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BOOK REVIEWS

Literature, Language and the Nation: Proceedings of the Second General Conference of the Association of University Teachers of Literature and Language (ATOLL) held at the University of Zimbabwe, 24-28 August 1987 Edited by E. Ngara and A. Morrison. Harare, ATOLL and Baobab Books, 1989, 230 pp., ISBN 0-908311-11-7, Z\$30,00.

The range of papers in this valuable collection shows the desire of university teachers in the SADC region to address issues relating to the broad areas staked out in the title: language, literature and national consciousness. What is immediately and fascinatingly clear is the tension between regionalism and nationalism which a number of the essays suggest, either implicitly or explicitly. The continuing anxiety over the use of English as a national language is also evident in some papers, and another trans-continental theme which emerges from the essays is the increasing gap between the intellectual and the political élite in the post-independence era.

There is a surprising — given the stance of the nascent Zimbabwe on questions of gender during the liberation war — near-silence in the collection on issues of gender and its relation to literature, language and nationality. One of the few essays which deals with women and writing is Rosamund Metcalf's essay, 'The liberation of female consciousness in African literature'. Her provocative readings of Mariama Ba and Bessie Head (in *When Rainclouds Gather*) as writers trapped in the mythology of romance and her praise of Emecheta form a fascinating contrast to Phillip Dine's essay. Dine castigates the dominant 'realist' mode of Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (and by implication most of African writing in English!) as 'one more repressive colonial structure' and contrasts Lessing's early works with the Algerian Kateb Yacine's *Nedjema* which he characterizes as an anti-novel 'committed to the disorientation of the reader at every level' — a remark which could be fruitfully used for Dambudzo Marechera's fiction as well. Dine does not, however, see the ironies in this iconoclastic text, using the woman Yacine as a trope for the nation and thus reiterating the négritudist 'Mother Africa' iconography in which the figure of woman in Africa can be so easily trapped and turned into a symbol without any political agency.

Anthony Nazombe's review of Frank Chipasula's fine anthology of central and Southern African poetry (*When My Brothers Come Home*) usefully contrasts the modern poetry of Malawi with that of Angola and Mozambique. He is critical of the way in which Angolan and Mozambican poetry is burdened by revolutionary rhetoric and — in his view — ignores the myth and music of the country, unlike Malawian poetry which is full of subtle irony and ambiguity. Here Nazombe is in danger of a kind of easy formalism and of failing to address the different socio-political contexts of the two regions. His anxiety about the reduction of art to the level of 'mere propaganda' spills over into his discussion of South African poetry where he, interestingly, acknowledges the new importance of the intrusion of traditional forms with their own aesthetic. He does not, however,

acknowledge that so-called traditional forms rarely distinguish between art and propaganda — and are, in fact, usually full of both. Neither Nazombe nor Emmanuel Ngara, in his article on South African liberation poetry, seem prepared to enlarge the parameters of their discussion of poetry to include popular song, which can — in my view — be seen as a legitimate form of poetry and which is, in the African context, at least as viable a medium for social and artistic expression as printed poetry.

In contrast, the need to include the medium of song in any discussion of protest and popular consciousness is stressed in Joe Mbele's paper but, unfortunately, this paper gives the impression of being a survey which fails to engage at all closely with the dynamics of a particular tradition. Mbele does not raise questions about audience, about the relation between song and written verse and about which form takes precedence in popular awareness. Here the language question is crucial and we are reminded of Ngugi's nagging fear that English, however decolonized and localized it may be, can never be a popular language, or the vehicle of expression for the bulk of the populace.

One of the most innovative papers in the collection analyses an item of popular culture — the comic strip — and demonstrates how it subtly engages in wide-ranging political comment. Tim McLoughlin's usefully diachronic essay, 'The comic strip and Zimbabwe's development', shows the shifting interface of comic-strip and colonizer, comic-strip and aspirant-consumer and a range of other comic-strip conversations and commentaries. The colonizer's wishful image of the grateful and subservient Black man is mirrored in the pre-Independence *Parade* magazine character Ninepence; comic-strips were also used to depict myths of heroic fighters to the Whites. They can also, as the restless, shifty cartoon character of the 1970s, Haja-Kasaga, shows, catch the spiritual restlessness of the times just as subtly as the fiction of the same period — for example in the work of Mungoshi, Marechera and Nyamfukudza. In its accessibility and topicality as well as its ability to create healthy ridicule at a time of tension and dissent the comic-strip is indeed a sensitive and useful popular art form, in the same way as the song. McLoughlin's paper is the only one in the collection to consider popular art forms and literature in a single argument — and yet, if one is to be true to the production of culture in most parts of Africa today, surely this is essential?

