

quality Conrad scholarship that has appeared during the last several decades. For students seeking introductory-level discussions of plot and metaphor that repeat the truisms of ancient Conrad studies, Schwarz's book has some use, since it provides adequate summaries of the crises of personal conduct and epistemology that characterize the fiction Conrad wrote after the publication of *Under Western Eyes* (1910-1911). However, the book unfortunately contributes little that is new or interesting to the already distinguished body of Conrad criticism in existence, and it can be safely ignored by students of Conrad's works who have progressed intellectually to the point of desiring that some innovative synthesis and skillful, informed application of theory be evidenced in the scholarship they read.

Denise Coussy, et al. ed.

*ANTHOLOGIE CRITIQUE DE LA LITTÉRATURE  
AFRICAINNE ANGLOPHONE*

Paris: Union Generale d'Éditions, 1983. Pp. 479

Reviewed by John Conteh-Morgan

A notable development on the French intellectual scene in the last decade is the outburst of activity in the teaching and studying of the literature of Anglophone Africa at university level. Although French academic circles had been aware of its existence from as far back as the 1950s, thanks to Raymond Quéneau's translation into French of Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drunkard*, this literature did not constitute, until fairly recently, the object of any serious attention.

For a long time in France, literature in English signified first and foremost the great tradition: the literary production of Great Britain and America. The imaginative writings of Anglophone Africa were only studied at postgraduate level in a few universities such as the Sorbonne and Grenoble.

In 1971, however, the situation began to change. A Société d'Études des Pays du Commonwealth (Sepc) was founded. With the creation of this Society, the vistas of university lecturers of English were opened to the fresh pastures provided by the literatures of the New Commonwealth. By 1973, the number of doctorates on Commonwealth literature had soared to over a hundred from about twenty in 1970. (For this and other details on the literature of Anglophone Africa in France see Michel Fabre, "La Littérature Africaine à l'Université: l'Enjeu d'une Discipline," *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*, Paris [Avril - Juin 1982], pp. 11-15). That year also witnessed the introduction, in several French universities including Caen, Toulouse III, Paris III, and Montpellier, of various undergraduate and postgraduate courses on the New Literatures in English, in particular that of English-speaking Africa. The official consecration of this literature came in 1981 with the inclusion of Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) in the English syllabus of the highly prestigious and competitive Agrégation examination.

Since then many workshops and conferences have been regularly organized on this literature; a couple of journals such as *African Newsletter* and *Echos du Commonwealth* founded; some special issues such as Robert Mane's study of Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (Sepc 1978) and Jacqueline Bardolph's of *Petals of Blood* (Sepc 1981) devoted to it, not to mention the volume of twelve essays on *Arrow of God* (Achebe et ses Critiques: "Arrow of God"), published by the Center for Afro-American and Third-World Anglophone Studies of the University of Paris III.

While the literature of English-speaking Africa can therefore be said to have truly arrived on the French university scene, the wider reading public of France still remains largely unaware of its existence. This is because for the most part, it is unavailable in translation.

In these circumstances, *Anthologie Critique de la Littérature Africaine Anglophone* could not have come at a more opportune time. It will be of special interest and value to the nonspecialist francophone reader who, in the opinion of the authors, is given "a real sample of this literature that is in search of its themes and form" (*Anthologie*, p. 10).

The authors' main concern in this book has not been to translate and present excerpts from a few good novels by internationally-known writers, but to include at least a passage from most of the novels written in English from Africa. Diversity and representativeness therefore seem to have been their watchwords. The book itself is divided into three main sections, each of which covers the fiction of a specific geographical area: West, East, and South Africa. A smaller section by Jean-Pierre Durix is devoted to prose from Central Africa and the Horn. Preceding the selection of texts from each region is a short introduction.

In her introduction to the West Africa section, Denise Coussy, the author of a 1980 "doctorat d'Etat" on the Nigerian novel, traces the origins and development of West-African fiction. She gives the by now familiar reasons for the rise of this literature—the need to counter images of Africa conveyed by novels such as Joyce Carey's *Mister Johnson* (1939), Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and to reconstruct the past; she also outlines some of its main themes: the cohesion of traditional society, the disruptive effects of the colonial enterprise, the corrupting influence of the city, and the inefficiency of the postcolonial state. Her chosen texts do not only exemplify these themes, but also give an idea of the various attempts by the novelists of this region, Achebe and Soyinka in particular, to write a form of English that is both masterly and yet richly African in texture.

In this respect, Dr. Coussy's translations deserve special mention. She manages, in general, to render into French the various types of English used by these authors to explore their African experience. Her attempts, however, at translating Tutuola are totally unsuccessful.

Is it out of fear of manhandling the French language (she could hardly have been blamed for this as she is only translating), or is it because she feels that an accurate rendering of Tutuola into French will forever devalue this author's work in Francophone eyes? Be as it may, she puts Tutuola's notoriously defective English into excellent French and thereby gives to her Francophone readership the totally misleading picture of a writer in perfect control of his medium. Of course, in the process she also loses the flavor and distinctive quality of the original.

