



African Literature Association NEWSLETTER

NKYIN KYIN — CHANGING ONESELF: PLAYING MANY ROLES

SINCE 1975



Presidential Speech 2014 40th Annual ALA Conference

University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa

Tejumola Olaniyan, ALA President, Professor of English, University of Wisconsin



I want to begin by thanking Professor Bhekizwe Peterson and all members of the Planning Committee and Event Planners for the outstanding job they have done in hosting this spectacularly successful conference. If any of you are here, please stand up to be recognized. Please help me give them a warm round of applause. Thank you. I would also like to thank the University of Witwatersrand, and more specifically the School of Language, Literature, and Media, for their generosity and the obviously muscular backing they gave our colleague, Bheki Peterson. Vice Chancellor Adam Habib's opening words on Wednesday about the place of Africa in

the world, the place of an African university in the world marketplace of the production of knowledge, and the particularly opportune location of writers and literary scholars in the task of imagining freedom for all here and elsewhere---those words started our conference on an inspiring, elevated note, and sustained our intellectual exchanges. My profound gratitude to Professor Habib, and to Professor Ruksana Osman, Dean of Faculty of Humanities, for their very warm welcome. I extend ALA gratitude too to all the sponsoring Partners, the keynote and specially invited speakers, and all participants from near and far, many who came with family members. Thank you all for your demonstrated commitment to facilitating the sharing and dissemination of expert knowledge on African literature and cultural studies. Thank you for your contributions in diverse ways to making this conference the great success that it is. Given its history, ALA was late in coming to a democratic South Africa, but, better late than never, and I hope it won't take another twenty years for the ALA to return to the southern Africa region.

My tenure as president is for me an opportunity to work in consolidating ALA's position as one of the most important institutions invested in all scholarly matters pertaining to African literature, African arts, and cultural production.

CONTENTS

CONVENOR'S ADDRESS.....	7
DEPARTURES 2004-2014.....	10
A TRIBUTE.....	12
ALA AWARD WINNERS.....	15

CALL FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS.....	17
ALA HQ DIRECTOR'S REPORT.....	19
RECENT BOOKS.....	21
LET MY PEOPLE GO.....	23
2014-15 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.....	24

Presidential Speech cont.

Organizations don't just run themselves; they are run by people. And in a non-profit organization like the ALA, I am talking of people who are dedicated volunteers committing so much time, energy, and careful attention to so much unpaid work. I would like to thank my colleagues on the Executive Council, the outgoing president, Soraya Mekerta, and the immediate past president, Anthonia Kalu, first, for working hard to ensure productive collaboration with the conference planning committee, and second, for their service to our organization. I arrive at this position having benefitted from the collective wisdom of those who preceded me as presidents of the ALA. To the newly elected Vice President, Moradewun Adejunmobi; and newly elected Executive Councilors—MaryEllen Higgins, Patrice Nganang, Keiko Kusunose, and Samuel Zadi—I say, congratulations on your election, and thank you for volunteering to serve; ALA is waiting for your good work! That work will be ably supported by, among others, our accomplished ALA Headquarters administrators at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the US, James McCorkle, Director, and Dorothy Vogt, Secretary. I gratefully acknowledge their work, as well as the truly generous support of Hobart and William Smith Colleges. I must not forget our tireless auditors over the years, Judy and Adlai Murdoch, doing so much work on such an important matter, for just mere 'thanks'. The ALA is really very appreciative of her work. Finally, congratulations once again to ALA award winners. By your accomplishments you have done ALA proud; winning the good judgment of peers is not an easy thing, which is why it is priceless. Thank you for your example. The sweet coda to all these organizational matters is, first, to present the outgoing President with ALA token of gratitude, a beautiful plaque.

Now, left to me, if I have the power, I would have ended this speech right at this point and say, hurrah, let's go and dance. But, alas, it is the venerable tradition of ALA Presidential Address that the new President not just "meet, greet and thank," but also offer some remarks on the condition of our discipline today. Well, I know there are not many people

in this hall who would ever accuse me of lacking an opinion on anything; well, may be of having too much and often polemical opinion. So, let me confess that I am happy to oblige our hallowed tradition by offering some remarks about our field of African literary studies today. I have titled the remarks with a question. I did so partly because I do not know much of the answers, and partly because, as professional critics and scholars, it is how you answer the question for yourself that really matters for your practice. Of course, I will give you my own ideas. So, here is the title:

African Literature is Doing Well, Thank You. But is African Literary Studies?

Let us begin with brief look at the state of African literature today. As we survey this literary landscape, we cannot but proclaim with some robust satisfaction that African literature and African cultural production are, by and large, in good health. Like lovers of literature elsewhere in the world, we have good reason to applaud the classics of a growing canon of significant works. Just look at all the popular—though typically subjective—yardsticks of measurement, such as "Africa's Best 100 Books of the Twentieth Century" and many such lists; or the many literary awards emanating from outside Africa, or the many new literary awards and literary festivals that are now proliferating within the continent. Then travel around the continent and see the many locally published writings whose titles you won't find anywhere in library databases or on the internet, yet. Just look at all these and we cannot but be really proud of where African literature stands today.

We are struck not only by the quantity of African literary and cultural production, but also by the range of themes, styles, genres, and media of production. In southern Africa to take only one example, we are confronted with an embarrassment of riches, to borrow the originally French expression in English. We have works written in a variety of languages including IsiZulu, Setswana, English, Afrikaans, and Sesotho among others. We have first time authors and established authors competing for

Organizations don't just run themselves; they are run by people. And in a non-profit organization like the ALA, I am talking of people who are dedicated volunteers committing so much time, energy, and careful attention to so much unpaid work.

Presidential Speech cont.

prizes. Fiction in both conventional and new, previously unimaginable formats such as the mobile or cell phone novel, poetry, literary memoirs, autobiography and a wide range of verbal performance. The preoccupation with macro-politics which predominated during the apartheid era—and which was standard in African literature generally till the 1980s—has yielded much way to a much wider range of additional themes and or totally new takes on old themes: social alienation, crime, challenges of rural living, imponderable government bureaucracy, pleasures and perils of childhood, sexuality and sexual orientation, the human and environment intersection, gendered access, opportunities, and discriminations, affirmation of the individual self against the remorseless dictates of culture and tradition, and many others. Here and elsewhere on the continent, the cross-fertilization between and among radio, television, film, and literature has become ever more generative, with literary works crossing from one medium to another at some rapid speed. Just think of the Arab Spring, for instance, and the extensive cross-art productivity it has engendered. A different kind of cross-fertilization is also taking place between the literary and other arts as well as between popular artistic culture and an art culture that derives its value from critical aesthetic assessments rather than the old anthropological fixation with antiqueness and indigenous cultural pedigree.

This, in spite of all the enormous challenges of daily living, is the thriving, astoundingly creative artistic-imaginative landscape of Africa today. African literature, I repeat, is doing well.

