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Editorial

The July 2016 issue of *GNOSIS* had a very warm response from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder for this issue even before the deadline of 31st May 2016. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted.

As a journal committed to quality research and writing, we are aware of the need to delink quality from publication cost. Hence, our decision to charge no publication fee from the scholars whose papers will be published in the issues of *GNOSIS*. At the same time since *GNOSIS* is a self-financed venture, co-operation and support in the form of subscriptions are solicited from the readers and admirers of English Literature and Language from all over the world.

This special issue of *GNOSIS* focuses on African Literature whereby the contributors through their research papers have dealt with a variety of topics ranging from gender issues, to the issue of marginality to name a few.

There are eight research/critical articles in this special issue. Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my reverend Guest editor of this issue Dr. Nandini C Sen for her selfless and tiresome efforts in assessing the articles very sincerely. I would also like to thank our esteemed Board of Advisors and the Review Editors for their valuable association with *GNOSIS*.

I am also grateful to the revered contributors who have made this special issue of the Journal a beautiful reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast.

Happy Reading!

Saikat Banerjee
Editor-in-chief

Introduction

African Literature through the Indian Prism

African Literature is not a homogenized entity. Most literary works coming from the African continent is categorized under the broad rubric of African Literature. Being a vast continent with multiple countries, languages and dialects it is difficult to bring all literary work from the continent under one broad umbrella. Currently Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone writing has brought the continent closer to the global literary community. Essentially a land of Orature and Oral cultures, the genesis of this literature was through stories, songs, fables and prose verses which were recited and performed. Praise singers and bards who were popularly known as the “griots” were revered in the society. They performed the mythological or historical narratives to music. The languages being peppered with innumerable proverbs would make for excellent story telling which were recited and sung and continued to be passed down from one generation to the next.

The Colonial times saw a surge in the written forms of literature along with the existing oral forms. One of the earliest slave narratives was Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789). The first Anglophone writing can be dated as early as 1911 when Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) published *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. Theatre as a genre was introduced and became extremely popular. The noted playwright and author Ngugi wa Thiong’o wrote *The Black Hermit*, a cautionary tale about “tribalism”. The precursor to Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) was *The Palm Wine Drinkard* written by Amos Tutuola in 1952. While most themes dealt with independence and liberation in the French occupied Africa particularly Senegal, there was an upsurge of the Negritude Movement. The greatest exponent of the Negritude Movement was Senegal’s Leopold Sedor Senghor. The Negritude Movement extolled the virtues of ancient Africa in a bid to sensitize the masses about its lost glory and its great cultural traditions.

Contemporary writing from Africa boasts of stalwarts like Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo rubbing shoulders with young and vibrant writers such as Chimamanda Adichie, Chika Unigwe, Leila Aboulela and many others. Literature produced in Africa is studied and appreciated the world over for its richness, topicality and literary value. In 1986 Wole Soyinka became the first post-independence African writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature. The Noma Award for Publishing in Africa was introduced in 1980 and is presented for the most outstanding work of the year in African literatures.

India and Africa go back a long way. In 1935 Rabindranath Tagore wrote an anguished poem titled “Africa”. Here he traces the colonial take over and the ruination of the cultures of this vast land. Interestingly he talks of Africa as an extension of Asia in terms of its deep cultural moorings.

*“You wept and your cry was smothered,
your forest trails became muddy with tears and blood,
while the nailed boots of the robbers
left their indelible prints
along the history of your indignity
And all the time across the sea,
church bells were ringing in their towns and villages,
the children were lulled in mothers’ arms,
and poets sang hymns to Beauty...”*

Tagore is brutal in his critique of the colonisers. He condemns their inroad into Africa, the torturous enslavement of countless millions, the indignities heaped upon the natives and the audacious celebration of ‘civilization’ in the West.

Indian Universities have been engaging with African Studies for over two decades now. There has been a spurt of scholarship in the areas of Literature Studies and in Diaspora Studies. Africa India trade relationships have increased significantly as India vies with China to become the highest investor on the African shores.