The section of the book entitled 'Language' has several essays which deal at a very general level with the crucial issues of education, equality, national consciousness, and culture — all of which are inevitably suggested by this topic when discussed in an African context. Other essays are more specific and these are the more rewarding for the reader. Andrew Morrison tackles the possibilities of the development of a specifically Zimbabwean English, thus implicitly querying Ngugi's assertion of English as a cultural 'dead-end' for Africa. The paper by Ines Machungo and Gilberto Matusse on 'Language and literature in education in Mozambique' is far too general; nothing is analysed in depth and the potentially fascinating subject of multi-lingualism in Mozambique is not addressed in nearly enough detail.

The two contributions by Scandinavian scholars are somewhat uneven in quality. Preben Kaarsholm draws parallels between the democratization

of the Danish countryside in the 1930s and Zimbabwe's tradition of popular mobilization. Helge Rønning's essay, in spite of its alarmingly general title, is both wide-ranging and sharply focused and suggestive rather than prescriptive in its comparisons between Norway and Zimbabwe. This paper gives a clear historical sense of Norway's move towards a democratic national consciousness rather than a national consciousness fixed within the bourgeois élite. This was, he argues, possibly because of the basic egalitarian ideals of traditional Norwegian society and the role of a national culture based on popular institutions and traditions combined with an element of classic European learning and modern science.

Peter Mwikasa's challenging and tightly argued paper on the links between Sesotho and distant Silozi puts the question of the élitist role of English in Africa in the context of other workable possibilities involving African languages. He outlines the accidents of colonial and church history linking the two languages and suggests modern possibilities for print media which could supply a readership of 10 million Sesotho-Silozi-Setswana language speakers, a group which cuts across national boundaries. Mwikasa points out that indigenous languages, far from being divisive, can offer possibilities for regional unity which cut across national boundaries. He might have added that it also provides a bulwark against the flourishing of narrow ethnicities, but he does point out the irony of the fact that it is the South African government that has most exploited the propaganda and consciousness-raising potential of indigenous languages; for example, during the Namibian war of independence they introduced Silozi into radio programmes beamed at the Caprivi Strip aiming to win the 'hearts and minds' of the few Silozi speakers in that area.

To conclude: although in some ways this is an uneven book, it remains an important one. It gives the reader a sense of the diverse energies of scholars and teachers from the region wrestling with problems relating to the politics of culture and the cultural politics of nation and region. The book has no doubt already been of much use in cultural studies and courses on literature focusing on Southern Africa. It certainly deserves to be widely used. It could also provide a lead to educationalists and cultural policy-makers in SADC's troubled neighbour, South Africa. Most important of all is the sense of a carefully realized regional focus which transcends the often artificial boundaries and the fragile concept of the 'nation'. Perhaps, as the book half hints, in spite of its title, what is needed most is not nationalism but regionalism. Taken as a whole the essays in this collection give a sense of what that regionalism could mean.

A Decade of Development: Zimbabwe 1980-1990 By *Diana Auret*. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1990, vi, 161 pp., ISBN 0-86922-485-9 (pbk), Z\$19,50.

Diana Auret's book gives a lucid description of how the rural people of Zimbabwe have taken part in the development process in education, health, agriculture, housing, transport and water resources.

The author approaches the theme of development from a Shona perspective, noting particularly that the Shona value the philosophy of 'togetherness'. To the Shona, *musha* does not only mean a 'home' but also 'the community, who reside in a common geographical area, share common interests, common traditions, a common way of life, and common values' (p. 2). This philosophy sets the agenda for development which takes into account the cultural background of the people. Auret makes the point clear when she reminds us that Western development programmes have, to a large extent, ignored the cultural aspirations of the societies for whom the programmes were intended.

Without burdening the reader with complicated theories of development, the book shows very clearly what the people of Zimbabwe have managed to do since the attainment of political independence in 1980. The author observes that the people of Zimbabwe have been able to avoid most of the pitfalls which have bedeviled the development process in many Third World countries, particularly with regard to decision-making. Zimbabweans have, by and large, made their own decisions.

