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1. Africa

(a) East Africa

(b) Southern Africa

(c) West Africa

2014 was a particularly productive year for West African literary studies, with scholarship addressing a range of authors, genres and forms in a broad-sweeping body of work.

Unsurprisingly, a key focus of the year's work was devoted to tributes and elegies for Chinua Achebe and Kofi Awoonor, both of whom passed away in 2013. Yaw Asante's 'Tribute: Kofi Awoonor (1935–2013)' (*TvL* 51:i[2014] 74–6), is a thoughtful reflection on Awoonor's legacy as a man whose life 'was a commitment and dedication to a country and continent to which he felt deeply attached' (p. 76). In spare prose, Asante foregrounds the reverberations of Awoonor's legacy and the tragedy that he should have been killed in the service of education and knowledge. Elsewhere, *ALT* 32 features an extensive and emotional tribute to the late Awoonor, featuring a range of retrospectives on, analyses of, and poetic tributes and eulogies to Awoonor. Intensely personal in register and poetic in idiom, these contributions testify to the import of Awoonor's legacy and its longevity in the wake of his untimely murder. These items include Kofi Anyidoho's 'Kofi Awoonor: In Retrospect' (pp. 121–4); Ghirmai Negash's 'Kofi Awoonor: Poem for a Mentor & Friend' (pp. 125–36); Mawuli Adjei's 'Looking Death in the Eye: The Human Condition, Morbidity & Mortality in Kofi Awoonor's Poetry' (pp. 137–50); Richard Priebe's 'Eulogy for an Artist, a Statesman, a Teacher & Friend: Kofi Awoonor' (pp. 151–7); Prince K. Adika's 'Postcolonial Trauma & the Poetics of Remembering the Novels of Kofi Awoonor' (pp. 158–72); and Kofi Anyidoho's 'Song for Nyidevu' (p. 173). Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* is one of two central foci, along with Amma Darko's *Faceless*, in the concluding chapter of Ato Quayson's masterful study of the production of postcolonial African space, *Oxford Street, Accra*. This

must-read book uses the example of a single street in a single district in the titular city to produce an engaging account of social space from the earliest days of empire to the present-day, drawing on impressively broad archival research and exploring unexpectedly potent sites for the constitution of spatial precepts, including salsa dancing clubs, fitness studios and the gym. The study concludes by turning its attention to literary representations of space, particularly representations of movement and traversals of the city. For Quayson, Awoonor's novel is remarkable in the 'peculiar and often unsettling sense of modularity by which the city is experienced' (p. 231), realized through its boldly unconventional, modernist prose.

Awoonor's sudden and tragic murder in Kenya's Westgate massacre of 2013 sent shock waves across the world. Equally potent in its significance was the death in March 2013 of Chinua Achebe, so often thought of as the father of modern African literature. The strength of Achebe's influence is apparent in the sheer volume of tributes and critical engagements with his work throughout 2014. Notable is the tribute in *PMLA* 129:ii[2014] 237–56, in the issue's 'Theories and Methodologies' section, featuring contributions from luminaries of postcolonial and African studies, the section covers a broad range of ground highlighting Achebe's significance as a writer and public intellectual. Elleke Boehmer's contribution, 'Chinua Achebe, a Father of Modern African Literature' (pp. 237–9), begins from the assertion that 'the death of a literary figure bearing a reputation at once local, national, and international invariably raises questions about the writer's legacy and the afterlife of his or her work' (p. 237). Boehmer asserts the strong foundation to Achebe's legacy, both as a critical commentator — notably through his now canonical critique of institutional racism in literary studies via his reading of Conrad — and as an author unto himself. Citing the enduring influence of *Things Fall Apart* as a classic text which 'permanently changed perceptions of African literature on the continent and worldwide' (p. 238), Boehmer makes a compelling case for the classical status of that work as a founding text of postcolonial studies

and for Achebe's larger importance as an author who found 'success in wresting Africa into non-African frameworks of cognition through the medium of the novel form, yet, importantly, without ever compromising or substantially changing his novels' structures of religious and cultural reference' (p. 239). *Things Fall Apart* is also the starting point for Rhonda Cobham-Sander's 'Chasms and Silences: For Chinua Achebe' (pp. 240–3). ~~Beginning with a discussion of~~ The strategic silences embedded within that novel are a means of 'register[ing] possibilities beyond representation' (p. 240), and ~~Cobham-Sander moves into a discussion of~~ echo in the larger aporia underlying the work of resistance and assimilation in Achebe's larger oeuvre. The remainder of the piece traces ~~a careful and nuanced history of~~ the many silences and ghosts which haunted Achebe in the wake of Biafra, ~~giving space for the reader, like the author, to mediate on the spaces left open therein.~~ Achebe's prose style is the subject of the next contribution to the tribute section, Uzoma Esonwanne's "'Restraint... My Style": Deliberate and Mournful' (pp. 243–5). Citing the twinned influences of *mbari* and the Igbo masquerade, Esonwanne draws links between the deliberate and measured style of Achebe's fictional writings and his non-fictional prose, making particularly important observations about how ~~this mode of~~ authorial control of tone challenges orthodox precepts around late style. The essay's comparison between ~~the literary style of~~ *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's first published work, and *There Was A Country*, his last, will be of particular significance for scholars ~~of the legendary author.~~ Harry Garuba, in 'Chinua Achebe and the Struggle for Discursive Authority in the Postcolonial World' (pp. 246–8), moves beyond readings ~~of the author~~ which position Achebe's work within the context of anticolonial nationalism and cultural colonization in order to excavate his importance for 'this postcolonial present' (p. 246). In so doing, Garuba characterizes Achebe's work as a study in the simultaneous interpellation of the split postcolonial subject by two incompatible discursive orders, ~~a split rendering of the self through competing models of normativity.~~ As

~~‘one of the defining characteristics of our postcolonial present’ (247), this move unmoors Achebe from the strictures of cultural and social context, transforming him into an author of the contemporary more fully than has perhaps been previously acknowledged. Eileen Julien, by contrast, approaches the reading of *Things Fall Apart* from a historical perspective in her contribution, ‘How We Read *Things Fall Apart* Then’ (pp. 248–50. Explicating Showing the range of reference which gave rise to that work, Julien situates Achebe as an author of the world, ‘the exemplar — if not the theorist — of early “postcolonial literature”, the one who inaugurated what would be known for fifty years as “African literature”’ (p. 249), who, at the time that his first novel was published, was nonetheless read alternately through a teleological vision of African society moving from tradition to modernity or, on the other hand, through the lens of ‘authenticity’. Yet, through a studied engagement with *Things Fall Apart* as it was once read and received, Julien proposes a different framework for understanding not just the author, but the novel as a form, through the ‘traversing of boundaries’ implicit in the imperial project and its aftermaths. The penultimate offering in *PMLA*’s tribute to Achebe, James Ogude’s ‘Reading *No Longer at Ease* as a Text That Performs local Cosmopolitanism’ (pp. 251–3), moves from Achebe’s first to his considers the second published novel, the story of Okonkwo’s embattled grandson. Reading the novel as emerging from a period of transition, as the nation-state of Nigeria slowly emerged, the essay traces the movements of two forms of cosmopolitanism in the novel: the idealistic and universal, and the local and situated. For Ogude, the struggle between these two modes of reckoning are what characterize Obi Okonkwo’s crisis in the novel: a desire to transcend not just his Englishness, but the traditional ways of his Igbo people as well, and an inability to reconcile this desire for selective participation. The section ends with Elaine Savory’s ‘Chinua Achebe’s Ecocritical Awareness’ (pp. 253–6), which draws a parallel to the loss of the author and the loss of ‘the whole earth as habitable space’ (p. 253). Reading Achebe’s work against the traditional~~

metaphysics of Igbo cosmology, carefully attuned to the earth and environment, Savory concludes a dense and thought-provoking tribute section with an elegy for a man who ‘understood the importance of balance in human and natural ecology’ (p. 255) in a manner which has become all-too rare.

