

many others, diffuses his own enlightening thoughts in which politics and philosophy converge. Thus, patriotism and spirituality are venerated by some writers; others like Tagore, Mandal argues, denote a more liberal milieu. Therefore, the political novel within Bangla literature manifests itself as a prior focus of attention from which different currents and moral urges originated in the long process towards Indian independence.

The last two essays by Daya Thussu and Sara Martín Alegre are dedicated to the media and the Western film industry that feeds on images of India in contemporary cinema. Thussu traces the rapid evolution of the media that as soon as it emerges develops a key role in the building of a national identity, forging a sense of Indianness which suffers alterations with the impact of privatisation and globalization. But whatever the damage any form of «cultural imperialism» might cause, the truth is that – as Thussu expresses – India has now her opportunity to convey a fair image of the country and culture to the rest of the world. This stands very far from the discredited vision of India portrayed by 1980s and 1990s films made by Western directors and analysed by

Martín Alegre. Her concern is that films such as *Passage to India*, *Gandhi*, *Heat and Dust* and *City of Joy*, promote «old and new stereotypes» and show a «monolithic reality», (157) «to perpetuate a sentimental, romanticised portrait of India that is blatantly colonialist» (152). Considering that India is the world's leading film factory, why are Indian films not distributed outside just like the Hollywood ones? What cultural mechanisms are at play to restrain their screening? Martín Alegre concludes with the optimistic expectation that Indian films will soon find a veritable place abroad that will brush off all the stereotyped, distorted image of the country.

The varied essays gathered in this volume are essential and challenging reading for both academics and students across the cultural sciences and humanities. The enriching insights and the wide-ranging perspective reveal the multicultural dimension of India, inspiring readers to explore themes further. Hopefully, this book will generate an even larger dialogue on the interrelation of cultures in the near future.

Ana M^a García

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Paula GARCÍA RAMÍREZ.

Introducción al estudio de la literatura africana en lengua inglesa.

Universidad de Jaén: Servicio de Publicaciones, 2000.

There are not many monographs on African literature in Spain, either in Spanish or any other peninsular language. Recently we saw in *Babelia-El País* (March 10th 2001) José María Ridaó's review of the anthology by Donato Ndongo and Mbaré Ngom *Literatura de Guinea Ecuatorial*, which may

be expressive of the situation of the whole issue of African literature in Spain and, indeed, although to a considerably lesser extent, in Europe. If the small amount of African literature in Spanish is characterized by what the reviewer aptly calls «materia reservada», i.e., by the lack of interest on the part of the

old metropolis, what else can be said about a minimal general interest in African literature written in other languages (including French, English, and those in the vernacular) and responding to other cultural backgrounds? The Spanish interest in African literature in general is certainly scarce. Only about fifteen books, some of them sharing their African syllabus with Asia and the Caribbean region, are currently at hand today, most of them in university libraries. The situation changes quite considerably in Portugal, a much more productive country, if only because of its deep linguistic share in postcolonial Africa. But one suspects, after a brief survey of the Portuguese production concerning African literature, that outside the particular domain of literature in Portuguese, the situation is similar to Spain.

In this respect, the present book is an important contribution to the small corpus of three or four handbooks on African literature available in our country today.¹ It is perhaps one of the most exhaustive ones, and, although the title indicates «en lengua inglesa», it is the case that the author does not miss the opportunity to present, before going deeper into its main concern, the whole panorama of African literature in languages other than English. Thus, we can get a wide perspective of literature in French, Portuguese, Arabic, Afrikaans, Spanish, German and such vernacular languages as Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Swahili, Kikuyu, and so on. There is even attention paid to such literary possibilities as pidgins and creole. This is

definitely a strong aspect of the book: its author has not limited herself to a neat and uncomplicated survey of English literature in Africa, but she has also accompanied it with a very useful and informative account of the different literatures that are now developing and coexisting in the African continent.

The presentation and interpretation of the historical and socio-political context of the literary endeavour in Africa is of primary importance here. This very same context makes it necessary to touch on the vernacular languages if we are to fully understand African literature in English, an issue that displays many connections with the linguistic and socio-political problems such as decolonization, the difficult integration of tradition and modernity, the artificiality of the borders between states, ethnic fragmentation, the problems of African identity, etc. This again is an important contribution of this book and, to meet its demands, the author, as she herself declares, has opted for a historiographic approach since it favours a better understanding on the part of the readers, and since most of the African authors themselves have shown a special concern for the relationships between literature and history.

The book is thus divided into seven major chapters, the first of which is most appropriately devoted to the exposition of the main keys for the correct study of African literature. Here the essentials of the problems and the particular features mentioned above are dealt with at length, although they recur again and again when needed in the rest

1. The essential publications are: Janheinz Jahn (1971) *Las literaturas neoafricanas*. Madrid: Guadarrama; Áfrico Amasik (1985) *La literatura africana hoy*. Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Benchomo; La Laguna: Centro de Estudios Africanos; Fahimeh Farsaie (1995) *Rostros de Europa: Autoras y autores de África y Asia*. Barcelona: Virus; José Luis Caramés Lage et al. (1997) *Literatura postcolonial en inglés: India, África y Caribe: teoría y práctica*. Oviedo: Universidad, Servicio de Publicaciones and Verónica Pereyra, Luis María Mora (1998) *Literaturas africanas: (de las sombras a la luz)*. Madrid: Mundo Negro.

of the book. In this connection, the second chapter is taken up by a general survey on African literature in languages other than English, even if again considerations about this topic abound all throughout the book when required by the expository plan of the author or the particular connections with the study of literature in English, which is indefatigably pursued throughout the remaining five chapters.