Of particular note are the author's suggestions for improvement: for example, she suggests that the social services enjoyed by the rural population and provided by government must be balanced against the overall economic situation in the country (p. 152). In this regard, the government is advised to raise direct taxes from the communal farming and resettlement areas. The author writes favourably on the resettlement programme, but points out that this policy alone will not solve the problem of overcrowded communal areas. Positive steps must be taken to develop the growth-points by providing the necessary infrastructure which should attract primary industries to the communal areas thereby creating employment and relieving the pressure on the land.

The importance of international aid to the development process is acknowledged but the author wonders whether aid is not 'one means whereby the West seeks to maintain control over the activities of the newly independent nations' (p. 153).

A Decade of Development: Zimbabwe: 1980-1990 is a welcome addition to the existing literature on Zimbabwe's development. Its findings should enable all those interested in development issues to understand and appreciate development as an instrument of peace and unity. It should also be read by those who want to know how Zimbabweans have used available resources to improve their standard of living. The challenges for further improvement which the author proposes are important and should be carefully examined, particularly by government officials who should find the suggestions for improvement challenging.

The Painted Caves: An Introduction to the Prehistoric Rock Art of Zimbabwe By Peter Garlake. Harare, Modus, 1987, iv, 100 pp., ISBN 0-908309-06-6, Z\$29,95.

The Painted Caves is perhaps the most important work yet published on the interpretation of Zimbabwean rock art. It is an attempt to view the art from the artist's perspective without recasting the images into the cognitive framework of modern cultures. As such it represents a refreshing change from previous work and a breakthrough in a hitherto stagnant field of research.

Garlake successfully demonstrates that the rock art is highly conventionalized in terms of both style and subject matter. He then argues that these depictions have a symbolic rather than decorative function. They represent, in a metaphorical way, the major concerns and emotions of a hunter-gatherer society. Thus a depiction may appear to be realistic but it has a hidden, and more important, meaning which was known to the hunter-gatherer society which used it; and therein lies the challenge to those interested in cognitive archaeology.

Garlake takes the known importance of trance in historically documented hunter-gatherer societies in Southern Africa as a fundamental basis for his argument that trance also took place among these societies in the past and that many of the depictions indicate trance-inducing activities and of the state of trance itself. This seems to be a believable interpretation of the numerous 'fallen figures', 'pregnant figures' and various lines and formlings found in the art. In his interpretation of the art in these terms, Garlake is following the tradition of several South African specialists. However, he goes a little further than they do in his suggestion that one cannot understand the rock art simply in terms of trance-related activities. He suggests that several depictions are symbols of other concerns; for example, the mother-child bond, the male-female dicotomy, social discord or co-operation, and so on. Unfortunately, in my opinion, he does not go far enough along these lines. The symbols represent more than merely trance-related activities. Garlake's treatment of animals and plants in the rock art is particularly disappointing in this regard. Animals and plants are discussed as mere pictures rather than as symbols and there is a tendency to reduce them to simply sources of potency or trance-modified images. More work is needed on the symbolic function of non-human elements in rock art.

The Painted Caves is divided into five sections. Part One answers most of the usual questions asked by the layman, including information on the age and the techniques of the paintings and provides an introduction to the conventions of the art form. Part Two reviews previous work, a little harshly in some cases, introduces the reader to the complexities of symbolism and provides a general anthropological background to San hunter-gatherer groups. Part Three suggests symbolic interpretations to various topics such as the standardized postures of the human figure and the combinations of human and animal figures in individual depictions. Parts Four and Five provide the reader with descriptions of paintings at selected sites and directions of how to get there. The directions are good

but his listing of the content of the paintings at the sites is rather disappointing. It is as if he has reverted to a pre-symbolic interpretation of the depictions.

I have a few other quibbles with the book. The basic layout is pleasing but the tracings, while generally good, are sometimes a little inconsistent and confusing. For instance, in some cases the unshaded areas represent white on the actual painting and, in others, light red. The outlines of several depictions could also have been smoothed off. As I know from personal experience, kinked outlines are often the result of differential weathering of the rock itself as well as the steadiness (or otherwise) of the tracer's hand. It is the principles behind the art that we aim to copy, so a smoothing off of the depictions would improve their visual impact. My greatest criticism of the book, however, is that the circles used to indicate size are not according to standard practice. Bar scales should have been used instead.

Nevertheless, this is an excellent book and it is very reasonably priced, especially when one considers the number of coloured plates included in it. *The Painted Caves* deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in the prehistoric art of Zimbabwe.

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Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa Edited by Preben Kaarsholm. Harare, Baobab; London, James Currey; Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1991, x, 258 pp., ISBN 0-85255-211-4 (pbk), Z\$30.00.

Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa is a fascinating and topical study which brings together research in various disciplines such as history, literature, art, development studies, political science, religion, constitutional law and sociology. It is based on the proceedings of a workshop on 'Culture and Development in Southern Africa' which was held at the University of Copenhagen in April 1988.

In this book researchers and development workers call for the return of culture to its rightful place in people's everyday lives, arguing that culture plays an important role in the development process of society and is very significant in economic development programmes. The contributors to this book offer some practical ways in which culture (including, for instance, customs, beliefs and taboos) can be used to facilitate the implementation of development programmes in a country. The majority of the contributors disprove the general European and North American beliefs about what is believed to determine economic development in the so-called 'under-developed' or 'developing' countries. The central argument of the book is that a consideration of culture, especially the role of local language and related communication processes, is missing in the western model of economic development. These scholars argue that the assistance of local customs, beliefs and language should be sought in the implementation of development programmes. Culture may be regarded as

central to development programmes because it arises 'mechanically out of economic growth and accumulation' (p. 3), helps human beings to identify communities that need to be 'developed' (the target group), and helps to define what constitutes development in a particular community.

Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa calls for a revision of the present model in which Western countries deliberately ignore the cultural element in development programmes. The various scholars point out that anyone working in the 'development enterprise', to borrow Kate Crehan's terminology, should operate within a society's value-system and its history, so that that society supports the enterprise.

The book is divided into three sections, in each of which one scholar's views are counter-balanced by those of another. The debate is prefaced by an excellent introduction which sets out the theoretical framework of the book. The first section deals with the colonial experience of Southern African communities, the second focuses on Black African nationalist struggles, and the third on the impact of imposed development programmes on the populace in independent countries. Contributors to each section come from various countries and cultures.

The first article, by MacKenzie, is particularly interesting in that he argues that the European settler in Rhodesia exploited African natural resources, especially wildlife, and denied the Black population access to game since African hunting methods were despised as 'savage and barbaric'. Game parks and hunting licences, therefore, turned Africans into poachers. He argues that the current international problem of poaching was created by Europeans when they ignored local cultural traditions and practices relating to wildlife conservation and utilization. The contradictions between African and European cultures have, therefore, made the problem of poaching difficult to solve. Unfortunately some African governments, and many development agencies, have simply adopted these colonial practices without scrutiny. As a result some of these programmes have not been sustainable because they do not receive support from the local people.

In his chapter, 'Fantasies and Mythologies of War', Kaarsholm points out that the liberation war in Rhodesia merged the African and European cultures and resulted in the adoption of what he calls 'independent critical modernist thinking' as found in the novels of Ndabezinhle Sigogo, Charles Mungoshi and Stanley Nyamfukudza. Another contributor and literary critic who shares this view is David Coute, who states that it was the contradictions of the political situation in Rhodesia in the 1970s that produced the famous writer Dambudzo Marechera. Both scholars reveal the fact that the colonial system created much disorder, much of which was, unfortunately, inadequately addressed at Independence. Some of these political, economic, cultural and social problems are adversely affecting development programmes.

On the political side, the colonial legacy created constitutional headaches for independent Zimbabwe. This is the subject of the contribution by Welshman Ncube and Shepherd Nzombe. Ncube and Nzombe explain how and why most of the constitutional changes in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1990 actually entrenched the economic control and interest

of White Zimbabweans. The government of Zimbabwe was pledged to keep the Lancaster House Constitution intact throughout this period. In this way the colonial society, including its economic and political system, was preserved, especially 'the constitutional registration and recognition of the sanctity of private property' (p. 173, see also section 16 of the Constitution).

While most writers regard the colonial system as having had a negative impact on Black Zimbabweans, Stephen Williams contends that, in fact they gained something from acculturation. He states that African cultures would have been forced to change anyway since change was inevitable. Africans would, at a certain future period, have had to deal with the 'technological needs' of the modern world. The impact of colonialism resulted in new social formations and mediums of cultural expression. In other words, colonization brought with it a new economic, political and social system from Europe and the two systems were eventually fused to produce a new way of life. New ways of communication or expression emerged within this new system and development personnel should use these methods when they interact with the people they are meant to develop.

Another contributor who writes on this issue is Kimani Gecau who calls for the inculcation in people of a scientific world-view, and the belief that the world can be changed by the purposeful actions of people and not merely by the wilful activity of nature and fate. This change, he argues, could be achieved through the use of the arts whose educative role existed in indigenous African societies before they were colonized, and which exists today in the teaching of history and the performance of music and popular theatre.