Of equal significance is *Chinua Achebe: Tributes and Reflections*, edited by Nana Ayebia Clarke and James Currey features forty-nine short essays, eulogies and reflections by a range of international critics and writers, including both rare, previously-published texts and newly commissioned work. The volume also contains a range of pieces published around the world in the wake of Achebe’s death. Beginning with Lyn Innes’s authoritative tribute to the author Achebe, published in the *Guardian* as his official obituary, and ending with a reprint of Binyavanga Wainaina’s satirical viral essay, ‘How to Write About Africa’, the collection as a whole spans ages, generations and perspectives on Achebe, including personal reminiscences, ruminations on and by his literary peers and successors, poetic reflections and testaments to the author’s enduring legacy across time and space. Of particular interest to readers will be the hauntingly beautiful prose poem in his praise contributed by Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo and Odia Ofeimun’s ‘For Chinua Achebe’. Femi Osofisan’s ‘The Discombobulation of a Rookie Patriot: A Stage Adaptation of Chinua Achebe’s *Man of the People*’ is another must-read entry. Throughout the volume, the The personal anecdotes, supplied by a range of friends and colleagues, are of particular value in humanizing a man whose literary talent catapulted him into who had become a legend.

Rare is a year that does not see critical attention paid to Achebe’s oeuvre and 2014 was no exception in this regard, irrespective of special commemorations. Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi’s essay, ‘Cold War Sponsorships: Chinua Achebe and the Dialectics of Collaboration’ (*JPW* 50:iv[2014] 410–22) is an important re-reading of Achebe’s *Man of the People* not, as it is so often read, as a study in corruption and failed governance in Nigeria,

but rather as part of a class of mid-century works which critique the ~~normative~~ rhetoric of the Cold War. Osinubi argues that the novel deliberately subordinates its engagement with Cold War geopolitics to localized concerns in the era of decolonization as a means of satirizing the often-inflammatory language ~~of Cold War era communist fear~~ expressing fear of Communism in newly-independent nations ~~such as Nigeria and~~. By so doing, the novel imagines a world order with space for political engagement outside of a post-World War II East-West binary ~~of the post-World War II period. By re-contextualising Achebe within a globalised political materialism, the essay re-vitalises Achebe's significance as a writer beyond any strictly national confines.~~ A re-assessment of Achebe's oeuvre is also the subject of Megan Cole Paustian's "'A Real Heaven on Their Own Earth" Religious Missions, African Writers, and the Anticolonial Imagination' (*RAL* 45:ii [2014] 1–25), which sets Achebe's memoirs and fiction alongside the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o to explore the ways in which missionary education, though implicated with colonial domination, ~~simultaneously~~ served **also** as a site for radical self-invention ~~in the formation of~~ **via** the emancipatory discourses which would drive decolonization. ~~Paustian's essay demands a nuanced engagement with missionary traditions, moving beyond a Manichean perspective to one in which African subjects and foreign missionaries partake in a complex relationship of contestation and creation.~~ The essay focuses on Achebe's *Education of a British-Protected Child*, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* in order to develop comparative readings of missionary education across genres. This mode of comparative analysis is continued in Aghogho Akpome's 'Ways of Telling: (Re)Writing the Nation in the Novels and Memoir of Chinua Achebe' (*JLST* 30:i[2014] 34–52), which examines the trajectory from Achebe's earlier novelistic output to his final work, the memoir *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, in order to argue that his thematization of the postcolonial nation betrays a narrowing of interest from Africa writ large, to the Nigerian nation and finally to the Igbo

ethno-nation. By so doing, Akpome offers a radicalization of ~~retrospectively radicalizes~~ Achebe's older work, ~~read through a retrospective lens~~. ~~Revisionist reading~~ continues in Oritsegbubemi Oyowe's philosophical essay, 'Fiction, Culture, and the Concept of a Person' (*RAL* 45:ii[2014] 46–62), which revisits Ikuenobe's ~~2006 reading of *Things Fall Apart*~~ as a study of normative personhood. ~~Offering an in-depth critique~~, Oyowe's essay deftly demonstrates that, contrary to the orthodox critical position, Achebe's work cannot be said to make any clear claims ~~about the notion of personhood~~, neither metaphysical nor normative. Françoise Ugochukwu also turns her attention to *Things Fall Apart* in an absorbing essay that traces the history of film and television adaptations of the novel, notably the highly-successful 1987 adaptation as a ten-part miniseries for NTA ('*Things Fall Apart: Achebe's Legacy, from Book to Screen*', *RAL* 45:ii[2014] 168–83). Finally, a chapter in Brian May's *Extravagant Postcolonialism: Modernism and Modernity in Anglophone Fiction, 1958–1988*, 'Tradition and the Talent for Individuality' picks up on the theme of the person, reading *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease* as studies in the relationship between art and the individual. In both novels, May argues, aesthetics — and particularly beauty — serves as an indication of moral values with a significant political import. This must-read chapter centres on Obi, protagonist of *No Longer At Ease*, positioning his climactic abandonment of his once-beloved poetry as the moment in which his ethical and moral quest fails. Drawing on the modernist aesthetic claim to art as weapon, May's readings of both novels situate each as fundamentally about art, beauty and the power therein.

Achebe is also subject of a chapter in Alexander Täuschel's *World English(es): On the Examples of India and Nigeria*, which focuses on the use of West African English in Nigerian Literature through readings of orality in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. ~~This line of~~ Linguistic criticism, ~~particularly stylistic analysis~~, was a major ~~aspect of studies of~~ Achebe's writing ~~Achebe studies~~ in 2014, ~~particularly essays dealing with various forms of~~

stylistic analysis. Isaac Nuokyaa-Ire Mwinlaaru's 'Style, Character and the theme of Struggle and Change: Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*' (*RAL* 45:ii[2014] 103–21) is a particularly fascinating example of this critical trend, using systemic functional linguistics to explore the narrative and linguistic transformation from fear and powerlessness in the novel to empowerment and bravery. The essay focuses particularly on the relationship between symbolism, narrative situation and transitivity patternings, on the one hand, and an underlying systemic linguistic analysis of the character of Chris as an exemplar of Achebe's call for an enlightened citizenry to stand up to power and transform society. Aghogho Akpome continues stylistic analysis of *Anthills of the Savannah* in 'Dispersal of Narrative Point of View in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*' (*EAREv* 31:i[2014], 19–37), which argues that extant criticism of the novel has been overshadowed by socio-political and thematic readings. Akpome offers a redress in a reading that focuses on the narrative and linguistic innovations within the novel, particularly its use of multiple focalizers, emplotment and temporal non-linearity. Drawing heavily on the narratological work of Jahn and Bal, Akpome convincingly demonstrates the extent to which Achebe creates a panoptic view of African society at the interstices of postcoloniality and postmodernity.

