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SPECIAL ISSUE ON AFRICAN LITERATURE

GUEST EDITOR

Claire L. Dehon

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Introduction: Francophone and Lusophone Literatures in Africa.

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Literary Aftershocks of the Revolution: Recent Developments in Algerian Literature.

Eric Sellin 115

Abstract. Most Algerian Francophone literature has been written since 1950, and thus the development of that literature has been intimately linked to the political events which forged the Algerian nation. Especially influential was the 1954-62 war of independence which for many years was a major contextual element in the literature. With the passage of time, the Revolution has begun to be less and less cognitive in the lives and works of the young writers. For some, Revolution lives on in the oneiric evocations of horrors glimpsed, for others it is something relegated to history, whereas for yet others it has become a political and social device.

The role the Revolution plays in a writer's creativity has tended to dichotomize the literature into a conservative branch of inward- and backward-looking patriotism and a radical branch of outward- and forward-looking experimentation. Both branches present equally fervent defenses of their loyalty to their country based on a variety of arguments, but the radical branch, regardless of its relative worth in terms of internal affairs, certainly is the branch which tends to transcend national idiom and to express itself in terms of wide-spread and universal literary values. (ES)

Sembène's Progeny: A New Trend in the Senegalese Novel.

Albert Gérard and Jeannine Laurent 133

Abstract. The growth of the *Nouvelles Editions Africaines* in Senegal has proved favorable to the promotion of a national literature whose grass-roots inspiration is in obvious reaction against the elitist proclivities of earlier writers trained in French universities. The younger novelists follow in the footsteps of Sembène Ousmane, depicting actual living conditions among the under-privileged and usually silent majority in present-day Dakar. Recent examples are Aminata Sow Fall's *La Grève des battù* (1979), Moussa Ly Sangaré's *Sourd-muet, je demande la parole* (1978) and Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (1979). Such works are designed for a local

readership, which is numerous enough because Senegal has the highest rate of literacy in French of all African countries. While the clinical realism of their narrative technique is similar to Sembène's in many respects, the characteristic feature of those writers is that they do not seem to have any political axe to grind: their detached lucidity and absence of bitterness makes their image of the African megalopolis all the more impressive and depressing. (AG and JL)

Evembe's *Sur la terre en passant* and the Poetics of Shame.

Richard Bjornson 147

Abstract. In *Sur la terre en passant*, Evembe fashions a poetics of shame from the ordinary experiences of life in a large African city (Yaounde). He does it in such a way that the hallucinatory qualities and scabrous details of one individual's state of consciousness mirror the malaise which characterizes the larger social reality. The protagonist Iyoni (whose name means «shame» in the dialect of Evembe's native Kribi) experiences both misery and social respectability in an environment where traditional values have been lost, only to be replaced by artificial, dehumanizing hierarchies and an attitude of materialistic acquisitiveness. Despite the mysterious illness which is eroding his will to live, Iyoni always attempts to maintain a dignified pose, and he seeks to project his own poetic sensitivity and his morality of love and compassion onto the larger social fabric, but his physical body proves incapable of sustaining his ideals, and when he regards himself as a machine which ingests food and ejects clots of blood and excrement, he has begun to lose confidence in himself as a loving, feeling person capable of working toward a more noble social order. The resultant anxiety and shame permeate Evembe's novel, which has been undeservedly neglected due to its implicit antiestablishment critique of church, state, and the Negritude movement. (RB)

Politics and the New African Novel: A Study of the Fiction of Francis Bebey.

W. Curtis Schade 159

Abstract. From its inception African fiction has been strongly marked by political themes. In the late 1950's the virulent satire of Mongo Béti and Ferdinand Oyono stated the case against the denigration of African values inherent in all aspects of the colonial system. Their style and message subsequently gave way to novels focusing upon the drama of the transition of power at the moment of Independence. Whether optimistic or disillusioned, many of these novels featured real events and people, often thinly disguised, and sought to give an «inside» picture of that historical moment. Other tendencies developed in the late 60's, most notably a strongly autocritical, often radical, body of fiction represented by such writers as Ousmane Sembène and Alioum Fangouré, and the more distant, philosophical study of politics and society of writers like Ahmadou Kourouma. In all of these examples the contemporary political situation, whether viewed globally or as it affected the life of a simple man, was the primary moving force within the novel.

By contrast, this paper will concentrate upon the work of Francis Bebey, exemplary of another current trend, fiction which, while continuing to deal with political concerns, does so in a different light, creating different tones, using different techniques. In the three novels and one short-story studied, politics is subordinated to other concerns and is treated less reverently than heretofore. We see in the work of Bebey a re-assessment of politics and its place in the life of contemporary (African) man. (WCS)

Sembène Ousmane's *Xala*: The Use of Film and Novel as Revolutionary Weapon.

