main inspirations behind the conference, and indeed many of the papers addressed the Irish colonial situation in a direct way; and the conference ended with a coach trip to the newly-opened Famine Museum in Strokestown. Galway is the centre of the *gaeltacht*, a fact underlined by the absence of signposts in English on the campus, but the working language of the conference remained English throughout. At the same time the coastal area to the west of the city was

playing host to armies of adolescents who had been sent to Summer Schools there (in a glorious heatwave) to learn Gaelic. Whilst offering lifts to the numerous young hitch-hikers as I explored the area by car, I came across a whole range of attitudes to Gaelic from proselytising zeal to dismissive indifference, and it transpired that this reflected the differing reaction of Irish pupils to the compulsory teaching of Gaelic in schools.

The issue of language seemed only to surface at the conference in response to my own paper, fairly early in the proceedings, in which I rashly attempted to present an overview of "English and French as post-colonial languages", trying amongst other things to explain the relatively greater buoyancy of indigenous-language cultures in the former British colonies as against the French-speaking ones as the result of differing colonial policies. This produced some understandably indignant reactions, which highlighted amongst other things the outlawing of Gaelic in Ireland in the 19th Century, and Ngugi's accounts of the suppression of indigenous languages in the colonial school system in Kenya. I wish I had then had the ammunition provided by Alain Ricard's book (see book review) with which to respond, but I retired, chastened but still convinced I had a valid point in general terms.

In general most of the other papers I attended were less controversial. Among those of direct relevance to ASCALF members were those of the Franco-Australian Anne-Marie Cattán Medcalf, who provided an interesting insight into the status of French colonial women in Vietnam, a useful background to the novels of Marguerite Duras; and Azzedine Hadiour (Staffordshire University), who deconstructed the trope of the city in Camus's *La Peste* to show how the colonised Arab inhabitants are excluded so as facilitate the "universalizing" discourse of the novel. A session dominated by the poetry of Derek Walcott brought together Jean Antoine Dunne (UCD) and Paula Burnett (Liverpool), both concerned with the implicit aesthetics of his attempt to construct a Caribbean identity through poetry: interestingly, neither participant had heard of manifestoes of "Créolité" emanating from adjacent Caribbean islands (see book review)... Two papers on aspects of African cinema were provided by Pamela McCallum (University of Calgary), on Sembène's use of

cinema to deconstruct colonial ideology in *La Noire de...*; and Felix Thompson (University of Derby), who looked at the representations of consumerism in Djibril Diop Mambéty's *Touki-bouki* and *Hyènes*. Finally Seán Hand contrasted Leiris's surrealist-inspired appropriation of African culture in *L'Afrique fantôme* with the often more perceptive diaries of colonial conquest of Galliéni.

In general it was a salutary and stimulating experience to attend a conference on post-colonial issues which emerged from a very different ethos to that of ASCALF or APELA. Every other paper seemed to take inspiration from the writings of either Edward Saïd or Homi Bhabha, and the range of colonial and post-colonial situations analysed in the papers stretched across the whole globe, from Aboriginal debutante balls in 1960s Australia to pioneer Canadian women writers in British Columbia, by way of a predictable concentration on colonial Ireland. Non-English-speaking cultures were thinly represented, however, as were studies of the linguistic aspects of colonialism. The conference nonetheless bore witness to the rapid foregrounding of the issues around post-colonialism in the English-speaking university world which will no doubt provide in the future new areas of intervention for members of ASCALF.

Peter Hawkins  
University of Bristol  
Université de la Réunion



## OBITUARIES

### Sony Labou Tansi

Marcel SONY, known as Sony Labou Tansi, born in Kimwanza, Congo, in 1947; died at the University Hospital in Brazzaville on 14 June 1995.

Marcel Sony, better known by his pen-name of Sony Lab'ou Tansi, will be remembered as one of the most prolific and original of the younger generation of writers to emerge from Francophone Africa in the post-independence years. His first novel, *La Vie et demie*, published by Seuil in 1979, marked a new departure in African fiction, and was the first of a series of novels combining the modes of magic realism, surrealist farce and black humour (in all senses of the word), which treated the dictatorial régimes of the newly-independent African states with the disrespect they deserved. This recurrent theme of his writing was also picked up in his numerous plays, such as *La parenthèse de sang* and *Je soussigné cardiaque*, published together by Hatier in Paris in 1981. For well over ten years he was the director of the Rocado Zulu Théâtre company of Brazzaville, capital of the People's Republic of the Congo, where he was born, lived and worked without apparent difficulty until very recently, despite the powerful and thinly veiled satirical charge of his writing. His theatre company was a regular visitor to the annual *Festival des Francophonies* in Limoges, and several of his plays were staged in Paris by prestigious French directors such as Daniel Mesguich during the mid-1980's.