Further **Other 2014** essays on Achebe published in 2014 include Zahra Sadeghi's 'Role of Colonial Subjects in making Themselves Inferior in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*' (*Advances in Language and Literary Studies* [NEW suggest *ALLS*] 5:vi [2014] np); Ecevit Bekler's 'The True Face of Pre-Colonial Africa in *Things Fall Apart*' (*Respectus Philologicus* 25:xxx[2014] 96–104; Abubakar Mohammed Sani's 'Literature as Tool for Sustainable Development: A Comparative Literary Analysis of Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Tahir's *The Last Imam*' (*Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 5:iii [2014]); Arua E. Arua's 'Free Indirect Style in Three Canonical African Novels Written in English' (in Arua E. Arua, Taiwo Abioye and Kehinde A. Ayoola's edited volume, *Language, Literature and*

Style in Africa), which compares the methods of focalization and style in *Anthills of the Savannah* with Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* (pp. 2–21); Aaron Bady's chapter 'The Thing and the Image: Violence in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*' in Stacy Peebles's edited collection *Violence in Literature* (pp. 38–53); and Amarjeet Nayak's 'Reading a Culturally Different Text: Meaning Signification Process in Chinua Achebe's Short Stories' (*Short Fiction in Theory & Practice* [NEW suggest *ShFTP*] 4:i[2014] 67–78).

Along with Achebe, Wole Soyinka stands out as a pioneer of West African literary writing and this distinction did not go unnoticed by scholars in 2014. Ivor Ageteman-Duah and Ogochukwu Promise's edited collection, *Essays in Honour of Wole Soyinka at 80*, speaks to the ongoing importance of his literary presence. ~~Timed to coincide with a year of events held worldwide to commemorate and celebrate the writer's eightieth birthday~~, This volume contains thirty short essays organized over six sections. The first, 'Salutatory Musing for the Master's Tale', features tributes ~~written by the likes of~~ **from** Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Nadine Gordimer, Sefi Atta, Margaret Busby, Toni Morrison and Nicholas Westcott. ~~Describing the steadfast voice of the author~~, These contributions paint a portrait not just of a literary giant, but of an engaged, kind and committed individual. Section two, 'The Canvas is Universal: Philosophy, Literature and the Politics of Redemption', is comprised of three more analytic reflections ~~on Soyinka~~ by Ama Ata Aidoo, Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Ato Quayson, foregrounding the ethico-philosophical dynamics of **Soyinka's** work. Section three, 'Harvest of Past Seasons: Memoirs, Conversations and Palavers', returns to a more personal idiom, with a broad array of reminiscences and anecdotes ~~reflections~~ by Soyinka's friends and family, including Femi Johnson, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Esi Sutherland-Addy and Amowi Sutherland Phillips. 'The Museum, African Art and Music', section four, ~~takes a broad view on~~ **surveys** Soyinka's legacies, placing his work in the wider landscape of African cultural

production through the ages. John Collins and Ivor Agyeman-Duah's take on Soyinka and Fela in 'The Protestants From Abeokuta: Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and His Cousin' is of particular interest, approaching Soyinka through the body of work of the infamous musician. ~~Poetry is the focus of~~ The next section, 'Poetry from the Threshold', ~~which~~ includes contributions from luminaries including Derek Walcott and Atukwei Oki. The last section of the volume, 'Tradition and the Modernity of Governance', highlights Soyinka's importance as a political thinker and public figure. It concludes with a reflection by former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, who draws connections across Soyinka's engaged intellectualism and the new African renaissance.

Three more essays demonstrate the ongoing **literary and political** import of Soyinka's work ~~to the landscape of West African writing, as well as its continued political urgency.~~ Solomon Omatsola Azumurana's 'Wole Soyinka's dystopian/utopian vision in *A Dance of the Forests*' (*TvL* 51:ii[2014] 71–81) reads Soyinka's play through the lens of temporality, arguing that, rather than simply depicting the exigencies of post-independence disillusionment, the work can be read as a linking of a hopeless past to an empty present in order to gesture towards **a dystopian future in which atrocities seem inevitable**. ~~Moving from a strictly national(ist) framework through which to understand the play to a universal reading of the work as a blurring of boundaries between dystopic and utopian future visions, the play is characterized as ultimately pessimistic in its outlook on the inevitability of atrocity.~~ Paradoxically, however, this fatalistic vision opens the play to the possibility of a utopian future. Based on the premise that only a critical perspective on the past and present can create the space for a hopeful futurity, the essay demonstrates the interweaving of the dystopian and the utopian as a ~~simultaneous~~ call for engagement. Andrew Barnaby turns his attention to another of Soyinka's plays in his "'The Purest Mode of Looking": (Post)Colonial Trauma in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*' (*RAL* 45:i[2014] 125–49), which takes as

its starting point Soyinka's statement in his author's note to the play that colonialism is 'a catalytic incident merely'. Drawing on a Freudian analysis of trauma and deferred action, the essay challenges this authorial self-positioning by positioning colonialism as 'an originary missing' of the event itself (p. 127), a kind of not seeing which calls for an ethical project of bearing witness and enables the act of witnessing to proceed. Ultimately, Barnaby positions the play as a study in postmemory and responsibility. Mark Mathuray's essay, 'Intimacies between Men: Modernism, African Homosexualities and Masculinist Anxieties in Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*' (*JPW* 50:vi[2014], 635–47), addresses what is arguably Soyinka's most famous work of prose fiction. The essay focuses largely on a single, pivotal scene from the novel, in which Biodun Sagoe meets the mixed-race, homosexual American, Joe Golder, on a dark and stormy night. Mathuray thoroughly explores how, ~~in this scene,~~ the homosexual figure functions within the aesthetics of African high modernism as an ethical challenge to normative discourses of nationalism and tradition. Both marginal and central, the character of Golder destabilizes the hegemonic forms of masculinity and heteronormativity represented by the novel's main characters, who themselves become figures embodying contemporary African nationalist leadership. ~~As a figure who engages in a paradoxical use of pre-colonial traditions of sexual fluidity incompatible with its inscription within nationalist discourse, Golder becomes an in-between figure which threatens, disrupts and offer an avenue to reinscribe normative discourses.~~ Finally, a moving and personal reflection on Soyinka rounds out this year's contribution to criticism on the author. In 'Wole Soyinka: "Intellectuel total vs. poète citoyen": An Antitotalitarian Theory of Power' (*Black Renaissance Noire* [NEW suggest *BRN*] 14:i[2014] 158–63), Alain Ricard ruminates on Soyinka's centrality to his own intellectual formation, reading in his multiple engagements a radical dialogism which threatens totalitarian discourses at their foundation.