As the author considers that there are grounds to think of three main literary areas in African literature in English, chapters 3 to 7 are organized around these three main domains: West Africa, East Africa and South Africa, with two separate chapters to deal more specifically with Nigeria and the Republic of South Africa, within the groups of West Africa and South Africa respectively, on account of the enormous weight of these two countries in the cultivation of African literatures in English. No doubt, this general layout facilitates the better understanding of a highly involved and complicated situation, in line with the introductory character of the book. Contiguities and discontinuities are appropriately underlined when necessary in such a way that the general mapping out is qualified with the attention paid to particular features arising here and there. In addition to the historiographic approach the author has most frequently opted for the presentation of the extensive list of works and authors through genre classification, which, if risking a fall into reiterative inclusion of the same author in different categories, has the advantage of providing a clear and orderly presentation very suitable for consultation.

The treatment of the different geographic areas mentioned above is balanced in relation to their relative importance in the field of literature in English. Chapter 3, devoted to Nigeria, is the longest, followed in length by

chapter 4, devoted to the rest of the West African area, and by the chapter dealing with the South African Republic. This is a consequence of the primary importance of the West African region, and within that region, of Nigeria, the most densely populated country in Africa and the one with an important emergent literature in English, hand in hand with the consolidated literature in English of the South African Republic. In East Africa English has lost ground, due to the growing cultivation of native languages (mainly Swahili) on account of a nationalistic reaction against colonialism. Other countries only marginally connected with English are included here, namely Cameroon and Somalia, but the opportunity is taken to present a brief account of the literary situation in other languages.

The monograph pays attention to the particular conditions of the book trade and editorial industry in Africa, as in the case of the *Onitsha Market Pamphlets* in Nigeria (80-83), or the so-called *Blay's novelettes* in Ghana (135-36), or their subservience to the Western World mass media, together with the biographical relationship of many African authors with Europe or the USA because they have fixed their residence there either permanently or for a long time. This is the case, among many, of Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri, the *Black Victorians*, Guillaume Oyono-Mbia, Lenrie Peters, Tijan M. Sallah, William Boyd, Peter Nazareth, Nuruddin Faran, etc. All this bears witness to the dependence of the African authors on Europe or America for the world distribution of their books.

The final bibliography is extensive enough and includes most of the items in English published during the late 1980s and 1990s in the domain of African criticism, which shows the wealth of what is now offered to the Spanish reader.

Although it is difficult to give in only 240 pages a full account of the rich emergent literature of a whole continent with comments, assessments, and samples of the work being dealt with, which the author tries to do wherever she can, the present book is too factual perhaps and exhibits a certain cursory character throughout. The present reviewer would have appreciated that, in the balance between presentation of mere facts and the rendering of personal judgement, the author had chosen to deal more at length with the latter, enriching her contribution with that personal touch that makes even a handbook the author's own. We know, however, that then the book would be longer, built on a different basis, and probably it would not fulfil its main aim as an introductory handbook for the Spanish public. Yet the few samples of poetry or narrative very sparsely included in the book indicate that, if they had been resorted to in a more assiduous way, the book would have gained in appeal to the reader and in liveliness.

Another necessary thing that one misses in this book, especially as it is

conceived as a general but detailed survey of the literature of a whole continent, would be a final index of names and titles. This is something almost compulsory in the English scholarly tradition and, it goes without saying, something extremely useful for consultation. Although still rare in the Spanish tradition, it is a feature that should be imported from the Anglo-Saxon world.

Otherwise, the book is extremely useful and through it the Spanish student of African literature can be introduced to the great (and not so great) names of the African literary canon in English (Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri, Amos Tutuola, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, etc.) and their interrelationship with a whole world of men and women, ideas and events in ferment now in that continent which, paraphrasing what has been often said about women's literature, is truly the lost continent of world literature.

Luciano García
Universidad de Jaén

Manuel AGUIRRE, Roberta QUANCE, Philip SUTTON.
Margins and thresholds: An inquiry into the concept of liminality in text studies
Madrid: The Gateway Press, 2000.

Liminality is not a new concept, but the truth is that in the field of English studies in Spain it has not been really discovered, used and developed until recent times. The series proposed and started with this monograph written by Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton, *Studies in Liminality and Literature*, comes to inaugurate a fruitful, open path for research. Though the

notion of liminality has already been introduced in guides such as Jeremy Hawthorn's (2000) *A Glossary of contemporary literary theory* (London: Arnold), Irena Makaryk's (ed.) (1993) *Encyclopedia of contemporary literary theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), and also in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's (1998) *Key concepts in post-colonial studies* (Lon-