The political difficulties he experienced in the last eighteen months of his life arose when he was elected as an oppositional député in the Congolese national assembly in 1993, which led to his being placed under house arrest when he was part of a protest against repressive government policies. This detention was broken after international appeals and petitions on his behalf ensured that he was allowed to travel to Europe for medical treatment earlier this year. On his return to the Congo in April it was already clear that he was dying, and

he and his wife succumbed to Aids within a few days of each other. He was 47.

With his untimely death, the literary world of Francophone Africa has lost one of its brightest and most prolific talents. A posthumous novel, his sixth, called *Le Commencement des douleurs* awaits publication by Seuil in Paris in the autumn. Many of the numerous plays he wrote for the Rocado Zulu theatre company have been published only in relatively obscure journals, the best known being *L'avant-scène du théâtre*, which published *La Rue des mouches* in 1985. These dramas deserve greater recognition, if only for their linguistic verve and characteristically witty use of French, which Sony once described as "a frigid language". This he transformed by injecting into it a dose of what he called "*tropicalités*", the popular colloquial French of the streets of Brazzaville, that of *radio-trottoir*. He mixed together high-flown literary style and street-wise vulgarity in both his dialogue and his narratives. Although the situations he presented were the familiar dramas of brutal oppression and the abuse of political power, the plots were usually improbable to the point of farce. In a play first performed in 1988 entitled *Qui a mangé Madame d'Avoine Bergota?* the dictator anti-hero decides to banish all potent males from his country and replace them with official inseminators. His plan backfires, however, when he falls hopelessly in love with the Mme Bergota of the title, who is really a man wearing drag to avoid summary execution or banishment. This unlikely story is carried along by the bravura style that Sony attributes to the dictator, who manages somehow to elicit sympathy from the audience for his plight.

This illustrates very well how Sony was able to turn even the most depressing and brutal régimes into a source of hilarity and life-affirming enjoyment. As a writer he was able to confront the unimaginable awfulness of the political situation in many African countries, turn it on its head and somehow extract from it a source of inspiration and a re-affirmation of humanity. The plot of his most famous novel, named after a hotel-cum-brothel called *La Vie et demie* involves a perpetually renewed power-struggle between a dynasty of "Spiritual Fathers of the Nation" and "Providential Guides", each as

brutally dictatorial as each other, and a constantly reincarnated rebel leader called Martial. The rebels' secret weapon is Martial's daughter Chaïdana who seduces the dictators in the brothel of the title, and infects them with lethal venereal diseases. Quite apart from the tragic irony of this in relation to Sony's own fate, the oblique relevance of this scenario to any number of African or even European civil war situations is fairly obvious; yet Sony manages to make it meaningful to a wider peace-time audience through the vitality of his style and a kind of life-enhancing cynicism. The virtue of Sony's writing is that it is able to transform this unpromising material into grimly comic parables of dictatorial absurdity, at the same time extracting from them a paradoxical humanism and an affirmation of the value of life in such situations of extreme degradation.

Sony will also be sorely missed in his role as the leading inspiration behind the *Rocado Zulu Theatre*, one of the most dynamic and original theatre companies to emerge from Francophone Africa. His plays are not limited to that context, however, having enjoyed several successful productions in Paris in the 1980s, and the publication of a complete collection of them is long overdue. Even though his notoreity is restricted at this moment of his eclipse to the world of Francophone theatre and writing, it would be consoling to think that in due course his works will become more widely known through translations and productions in English. He deserves to be recognised as one of the major African writers of his generation.

Peter Hawkins  
University of Bristol  
Université de la Réunion

### **Sony Labou Tansi (pseud. of Marcel Sony) 1947-1995**

Sony Labou Tansi, one of the most talented, versatile, prolific and influential of Francophone African writers to come to maturity after Independence, died on 14th June in his native Brazzaville at the age of 48. He was a teacher of English, poet, novelist, and dramatist, directing and performing in the

company he founded, the Rocado Zulu Theatre of Brazzaville, one of the most renowned theatre companies in Africa.