Thirty-one out of the thirty-nine passages chosen are from Nigerian novels, a fact which vividly underscores the preeminence of that country on the West-African literary scene. In the case of the selection from Sierra Leone, one wonders whether in addition to the excerpt from Nicol's *Devil in Yolahun Bridge* (1965) a further choice from some of the novels available—Wellesly-Cole's *Kossoh Town Boy* (1960), Conton's *The African* (1960) Sariff Easmon's *The Burnt out Marriage* (1967), or Yulisa Amadu's *No Past, No Present, No Future* (1973)—could not have given a fuller picture of literary activity in that country.

In the section devoted to East Africa, Dr. Jacqueline Bardolph reminds the reader that this region, unlike West Africa, has been exposed to English only comparatively recently. Under Arab influence, there developed in East Africa, a lingua franca, Swahili, whose spread and implantation was later helped by an official British policy which carried out the day-to-day administration of the region in it, and encouraged its use as a medium of instruction at the primary school level. Literacy in English was therefore lower and less widespread in East Africa, on the eve of Independence, than in English-speaking West Africa. Hence in Dr. Bardolph's opinion the relatively late development of a literature in English in the former area. The first novel from East Africa, Ngugi's *The River Between*, was published in 1964; the first from West Africa, *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* in 1952.

Since then, of course, the East-African literary scene has displayed intense activity. This is fully conveyed by the varied selection made by the anthologist. In tune with the general objectives of the book, she does not limit her choice to the substantial writers of the area—Ngugi, Meja Mwangi. She also anthologizes passages from works such as the Tanzanian Palangyo's *Dying in the Sun* (1969), the Kenyan Ole Kulet's *To Become a Man* (1972), and the Ugandan Okelle Oculi's *Prostitute* (1968). Her selections are grouped, like in the preceding section, into the main concerns of this region's fiction: the mau-mau revolt, the anguish born of rootlessness, and the ills of the new nation-state.

Dr. Bardolph is on strong ground when she says that East-African prose, unlike that of West Africa, dwells more on collective adventures than on individual destinies: for example, the fate of a village in *Grain of Wheat* (1967) and Ruhumbika's *Village in Uhuru* (1969), that of a representative family in *Petals of Blood* (1977). But she is less convincing when she asserts that it also contains a much greater presence of the oral literary traditions of Africa. To carry

conviction, this point will have to be argued out more fully. She does not do that, and her choice of texts does not illustrate it either.

In the last section of the book, that devoted to South Africa, Jean Sevry, the author of *Le Roman et Les Races en Afrique du Sud (Novel and Races in South Africa, 1982)*, starts by giving a brief picture of the socioeconomic realities of the region without which, he says, "the literary production of the Republic will not be understood" (p. 367). He then traces the evolution of this literature from its origins in the twenties and situates its birthplace to the mission centers of Fort Hare and Lovedale. It was here that young African mission boys were asked to collect and transcribe in their language the praise songs, proverbs, and epics of their cultures. Indeed, one of the first historico-literary works by a black South African, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925) was born out of this practice.

Although the perspective from which these mission boys were expected to view their culture was Christian, the taste they had acquired for exploring their culture was to serve them in good stead in their quest, during their nationalist phase, for an identity and a heroic past. The writers, from whose works excerpts are chosen to illustrate the preoccupations of this early period include Mofolo's *Chaka*, Stanlake Samkange's *Origins of Rhodesia* (1968), and Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1920).

Jean Sevry situates the second period in South-African writing around the 1960s. What characterizes the works of this period is no longer the exhumation of a heroic past, but the brutal description of the cruelty of a segregationist and puritanical present. South-African society with its mines, Sowetos, passbooks, impossible and forbidden interracial relations and phantasms is described and denounced by the new wave of writers. A literature of shantytowns by angry young men has replaced the vague negritude-like musings of the mission-educated older generation. Peter Abraham, Alex La Guma, Mphahlele, and Nkosi are some of the authors chosen by Sevry to exemplify this tendency.

*Anthologie Critique de la Littérature Africain Anglophone* is a very useful addition to the growing stock of books in France on the literature of anglophone Africa. In addition to being a good introduction to this literature, it provides a bibliography at the end of each section that will help the interested pursue their knowledge of the subject. Will it be to cavil at it however, to suggest that its near-total concentration on the novel makes the title somewhat misleading?

Mario J. Valdés  
*SHADOWS IN THE CAVE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
APPROACH TO LITERARY CRITICISM BASED ON  
HISPANIC TEXTS*

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. Pp. xi + 215.  
\$25.00.

Reviewed by Peter Bly

Towards the end of this book, Mario Valdés makes the bold claim that he is "introducing a new concept of literary history to Hispanic Studies" (p. 163). Perhaps it would be truer to say that he tackles an area of literary theory that most Hispanists find convenient to ignore: hermeneutics, or the methodological principles of interpretation and explanation of the literary text. The major part of Dr. Valdés's study is devoted to the theoretical discussion of one particular approach to the literary text, the phenomenological. Illustrations are taken from a wide range of major Hispanic authors: Cervantes, Galdós, Fuentes, García Márquez, Cortázar, Paz, and Neruda. Dr. Valdés is to be warmly congratulated both on a fluent and masterly exposition of his theory (with its accompanying jargon!), and the very perceptive analyses of his chosen texts. Two examples of the latter (the notion that at the end of Galdós's *Misericordia*, 1897, the reader is participating at a mass said by the saintly protagonist, Benina, and the suggestion that Sancho Panza in his conversations with his master is the paradigm for the creative reader) are particularly original and arresting.