So, what of our field of African literary scholarship today? By contrast, and very regretfully, I would have to say that African literary criticism, that is, *literary criticism carried out by scholars who identify themselves as*

specialists in African literary studies, is in an anemic state at the moment. Without question, there are the typical few oases that we can identify. And more generally, we are trying very hard and have made important marks. On the whole, though, we are very much lagging behind our literature. In many publications specifically dedicated to examining African literature, our current preoccupations as critics have not extended far beyond those that animated discussions from the 1960s to the 1980s. For the most part, we remain trapped in the arguments that animated conversation two decades or more ago. The critics of that generation responded creatively to those arguments and challenges to the best of their ability; it does not seem to me that we have pushed the boundaries of their thinking that much further. Take, for example, the old



Thelma Pinto, Sindiwe Magona, Anthonia Kalu

question of the suspicion of theory. All through from the practical criticism of Eldred Durosimi Jones and Dan Izevbaye, to pragmatic sociological-historical bent of Albert Gerard, Abiola Irele, Bernth Lindfors, Emmanuel

Presidential Speech cont.

Obiechina, and Isidore Okpewho, to the Marxist sociology of Molarra Ogundipe and Omafume Onoge, to idiosyncratically cite just a few familiar categories and leading practitioners—all through the beginnings in early twentieth century to the 1980s, the suspicion of theory attitude was a very marginal, peripheral phenomenon. That is, until the “Bolekaja” critics of the 1980s—Chinweizu, Onwucheka Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike in their *Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature*—who, riding on the coattails of a dissipated American Black Power racialism, popularized the anti-theory attitude by stereotyping a certain kind of modernist work and criticism as theory in general, in opposition to a supposedly non-theoretical, non-difficult, and simple Africanness. Oyekan Owomoyela also later vigorously propagated a similar line of thinking.

The vagueness or nebulousness of their proposition caught on, such that that kind of suspicious attitude became more generalized. But at least, Chinweizu and his colleagues wrote a book that we must consider quite self-consciously theoretical, though it was to attack “theory.” Although that suspicion of theory has persisted and is sometimes worn as a badge of honor among many scholars of African literature today, there has not been a single scholarly updating of the defense of that position; only Chinweizu and co.’s book still remain as the touchstone for the attitude, even if it is not often cited as such. Again, they look much more vitally engaged with the literature and criticism of their era, and contributed much more to the vitality of the literary criticism of their era, than us to our own time today.

One result of the current situation is that the most arresting conceptual and philosophical engagements with the works of African writers today often emanate from outside our field. Widely suggestive and provocative scholarship on African writers and artists is now more frequently produced by those who have only a peripheral and tangential connection with the broader field of African literature. We find ourselves in a position where those who define the paradigms by which African cultural production will be evaluated within literary studies writ large, are

from outside the specific field of African literary studies. Thus, scholars with other areas of expertise, and with less socio-contextual familiarity with our object of study, are appropriating the literature, speaking for the literature, and defining the terms on which it will be admitted within the halls of some larger entity, whether that entity is called “world literature” as our convener, Bheki Peterson mentioned on Wednesday, or “postcolonial literature,” or “literature from the global south.” As my co-editor and I stated in our anthology of criticism and theory (*African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, 2007), theory informs all we do, and it does not have to be inaccessible or unreadable; aversion to theory is itself a theoretical attitude.

What theory needs to do is provide us with principles that can form the basis for productive engagements with the range of African literature today.

It was Frantz Fanon who said in 1961 in *The Wretched of the Earth* that “Every generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it.” It seems to me that our current crop of

writers, so-called “third generation,” have, in the multi-sided capaciousness of their explorations of contemporary Africa in the world and the world in Africa and their own place in that circulation, it seems to me that they have discovered a historic mission and are fulfilling it by pushing the boundaries of what Africa is and what we could think in relation to Africa. The question now is: When is African literary criticism going to catch up with its literature?

And what is the role of the ALA in all this?

The ALA is an association of scholars, but it is an association of scholars that has been unafraid to wade into treacherous political waters in the past. When Dennis Brutus of blessed memory, then in exile in the United States, urged us to take a stand on apartheid at a time when battles were raging for and against divestment with companies doing business with the apartheid government, the ALA voted to take a stand. Let me seize the opportunity to pay tribute to the leadership and membership of ALA at the time and their

The ALA is an association of scholars, but it is an association of scholars that has been unafraid to wade into treacherous political waters in the past.

Presidential Speech cont.

willingness to be not only witnesses but also participants in making history happen wherever they happened to be located.

We are, as I said, an association of scholars. This means that in addition to a willingness to act on matters of politics, we must exhibit a similar readiness to act on matters of scholarship. We in the ALA, who have been so willing to confront political challenges head on, ought not to cower with fear when faced with challenges of an intellectual order. In this second decade of the twenty-first century, the danger that we face as an association is one of growing intellectual irrelevance in the expanding discourse on our literature. We cannot allow this to happen. Difficult as it may be, I would like to issue a call for the ALA to invest its energies in the production of a critical discourse that is adequate to the task of assessing a stylistically and thematically diverse output that is now African literature. We are called upon, not only to promote our writers, but also the critical discourse that we generate in relation to the work of those writers. In order to do this effectively however, the critical discourse must exhibit the inventiveness, sophisticated imagination, and adventure that we see in the creative writing itself. The critical discourse that we develop cannot be built on an ignorance of, or non-engagement with, other discourses being produced around the work of literature and art in other traditions. Literature and criticism are locally inspired but are also very *global* institutions, simultaneously continental and transcontinental. In any case, as intellectuals and middle class, we travel across borders all the time; there is no reason for us to expect the most relevant ideas about a text to be found only within borders. To further imprint our expertise on this critical discourse, we as members of the ALA will need to incentivize ourselves by offering appropriate rewards and recognition for those who contribute to extending the critical apparatus which frames our approach to literature.

We have at all times been willing and eager to welcome creative writers in our midst. We have given due recognition. Indeed, the first prizes created by the ALA were prizes awarded to creative writers on the one hand, and cultural activists on the other. Though the ALA was founded in 1975, it was not until last year, 2013, that we first adopted the idea of awards

for published scholarship. So, for forty years, an association of scholars did not have any system of rewards for scholarship. But, better late than never; we now have three awards for published scholarship, and, with your determination, the sky is the limit.

I understand that the focus on developing an appropriate critical and theoretical discourse presents some practical problems of access for many of our colleagues working in certain parts of the African continent. We cannot be so heavily infatuated with developing theory and critical discourse that we fail to acknowledge the material conditions which favor scholars working in certain contexts and disable scholars working in other contexts.

Let me remind you all of some of the priorities I outlined in my statement for election to the position of vice-president. These priorities remain germane as ever.