It is a moot point whether his literary reputation owes most to his fiction or his plays, which have been regularly awarded prizes in the annual Radio France International drama competitions; but it is by his satirical novels that he is probably best known in the West.

*La Vie et demie* (Life and a half), published in 1979, suggests Jonathan Swift at his most savage (as in *A Modest Proposal...*), Henry Miller at his most scabrous, Rabelais at his most scatological, with the burlesque, hallucinatory vicissitudes of Voltaire's *Candide* interspersed with the grotesque absurdity of Jarry's *Ubu*. Set in the thinly-disguised fictitious newly-independent territory of Katamalanasie, it traces the career of the puppet dictator - a combination of Idi Amin and Emperor Bokassa - the "Guide Providentiel" set up by a neo-colonial Power, and his successors. The complicated and byzantine nature of the action veers from uncompromising violence to burlesque farce to form a ferocious satirical fable.

In the nine years following the success of *La Vie et demie*, Sony Labou Tansi published four more novels, continuing his campaign against abuses of power in contemporary Africa. *Les Sept Solitudes de Lorsa Lopez* (1985), which reflects the influence of Latin American magic realism, condenses into a Rabelaisian farce a host of parables. The real hero is Estina Bronzario, a raunchy matriarch of tough, unshakeable tenacity who organizes a sexual strike among the adult women (shades of *Lysistrata*) to force the men out of their apathy and cowardice which have brought shame and dishonour on the community. In an action comprising a burlesque concatenation of improbabilities the author secretes a serious satirical intention: he invites us to reflect on the meaning of honour and human dignity; the significance of tradition; the relationship between humans and their natural environment; the communal responsibility for individual actions; the falsification of history and its silences; the arbitrary nature of authority; the war between the sexes ... to name but a few!

The mystification and excesses of subject and episode, the anarchic approach to language, with the author's iconoclastic disrespect for the niceties of "standard" French,

together with British publishers' notorious caution over publishing translations, have probably militated against English versions of these powerful and original works appearing in Britain. His is a rumbustious amalgam of neologisms, euphemistic obscenities, traces of Portuguese and poetic metaphors with colloquialisms borrowed from Brazzaville slangy street language. To date, only one of Sony Labou Tansi's novels has been published in an English translation by J.A. Underwood: *L'anté-peuple* (The Ante-people) which adopts a fairly realistic mode which makes it less convoluted and more easily accessible than most of his work.

Since 1988, Sony concentrated on writing for the theatre. However, in the Autumn, the Editions du Seuil will be bringing out a new novel, *Le commencement des douleurs* (The Beginning of the Pain).

Dorothy S. Blair

### Sylvain Bemba est parti à M'pemba<sup>1</sup>

(17 February 1934 - 8 July 1995)

Sylvain Bemba, one of Africa's most accomplished cultural figures, died in a Paris hospital on July 8, 1995. His remains were laid to rest a few days later in Brazzaville, in his native Congo Republic.

Although Mr Bemba was unable to complete his secondary education, he became a journalist, concentrating at first on sporting events. He was soon after asked to write a biography of the first Congolese President, the Abbé Fulbert Youlou, and, having caught the latter's attention, was appointed to the Agence Congolaise d'Information in 1962.

He was one of the frequent contributors to the *Revue Liaison* which was published between 1950 and 1960, while also writing a number of short stories. In 1962, he was awarded the *Grand Prix de la Nouvelle Africaine* for his story entitled "La Chambre noire". By the late 1960s, he turned his literary activity to the theatre, and by the end of the next decade had successfully yielded a strikingly original repertoire, including

<sup>1</sup> M'Pemba: kingdom of the dead, the ancestors' world according to Kongo custom.

*L'Enfer, c'est Orféo, Une eau dormante, L'Homme qui tua le crocodile, Tarentelle noire et Diable blanc* and *Un foutu monde pour un blanchisseur trop honnête*. The year 1979 saw the publication of his first novel, *Rêves portatifs*, which explored the emergence and influence of the radio and television in Africa, and this work was followed by three other novels, *Le Soleil est parti à M'Pemba, Le Dernier des Cargonautes* and *Léopolis*. Remarkably enough, he also found the time to devote his energy to yet another discipline, namely music, and to publish in 1984 a study of music from the Congo and Zaïre which remains one of the most important references in the specialty.