Stylistic analyses were not limited to readings of Achebe; other contributions to the developing field of stylistics and West African literature include Godwin Oko Ushie and Idaeivor Bello's 'Umbilical Accord and Symbiosis between Man and the Environment: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Poems of Joe Ushie's *Hill Songs* and Unima Angrey's *Drought (Ubang)*' (*Theory and Practice in Language Studies* [NEW suggest *TPLS*] 4:vii[2014] 1327–33) and Edmund Bamiro's 'Stylistic Functions of "Dislocation" in Soyinka's Novels: A Systemic-Functional Analysis' (*Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 4:xii[2014] 2492–7). Most significant in this line of criticism is Daria Tunca's wonderful *Stylistic Approaches to Nigerian Fiction*, ~~a stunning example of the broader applications of linguistic criticism for West African literature.~~ Tunca's book begins from the premise that, through a sustained engagement with the principles of stylistic analysis, new meanings and positions may be excavated from the literary text. ~~In her introduction, as throughout the book,~~ Tunca is careful to note that this approach is not hostile to 'traditional' literary criticism, but rather serves as an extra set of tools ~~for uncovering the text's hidden meanings and submerged dynamics.~~ This stylistic method is outlined in the study's first chapter, 'Towards an "African Stylistics"? Historiographical and Methodological Considerations'. Theory is put into practice in the next chapter, 'Of Palm Oil and Wafers: Characterization in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*', which convincingly ~~calls upon a close analysis of~~ **analyses** the novel's formal features — particularly its use of proverbs and its recurrent grammatical patterns — to demonstrate protagonist Kambili's ~~growing~~ awakening throughout the course of the novel. Tunca's deployment of the concepts of mind-style and transitivity are particularly compelling ~~in this analysis,~~ as is her use of Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, ~~showing how the narrator's transformation into a woman of agency is linguistically rendered within the text.~~ The next chapter retains its focus on Adichie. "'The Other Half of the Sun": Ideology in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*' ~~uses the notions of~~

inspects underlexicalization, repeated schemas, the use of vocatives and the use of exemplification to unpack the ~~undercover~~ ideological constructions which undergird the novel. Moving to a study of Ben Okri in 'Art is a Journey: Metaphor in Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within* and *Dangerous Love*', Tunca compares these two versions of a broadly similar text, identifying the underlying use of conceptual metaphor as a major element in the reconstruction of meaning across each. The final two chapters of the study move to shorter form fiction, examining the novellas of Chris Abani and Uzodinma Iweala. "Bi-textual" Poetics Investigating Form in Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* uses the conventions of stylistic analysis to develop **develops** a methodical framework for understanding the often-contradictory impulses which underlie Abani's prose, **creating** what is often ~~critically~~ described as its haunting quality. The concluding chapter to the study, 'Children at War: Language and Representation in Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* and Chris Abani's *Song for Night*' addresses two difficult novels which engage, in various ways, with the figure of the child soldier and the memory of the Nigerian Civil War. The former text is read through its linguistic inaccuracy, a departure from realism in the text that enables its stylistic range, while the latter text can be described as riddled with ambiguities which result in a split between an empathic and an ironic reading. Tunca closes out her study with a call for a re-appraisal of the value of stylistics as a form of literary criticism, the value of which is aptly demonstrated throughout the book.

Hamish Dalley's *The Postcolonial Historical Novel: Realism, Allegory, and the Representation of Contested Pasts*, contains two chapters ~~which will be~~ of interest to scholars of West African literature. The first of these, 'Aesthetics of Absent Causality: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*', positions the novel against a larger body of Nigerian Civil War literature, noting the ways in which Adichie's text departs from certain normative features. Dalley argues that, through the use of character and plot, Adichie refuses the

imperative to homogenize either victims or perpetrators of violence, instead insisting on ‘the inadequacy of historical interpretations that ignore the internal heterogeneity of Nigeria’s ethno-religious communities’ (p. 126). Citing what he terms the novel’s ‘aesthetics of absent causality’, Dalley uses close readings of the text to demonstrate how, through a sort of historical documentation intercut with elements of the fabulous, Adichie demands an expansion of imaginative horizon beyond the nation-state and its attendant absolutes. In his following chapter, ‘Spectres of Civil War Trauma: Chris Abani’s *Song for Night*’, Dalley turns to another example of war fiction, ~~written in a distinct idiom~~, to discuss the significance **and** applicability ~~and salience~~ of trauma theory in studies of Nigerian Civil War writing. Noting the ambiguities which pepper Abani’s novella, Dalley ~~makes a claim to~~ **claims that** its ‘trauma aesthetics’ ~~as another means of unsettling~~ **unsettle** orthodoxies around history and realism in the postcolonial novel.

~~Like Dalley~~, Madhu Krishnan’s *Contemporary African Literature in English: Global Locations, Postcolonial Identifications* also includes a number of chapters ~~and readings~~ of interest to studies of West African literature. Based upon the premise that the ~~conceptual~~ gap between aesthetic and material readings of African texts has led to the constriction of imaginative horizons around the image of Africa, ~~as mediated by these works~~, Krishnan’s monograph ~~alternately~~ considers case studies by Aminatta Forna, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chris Abani, and G.A. Agambila ~~throughout its course~~. In the second chapter of the study, ‘Gender and Representing the Unrepresentable’, Krishnan places Forna’s *Ancestor Stones* and Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* in conversation with Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgins* to examine the intersection of gender and conflict ~~in contemporary African writing~~. Gendering and engenderment are, ~~throughout the chapter~~, considered in the plural, using the modes of historical and testimonial writing engaged in by Forna and Adichie as arguments for a contrapuntal process of engagement which ~~exceeds beyond the limits of the text itself~~.

Both texts, she argues, subvert the trope of feminization in conflict in order to present alternative visions of engenderment which remain nonetheless under pressure from external material forms. In the following chapter, 'Mythopoeics and Cultural Re-Creation', Krishnan turns to Abani's *GraceLand* as an example of a text which re-configures traditional and modern mythological narratives as a way of re-defining the delimitations of to redefine cultural hybridity and liminality. Through its reconfiguration of mythological narratives and its resistance against a collapse into the surreal or arcane, *GraceLand*, Krishnan argues, develops a vision for contemporary Africa which resists totalities and refuses absolutes in favour of an ever-vigilant sense of multiplicity. *GraceLand* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* are again subjects of the study's final chapter, 'Global African Literatures: Strategies of Address and Cultural Constraints', which examines the use of the trope of the book within the book in each text as an unsettling of rhetorical desire and narrative convention. By forcing the readers into a relationship of coproduction through the insertion of extra-literary 'texts' within each novel, both subvert absolutist models of cultural identification. The chapter concludes with a discussion of locally-published African literature, including Ghanaian politician and writer G. A. Agambila's *Journey*, which chronicles the disillusionment of an educated member of Ghana's burgeoning elite class against the background of economic deprivation. Krishnan situates *Journey* as another form of African literature beyond that published in the multinational literary market; it draws upon specific localized forms of identification to create a multi-modal narrative structure that points to limits of the 'local' and 'global' in studies of African literature today.