Kenneth Harrow 177

Abstract. Sembène Ousmane's *Xala* was written as a novel and made into a film in 1974. It is a biting attack upon the newly risen bourgeois class that has ascended to power and wealth in Senegal since independence. The ideological framework of *Xala* rests upon Marxist assumptions adapted to and modified by the circumstances in Africa. The distinctively Senegalese features which mark Sembène's portrayal include Muslim and traditional religious beliefs which form the basis of the class oppression and the sexism depicted in *Xala*. They also supply the title to the work since *xala* means impotency in Wolof, and it is described with great humor by Sembène, as the result of a marabout's curse. Sembène's treatment of the theme of class oppression focuses upon the great disparities that exist between the wealthy, elite classes and the impoverished masses, especially the beggars and cripples who live on the streets of Dakar. By focusing upon the issue of acculturation in the film, and by emphasizing the importance of imagery related to sight and the act of seeing, Sembène effectively overcomes the deficiencies of the novel in creating the film version of *Xala*. (KH)

Theme and Imagery in Tchicaya U Tam'si's *A Triche Coeur*.

Emil A. Magel 189

Abstract. Partaking of the universal search for self-knowledge, Gerald Felix Tchicaya U Tam'si's *A Triche Coeur* explores and evaluates the assumptions which shape his African identity. The thematic movement of the volume progresses from his initial state of naive ignorance of the realities of African history to a more mature awareness of it. Through images of uprooting and regeneration, the poet discovers both the blood-stained truth of European colonization of Africa and the traitorous collaboration of its renegades. Casting off the myths of the civilizing mission, the noble savage and the romantic posturings of the Negritude poets, U Tam'si releases himself from their psychological hold on him. Utilizing metaphors and similes which emphasize the discovery process, the poet generates a new vision of himself and urges other 'lost' Africans to follow his footsteps. (EAM)

Satire in African Letters: Black Appraisals of White Ethnologists in the Works of Ferdinand Oyono, Tchicaya U'Tam'si and Yambo Ouologuem.

Ingeborg M. Kohn213

Abstract. Among the black African writers who have singled out whites for satirical treatment, the novelists Ferdinand Oyono and Yambo Ouologuem and the poet Tchicaya U'Tam'si have focused on a certain type of ethnologist: the man who has come in the guise of explorer and scientist, but whose prejudices, ignorance, greed, presumptuousness and other negative characteristics are soon unmasked by his native hosts. In their works, we find portraits depicting the white ethnologist that are not only unanimous expressions of scorn and contempt, but also examples of the skillfull use of satire as a literary weapon. (IMK)

Luandino Vieira's Short Fiction: Decolonization in the Third Register

Irwin Stern, Columbia University 229

Abstract. The central theme of Luandino Vieira's short fiction is the «anthropological» daily existence in the *musseques*, slums, which surround the city of Luanda. The socio-political question of the epoch—the liberations movements and the repression by the colonial rulers—do not escape the author's view. Prior to the publication of Luandino's works, the language of Angolan fiction was indistinguishable from that of standard Portuguese fiction. The relationship of Quimbundo, the Bantu dialect of Luanda, and Portuguese is the key to the originality of Luandino's works. This becomes quite evident in the collections *Velhas estórias* and *No antigamente na vida*.

Language register is Luandino's prime consideration. The «establishment» figures of the stories speak in Portuguese, while the people of the *musseques* function in Quimbundo. When the two social groups come into contact so do their languages. The result is a third register of speech, one which reflects the Portuguese-Quimbundo heritage and results in a new literary language. The basic contribution of Quimbundo is within the lexico-semantic area. In addition to a large number of Bantu words, new shades of meaning are given to common Portuguese terms through innovations in their traditional meaning and usage, as well as through their recreation along African language principles. Portuguese contributes its wealth of morphemes—principally suffixes—which enhance the Quimbundo vocabulary. Syntax is similarly recreated.

Although Luandino's short fiction has been called hermetic, it does present an epoch of Angolan society. Its existence is an affirmation of national idependence. (IS)

Käfkä's Influence on Camara Laye's *Le regard du roi*

Patricia A. Deduck239

Abstract. In *Le regard du roi*, Camara Laye attempted to assimilate into his own fictional world the structure, techniques, and themes which he found in the works of Kafka. A close analysis of the novel reveals not only significant influence, but direct imitation of Kafka. Although certain Kafkaesque techniques—for example, the limited perspective, and the dispensation with time and space as measurable quantities—are often used effectively in the novel, they lose much of their intricate complexity in a fictional world allowing, as Laye's does, for positive resolution. Such techniques become integral and meaningful elements only when Laye uses them within the context of his *négritude* theme. (PAD)