My tenure as president is for me an opportunity to work in consolidating ALA's position as one of the most important institutions invested in all scholarly matters pertaining to African literature, African arts, and cultural production. As President, I will focus on three principal areas that I am convinced we need to work more on to make our Association meet the challenges of the near future.

- *First, a re-energized membership drive.* African literature is making wider appearance on college course lists abroad, even if taught in many instances by those only partly immersed in the field. The effect on increasing student interest has been significant. We need to reach out not just to the traditional categories of recruitment targets such as graduate students and teachers primarily in the field, but also to those only peripherally so at the moment. Above all, it is high time we attract back many of our leading scholars who have, for one reason or the other, drifted away from the association over the past years. We need their wealth of insight, experience, and prestige now more than ever before.
- *Second, we need to ramp up our mentoring of graduate students and*

junior scholars. This is not simply because of the truthful cliché that “they are the future of the organization.” That reason would suffice just to make the ALA survive. But ALA needs to not just survive but also thrive competently and in the front ranks of literary studies today. In addition to creating nurturing intersections in which students, junior and senior scholars learn from one another (on criticism, pedagogy, etc.) in a multidirectional manner, I envision mentoring as also including research and publishing collaborations, as well strategic sharing of opportunities and advice on where to publish. The goal is that we in the ALA make much wider publication appearance everywhere but especially more on the pages of leading journals and on the list of leading presses. Again, as Vice Chancellor Adam Habib so perceptively articulated the African challenge today, we must be simultaneously locally relevant and at the same time globally competitive. The benefits will be both individual professional advancement and the advancement of the collective profile of our organization.

- *Third, we have over the years done very well* both individually and collectively in donating books to universities in Africa. Given the ever-increasing cost of books as well as of transcontinental postage, and the fact that donated books are more often than not years old, it is time to explore additional approaches, such as journals and books in pdf format, for instance. Some presses are already selling those on cds; they are much cheaper to buy and to mail. Let us open a formal conversation on this and other resource support measures.

I want to end by once again thanking our convener and the many hosts and sponsors. I thank you the entire membership for the confidence you reposed in me and I look forward for more of your support during my tenure. Please re-dedicate yourselves to the ALA by paying your annual dues promptly, and by inviting potential members to join the organization. Easter celebration, for instance, is around the corner, give ALA annual memberships as gifts to professional friends and colleagues.

Thank you for attending this conference and I wish you all safe travels back to your various destinations. Our next conference is June 3-6, 2015, at the University of Bayreuth in Germany. I look forward to seeing all of you and many more, there.

It is play time now, so let's dance!

April 12, 2014



Dinner and Conversation following Opening Reception

Convenor's Address 2014

40th Annual ALA Conference

**Bhekizizwe Peterson, Professor of African Literature
University of the Witwatersrand**



Dear Members of the African Literature Association and Distinguished Guests, Colleagues and Friends, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 40th Annual Conference of the ALA. I want to start off by expressing my deepest appreciation and thanks to all of you, particularly those of you who have come from far away places to come and deliberate and celebrate African arts and culture.

I would like to thank Professor Soraya Mekerta, the current President of the ALA, Professor Anthonia Kalu, the past President of the ALA, for the guidance and support throughout the preparations for the conference. To all our invited speakers, writers and artists, thank you for your generosity and especially your willingness to assist in easing some of the logistical problems that concerned your participation. Appreciation is also due to members of the Executive and general members of the ALA for their encouragement and kind words, especially when we were confronted with the peculiar challenges that our local context presents. I remain deeply grateful to all of you. The same is true of the organizing team that, in many ways, is the engine behind what we have achieved thus far and of what will be required in the forthcoming days.

Our gathering in Johannesburg is significant for a number of reasons. 2014 marks the 40th anniversary of the ALA. Your presence here today is a testimony to four-decades of the scholarly and creative commitment and excellence of ALA members. The second significance of convening in Johannesburg lies in the special relationship – if I may call it so – maybe I should say difficult relationship that the ALA has had with South Africa because of apartheid. It is estimated that between 1957 and 1966 dozens of South African artists left the country on so-called exit permits – meaning that they were not allowed to return to South Africa. This partially accounts for why, since the idea of the ALA was conceived, and since its formation, South African writers and artists in exile have played a prominent role in the organization. The obvious names that come to mind include the likes of Daniel Kunene, Dennis Brutus, Mazizi Kunene, Es'kia Mphahlele, Oswald Mtshali, Mongane Wally Serote, Keorapetse Kgotsile and Cosmo Pieterse. So, in a sense, the ALA, in addition to all its other noble aims, could not escape being, also, an anti-apartheid movement.

For me, there is added pathos in the ALA meeting in Johannesburg. The poignancy comes from the realization that many of the writers who formed part of the launch of the ALA have passed on in the last few years, including Chinua Achebe and Kofi Awoonor. The most recently departed, Mbulelo Mzamane, was meant to host the **Evening of Homage and Tribute to Writers and Artists who have Passed On** that is scheduled for tomorrow.

April 2014 also marks an auspicious moment in African history and experience: 20 years since the demise of official apartheid, and elsewhere on the continent, 20 years since the genocide in Rwanda. The awareness and sensitivity to what may seem, on the surface, as opposite developments, is what lead to the framing of the theme of the conference. On the one hand, in April 1994 in South Africa, there was a sense of achievement and hope precipitated by the inauguration of the first democratically elected government in the country. The local developments were, however, counterpoised and undercut by the despair unleashed by the unfolding of

Convenor's Address cont.

the genocide in Rwanda. Elsewhere, other seemingly intractable challenges continued to bedevil the continent: poverty, inequality, inequity, tyranny and impunity - to cite some of the obvious and crucial conditions.

We felt that April 2014 presents a fitting occasion from which to embark on the kinds of introspection and predictions that look simultaneously, at the past, present and the future. We are compelled, as Fanon called for, "to occupy a zone of occult instability" where the demands of the moment and the passage of time require much more than mere chronological unfolding or apprehension.¹ The zone of occult instability complicates time and agency and, instead, invites a more fluid, multiple, contingent and unstable sense of social contradictions, history and politics. This is particularly true in relation to the shadows and unfinished business of apartheid and, also, the limits and possibilities for imagining and creating a more just, egalitarian and humane world.

We were very much aware of the usefulness and limitations of invoking apartheid as a central concept and theme for the conference. Apartheid, as a political system and concept, enjoys a complicated status in local and global imaginaries.

We were very much aware of the usefulness and limitations of invoking apartheid as a central concept and theme for the conference. Apartheid, as a political system and concept, enjoys a complicated status in local and global imaginaries. It signified one of the most totalising attempts at racial social engineering, encompassing economic, socio-political and cultural policies. It intruded into the most basic elements of everyday life, intent on overseeing all the rights and rites of passage, experience and reflection, from birth to death. Apartheid also became shorthand for highlighting and challenging the manifestation of different kinds of racism, discrimination, segregation, alienation and exploitation across the world. In many ways, we continue to live in a world where a common humanity is denied and where even the most personal and intimate aspects of our lives continue

to be policed and regulated by constituencies ranging from the church, capital to the state.