Amongst the most significant publications of 2014 was *Matatu* 45, edited by Ogaga Okuyade. Titled *Tradition and Change in Contemporary West and East Africa Fiction*, the volume features a broad range of essays which deals with authors both canonical and lesser-known from West Africa, and heavily features themes of gender, sexuality, diaspora,

migration, politics and space, with a primary focus on writing from the previous decade.

Iniobong I. Uko's 'Womanhood, Sexuality, and Work: The Dialectic of Exploitation' (pp. 1–20) sets the ~~canonical~~ writing of Flora Nwapa and Ama Ata Aidoo in dialogue with the work of Nawal El Saadawi ~~in order to argue that the concept of womanhood has largely been explicated through the lens of sexuality. Examining~~ **to examine** the ways in which each author intervenes in the exploitative dynamics ~~which so appear with respect to feminisation and~~ **of traditional** gender relations, ~~the article proposes readings which open~~ **and opens** avenues towards new agendas for African women ~~in the contemporary moment~~. That essay is followed by Enajite E. Ojaruega's 'Outgoing and Incoming Africans: Migration and Reverse Migration in Contemporary African Narratives' (pp. 21–34), which reads a number of texts including Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Abani's *GraceLand* and Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* to explore the often-conflicting sentiments of aspiration through migration and nostalgia through return ~~which define the 'outgoing' and 'incoming' dynamics of migration and return. The next chapter in the collection,~~ Oluwole Coker's 'Development Imperatives and Transnationalism in Third-Generation Nigerian Fiction' (pp. 35–42) addresses two seemingly dissimilar narratives, Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* in order to ~~engage in a discussion of developmentalism and~~ **discuss** the development quest in contemporary Nigerian fiction as the fulcrum of a transnational aesthetic which emerges in these works. ~~Later, the collection turns to an example of West African fiction which is likely to be less familiar to European and North American readers in~~ Thomas Jay Lynn's 'Postcolonial Encounters Re-Envisioned: Kojo Laing's *Woman of the Aeroplanes* as Trickster Narrative' (pp. 153–66) focuses on the Ghanaian author, ~~the essay reads *Woman of the Aeroplanes* as a postmodern trickster narrative which offers an~~ **reading** **his trickster book as** offering an alternative to the historical domination of West Africa through an emphasis on personal and political modes of freedom, ~~opening up new pathways~~

~~to true equality amongst societies.~~ Christopher Ouma's 'Countries of the Mind: Space-Time Chronotopes in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (pp. 167–86), ~~meanwhile,~~ centres on the significance of the university town of Nsukka in Adichie's debut novel. Defining the city as a 'toponym', comprised of compounds, houses, and a range of material objects, the essay probes the play of belonging and non-belonging engendered through its trajectories of movement across space and time, ultimately positioning Nsukka as an aesthetic space, a country of the mind, in which a liberating topography is forged. The next essay in the *Matatu* volume, Brian Doherty's 'Writing Back with a Difference: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Headstrong Historian" as a Response to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*' (pp. 187–202), ~~similarly focuses on Adichie,~~ reading **reads** her short story as an act of literary revision set against Achebe's canonical novel: part homage and part critique. ~~Adichie is also the subject of~~ Chitra Thiruvikraman Nair's 'Negotiation of Socio-Ethnic Spaces: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a *Testimonio* of African National and Ethnic Identity' (pp. 197–209), reads the novel as a negotiated articulation of Biafran and Igbo space within the landscape of twentieth-century geopolitics. ~~While Adichie looms large in *Matatu* 45,~~ Louisa Uchum Egbunike's contribution, 'One-Way Traffic: Renegotiating the "Been-To" Narrative in the Nigerian Novel in the Era of Military Rule' (pp. 217–32) ~~takes a step back in time from Adichie in its exploration of the 'been-to' narrative. The essay covers~~ **makes a** ~~broad chronological and historical sweep, which includes Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*, Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*, Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Oguine's *A Squatter's Tale* — its broad historical sweep alone recommends~~ **signals** its merits. ~~While much has been written about the dynamics of diaspora and migration,~~ Egbunike's essay compelling makes a case for a re-materialised consideration of ~~these terms-~~ 'home' and 'abroad' ~~achieved largely~~ through close attention to the dynamics of ~~in these works as~~ a fundamentally asymmetrical system of exchange. ~~Egbunike's essay is~~

followed by Alexander Greer Hartwiger ('Strangers in/to the World: The Unhomely in Chris Abani's *GraceLand*' pp. 233–50), argues that Abani's novel may be read as a reconfiguration of the grounds of world literature, as a category, through the discourse of the unhomely, as tied to its embodied and spatialized instantiations, ultimately constituting an unhomely and a counter-hegemonic cosmopolitanism. Abani, like Adichie, is one of the better known contemporary writers from West Africa. Less known, however, is academic and writer Maik Nwosu, the focus of Ngozi Chuma-Udeh's 'Maik Nwosu's *Invisible Chapters*: Investigating Psychological Fragmentation in Nigerian Literature' (pp. 251–62). The essay is a study of character which seeks to link the ongoing social and political turmoil faced by Nigeria to the psychological state of fragmentation experienced by Nwosu's characters. James Omuteche's 'The Global Underground and the Illegitimate Diasporas: in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*' (pp. 263–94) continues the theme of socio-political critique and psychological disorientation. The essay argues that, far from its emancipatory promises, globalization in Unigwe's novel can be linked directly to the perpetuation of neo-imperial structures of subordination which contribute to the displacement and dislocation of her protagonists, forced instead into exploitation via the submerged and informal channels of global flow and movement. Unigwe's fellow contemporary Nigerian writer is the focus of the next essay in the collection, Owojecho Omoha's 'Fictional Narrative and the Reflective Self in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*' (pp. 295–314), which turns its attention to narrative style, in its situating of the novel as a self-reflexive manifestation of the author's own experiences as a student in Jos in northern Nigeria. Kaine Agary, meanwhile, is the subject of the next entry in the volume, Charles Cliff Feghabo ('Inverting Otherness in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*' (pp. 315–32) This essay marks a redress to redresses the largely ecocritical readings of oil narratives, arguing instead for a more strongly gendered *ecofeminist* reading of despoliation and exploitation in this body of work, using Agary's novel as a model of this new ecofeminist

~~line of criticism.~~ 'Love's Metamorphosis in Third-Generation African Women's Writing: The Example of Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret lives of Baby Segi's Wives*' (pp. 333–64), by Olusegun Adekoya, similarly proposes a feminist reading of contemporary West African writing, reading Shoneyin's debut as an examination of human sexuality in the twenty-first century African context. The penultimate contribution to the collection, Nmachika Nwokeabia's 'Gender and (Homo)Sexuality in Third-Generation African Writing: A Reading of Unoma Azuah's *Sky-High Flames* and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*' (pp. 365–80) ~~retains this examination of the dynamics of sexuality, interrogating~~ **interrogates** the intersectional dynamics of same-sex desire and gendered identifications as a negotiated hierarchy of value. The volume concludes with Shalini Nadaswaran's 'Motif/ves of Justice in Writings by Third-Generation Nigerian Women' (pp. 381–96), which reads a range of women's writing including Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You By Chance*, Abidemi's Sanusi's *Eyo*, Akachi Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* and Sefi Atta's *Swallow* as excavations of Nigeria's socio-political dynamics and the destructive influence of transnational commerce on the ability of Nigerians to attain well-being and self-actualization.

