

FINAL REPORT (298634 CAMLIT) FP7-MC-III-F
Publishable Summary

Perpetuating Cameroon Anglophone Literature: A Critical Study of Selected Texts

Examining some eighteen Cameroon Anglophone writers from interdisciplinary critical perspectives, this study is original and innovative. The study is an excellent representation of a literary tradition which has not gained deserving international attention. Its relevance in the European Union is very evident. It is therefore ground-breaking. It has met all its objectives with regard to the work packages (WP1 - WP4) and various tasks under each work package. The study has been transformed into a monograph which would be published as the best means of disseminating Cameroon Anglophone writing in the international literary and cultural community. The book substantially demonstrates that Cameroon Anglophone literature is postcolonial literature which contributes enormously to contemporary questions of cultural nationalism and global interconnectivities, dynamics of political power, representations of gender complexities, and articulations of existentialist positions.

The Structure of the Work

The study comprises an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. The introduction is an impressive effort at a review of research, at charting the field, and at introducing a valid new approach to a wider selection of texts. With regard to critical paradigms, discourses on Postcolonial literary criticism have been used. Postcolonial Criticism is eclectic or hybrid as it revolves historiography, culture and transculturality, poststructuralism/deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism, philosophy and language. In line with this conviction the theoretical framework of the present study is guided by the different critical concerns of the works analysed. Current critical discourses characterise the way theory would be handled, unless in cases where received and unchallenged concepts are imperative for use.

It is worthwhile to note that the study has been structured in such a way that the reader does not necessarily need to follow a chronological order of discourse regarding the different sections. Apart from the detailed introduction the reader can begin with any part of their choice. The unity of the work is not disrupted because its entity consists of several trajectories of construing and critically analysing Cameroon Anglophone literature. The analyses are as follows:

1 “Literary Historicity: Anglophone Identity, Resisting Political, Linguistic and Artistic Eclipses” is dedicated to a critical examination of the Anglophone problem in the matrix of nation-building and identity. The birth of Anglophone literature has been attributed to this very delicate issue in the Cameroonian nation. This explains why original conceptualisations of Cameroon Anglophone are based on a political category. With a critical bent on literary historicity in Postcolonial Theory, Anglophone political activism is addressed in terms of temporalities and positionalities. The section briefly underscores the historical circumstances which account for Anglophone minority consciousness and socio-political resistance to marginalisation and assimilation. Victor Epie Ngome’s *What God Has Put Asunder*, Bole Butake’s *Family Saga*, Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* and Nol Alembong’s *Forest Echoes* are critically read with regard to their imaginative interpretation of Anglophoneness and futurity.

2 Cameroon has one of Africa’s rich multicultural identities. “Cultural Perpetuity: Reasserting Cultural Identity and Negotiating New Spaces with Western Encounters and Globalisation” is an important trajectory in construing Cameroon Anglophone literature. It grapples with cultural nationalism through artistic representations. Oral literature and its implication on written literature is an interesting Afrocentric approach to its literature. Kenjo Jumbam’s *The White Man of God*, Bongasu Tanla-Kishani’s *Konglanjo* and Alobwed’Epie’s *The Lady With the Beard* showcase the dynamics of Cameroon’s pluralistic culture, its rootedness despite colonial, imperial and global incursions, and its negotiation of spaces in the inevitability of transculturalism. Relying on cultural critics such as Kwame Gyekye, John Mbiti, Masolo, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, Nol Alembong and Francis Nyamnjoh, the section argues for the specificity of African cultural identities

and their place in the global cultural scene. The discourse immensely contributes to European Union's cultural diplomacy policies in promoting and valorising Africa's extremely rich cultural heritage.

3 "Beyond Anglophone Voice and Literature: Raising Awareness for a Marginalised People" is a discourse which places Cameroon Anglophone literature in the main stream of postcolonial literatures in the domain of contestations of power orchestrated by intrinsic and extrinsic historical circumstances. Postcolonial Africa is to an extent the legacy of European and Western colonial and imperial experience. Present international ties and corporation necessitate a good understanding of problems of African governance and politics. The complexities of power networks as performance of political, social and economic dominance are very characteristic of African postcolonial states, particularly south of the Sahara. The Mystery and Burden of History: Teleology and the Corpsing of Time in Tah Asongwed's *Born to Rule: The Autobiography of a Life President* (1993), Metaphors of State Disability: Assessing Power and the Body in Bate Besong's *Beasts of No Nation* (1990) and Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Black Caps and Red Feathers* (2001), and Representing and Reconstituting Fragments in Mathew Takwi's *Fire on the Mountain* (2008) are the interpretative frames. Taking recourse to critics in political science such as, Achille Mbembe, Ania Lomba, Crawford Young, Ernest Renan, Hayden White, Margaret Macmillan, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Walter Rodney, intricate systems of governance in the "postcolony" are analysed to contest the "post" in postcolonial. Political systems are still enmeshed in colonial and imperial processes. Neocolonial and globalisation discourses only show how degenerate African governments, buried in autocracy and militarisation, may become.

4 "Images of Women: R/Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes" wrestles with female representations in Cameroon Anglophone literature from an Afrofeminist perspective. It therefore has affinities with the section on culture imaging given that it evaluates female representations in culturally ordered contexts. The European Union is cognisant of gender balance in all aspects of social, cultural, political, economic and academic engagement. It promotes female empowerment through education and artistic productivity which is an enriching site for debates regarding different cultural notions on gender and contestations of power. This chapter centres on female representations in Cameroon Anglophone writing with emphasis on female authors Margaret Afuh and Anne Tanyi Tang. While female imaging and imagining can be appropriated with any theoretical paradigm, the major argument here is that not any kind of criticism should be imposed on a culturally inspired text which primarily needs to be interpreted within its own cultural epistemological terms. Margaret Afuh's *Born Before Her Time* and Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa, My Bundle of Joy* and *Arrah* are discussed against the background of African Feminist scholars such as Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Obioma N Nnaemeka, Amina Mama, Oyeronke Oyewumi, C G Chukukere, and Catherine Acholonu. Gender negotiations in patriarchal ideology and practice, marriage, child-bearing and mothering, education and the dynamics of empowerment, and cultural enhancement are the discursive parameters in deconstructing and reconstructing images of the woman.

5 "Existentialist Questions: Transcending Regional Boundaries, Addressing Universal Concerns" is centred on global discourses of humanity's existential destiny. Common problems of human existence with regard to Martin Esslin's and Neil Cornwell's articulations of the absurd, Jean Paul Sartre's free-will theories and Baron D'Holbach's determinist convictions are applied to Linus Asong's *No Way to Die*. This philosophical perspective demonstrates the text as parallel with Western categories. Analysing diaspora discourses bordering on the views of scholars such as James Clifford, Joseph Harris, Colin Palmer, Carole Boyce Davies, Khachig Tölölyan and Maybritt Jill Alpes, positions Cameroon Anglophone literature's contribution to migratory, transcultural and transnational realities. Diasporic peculiarities with regard to "Bush falling" phenomenon are interpreted in Priscillia M Manjoh's *Snare*.

The conclusion reviews the arguments and invites further research in the field to perpetuate Cameroon Anglophone literature and ascertains its place in Africa and the rest of the world.