Shortly before his death he completed the manuscript for a fifth novel, which examines the myth of General de Gaulle in Africa. He was also editing two plays he had recently written. Throughout his career he had resorted to a number of pseudonyms to protect his identity (Martial Malinda was the most notable one) and even recently, in the unstable political climate in the Congo Republic, he felt that he had to add on his mother's maiden name N'Tari to his own to avoid confusion with another, rather outspoken journalist, who shared his name.

Sylvain Bemba was a major contributing factor in the dynamics of literary circles in Brazzaville, meeting with and encouraging younger writers such as Marie-Léontine Tsibinda, Caya Makhélé, Makita Philippe, and most notably, his dear friend, the late Sony Labou Tansi. For Tansi, Bemba had become a veritable mentor, as Tansi's dedication in one of his novels, *La Vie et demie*, clearly reveals: "parce que, tout au long de cette fable je ne cesse de me dire: "Qu'est-ce qu'il va en penser le vieux?"

When I met recently (December 1994) with Mr Bemba in Brazzaville, I had no idea that I would be writing about him so soon in the past tense. He was giving, welcoming and available, eager to converse and to listen. Mr Bemba's re-interpretation of Sartre's famous phrase "l'enfer c'est les autres", expresses perhaps best his feelings towards others, but somewhat characteristically understates just how much he touched people during his life:

Je ne peux pas me réaliser tout seul. J'ai besoin des autres, de leur regard, pour me faire tel que je veux être moi, tel

que je veux devenir. Car, celui qui refuse les autres est en enfer.

For those who knew him, for those who loved him, for those who have read him and for those who will read him, there will be little doubt that Sylvain Bemba, "journaliste et écrivain, est parti à M'pemba."

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*La mort d'un enfant de la foudre* in *Africasia*, n° 33, February 1971

*La Rumba fantastique*, Paris: RFI/ACCT, 1975

#### Plays:

*L'Enfer, c'est Orféo*, Paris: ORTF/DAEC, 1969

*L'Homme qui tua le crocodile*, Yaoundé: CLE, 1973

*Une eau dormante*, Paris: RFI, 1975

*Tarentelle noire et Diable blanc*, Paris: P.J. Oswald, 1976

*Un foutu monde pour un blanchisseur trop honnête*, Yaoundé: CLE, 1979

#### Novels:

*Rêves portatifs*, Dakar: N.E.A., 1979

*Le Soleil est parti à M'Pemba*, Paris: Présence africaine, 1982

*Le Dernier des cargonautes*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1984

*Léopolis*, Paris: Hatier, 1984

#### Non-fiction:

*50 ans de musique du Congo-Zaïre*, Paris: Présence africaine, 1984

Dominic Thomas  
Yale University

### NOTICES

**ASCALF Study Day in Bristol:** call for papers. The Association for the Study of Caribbean and African Literature in French is organising a study day on Friday 19th April 1996 at the Department of French, University of Bristol, 17-19 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TE. Papers are invited which foreground the question of Critical Approaches to Caribbean and African Literature in French. It is intended that these should form the core of a special issue of the forthcoming *ASCALF Yearbook*. Titles and brief summaries to be sent by Friday January 1996 to Peter Hawkins, at the above address, fax (+44)-117-928-8922, e-mail p.g.hawkins@bris.ac.uk, tel. from 10 Jan. onwards only (+44)-117-928-7915.

### Francophone Africa Newsgroup

E-mail users may be interested to learn of the existence of a francophone Africa newsgroup based at the University of Lyon. The following is taken from the initial correspondence a new subscriber receives and contains information on how to subscribe. If any ASCALF member would like more information, please e-mail Nicki.Hitchcott@Nottingham.ac.uk.

#### La liste afrique@univ-lyon1.fr

Cette liste se veut donc un forum ouvert, sans AUCUNE modération, pour des discussions concernant le continent africain et les Africains. La qualité des articles ainsi que la réussite de cette liste dépendra de vos interventions et du nombre d'intervenants. Il appartient à chacun de nous d'assurer la survie de la liste et d'en augmenter le nombre d'inscrits, ce qui déboucherait éventuellement sur la création d'un newsgroup fr.soc.afrique.

#### Les règles à respecter

Il est très important de respecter les règles de bon usage: pas d'annonces commerciales, pas d'attaques personnelles, pas d'insultes, pas de propos tombant sous le coup de la loi française (racisme, antisémitisme, négation du génocide).