~~It is no surprise that these collections and monographs, for all their range, place a particular emphasis on literary works by female authors from West Africa;~~ Women's writing from West Africa has long held a significant place in criticism, from the foundational work of Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo to the emergence of twenty-first century literary stars such as Adichie and Unigwe. In 'Gender-based genre conventions and the critical reception of Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*' (*Literator* [NEW suggest *Literator*] 35:i[2014] np), Polo B. Moji ~~addresses the construction of gender through a study of~~ **studies** genre conventions in Nigerian war writing. Arguing that the reception and production of war writing presents a stark binary between the feminine home front and masculine war front, Moji ~~contests~~ **questions this orthodoxy** ~~the extent to which these literary~~

orthodoxies undermine women's participation in times of conflict. Reading Emecheta's novel as a subversion of normative spatial tropes of femininity and masculinity in times of conflict, The essay unpacks *Destination Biafra*'s destabilization of gender identities in favour of a radically-reoriented vision of gender as fluid and multiple in its instantiation. Emecheta is also the object of Angela M. Fubara's 'Figures of Pedagogy in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Buchi Emecheta's *Double Yoke*' (*TvL* 51:i[2014] 18–28), which takes a comparative perspective on the two novels as studies in feminist teaching. Using a range of detailed close readings, Fubara explores the ways in which each narrative engages with 'strategies that evoke images that go beyond women's disparagement and marginalisation to female empowerment and self-assertion' (p. 19) through the twinned foci of economic independence and education. Ultimately educating the reader on the potential of female self-assertion, both novels, the essay argues, engage with pedagogic precepts in order to subvert oppressively patriarchal norms of gender identity. A final essay on Emecheta, Anegebe Endurance, Abdulhameed A. Majeed and Gariagan Gift's 'Oppression of the Girl-Child in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*' (*Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 5:iv[2014] 163–7) continues in the theme of feminist criticism, examining examines the ways in which patriarchal oppression produces a replication of violence across generations in the alienated mother-daughter relationship. While Emecheta and Aidoo remain among the best known of female West African writers, first-published West African woman Flora Nwapa also attracted critical attention in 2014. Part of a special issue of *Research in African Literatures* on 'Africa in the Black Atlantic', Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi's 'Provincializing Slavery: Atlantic Economies in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*' (*RAL* 45:iii[2014] 1-26) re-assesses Nwapa's canonical novel not as a text about women's solidarity, but as part of a 'genealogy of West African fiction on the relations between Atlantic and African slaving networks' (p. 2). Osinubi deftly demonstrates the extent to which the novel engages with a complex and interweaving

historical-spatial matrix, mediated by its eponymous character's movements and interactions throughout the text. Readers of *Efuru* often overlook the importance of the Atlantic slave trade to the novel, particularly its connections ~~to be made~~ with the more dominant system of debt-bondage. ~~in the novel; in redressing this critical oversight,~~ Osinubi's essay provides an important basis for the re-appraisal of the novel's politics ~~and, particularly, the discursive force of its cultural symbolisation,~~ as well as a keen argument for a critical return to canonical texts from the region. Naomi Nkealah's 'Women's Contribution to the Development of Anglophone Cameroonian Drama: The Plays of Anne Tanyi-Tang' (*RAL* 45:ii[2014] 122–34) similarly makes a convincing call for a return to the writing of earlier generations in its sweeping survey of the work of Tanyi-Tang and her centrality in the development of women's voices and visions in Cameroonian drama.

The new generation of women writers from West Africa were also subject to much critical attention in 2014. Two essays ~~published in 2014~~ focused on ~~the writing of~~ Nigerian-British author Helen Oyeyemi. Christopher Ouma's wonderfully rich 'Reading the Diasporic Abiku in Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl*' (*RAL* 45:iii [2014] 188–205) proposes a reading of the abiku — the child who dies and is reborn repeatedly — within the context of ~~diaspora~~ ~~and~~ migration, as a figure through which to 'confront ... structures of racialized interpretation' (p. 188). Joining readings of the abiku from within its Yoruba tradition with an interpretation based upon psychoanalysis through Dissociative Identity Disorder, Ouma argues that the ~~use of the trope~~ allows the novel to reframe orthodox notions of the African diaspora ~~and its attendant discourses on migration and race~~ in a context which moves beyond the overdetermining spectre of the Middle Passage to an African diasporic space of evolution. ~~Arguing that 'diasporic structures of feeling are characterized by~~ in 'the creative struggle for reconciliation and conjuncture' (p. 196), ~~Ouma's essay convincingly argues for a re-reading of African diasporic space as a scene of evolution, fluctuation and negotiation.~~ The second

major essay ~~focused on Oyeyemi~~, Aspasia Stephenou's 'Helen Oyeyemi's *White is for Witching* and the Discourse of Consumption' (*Callaloo* 37:v[2014] 1245–59) similarly examines tensions created by the deployment of discrepant traditions in Oyeyemi's work. ~~Here~~, Stephenou turns her attention to the use of the Caribbean soucoyant myth as a complicating supplement to the vampire narrative in the novel, centring her readings around the discursive potency of consumption as a narrative motif. Linking together the notions of race, history, melancholia and assimilatory desire, the essay positions the novel as a study in the tension between the past and the present in the constitution of the self via the other.

~~Along with Oyeyemi~~, Chika Unigwe was another main focus of criticism in 2014, particularly centred on her 2009 novel of sex trafficking in Antwerp, *On Black Sisters' Street*. These studies ranged from the more strictly narrative and stylistic, in the vein of Tunca's chapter, described above, to the more sociological ~~in their perspective~~. Chielozone Eze's ~~contribution to Unigwe scholarship~~, 'Feminism with a Big "F": Ethics and the Rebirth of African Feminism in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*' (*RAL* 45:iv[2014] 89–103) is a standout in the field, situating the novel as a feminist intervention into the discourse of human rights and the dignities of the bodies of women. Eze highlights the extent to which the novel makes ~~transparent~~ **apparent** the reduction of women's bodies to their mere use-value for men, ~~arguing that, by way of counter~~, as well as how the women in Unigwe's novel unapologetically embrace feminism and women's solidarity. ~~Describing the novel's dramatisation of the~~ in their flight from 'pain and annihilation' (p. 90) ~~experienced by its characters, Eze's remarkable feminist reading is a must-read for scholars interested in African women's writing and global politics~~. Sarah de Mul's 'Becoming Black in Belgium: The Social Construction of Blackness in Chika Unigwe's Authorial Self-Representation and *On Black Sisters' Street*' (*JCL* 49:i[2014] 11–27) sets the novel in dialogue with Unigwe's autobiographical musings on the meaning of ethnic minority writing in Flanders. From the

distinctly de Beauvoirian claim that one is not born as African or as black, but rather becomes it, de Mul excavates what she terms, following Graham Huggan and Sarah Brouillette, the strategic exoticism at the heart of both Unigwe's non-fictional writing and her novelistic output. ~~Remaining sensitive to the difference in context and position which define Unigwe versus her characters, the essay nonetheless draws out a range of correspondences around issues of self representation, embodied agency and the performance of black identity in the European metropole.~~ Another essay published on Unigwe in 2014 is Rose A. Sackeyfio's 'Black Women's Bodies in a Global Economy: Sex, Lies and Slavery in *Trafficked* and *On Black Sisters' Street*', a chapter in Negash, Frohne and Zadi's collection, *At the Crossroads: Readings of the Postcolonial and the Global in African Literature and Visual Art*, which sets Unigwe's novel in dialogue with Akachi Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*.