Even the sphere of knowledge and cultural production is, as you know, not immune from its regimes of control, prescription and, ultimately, suffocation. There is much creative and scholarly work that is rendered marginal and / or invisible because it articulates different beliefs and ideas and, furthermore, expresses itself in different languages, accents and rhythms and that are regarded as not being normative. In this regard, a critical and self-reflexive attentiveness is required in a number of respects. The first is in relation to African Literature and cultural production and its status and place in the ever-changing geo-politics of knowledge production. The choice is yours in terms of where you want to start to chart the forms of claimed *apartness* between, as Chinweizu provocatively put it, the 'West and the Rest of Us'. You may conveniently start with the Enlightenment and its denial of co-equivalence and any sense of the

aesthetic to Black people across the world. You can fast forward to the 60's and the debates around whether African literature was, is or is not an 'appendix' of English letters. Currently, we are negotiating at least two shifts. The first is the mutation of Comparative Literature into World Literature. Then there are the calls for a 'Theory from the South'. Whatever the merits of these developments, we are called upon to proactively and creatively intervene and not reduce ourselves to being consumers rather than producers of knowledge about the continent, its diaspora and artists.

The last two decades, as before, have also been witness to the continued will to live, narrate, innovate and excel on the continent and elsewhere. This is powerfully manifest in the resilience, originality, creativity and achievements attained

¹ Frantz Fanon **The Wretched of the Earth** (New York: GroveWeidenfeld, 1968).

Convenor's Address cont.

across a wide spectrum of social and cultural endeavours, particularly in areas such as the arts, technology, new media and global sport. Shot-through these practices and interventions is, often, an abiding reliance on and valorization of the complexities and politics of the quotidian. The everyday longings for food, clothing, shelter, joy, love, beauty, community and all sorts of emancipation present, arguably, some of the most politically affective and effective occasions where people called into question the dominant ideas, institutions and practices of the State and other powerful national and international forces. Artists and citizens – through the recourse to texts, modes and repertoires of living – proffered alternative accounts, senses of self, memories as well as incendiary and enchanting hopes for the future. These unsettled and transcended dominant notions of the sensible and desirable in the post-colony and the world at large.

Art offers one way of embodying and thinking-through experience, conferring coherence and meaning to a myriad of life-moments that range from the painful to the pleasurable. The best of its kind does so in ways that surpass mere recognition or identification but gives us reality presented in a new light. It not only shapes our notions of self but also, potentially, connect us to other persons, allowing us to share our pains and joys even with strangers. In this way art allows us to form bonds that facilitate the cultivation of possible senses of collectiveness, of humanity. In linking us together, art teases or compels us to examine social relationships, especially within the contexts of the social realities in which we live.

In **The Necessity of Art**, Ernst Fischer, remarks that "the magic role of art has progressively given way to the role of illuminating social relationships, of enlightening...(us)". He notes that:

Either of the two elements of art may predominate at a particular time...

sometimes the magically suggestive, at other times the rational and enlightening; sometimes dreamlike intuition, at other times the desire to sharpen perception. But whether art soothes or awakens, casts shadows or brings light, it is never merely a clinical description of reality. Its function is always to move the whole man, to enable the 'I' to identify itself with another's life, to make its own what it is not and yet is capable of being.²

It is because of all these possible qualities that art has the potential to divide or to unite, to create new laagers of apartheid, or inaugurate ties and forms of consciousness that allow us to imagine and work for a better world. Aware of these potentialities, Chinua Achebe cautioned that we must remain vigilant about the kinds of narratives that we tell and visions that we pursue. In "The Truth of Fiction", Achebe observes that "there are fictions that help and fictions that hinder. For simplicity, let us call them beneficent and malignant fictions". Imaginative literature belongs to beneficent fictions. "It does not enslave; it liberates the mind. Its truth is not like the canon of an orthodoxy or the irrationality of prejudice and superstition. It begins as an adventure in self-discovery and ends in wisdom and humane conscience".³

--April 9, 2014



² Ernst Fischer **The Necessity of Art** (London: Peregrine Books, 1978), 14.

³ Chinua Achebe *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays 1965-87* (London: Heinemann, 1988), 98, 105.

DEPARTURES 2004 — 2014

2014

- Maya Angelou
- Daniel Biyaoula
- Peter Clarke
- Prof. Mbuleo Vizikhungo Mzamane
- Amiri Baraka
- Yulisa Amadu Maddy
- Prof. Catherine Acholonu

2013

- Khady Sylla
- Koffi Awoonor
- Prof. Eckard Breitingner
- Sathima Bea Benjamin
- President Nelson Mandela
- Chinua Achebe
- Iyayi Festus

2012

- Zadi Zarouou

2011 (Provided by Eustace Palmer)

- Emmanuel Obiechina, professor of English at Nsukka, author of *Onitsha Market Literature and Culture, Tradition and the African Novel*. [As a note, he taught as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Hobart and William Smith Colleges]
- Khadiatou Gueye. Born in Senegal, critic and teacher
- Ulli Beier, born in Germany, taught at various universities including Ibadan, publisher of *Black Orpheus* and compiler, together with Gerald Moore of *Modern Poetry from Africa*
- Andre Chedid, born in Egypt of Lebanese parents, outstanding poet and novelist writing in French

(2011 cont.)

- Matangatanwa Ngwera, from Mozambique, FRELIMO stalwart
- Lewis Nkosi, South African, critic and playwright, author of *Tasks and Masks*.
- Edward Glissant, born in Martinique, poet and literary critic
- Jean-Pierre Guignane, from Burkina Faso, playwright, founder/Director of the Troupe Theatre de la Fraternite
- Esiaba Irobi, Professor of Performance Studies, Ohio University, poet and playwright
- Desire Ecare, Ivorian filmmaker
- Adama Drabo, Malian filmmaker
- Thierno Fatu Sow, Senegalese filmmaker
- Mahama Johnson Traore, Senegalese filmmaker
- James Campbell Badiane, Senegalese/Gambian filmmaker
- Tahar Cheria, Tunisian filmmaker
- Sotigui Kouyate, celebrated Burkinabe actor
- Samba Felix Ndiaye, Senegalese filmmaker
- Andre Como Ottong, Gabonese filmmaker
- Amadou Bourou, Malian filmmaker

2010

- Lucille Clifton

2009

- Tayeb Salih
- Ngugi wa Miri
- Es'ca Exkiel Mphalele
- Miriam Makeba
- Abdel Khativi
- Boubacar Joseph Ndaye

Departures cont.