### **Quelle langue parle-t-on?**

S'il nous faut définir une langue pour cette liste ça serait le français, et c'est d'ailleurs la raison pour laquelle cette liste a été créée. Cette liste étant non modérée, tous les articles, quelle que soit la langue utilisée, seront évidemment les bienvenus.

### **A qui s'adresse cette liste?**

Vous êtes priés, d'inviter tous les Africains francophones, ainsi que tous ceux qui s'intéressent aux problèmes du continent, à s'inscrire dans cette liste. Pour toutes vos suggestions et/ou critiques sur la gestion de cette liste, faites-le savoir à l'adresse suivante:

### **Comment s'inscrire?**

Envoyer à [listserv@univ-lyon1.fr](mailto:listserv@univ-lyon1.fr) la commande suivante dans le corps de votre message (pas de Subject:):

SUB Afrique prénom nom

### **Comment se désinscrire?**

Envoyez à [listserv@univ-lyon1.fr](mailto:listserv@univ-lyon1.fr) la commande suivante dans le corps de votre message (pas de Subject:):

SIG Afrique

Attention: cette commande doit être envoyée depuis l'adresse avec laquelle vous vous êtes inscrit. Si vous projetez de changer d'adresse, désinscrivez-vous avant. Après il sera trop tard. Réinscrivez-vous après avoir changé d'adresse.

### **Comment écrire à la liste?**

En écrivant à [afrique@univ-lyon1.fr](mailto:afrique@univ-lyon1.fr), précisez toujours le sujet de votre courrier grâce au champ "Subject:".

### **Ma signature?**

Ne dépasser jamais trois lignes, Et faites-la précéder d'une ligne contenant deux tirets en tête "--" (convention USENET).

### **Comment obtenir de l'aide pour utiliser listserv?**

Envoyez à [listserv@univ-lyon1.fr](mailto:listserv@univ-lyon1.fr) la commande suivante dans le corps de votre message (pas de Subject:):

### **HELP**

### **A qui signaler un incident dans le fonctionnement de la liste?**

Décrivez l'incident à [afrique-request@univ-lyon1.fr](mailto:afrique-request@univ-lyon1.fr)

### **Les en-têtes**

Par défaut les en-têtes des messages sont positionnées pour qu'une simple réponse ne soit adressée qu'à l'auteur d'origine du message, et pas à toute la liste. Si vous voulez que votre réponse soit diffusée, mettez la liste en copie. L'usage veut que l'on réponde en privé à l'auteur d'une question, et que celui-ci publie un résumé à la liste. Cependant, ce fonctionnement n'est peut-être pas adapté à certaines discussions et peut être changé.

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### **African literature e-mailing list**

The African Literature Forum has been created for the discussion of topics and issues in the field of literature by writers of the African Continent. This listserv promotes discussion and critical exchanges of ideas among scholars, educators, students and others with a strong interest in the literature of the African Continent.

While this forum focuses primarily on the genre normally included within belles lettres (i.e. prose fiction, poetry and drama), other areas (eg film, myths, legends, folk-tales, history, religion) may also be discussed if they bear directly and explicitly upon the study of literature.

The address is: [AFRLIT@acuvax.acu.edu](mailto:AFRLIT@acuvax.acu.edu)

\*



### Useful address

**Médiathèque des Trois Mondes:** 63bis rue Cardinal Lemoine,  
75005 Paris.

Tel. (33 1) 43 54 33 38

*Association des Trois Mondes:* same address

Tel. (33 1) 43 54 78 69.

Fax: (33 1)46 43 70 19

*La Médiathèque des Trois Mondes* in the rue Cardinal Lemoine specialises in films from the "third world", films about development issues, and Beur films. It has a good catalogue of videos for rental or sale, in variable formats (3/4 LB/HB, VHS, Betamax). Their shop is small but very helpful (be warned: they don't accept credit cards, and there is a supplement for Eurocheques).

The *Association des Trois Mondes*, at the same address (tel: 43.54.78.69), has a database (ALIZEE) of films distributed in France or selected at European festivals, as well as a holding of specialised books and journals, and dossiers of reviews, photographs and critical articles. Their documentation can be consulted by appointment.

The Association also publishes a quarterly review, *Images Nord-sud: Bulletin. Guide trimestriel de films sur le développement*. This costs 30F per issue, or 100 Fr for an annual subscription. Essentially, it contains *fiches* on new films, with résumés and excerpts from reviews. Cheques should be made out to the *Association des Trois Mondes*.