The contradictions of the colonial experience and the war of liberation in Rhodesia are illustrated in K. D. Manungo and Norma Kriger's conflicting interpretations of the role of the peasants in that war. The traditional view is that the peasants took orders from the guerrillas. Kriger, however, highlights the fact that some peasants used guerrilla troops to further their own, not necessarily military, interests, for example, to solve family conflicts. Manungo, on the other hand, sees the peasants as having been the guerrillas' subjects or instruments.

Terence Ranger also explodes another generally-held belief in his contribution when he reveals that Christianity is not the most common religious belief in Zimbabwe but rather traditional African religion incorporating the veneration of ancestral spirits and the consultation of n'angas and spirit mediums. Such practices need to be taken into account in the implementation of development programmes. For instance, development planners should be aware that some people may respond to economic disparities within their communities by accusing their more prosperous neighbours of witchcraft.

The four articles by Kate Crehan, Luke Mhlaba, Bodil Folke Frederiksen and Jeff Guy and Motlatsi Thabane in the last section offer practical ways of changing planners' attitudes towards the communities that they are meant to develop. Crehan points out that most programmes fail because they are imposed on local communities by outsiders, rather than being

willingly adopted by the community which the programme is intended to benefit. Similarly, inappropriate theories and communication methods are applied in the analysis of development needs of local communities. One of the solutions to some of the media problems is to produce newspapers in local African languages, using grassroots resources. In addition, effective local government should be left in the hands of local communities in order to avoid people's indifference to imposed leadership from central government.

Although this is a useful book for development practitioners and academics of development studies, it has certain weaknesses. The articles written by Crehan and Gecau end abruptly, at a point where one might reasonably expect a conclusion. Mhlaba's analysis of texts is very inadequate in that he hardly looks at the language, themes and ideological orientation of those texts. The use of racist and inappropriate terms and interpretations is also somewhat disturbing and flaws an otherwise useful text.

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Decentralizing for Participatory Planning? Edited by K. H. Wekwete and P. de Valk. Aldershot, Avebury, 1990, xvi, 277 pp., ISBN 0-566-07113-4, £33.50.

This analysis of decentralization, planning and participation covers five eastern, central and Southern African countries: Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The similarities and differences between these countries' experiences with regard to policies on decentralization and participation are described in a stimulating and provocative manner. The work is provocative because the writers raise important issues that need further study: for instance, the nature of the state and its relations with its people. The writers argue that the state's political party structures are not as yet controlled by people at the grassroots level, adding that such political parties cannot, therefore, be useful mechanisms for the mobilization of these people. It is stimulating because of its fresh approach to the themes of participation, decentralization and planning.

In the five case studies reviewed, changes were introduced at the micro- or sub-national level as a result of administrative arguments that these changes would improve efficiency and effectiveness. But the changes 'came about without personal involvement and most of the time without [an] understanding of the rationale behind them' (p. 256).

The implications of adopting such an approach are that the people for whom planning is done view the centre, the capital, as the place where all decisions affecting them are made. This may cause instability. In addition, these changes or reforms were not adequately supported by manpower and the necessary finances, thus raising the question that governments wanted decentralization on paper without effective devolution in practice. The book rightly places an emphasis on this issue because the success or

failure of people's participation in development projects largely depends on the availability of resources. Decentralization has a tendency to drive would-be participants away — and their projects collapse.

A number of questions are raised in this book which still need to be resolved: for example, what are the alternatives or necessary complements of administrative decentralization? Political parties in the five countries reviewed are not yet grassroots organizations. They are controlled from, and operate very closely with, the bureaucracy. But even if they were not controlled from the bureaucracy, and even if each of the countries reviewed had more than one dominant political party, it would still be difficult to use political parties as vehicles of mobilization for development, as has already been mentioned. Although voluntary associations have been suggested as possible alternative forms of participation during the development process, there is, as is noted with some concern, a 'lack of appreciation by the administrative and ruling élite, especially when they [the associations] are organized outside government institutions' (p. 267). This 'cold war' between voluntary associations and government administrative apparatus arises from both parties' desire to control scarce resources and, possibly, those institutions which may make them available.

Decentralizing for Participatory Planning? is an important addition to the existing literature on planning, decentralization and participation in that it suggests new avenues which may be followed in attempts to improve upon each of these topics. It should be of great benefit to academics and all those who are interested in planning and general development issues.

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