2008

- Hilarious Ambé
- Bate Besong
- Aimée Cesaire
- John Conteh-Morgan
- Cyprian Ekwensi
- Oyinka Ogumba
- Oyekan Owomoyela
- Sembene Ousman

2007 [some were memorialized as well in 2006 or 2008]

- Bebe Moore Campbell
- Joseph Soble

2006

- Prof. Clifford Nelson Fyle
- Prof. Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh
- Edward Rice, spouse of Micheline Rice-Maximin
- Gay Wilentz
- Taddesse Adera
- Wanjiru Kihoro
- Naguib Mahfouz
- Mazisi Kunene
- Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin
- Octavia Butler
- Ali Farka Touré
- Gordon Parks
- Ellen Kuzwayo
- Drs. Bate Besong and Hilarious Ambe
- Fessehayle "Joshua" Yohannes

2005

- August Wilson
- Kalidou Sy
- Ossie Davis
- Gerald Moser
- Yvonne Vera
- Jacques Manajora
- Ionel Ingakan

2004

- Edward Said
- Ahmadou Kourouma
- Aicha Fofani
- Kristine Aurbakken
- Jean Rouch
- Dany Bebel-Gisler

2002-3 [memorials held in 2002 for some who passed in 2000-01]

- Leopold Sédar Senghor
- Lemuel Johnson
- Mongo Beti
- Francis Bebey
- René Philombe
- Sunday Anozie
- Wale Ogunyemi
- Bokar N'Diaye
- Boalamusa Keita
- Anna Rutherford
- Edison Mpina
- Ola Ritumi
- Nina Ba



A sculpture of former South African President Nelson Mandela at Howick, 90km south of Durban, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of his capture by the apartheid police. Designed by artist Marco Cianfanelli, the unique sculpture is 10m tall and made from 50 steel columns anchored in concrete to symbolise the prison. As a young liberation fighter Mandela was arrested on 5 August 1962, months after founding the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC). AFP/GETTY

ONE BREATH: A TRIBUTE TO ALA MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED ON (2004-2014)

ANTHONIA KALU



Last year at the 39th ALA meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, I stood before you as the President of the ALA to give a tribute to Professor Chinua Achebe who joined the Ancestors during that meeting. This year, Bheki Peterson has asked me to pay tribute to a group of ALA members who, over the course of their lives were seen as ‘Continental Beacons.’ And because I don’t know which of those men and women on the list we have compiled that do not qualify for that title, I decided to tell you their names (the list was placed on each chair), and in so doing let each of them know that this august body values each of one of them in ways we perhaps forgot to tell them while they were still here.

Among the Igbo of Nigeria, one of the announcements used when a person dies is captured in the phrase. “Oke osisi adaala!” (“A great tree has fallen!”) On hearing that announcement, many will immediately begin the keening, singing the dirges signaling the mourning that, depending on who died, will last anywhere from a few days to a few market days, or even years.

As humans familiar with the finite nature of death, sometimes, and depending on the accomplishments of those who died, we know that mourning never stops. As mourners, we think we have forgotten our loss until there’s a roll of thunder that calls our name, or a gentle wind blows through the house, or a leaf falls from a favorite tree at our feet and we become filled with the spirit of those who have gone on. Being filled with that spirit is what we call ‘grieving.’

Over the course of our lives, we learn the different ways in which different communities deal with the finite nature of death, and we tremble with dread, shrinking from the fear of our uncertain understandings of our mortality. And, sometimes we light a candle for ourselves, saying to the one who has gone on, “May this light shine on your path as you make your way through the other world, the land of Spirits! But, frequently, we are lighting those candles for us because we want to understand Life; we want to come to terms with Death and dying. We light the candles because we do not want to stumble into the meaning of that which we owe that dreaded being who Paolo Coehlo refers to as the “Unwanted Visitor.” This is because somewhere in the recesses of our minds, we know without a doubt that One Breath is all we owe Death. So, at those moments, we seek the Light because the thought of Death stifles us with its finiteness.

But the Truth is that we owe Life our ideas, our friendships, our creativity; our creative energy. When, over the years we have learned to say, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes,” we are learning to nudge ourselves and each other to remember that when Earth goes back to earth and ashes remain ashes, Life seems to have no meaning; things seem to remain the same. And, it’s as though we have no place on the planet. But, each person that moves to that other Earth; that inexplicable but transformed Time and Space, he or she provides for us, the Living, a ladder to the heavens; or, to the Sky as my Igbo ancestors say. And, according to the various stories imagined about those departures by African storytellers, between that Earth and the heavens are the people who help us to

One Breath cont.

see better, to imagine a better world, a heaven in sky above us. A Sky that is always bigger than us because it is kind enough to accept our offerings of words as we continue to build and expand it using language to create form in places where we imagine form to be at its best essence. It is a place of stories that only humans with language can create and inhabit even as they struggle to hold on to corporeal, finite bodies. In the post-colonial African environment, these women and men that we celebrate today have shown themselves to possess indomitable imaginations. They are our fiction writers, our poets and musicians, our artists, our creative geniuses who in the course of less than two centuries have managed to write us back into erstwhile free ancestral places by encouraging us to pour libation to the African Spirit, ensuring that we'll continue to see the Ladder of Life, climbing it to those places where ideas come to life, liberating us from the darkness of the violent acts, the human rights abuses, the trafficked women, men and children, the wickedness of the different grades of poverty that we dare not address lest it engulfs us, the men and women of dark hearts who assail our dreams of all the tomorrows that our ancestors protected for us for centuries in the homesteads that we continue to liberate with the stories that they told us. Stories they said we could only tell in the evenings when all the day's work was done.

Our ALA Colleagues who have gone on will continue to help us because they are now the link between us and the world we think we know exists because we have been told it exists. And, because we believe that the worlds they told us exists and lives on in our lives, these men and women whose lives we celebrate today will continue to live through us. Frequently, those we love and honor become more real for us after they leave us in death, following the Unwanted Visitor to a place we

hope... no, to a place located in a Time we know will find us no matter how well we hide our true selves, our Spirit, in what we think is true form, or bodies.

And, the men and women we knew, however briefly on this homestead called Earth transform their bodies to earth, never leaving us, always changing, as they become Us. Transformed, their transformational leadership becomes a light for us, shining the path to the best that is in us, and them. And, knowing that the paths they charted will never close, we pour libations to ensure that we can always find them with our

Today, the question for the ALA as we remember all the men and women who chose to walk the path of African literary studies with us is this: How will we choose to immortalize these our friends, colleagues, mentors and teachers who have gone on to that other Earth?

words. Immersed in our writing lives, our stories become offertories to them imploring that they assist us in our efforts to recall the One Breath that they owed Death so that we can use it as our inadequate currency to celebrate our lives and theirs. In the process, we also become Ancestor worshippers living in times that call forth our sense of purpose in the hope that we will have the integrity of spiritual strength to continue to pour libation to our dear departed. Even though some of them were not our friends in life, they never became our enemies in death. But some of them were truly our brothers and our sisters; many were

our teachers and mentors, others were our friends. Individually and collectively we miss them, not because they are under the ground but because we are under their ever watchful and loving gaze.