No author received as much critical attention in 2014 as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. In addition to ~~chapters in the *Matatu* special issue, Tunca's, Dalley's and Krishnan's monographs~~ **works already mentioned**, ~~a wide range of journal articles addressed the author's work.~~ Jennifer Rideout, in 'Towards a New Nigerian Womanhood: Woman as Nation in *Half of a Yellow Sun*', (*CE&S* 36:ii[2014] 71–81) ~~reads Adichie's second novel as a political allegory describing the future of the Nigerian nation. Convincingly demonstrating~~ **demonstrates** the ways in which *Half of a Yellow Sun* uses its female characters as archetypes of the nation — defined through the two poles of Mama, who represents traditional practices of community-building bound to the ethno-nation, and Kainene, as a textual manifestation of the 'new', fully modernized Nigerian nation. The essay concludes that it is Olanna, an allegorical female symbol ~~somewhere between the two poles~~ **who combines the two discourses**, who points to the way forward for the embattled nation-state ~~through a twinning of the two discourses.~~ ~~The idea that *Half of a Yellow Sun*,~~ Despite an extant critical focus on its individualistic and libidinal dynamics, ~~can best be~~ **the novel is also** read as a political

allegory is also found in by Meredith Coffey 's essay on the novel, ("She is Waiting": Political Allegory and the Spectre of Secession in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*' *RAL* 45:ii[2014] 63–85). While stating that the setting of the novel is integral to its task of moral instruction, Coffey makes a compelling case for reading the novel against the apolitical trend in criticism and as a wider study in postcolonial politics. For Coffey, the novel's allegorical potential is demonstrated in its setting of its characters' intimate relationships against the circumstances of history. Reading the novel's end as a refusal of closure, rather than testament to Biafra's failures, the essay puts forward a reading of sees the text as a counter-historical discourse that challenges the inevitability of postcolonial disillusionment. Connor Ryan's essay, 'Defining Diaspora in the Words of Women Writers: A Feminist Reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* and Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*' (*Callaloo* 37:v[2014] 1230–44) moves its attention to Adichie's short stories, setting these in dialogue with the work of Canadian writer Brand. In this essay, Ryan argues that, reading the stories collected in *The Thing Around Your Neck* as studies in migration, gender provides a fulcrum around which narratives of migration turn. Language, for Ryan, becomes the site through which the subversion of gendered and racial hierarchies enacted in diaspora manifests itself, providing a means for a radical reconsideration of 'what it means to be black and female in the diaspora' (p. 1230). Adichie is also mentioned in two essays in a recent special issue of *Transition* on the theme of 'What is Africa to Me, Now?': Louis Chude-Sokei's 'The Newly Black Americans: African Immigrants and Black America' (*Transition* 113 [2014] 52–71), which reads Adichie's short stories and most recent novel, *Americanah*, along with texts by Teju Cole and Chris Abani, as exemplars of the 'new' black American experience; and Madhu Krishnan's 'Negotiating Africa Now' (*Transition* 114 [2014] 11–24), which considers Adichie's writerly and media work along with that of writers including Chris Abani in the

context of twenty-first century, transnational African literary production. A number of other essays which draw on Adichie's work appeared in 2014: Nneka Nora Osakwe's chapter, 'Internationalizing Pedagogy Using African Literature: Teaching Composition Lessons with Chimamanda Adichie's 'My Mother, the Crazy African' (in Negash, Frohne and Zadi's *At the Crossroads: Readings of the Postcolonial and the Global in African Literature and Visual Art* pp. 241–56); Leena Hannele Eilittä's "The world outside seemed mummified into a sheet of dead whiteness": epiphanic experience in the short stories of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie' (*Short Fiction in Theory and Practice* 4:i[2014] 79–92); and Londhe Sachin Vaman's "Families in Crises" in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*' *New Academia* 3:ii[2014] 1–4).

Chris Abani has been mentioned several times already, particularly with reference to his critically-acclaimed second novel, *GraceLand*. A number of other essays published this year examine the novel as a study in place. Lauren Mason's 'Leaving Lagos: Intertextuality and Images in Chris Abani's *GraceLand*' (*RAL* 45:iii[2014] 206–26) uses literary and visual intertextuality in the novel as the basis for a renegotiation of diasporic formations and belonging. Arguing asserts that 'Abani's novel reminds us that the inarticulable elements that constitute diaspora—beyond materiality and shared living conditions—are what written narratives want desperately to articulate' (p. 223), Mason and demonstrates how the transnational, cosmopolitan range of extra-literary reference in the novel—from the bright lights of Las Vegas to traditional folklore to Soviet-era cinema—forges, through bricolage, a transnational notion of black identity which exceeds static or orthodox notions of cultural belonging. The notion of a Cosmopolitan black identity is also explored in John D. Schwetman's 'Leaving Lagos: Diasporic and Cosmopolitan Migrations in Chris Abani's *GraceLand*' (*PCP* 49:ii[2014] 184–202) reads the failure of Abani's protagonist, Elvis, to find a sense of belonging in Lagos as the instantiation of an earlier moment of diasporic

estrangement in his movement from rural Igboland to the Nigerian metropolis. For Schwetman, this narrative move forcibly refuses the essentialization of origins so often the foundation of diasporic perspectives, in favour of a cosmopolitan narrative of integration and plurality. *GraceLand* was not the only Abani work to receive attention in 2014. In Madhu Krishnan's 'The Storyteller Function in Contemporary Nigerian Narrative' (*JCL* 49:i[2014] 29–45), Abani's 2009 novella *Song for Night* is read against Helon Habila's *Measuring Time* as instances of textual orality. Krishnan argues that both novels adopt a mode of textual engagement which rests **rely** upon the intersubjective and collective modes of address more often associated with the spoken word, particularly traditional folklore. Though neither text can be said to be hybridized, in the sense of directly transcribing proverbs or other signifiers usually associated with **of** orality, both use a range of techniques to move beyond the strictly linguistic definition of the word in order to transform readers into active co-producers of the text. Alexandra Schultheis Moore and Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg's "'Let Us Begin with a Small Gesture": An Ethos of Human Rights and the Possibilities of Form in Chris Abani's *Song for Night* and *becoming Abigail*' (*Ariete* 45:iv[2014] 59–87) also reads *Song for Night* as a study in narrative innovation. In a comparative reading with Abani's *Becoming Abigail*, the essay reads both works as mediating between an embrace of human rights and a critique of its normative discourses. In both cases, it is the deliberate crafting of **Both works** **deliberately craft** aesthetic forms ~~within each work~~ which allow a shared ethos to develop between reader and text, exploiting the lacuna which appears at the limits of human rights discourse and law. At the same time, both texts challenge the notion of a universal, shared humanity, instead positing a ~~notion~~ **concept** of human rights as a self-reflexive and continuous critique.