The Literature studies have mainly focussed on the writings of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Grace Ogot, Ama Ata Aidoo, Chimamanda Adichie and many others. The colonial times, Post Colonial hardships, formation of nation states,

gender inequality, colonisation of minds and bodies, Apartheid and its aftermath are some of the tropes taken up for discussion.

Shivani Jha in her essay titled “The Erasing of Hierarchies and Bridging of Divides” in Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s “Globelectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing” explores the language question which has been central to this genre of Literature. Ngugi’s call for banishment of the Coloniser’s tongue and the rationale behind his argument has been taken up for discussion. Ajanta Dutt in her essay titled “Linguistic Innovations in 20th Century Nigerian English Novels” takes the language debate further. She explores how the English language is significantly embellished by the incorporation of Ibo words and phrases, native images and idiomatic messages by the African writers who create a world of new languages and cultures hitherto unknown to the global audience. Varsha Singh in “Memory of Stones: A Saga of Historical Modalities” explores the writing of the South African writer Mandla Langa where she views the ravages of the ongoing saga of colonialism in the African mind. She explores Langa’s novel in terms of it providing an ethical healing to the ruptured psyche of the people and their nation. Sunanda Sinha in her essay “The New Second Sex in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*” explores the gender question in two of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s seminal novels. She argues that the new ‘breed’ of the ‘second sex’, make their presence felt within the socio-political, economic context of Post Independent Kenya. Her paper examines the sphere of operation and activity of ‘subjects’ within a defined cultural environment and an emerging epistemic enterprise in the cultural context as well as the writing space of Post Independent Kenya. Sudipta Mondal in her essay “Caught ‘In Between’: The Case of Obi in Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*” examines the chief protagonist Obi who starts out as an idealist but slowly falls victim to the rampant corruption prevailing in his country post Independence. Mahmoud Al-Zayed in his essay “*Matigari*: A Call to Speak Truth to Power” discusses three noted Theorists – Franz Fanon, Edward Said and Naom Chomsky. He discusses Ngugi’s stance on the role of the intellectual in the African context in his non-fictional and fictional writings with special focus on *Matigari*. Purva Upadhyay shifts her focus to Black American writing. Her Paper titled “Dreams, hopes and disappointment in Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Palace*” explores the stories of seven women in Brewster Place, a dead-end street separated by a wall from the rest of the unnamed city. The place reflects the lives of

people residing there; who are also at the dead-end of their lives, they have nowhere to go and all their dreams, hopes and desires are captive inside the wall. The claustrophobic life of the Coloured Woman in Racist America forms the core of her Paper. Bidisha Kantha in her Paper “Treatment of the Concept of the ‘Other’ in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” locates the ‘other’ in the self of both cultures the Ibo and that of the Coloniser’s which has its individual role to play in what constitutes the historic event of colonization.

The contributors to this Special Issue range from being established Academics to Research Scholars who are starting their forays into the literary arena. The issues addressed are multiple - ranging from gender issues to culture formations and the language question showcasing the Indian scholarship on African Literature.

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The Erasing of Hierarchies And Bridging of Divides in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Globalectics: Theory And The Politics of Knowing*

Shivani Jha

Abstract: The focus of this essay is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's literary treatise *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*. In this critical treatise Thiong'o exposes the politics of language in the English literary world in order to bring about 'liberation of literature from the straitjackets of nationalism'(8)in favor of a uniformity of knowledge in terms of selection of texts that comprise the English Literature curriculum across nations and cultures. Although Thiong'o was disillusioned with the situation he also proposed a solution. The essay shall discuss the discontentment of Thiong'o with literary imperialism followed by his proposed method of textual reading, the method of Globalectics.

Keywords: Globalectics, Literary imperialism, Language, Alienation, Inferiority, Critical bridges.

In 1967 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, on returning from Leeds University became a member of the English Department of the University of Nairobi. Here he came up with a tract calling for the abolition of the English Department. Thiong'o's appeal generated widespread opposition and criticism. He had spoken the unspeakable; the vision that Thiong'o had had totally escaped his critics. Thiong'o wanted a Department of World Literatures, referred to as 'Literature', instead of what is known as the "English Department"; a changed nomenclature would emphasize, an expanded view and extend equal respect to literatures worldwide and not only "English Literature".