Today, the question for the ALA as we remember all the men and women who chose to walk the path of African literary studies with us is this: How will we choose to immortalize these our friends, colleagues, mentors and teachers who have gone on to that other Earth? What kind of tribute should we pay them to ensure that they, our newly created Ancestors, remain in the voice of the waters, in the whispering of the trees, in the flaming of the embers that fire their memories in our hearts.

One Breath cont.

Many years ago, Birago Diop said that,

Each day [we remember our dead, we] renew ancient bonds,
Ancient bonds that hold fast
Binding our lot to their law,
To the will of the spirits stronger than we
To the spell of our dead who are not really dead,
Whose covenant binds us to life,
Whose authority binds [us] to their will,
The will of the spirits that stir
In the bed of the river, on the banks of the river
The breathing of spirits
Who moan in the rocks and weep in the grasses.

So, out of respect for our people who are never dead, we do not pour libation with water; rather, we make strong wine and use that to salute our people who have gone on and whose unassailable knowledge of Life sustains us as we make and build new and stronger homesteads and a better world. We use the work of our hands, our stories, poems and music to evoke hope and grace in remembrance of those who used words to teach us how to build a new Earth. And, so I want to call on as many of you as possible to help us call out the names of the ones who have gone on for the past ten years because, for today, that's how much Time we can hold in our memory. So we call the name of Nelson Mandela, Mbulelo Mzamane, Dennis Brutus, Yvonne Vera, Chinua Achebe... [Here ask people in the room to call out names of Those Departed from the list of names provided...].

In their names, their lives and the memories we hold of them:

[We] Hear the voice of fire,
[We] Hear the voice of water.
[We] Listen in the wind, to
The bush that is sobbing: [and we know that]
This is the ancestors breathing.

And, we celebrate and affirm Life Everlasting! We Celebrate Breath!

Thank you!

Works Cited

Diop, Birago. "Breath," in John Reed and Clive Wake, *A Book of African Verse*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1964. Coelho, Paulo. *Manuscript Found in Accra*. Trans., Margaret Jull Costa. New York: Vintage International. 2012.

Presented at the 40th African Literature Association Conference, Johannesburg, South Africa on April 10, 2014 by Anthonia Kalu, Professor of African-American and African Studies, Ohio State University-Columbus and former President of the ALA.



NADINE GORDIMER RECEIVES FONLON-NICHOLS AWARD

PEDE HOLLIST RECEIVES ALA CREATIVE WRITING AWARD

There were fourteen recipients in eight categories of awards presented during the 40th Annual ALA Conference at Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa in April 2014. The ALA is currently accepting submissions and nominations for the 2015 Awards.

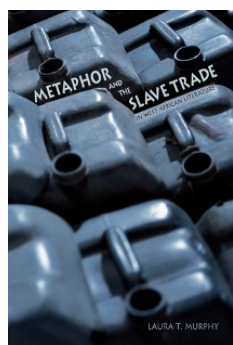
Scholarly Awards

Graduate Student Best Essay Award

For an outstanding paper in African literary studies by a graduate student. Authors must be current members of the ALA. The paper must have been presented at the preceding ALA conference.

WINNER: Megan Cole Paustian, "'A Real Heaven on Their Own Earth': Religious Missions, African Writing, and the Anticolonial Imagination."

HONORABLE MENTION: Jonathon Coplen Rose, "Laughing across a Social Divide: Corruption and Class in Pieter-Dirk Uys's *MacBeki*."



First Book Award

For an outstanding book in African literary studies, which is the first book by the author, and published in the preceding calendar year.

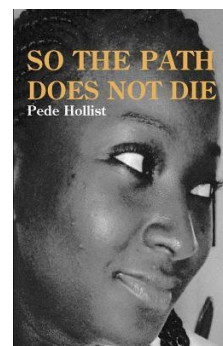
WINNER: Laura Murphy, *Metaphor and the Slave Trade in West African Literature*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012.

Writing Awards

Book of the Year Award – Creative Writing

For an outstanding book of African literature, whether novel, non-fiction prose, play, or poetry collection, published in the preceding calendar year by an African writer.

WINNER: Pedo Hollist, *So the Path Does Not Die* (2012).



Fonlon-Nichols Award

For excellence in creative writing and contributions to the struggle for human rights and freedom of expression.

WINNER: Nadine Gordimer.

Travel Awards

ALA conference attendance funding for excellent proposals submitted by scholars based in Africa.

WINNERS: Senayon Olaoluwa, Nigeria

Larry Ndivo, Kenya

Ngozi Ezenwa-Ohaeto, Nigeria

Awards cont.

Service Awards

Executive Council Service Award

For outstanding service as officers of the African Literature Association.

Soraya Mekerta, President

Huma Ibrahim, Deputy Vice President

Ghirmai Negash, Executive Councilor

Moussa Sow, Executive Councilor

Distinguished Member Award

For outstanding record of service to the ALA and commitment to teaching and scholarship in African literature.

WINNER: Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi.

Conference Convener Award

For outstanding service as convener of the year's annual meeting.

CONVENER: Bhekizizwe Peterson



Anne Adams, Fahamisha Brown, Rashidah Ismaili Abubakr

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: ALA AWARDS FOR CREATIVE WRITING, SCHOLARLY WRITING AND SERVICE

The African Literature Association is currently accepting nominations for the following awards. Please note the deadlines and that all nominations and materials should be addressed to Professor Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi at the specified address. The awards will be presented at the ALA 41st Annual Conference, held June 3-6, 2015 in Bayreuth, Germany.

Graduate Student Best Essay Award

Deadline: June 30, 2014

For an outstanding paper in African literary studies by a graduate student. Authors must be current members of the ALA. The paper must have been presented at the preceding ALA conference (i.e. in 2014). (The expectation is that authors have had the benefit of comments at the conference and have revised the paper).

Send by email to jmphd@ncsu.edu the following:

- (1) the paper and an abstract, in Word document, with no name or any other identifying mark anywhere;
- (2) a pdf file of the 2014 ALA conference Program page showing the panel in which the paper was presented
- (3) CV and bio

Book of the Year Award – Creative Writing

Deadline: June 30, 2014

For an outstanding book of African literature, whether novel, non-fiction prose, play, or poetry collection, published in the preceding calendar year (2013) by an African writer. Authors or their publishers can make nominations.

Send an author bio, one-page book description, and 5 copies to:

Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi, ALA Awards, Department of English, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8105

Book of the Year Award – Scholarship

Deadline: June 30, 2014

For an outstanding book in African literary studies published in the preceding calendar year (2013). Authors must be current members of the ALA. Book must be published by a reputable peer-reviewed press. Authors or their publishers can make nominations.