~~The issues of gender, violence and discourse are covered with respect to a range of writers working from West Africa and its diasporas, including a selection of writers less-~~

known in Europe and North America, in three collections edited by Chin Ce and Charles Smith. Notable here is *Gender Issues in African Literature*, edited by Chin Ce and Charles Smith, ~~While covering~~ covers African literatures from across the continent, ~~the collection~~ and includes important essays ~~on gender in Nigerian writing, focusing~~ on Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, Akachi Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle* and Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* in chapters by O. Ojeahere ('Gender and African Modernity'), J.T. Tsaaior ('Male Authority, Female Alterity') and S.A. Agbor ('Female Writers on War'), respectively. *Destination Biafra* is the subject, too, of a second chapter by E.N. Ngwang ('Feminist Re-Writing'). The collection as a whole attempts to examine the ways in which Western discourses around gender and sexuality are countered and challenged in African fiction. In *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, for instance, ~~appears~~ **there is** a call for women's solidarity as a means of combating patriarchal norms amplified under colonial modernity; Ezeigbo's novel, ~~meanwhile,~~ is read as a study in negotiation, set against the complex terrain of (en)gendered power amongst the Igbo. The two essays on *Destination Biafra*, finally, set it alongside Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me* and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* as an exposé of the particular violence wrought against women in times of war, on the one hand, and as a symbolization of the virtues of a Negritude-inspired female resilience, on the other. ~~Though not explicitly focused on gender,~~

Ce and Smith edited two other volumes, *Counter Discourse in African Literature* and *The Dark Edge of African Literature*, ~~also engage extensively with the importance of gender in narrative discourse, conflict and negotiation in African literatures.~~ The former volume, features chapters on Femi Osofian's *Tegonni: An African Antigone* (A. Van Weyemberg, 'An African Antigone', 43-59), Osonye Tess Onwueme's *The Mission Face*, Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (K. Secovnie, 'Cultural Translation', 61-80) and Chin Ce's *Children of Koloko* (O Okuyade, 'The Rhetoric of Despair', 95-110). With its heavy focus on drama,

the volume will be a particularly valuable resource for theatre scholars at all levels. *The Dark Edge of African Literature* places its emphasis on conflict and violence, featuring chapters on a range of continental African writers, of which essays on Chin Ce and Femi Osofian will be of particular interest. Similarly non-canonical essays can be found in Jessica Munns' chapter, 'Two Oroonokos: Behn's and Bandele's' (pp. 162-166 in Cynthia Richards and Mary O'Donnell's edited volume *Teaching Behn's Oroonoko*), which draws comparisons between the canonical text and Biyi Bandele-Thomas's revision, and Suzanne Marie Ondrus's chapter 'Childhood Creative Spaces as Survival Spaces in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*' (pp. 35-52 in Vivian Yenika-Agbaw and Lindah Mhando's edited volume, *African Youth in Contemporary Literature and Popular Culture: Identity Quest*).

Along with its moving tribute to Kofi Awonoor, discussed above, *ALT 32* features a number of issues which will certainly be of articles of interest to scholars of West African literature. includes another article on the abiku: Ikenna Kamalu's 'Abiku in Ben Okri's Imagination of Nationhood: A Metaphorical Interpretation of Colonial-Postcolonial Politics' (pp. 20–32) argues that Okri's use of this figure as a cultural metaphor, serves the aims of social justice and political reform by foregrounding the once-denigrated cultural values of the colonized. Okri's aesthetics of magical realism are also subject of a number of book chapters in 2014: Jennifer Wenzel's 'Petro-Magic-Realism Revisited: Unimagining and Reimagining the Niger Delta' (in Ross Barrett, Daniel Worden and Allan Stoekl's *Oil Culture*); Durojaiye Owoeye's 'Going Beyond Borders: Rushdie, Okri and the Deconstruction of Realism' (in Arua, Abioye and Ayoola's *Language, Literature and Style in Africa*); and Stephan Larsen's 'Whose Magic? Whose Realism? Reflections on Magical Realism in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*' (pp. 275-287 in Anders Cullhed, Lena Rydholm and Janken Myrdal's *True Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts*).

ALT 32 also includes an insightful reading by Edward Sackey of a perhaps lesser-known text in ‘Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Revolutionaries: Exoteric Fiction, the Common People & Social Change in Post-Colonial Africa - A Critical Review*’ (*ALT* 32[2014] 47–57), an analysis which unpacks the novel as a socially-oriented mode of experimental engagement by a politically-engaged author. Deborah L. Klein’s “‘Manhood’ in Isidore Okpewho’s *The Last Duty: Authority or Accountability?*’ (*ALT* 32 [2014] 104–19) considers the novel through the lens of social justice by tracing the tension inherent in conceptions of manhood in times of war, engaging in a careful and methodical character analysis to support her readings.

Genre fiction became a focus of scholarly inquiry in 2014. Terri Ochiagha, in ‘The Dangerous Potency of the Crossroads: Colonial Mimicry in Chukwuemeka Ike’s *The Bottled Leopard* and Chike Momah’s *The Shining Ones: The Umuahia School Days of Obinna Okoye*’ (*L&U* 38:i[2014] 86–105), takes a long historical view of children’s literature in her examination of two Nigerian boarding school stories. Drawing on the theoretical work of Homi K. Bhabha, Ochiagha argues that these stories provide an intricate negotiation of identity through colonial mimicry, ~~critiquing the educational aspect of the colonial mission while exploring the complexities of self-definition.~~ Both replicating and subverting the generic conventions of the boarding school novel, these two stories, ~~as the essay carefully traces,~~ dramatize the simultaneous pull of the colonial school and indigenous collectivities. Moving further back in time is Rebecca Jones’s ‘Journeys to the Hinterland: Early Twentieth-Century Nigerian Domestic Travel Writing and Domestic Heterogeneity’ (*PocoT* 9:iv [2014] np), which examines Yoruba- and English-language travel writing by I.B. Thomas and E.A. Akintan, ~~written in the early twentieth century,~~ as a means of rethinking cosmopolitanism through its ~~localized and~~ territorially-specific instantiations during the era of amalgamation and nation-formation. Using translocal and regional networks, these travelogues reconfigure the centre/periphery dynamics which have dominated studies of colonialism, exposing the

heterogeneity of discrepant cosmopolitan forms. Science fiction is the subject of Matthew Omelsky's "'After the End Time": Postcrisis African Science Fiction' (*Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1:i[2014] 33-49), which looks at Efe Okugo's novella, *Proposition 23*, as a post-Fanonian articulation of revolutionary subjectivity. ~~As part of what Omelsky deems 'postcrisis fiction',~~ Okugo's work may be best read as a reconfiguration of biopolitics through its imagination of African futures beyond capital. ~~As a whole, 2014 was a fertile and exciting year for critical work on West African literature, which is sure to continue in the years to come.~~