Thiong'o felt that works from the vernacular literatures translated in English and native works in English should find equal representation in the curriculum so as to bring about an easy connect with its reader. The concern he registered was not one faced by the African reader alone but the readers of English literature worldwide.

He observed, by reading the literature of a specific country alone the exposure of the students belonging to the Department of English was

Linguistic Innovations in 20th Century Nigerian English Novels

Ajanta Dutt

Abstract: The Nigerian novelists of the latter half of the 20th century used innovative linguistic measures in their Anglophone novels. While they debated conflicts brought upon tribal culture by colonization, the advent of Christianity and English education, they elaborated their English narration with Igbo loans, transliterated phrases, native images, idiomatic messages, and comprehensive syntax variations. These measures wrought nuances in English, making it distinctive and giving a new voice as shown in the novels studied here. Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola set the trend for different Englishes, whereas Gabriel Okara and T. Obinkaram Echewa concentrated deeply on culturally imbued metaphors. Buchi Emecheta kept her language fairly pristine, but presented myths and conflicts to register cultural values hitherto unknown to world readers.

Keywords: Igbo loans, Images and metaphors, Syntax variation, Social consciousness, Tribal conflicts, Pidgin English, Cultural symbols, Linguistic changes, Hybridization.

The English language came to the Nigerian writers through colonization and missionary zeal which established English education in the country. The Nigerians were tribal people and had an oral indigenous literature largely based on songs and story-telling. This subsequently saw the rise of literature in English. Researchers believe that: “English, because of its longstanding historical origins in Nigeria and its present day richness should be considered a language that *is*, and has long *been* African” (Walters)

The Nigerian writers single-mindedly engaged in formulating a written language to reproduce their tribal heritage. They used English “conscious of the fact that they are presenting a Nigerian experience” (Taiwo 33). Their ideal was to establish what Achebe in his essay called “commitment to an African destiny” as he did not feel they sought recognition by taking up “apprenticeship” in the English language (7).

Sabin says that “whatever inglorious strategies” might have constituted the international spread of English, the resultant vector is

Memory of Stones: A Saga of Historical Modalities

Varsha Singh

Abstract: Colonialism for Africans is not an event of past but a history whose repercussions and traumatic consequences are still affecting today's political, social, historical, cultural, and artistic phenomenon. African writers are continually preoccupied with modalities of traumatic colonial past and neo colonial present to provide an ethical healing to the ruptured psyche of their people and nation. This paper deals with Mandala Langa's *The Memory of Stones* (2000) which tries to reconstruct African past under the twin matrices of memory and trauma. Nevertheless, contrary to those who adamantly favour the amputation of 'traumatic memory', Langa, in this novel, favours looking through 'narrative memory' which work through the past and provide healing to the younger generation so that they could be enabled to cope with future challenges of nation building.

Keywords: Post colonialism, Trauma, Existential rupture, Ethical healing, Counter memory, Genealogical consciousness, Zulu history and Nation building.

A people who do not preserve their memory are a people who have forfeited their history. (Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*)

A memory text is a family/community saga, a novel and a historical document rolled into one, using the oral storytelling tradition. With the help of these structuring devices of past and memory, African writers have brought to the fore, in cogent fashion, not just the social and cultural life of generations of Africans, but their art forms to redefine the patterns of existential rupture caused by colonialism and its far reaching repercussion and traumatic consequences which are still actively evolving in present Political, historical, and artistic phenomenon. Among African writers, one who appears to be most typically engaged in revivifying memory for the purposes of investigating the present is Mandla Langa. In his works, Langa explicitly deals with the South African past experienced by black people as a trauma that has to be

