



Introduction

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Using the notion of 'face' from politeness theory in ethnomethodology—which has its equivalent in the co-operative principle in pragmatics—Douglas Killam provides a critical analysis of Chinua Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* in the context of the historical event of the independence of Nigeria. Recognising that Eliot's poetry and prose writing during Achebe's degree years at the University College Ibadan must have influenced Achebe and capitalising on Roger Sell's exposition and use of politeness theory in reading Eliot, Killam explores the effect of this novel as it focuses readers on questions of society and humanity through a process of offending considerations of communal expectation. He concludes, stating that these concepts do not only importantly contribute to contemporary critical discourse and cross-cultural understanding of literature but also provide opportunities for the understanding of the socio-cultural situatedness of human action and interaction in both fiction and real-life intercourse.

After deconstruction and with the advent of the recognition that context is variable, broadly speaking, certain homologies do exist between the development of literature and socio-cultural realities. Using an interdisciplinary methodology, Sabry Hafez demonstrates a certain homology between the development of women's literature and socio-cultural reality. Developing a typology of women writing in modern Arabic literature, he roots the texts into their context, illuminates the textuality and narrative strategies of these novels and outlines some of the recent concepts dealing with the complex dialogue between language, identity, feminist theories and narrative. He combines theoretical postulations and practical criticism to demonstrate how a number of the theoretical assumptions of modern critical theory require radical modifications when dealing with a different literary tradition such as modern Arabic and with the question of gender in a literature of countries at different stages of development.

Selecting gender-related narratives from the collection of Wilhelm Bleek and

Lucy Lloyd, Belinda Jearsen explores the portrayals of conflict between young women and traditional customs or rituals of the /Xam. Central to the investigation is the delineation of the relationship between the educative qualities of the puberty rites for young girls and the role which the supernatural being, !Khwa, plays in these narratives. Jearsen argues that the narratives function as warnings against disobeying the observances propagated in the stories. Ignorance or disobedience of the traditional structures leads to punishment, either by a supernatural force operating via the elements or by means of inter-personal violence.

Arguing that the most prominent meaning attached to the *izibongo/izihasho* is that these are 'praise poems' which laud the feats, character and personality features of the person about whom the poem is composed, Noleen Turner uses empirical evidence to show that the most striking feature of Zulu women's praises in urban areas is the dearth of praises generally accorded to women. Unlike the praises of Zulu men which are common and which may contain both positive and negative references, the *izihasho* of women which do exist are remarkable for the lack of praiseworthy material they contain. She reasons that this lack may be a direct result of the role of women in society and the very composition of the patrilineal and patriarchal Zulu social structure.

The concept of tribe has been the subject of a sustained critique for many years in African studies and has been viewed as a product of the colonial enterprise. Using ethnography from southern Malawi, Alan Thorold suggests a more sophisticated analysis in which Africans are not taken to be the dupes of missionaries and colonial administrators. He argues that the social structures that developed in southern Africa before and after European intervention in the region that have been described as tribes—or more recently by euphemistic and poorly defined terms like 'ethnic group' and 'nation'—were in no simple sense imposed upon Africans.

Jacqueline Jaffe employs a close reading of Arthur Conan Doyle's book *The Great Boer War* (1900) in order to see how a renowned writer of adventure stories uses the narrative conventions of romance and adventure to shape the telling of military history in support of imperialistic goals. As part of a continuing study about culture and imperialism in late Victorian England her paper attempts to raise questions about the nature of the link between history, literature and British imperialism.

Starting from the premise that canonised, traditional Afrikaans—and other—literary texts are the product of the socio-political power emanating from a colonial hegemony and that the very process of canonisation itself is a

product of a particular ideological network, Godfrey Meintjes interrogates texts written before the *Vernuwings van Sestig* which used to be revered and which more recently have been reviled. With reference to Kermode, Scholes and Barthes, he first discusses the notion *herlees*. He then examines the problems of contemporary historiography with regard to Krieger, Foucault, Degenaar, Derrida, Hutcheon and McHale and attempts to reconcile marxism and poststructuralism under the aegis of Stephen Greenblatt's term *new historicism*. Meintjes demonstrates his argument by providing a political re-reading with reference to Malherbe's *Hans die skipper* (1928), Van den Heever's *Somer* (1935) and Boerneef's *Boplaas* (1938). Following Doctorow, he concludes that fiction is indeed a form of history. Whether history is a kind of fiction as Doctorow asserts, he intends pursuing in further research.