Send an author bio, one-page book abstract, and 5 copies to: Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi, ALA Awards, Department of English, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8105

Call for Nominations cont.

First Book Award – Scholarship

Deadline: June 30, 2014

For an outstanding book in African literary studies, which is the first book by the author, and published in the preceding calendar year (2012). Authors must be current members of the ALA. Book must be published by a reputable peer-reviewed press. Authors or their publishers can make nominations.

Send an author bio, one-page book abstract, and 5 copies to:
Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi, ALA Awards, Department of English, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8105

Best Article Award

Deadline: June 30, 2014

For an outstanding article in African literary studies published in a major peer-reviewed journal in the preceding calendar year (2013). Authors must be current members of the ALA. Authors or their publishers can make nominations.

Send a pdf copy to: [jmpht@ncsu.edu](mailto:jmphd@ncsu.edu)

Fonlon-Nichols Award

Deadline: October 31, 2014

For excellence in creative writing and contributions to the struggle for human rights and freedom of expression. It is given every year to an African writer. The Award was established in 1992 to honor BERNARD FONLON and LEE NICHOLS for their contributions to both African literature and the freedom of expression. Authors CANNOT nominate themselves, and neither can their publishers nominate them.

Send nominations as email document attachments to: mpht@ncsu.edu

Please note: The nomination 'packet' should contain:

- a) a biographical profile of the nominee
- b) a detailed justification for the nomination. This should not be more than 2 single-spaced or 4 double-spaced pages.

ALA Distinguished Member Award

Deadline: October 31, 2014

For outstanding record of service to the ALA and commitment to teaching and scholarship in African literature. By nomination only. Nominees must have distinguished themselves over the years in service to the ALA, and commitment to teaching and scholarship in, and promotion of, African literature. Self-nominations are NOT accepted.

Send nominations as email document attachments to: [jmpht@ncsu.edu](mailto:jmphd@ncsu.edu)

Please note: The nomination statement should contain:

- a) a biographical profile of the nominee, and
- b) a detailed justification for the nomination. This should not be more than 2 single-spaced or 4 double-spaced pages.



Director of Headquarters Report

James McCorkle, Director of ALA Headquarters



First, I must acknowledge Hobart and William Smith Colleges' Provost, Titi Ufomata—without her, and in turn the Colleges' physical contributions, my work would be far more difficult. Our secretary Dot Vogt, as you all know, is amazing juggling her duties as administrative secretary not only to Headquarters, but also to the Departments of French, Spanish, Russian, German, Writing and Rhetoric, and Dance.

Finally, George Joseph helped with the transition, as he and I completed the final organization of the archives, and prepared it for digitalization. As reported in Charlestown last year, the archives were scheduled to be scanned and digitalized over that spring and summer. That project was completed in late August 2013.

All the paper archival material that Headquarters held as of May 2013 has been placed on compact discs; each document or sets of documents is in its own pdf, which Headquarters holds a copy; the Library as well holds a copy (as a master disc in the IT department, it is not available for circulation).

The Headquarters hosted the EC's October retreat. Provost Ufomata provided a reception for the ALA EC as well as members of the Colleges' Africana Studies Program at her home; following the reception, what is now a tradition, we held a symposium with papers given by Ghirmai Negash, Tejumola Olaniyan and Marie- Hélène Koffi-Tessio. The meeting on Saturday was productive, including breakfast, sponsored by the HWS Africana Studies Program, lunch, sponsored by the ALA. The Headquarters facilitated a Skype conference with Professor Peterson regarding the progress of organizing Johannesburg conference. At the conclusion of the day, dinner was held at the home of the director.

The work of the Headquarters over the year continues to be distributing via e-mail announcements and matters of importance to the ALA membership: this includes calls for papers, conference and event announcements, job announcements, fellowship announcements, and news regarding the passing on of members and of artists, writers, scholars from Africa and throughout the world. These are generated, on the whole, from the membership.

The Headquarters also distributes membership announcements and calls for papers for the ALA conference. We have also compiled a list of those ALA members and friends of the ALA who have passed on. Again, we depend on members for this information and its ultimate accuracy.

The membership rolls are now up-to-date: Dot Vogt, working with our files, those of the Treasurer Mohamed Kamara and those of the JALA editorial office, under Abioseh Porter, has amended and greatly improved the membership lists.

With this newsletter, Headquarters is reestablishing its publication. In part the place of the e-mail announcement has rendered a print newsletter irrelevant if not overly costly; and perhaps even an electronic one would fail in that so much now is time-sensitive. However, there are concerns that are not: tributes to those who have passed on; a listing of book publications over the past period of the newsletter, reports of the President to the membership that should have a place of record. The tentative publication schedule is twice a year: in June (typically following the annual conference) and in December (typically following the October Executive meeting).

Director's Report cont.

Headquarters is also committed to developing the ALA archives. The ALA archives should hold publications—at least in book form—of its membership, hopefully offered by the author or the publisher as a donation to the ALA and its archives. This would add an immense gravitas to the purpose of the ALA's mission of being a focus of literary scholarship. This expansion of the archives would also do at least three things: first, it would signal that the archives are substantial, thus perhaps members would consider donating their materials to the archives for perpetuity; 2) it would or should prompt us to think more clearly about a permanent home for the archives and headquarters; 3) it would again provide a real physical gathering point for scholars and writers involved in African and African Diaspora literature and allied arts.

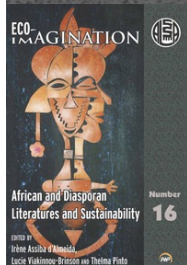
Headquarters will be embarking on the digitalization of its visual materials. This should aid in the process of attribution and identification. Developing a visual history of the ALA is a long-term goal of Headquarters.



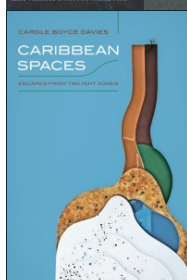
Roundtable: African Women Writers and Artists in Conversation, Sponsored by the Women's Caucus of the ALA: including Thelma Pinto, Sindiwe Magona, Tanella Boni, Zanele Muholi, Karen Jennings, Véronique Tadjo, Wambui Wamae Kamiru.

Recent Books by Members and Friends of the ALA

This listing is based on titles provided by members, book launches at the ALA conference, and those that have come to our attention. Please share news of your book publications and those that would be of interest to the ALA membership.



d'Almeida, Irène Assiba, Lucie Viakinnou-Brinson, and Thelma Pinto, Eds. *Eco-Imagination: African and Diasporan Literatures and Sustainability*. Africa World Press. 2014.

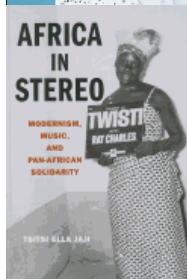


Clarke, Nana Ayebia and James Currey, Eds. *Chinua Achebe: Tributes and Reflections*. Ayebia Clarke Publishing. 2014.