The New Second Sex in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*

Sunanda Sinha

Abstract: What does it entail to ‘speak’? What is the nature of women’s emancipation in real life and in literature? These processes, real and propounded, operate within the politics of control, subjugation and suppression exercised by society. With others, it involves the question of activity in a given cultural understanding – lived as well as thought. Second and most interesting is the question of ‘distance’ between the two even though it has been established that the literary world has a bearing on the real lived experience. With an attempt to analyse Ngugi’s idea of women’s emancipation, the paper will explore how his women, especially Wanja (*Petals of Blood*) and Jacinta Wariinga (*Devil on the Cross*), the new ‘breed’ of the ‘second sex’, make their presence felt within socio-political, economic context of Post Independent Kenya. The paper will examine the sphere of operation and activity of ‘subjects’ within a defined cultural environment and an emerging epistemic enterprise; the positioning and repositioning of ‘subjects’, in the cultural context as well as the writing space of Post Independent Kenya.

Keywords: Speak, Control, Culture, Second Sex, Subjects, Repositioning.

Anthropological and sociological studies have revealed that in traditional pre-colonial times the African women, unlike their fair counterpart, the white woman, held the reigns of communal and household chores and shouldered miscellaneous aspects of decision making along with the African male. Some of the African societies then were primarily matriarchal where female incarnations of goddesses were worshiped, and women actively participated in public life and made a significant contribution to the political movement. Their situation, however, deteriorated with what Khalid Kishtainy calls the ‘white conspiracy’ which robbed them of dignity and self-respect and relegated them to the margins of existence. Obscured by dominant, the body of African women became a trope of political and intellectual conquest. She was mystified, sexualised, nativised and sometimes even

Caught 'In Between': The Case of Obi in *Achebe's No Longer at Ease*

Sudipta Mondal

Abstract: This article on the celebrated African author Chinua Achebe intends to launch a deeper analytical and detailed probe into his novel *No Longer at Ease*, which is the story of an idealistic hero, who returns from England to change the society, but falls into the trap of the prevailing corruption. But before analyzing the novel, it also tries to elaborate the reason of Achebe, along with other African writers, taking up the vocation of writing to pen down the unfeigned version of the African tribal life, in order to show how the colonizers started to wreck havoc on the indigenous tribal culture of Nigeria.

Key words: Igbo/Ibo community, Isolation, bribe, corruption, downfall.

An author of such a grand scale as Chinua Achebe hardly requires any introduction, as he is one of the most powerful voices to have emerged from Africa, who has not only carved a niche for himself in the world of literature, but has also created a permanent place for African literature in the heart of the masses. He, along with other renowned African authors like Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo etc made it their live's mission to narrate the stories of Africa from the perspective of an insider. Chinua Achebe, being the one who enjoyed the best and worst of both tribal culture and Christianity, perfectly fits into the shoes of one who shoulders the burden of providing the most genuine account of the impact of colonialism on the tribal life of the Igbo/Ibo community.

Africa, known as the 'Dark Continent', has always held the sway of the fantasy of the European colonisers. It was in Africa where the first human beings walked their first step, so besides being the source of various superstitions, exoticism and black magic in popular imagination, it was also the richest source of raw materials for the fast developing European industries and hence, it always lured the colonisers to its shore. It hardly surprises anyone that the impact of the colonial enterprise in Africa will be fatal, as African continent was rich not only

***Matigari*: A Call to Speak Truth to Power**

Mahmoud Al-Zayed

Abstract: In order to place Ngugi wa Thiong’o, as a writer, in the intellectual tradition, this paper takes the theoretical trajectories of three intellectuals as a point of departure: Edward Said and Noam Chomsky vis-à-vis Frantz Fanon. What connects these three intellectuals, though they might differ in their approaches to the definition of what the role of an intellectual is, is that the task of an intellectual is “to speak truth to power”. Part I of the paper looks at different understandings of the concept of the ‘intellectual’ and that of ‘truth’, as it exists within the anarcho-radical tradition of the West vis-à-vis Africa and Part II unravels Ngugi’s stance on the role of the intellectual in the African context in his non-fictional and fictional writings with special focus on *Matigari* (1987).

Keywords: Truth, Power, Intellectual, Neo-colonial, Liberation.