Providing evidence from several language families of the world for three possible roots, KAM, PAK and TAK' which probably date back to 14000 B.P. and which might have been present in the Proto-World of about 40000 B.P., Richard Bailey challenges the methods of historical semantics and suggests a refinement. From studying semantic development patterns present in the data, it becomes apparent that a generally predictable direction of semantic change is discernible. The regularity and attestation of these semantic patterns of change in available evidence in most of the world's languages, provide evidence for a universal tendency of semantic development in semantic areas such as the one illustrated by these three roots. These findings demonstrate that phono-lexical historical reconstruction becomes feasible at more remote time depths because of the identification of many more words as cognates than would have been possible without recognising the existence of these semantic areas.

Louis Molamu explores the origins and development of Tsotsitaal as *lingua franca* in the urban areas of South Africa. As historical account of a language used mainly by young black males, aspects of class, gender and ethnicity are considered. In the context of the study of Tsotsitaal as language, Molamu discusses the flexibility of the language, including innovation in vocabulary, phonology, grammar and pronunciation.

Departing from the presupposition that history provides evidence that the non-use of a language in the economic and social spheres may lead to the language's demise in favour of the language used in these public domains, Jeanne Maartens tentatively postulates that it is to be expected that the economic and social realities of the South African situation will eventually lead to the indigenous languages such as Afrikaans and Zulu being supplanted by English. Using Edwards' (1985) argument on the language/

identity relation as a point of departure and exploring the implications of his view that language is not essential to group, she argues that although these languages which often fulfil a strongly divisive role in this society may vanish as markers of group identity, the identity itself can be maintained should the group so wish.

With questions on identity currently very much in the air—as is also evident in the contributions to this issue—Betty Govinden confronts identity forming values of colonial canonical literature and apartheid's christian national and fundamental pedagogics and attempt to rethinking identity on a personal, group and professional level from feminist, post-colonial and historical contexts. Even though many people—like Indians—have been deprived of relating to the African context during the era of apartheid's cultural and educational hegemony, the challenges of a transformed pedagogy and the contribution to the building of a non-racial society may be partly met by utilising practices of re-memory. This amounts to individuals telling and retelling their stories in the context of a re-thinking, re-feeling and re-experiencing of the past in the light of different facts and a consciousness of circumstances which have been shrouded by the politics of past oppression.

Finally, David Hemson, reviewing Steve Biko's *I Write What I Like*, argues that a final audit of the achievements of black consciousness still has to be undertaken. Central to his argument is an appreciation of the wide variety of fronts on which Biko contributed in the midst of a situation of oppression devoid of political traditions which might have been used to counter it. Addressing themes in Biko's character and participation in the black student movement, Hemson weaves his argument through Biko's physical and intellectual courage, his arguments for and against the participation of white liberals in the struggle, his attempt to move beyond the 'two-faced' nature of African politics, purported racism and gender bias in black consciousness and his assertion of black pride, radical black leadership and various cultural issues which still remain in contention in contemporary African culture and politics. Addressing apartheid hegemony over blacks, Biko's arguments on the role of white technology and the counterrole of African values are also elucidated. The most important contribution of black consciousness' political strategy was its opposition to collaboration with apartheid institutions, especially as it manifested in the creation of Bantustans. Biko's criticism of Bantustan leaders is central here. Concluding, Hemson points to the important contribution of Biko himself as well as black consciousness as movement in the liberation struggle but also poses the question as to how this history and more particularly black identity, can be related to the event of the negotiated settlement in South Africa.