Davies, Carole Boyce. *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones*. University of Illinois Press, 2013.

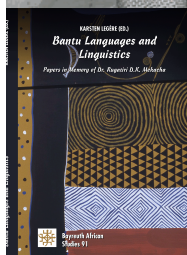
Garritano, Carmela. *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History*. Ohio University Press. 2013.

Hollist, Pede. *So the Path Does not Die*. Langaa Research. 2012



Jaji, Tsitsi Ella. *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music and Pan-African Solidarity*. Oxford University Press. 2014.

Jean-Charles, Régine Michelle. *Conflict Bodies: The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary*. Ohio State University Press, 2014.



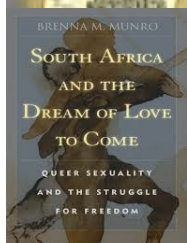
Legère, Karsten, Ed. *Bantu Languages and Linguistics: Papers in Memory of Dr. Rugatiri D. K. Mekacha*, Bayreuth African Studies 91. Eckersdorf, Germany: BAS 2014.

Mhlambi, Innocentia J. *African-Language Literatures: Perspectives on isiZulu Fiction and Popular Black Television Series*. Wits University Press. 2012.

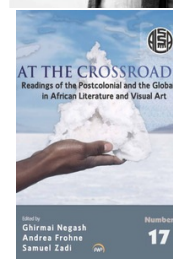
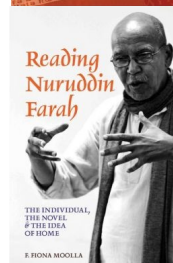
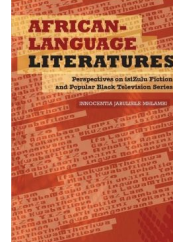
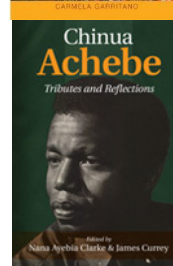
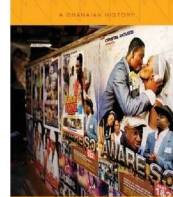
Modisane, Litheko. *South Africa's Renegade Reels: The making and Public Lives of Black-Centered Films*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2013.

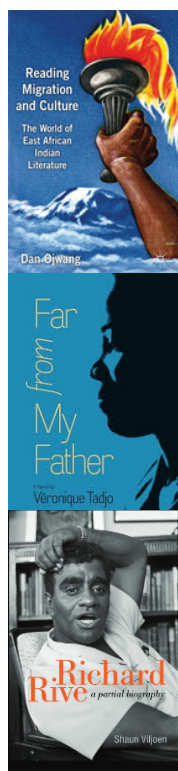
Moolla, Fiona. *Nuruddin Farah: The Individual, the Novel and the Idea of Home*. James Currey Press. 2014.

Munro, Brenna. *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*. University of Minnesota Press. 2012.



African Video Movies and Global Desires





Negash, Ghirmai, Andrea Frohne and Samuel Zadi, Eds. *At the Crossroads: Readings of the Postcolonial and the Global in African Literature and Visual Art*. Africa World Press. 2014.

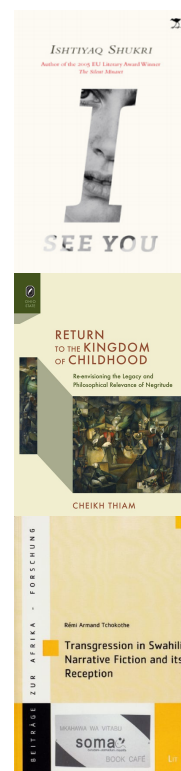
Ojwang, Dan. *Reading Migration and Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2013

Shukri, Ishtiyah. *I See You*. Jacana Press. 2014

Tadjo, Véronique. *Far From my Father*. Amy Baram Reid, Trans. CARAF/University of Virginia Press. 2014.

Thiam, Cheikh. *Return to the Kingdom of Childhood: Re-envisioning the Legacy and Philosophical Relevance of Negritude*. Ohio State University Press, 2014.

Viljoen, Shaun. *Richard Rive: A Partial Biography*. Wits University Press. 2014.



Books Received

Tchokothe, Rémi Armand. *Transgression in Swahili Narrative Fiction and its Reception*. Berlin and Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2014.

Please inform the Headquarters of the African Literature Association of recent book publications of interest to the ALA membership and the mission of the ALA by members and friends of the ALA. As the Headquarters is embarking on expanding the archives of the history and achievements of the ALA and its members, thus we would be grateful for contributions of copies of books by members and those associated with the mission of the ALA.

ALA Publication

As we celebrate the life of Chinua Achebe, the ALA is pleased to announce the availability of our ebook, *Chinua Achebe: A Tribute*. This book is a tribute to Achebe, his life and work, his place in Africa's history and his role in reclaiming the dignity of that history. These poems, short essays and letters extol one of Africa's greatest novelists, who was also a teacher, a colleague, and a noted and respected elder who understood his times. Once in a millennium, someone of princely bearing comes along to light the way for a people. In these entries, Professor Achebe's generous spirit shines like a guiding spirit: warm, urging, steady.

To view *Chinua Achebe: A Tribute* (edited by Anthonia Kalu, Simon Lewis, and Ernst Emenyonu) on the ALA website (www.africanlit.org), please use the current user name (jala) and password (nkyin kyin) presently used to access JALA. *Chinua Achebe: A Tribute* is also available as e-book from Amazon.com. (<http://www.amazon.com/Chinua-Achebe-1930-2013-Anthonia-Kalu-ebook/dp/B00J>)

Ghirmai Negash

Let My People Go

Fish of the sea, serpents of the land

Let my people go, *haram, haram*.

O Fish of the sea, O serpents of the land

Let my brother go, the brother of love

O Fish of the sea, O serpents of the land

Let my sister go, the sister of love.

Fish of the sea, serpents of Sahara

Enough *Naqura*, enough *Cetimo*

Let my people go.

Let my father go, the father of love.

The death of the mother land looms large, larger with each passing
of those driven into the alleyways of exile and doom.

Fish of the sea, serpents of the land

Let my people go, the children of love

Fish of the sea, serpents of the land

Let my people go, the people of love.

Haram! Haram! Haram! Haram!

Let my people go, the people of love.

Ghirmai Negash is Professor of English and African Literature, Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. He is the author of *A History of Tigrinya Literature in Eritrea* and *The Freedom of the Writer & Other Cultural and Literary Essays* (in Tigrinya), and co-translator and editor of *Who Needs a Story?* as well as, most recently, co-editor of *At the Crossroads: Readings of the Postcolonial and the Global in African Literature and Visual Art*.



2014 – 2015 Executive Council

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ALA 41st Annual Conference

June 3-6, 2015
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All inquiries should be addressed to the Headquarters Director, James McCorkle.

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