What is it to be an intellectual? What is his/her role in society? Cultural critics in different socio-political contexts have arrived at varying understandings of the concept of the intellectual. The African context leads to a radical understanding of notions like “intellectual” and “truth”, which is different from that which emerged in the West, which had established democratic traditions. This paper engages with the idea of the intellectual and that of truth that emerges from the cauldron of political struggles against neo-colonialisms of different kinds that thwarted common existence in different nations of Africa. By adopting a comparative, cross-cultural framework, what one wishes to examine is how the discourses of Said, Chomsky, Fanon and Ngugi offer two alternatives of what can be termed as radical, but with opposing characteristics and see how a novel like *Matigari* can be read against such a theoretical backdrop.

1. The Role of the Intellectual: Said and Chomsky vis-à-vis Fanon

Truth and justice are notions that need to be exposed to the public in times when the custodians of lies and injustice run the country. The task of “speaking truth to power” is even more urgent in countries

Dreams, Hopes and Disappointment in Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*

Purva Upadhyay

Abstract: Gloria Naylor's first novel weaves together the stories of seven women in Brewster Place, a dead-end street separated by a wall from the rest of the unnamed city. The place reflects the lives of people residing there; who are also at the dead-end of their lives, they have nowhere to go and all their dreams, hopes and desires are captive inside the wall. Each story is the moving portrait of their dreams and desires, their struggle in crystallising those and their ultimate disappointment either by failed opportunities or a series of misfortunes.

Keywords: Dreams, Hopes, Disappointment, Gloria Naylor, African-American experience.

During the last few decades of twentieth century African-American literature has contained a strong and spirited female content. Among which Gloria Naylor has stood out as a standard of excellence, who in her own different way has defined the African-American novel. She is deeply involved in the exploration of illusion and reality concerning the daily, domestic life of the Black community. She published her first novel, *The Women of Brewster Place*, in 1982. The novel was well received and it won the American Book Award for first fiction in the following year. The success of her first novel constructed her place among the leading contemporary writers of fiction. It is one of the richest and most accessible of her novels. Its strength and passion lies in the rich portrayal of black lives which includes serious examination of racial and social politics.

As the title suggests, the novel is mainly about the place and women. Brewster Place is a street with four double housing units in an unnamed city in America. The place was separated from the rest of the city through a wall thus making it a dead end both literally and figuratively. Most of the residents came here because they had no choice and remained here for the same reason. Like them their dreams and desires had no escape from the place. They long for a home where they are heard, fed, cared, loved, protected and above all respected.

Treatment of the Concept of the 'Other' in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Bidisha Kantha

Abstract: The concept of the 'other' have been read and re-read in multiple contexts explored in multifarious dimensions and is still in the process of getting further inputs in gaining signification. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, often considered a mouthpiece of the African colonized requires further understanding in terms of the "other" portrayed therein. The most widely accepted and well researched foundations of the book lay in his delineating the arrival of the colonisers and disruption of the well constructed lattice of the primitive Igbo society. However the author seems to have gone way further in his understanding of the positioning of the 'other' in this novel and portrays beautifully the location of the secondary in the self of both cultures which has its individual role to play in what constituted the historic event of colonization.

Keywords: Colonisation, Igbo, redefining other, African culture.

"Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo's body was dangling, and they stopped dead."(Achebe 196)

The end of the life of Okonwo is the marker of the end of a cultural history of a period. This end denotes not just an end but rather an end tinged in dishonour, almost as if an epic of abomination had just been wrought. Okonwo's death described with his body "dangling" from the tree is the death that brings to the readers a sense of waste and a feeling of a dismal destruction of national pride and culture. The reverberation of the words spoken by Obereika:"Perhaps your men can help us bring him down and bury him"(Achebe 147) is the indirect indication to one who is responsible for this end, clearly asking him to take the responsibility of this deed. Only that the one indicated here, the district magistrate is indeed not the one primarily responsible, but just a representative of the empire, whose lust for power had resulted in the demolition of many such cultures.

The work of Achebe is to not concentrate on the functions of these foreign forces on the soils of Africa, but to uphold the African

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