

AN AMALGAM OF GENRES

What we find in *Imbizo* 7(1) is a *mélange* of artistic texts that come together to address interrelated issues relevant to scholarly engagement in this age. The authors have drawn from novels, short stories, oral narratives, memoirs and films to present their arguments. These arguments hinge on questions of power and resistance, forgiveness, state security, female sexuality, gender relations, and oral literature. While some of the articles explore the familiar terrain of fictional invectives on social life, others are situated directly within the context of their historicity. To navigate all the articles in this issue is to navigate a vast landscape of criticisms which are at once familiar and discomfoting – discomfoting because they challenge our self-knowledge.

In ‘The interrelationship between oral literature and museum studies’, the author unpacks the interface between the study of oral literature and the study of museums, arguing that an appreciation of folklore can lead to the development of community museums, while existing museums can aid studies of oral literature since they provide raw data. This article places oral literature at the centre of community life while simultaneously compelling us to see the value of museums. It makes us wonder how much we know about the museums in our communities and their impact on social development.

From oral literature and museums, we move on into the field of film, specifically into films that explore the plight of African slaves in America. The second article ‘Manifestations of power and resistance: an exploration of Quentin Tarantino’s *Django unchained* and Steven McQueen’s *12 years a slave*’ highlights the tragedies of African slave history where African slaves endured the most horrendous hardships in the hands of their white masters, suffering abuses that were not just physical but also psychological, because to succumb to a white master is to lose your independence as a human being. The authors of this article however focus not only on the domination of the slaves but also on the slaves’ attempts at resisting domination.

The article on ‘African women and forbidden grounds: female sexuality and self-determination in African literature’ continues on the theme of power and domination, but focusing this time on how the female body is subjected to sexual domination and how in turn it resists that domination. The article advocates a “decolonisation” of the female body as the ultimate step to restoring its human dignity.

Somehow it is hard to successfully restore that which is lost without engaging with the concept of forgiveness. This is where the article on ‘Ambiguities of forgiveness in *Left to tell: discovering God amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*’ becomes significant, since it discusses the inherent contradiction in granting forgiveness and at the same time desiring justice. The author looks at a memoir which recounts the 1994 Rwandan genocide as it breaks down the boundaries between victim and perpetrator. The author argues that although forgiving the perpetrator of violence is a crucial part of the healing process, exacting justice is just as important for any kind of reconciliation to take place.

Linking up ethnicity with the issue of land, the article on ‘The significance of land and culture in selected texts by Chenjerai Hove’ interrogates the ways in which the allocation of land to indigenous peoples in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) fractured their cultural identities, as revealed in the writing of Zimbabwean writer Chenjerai Hove. Like the article on ‘Manifestations of power and resistance’, this article approaches its selected texts using realism as a lens. Through this lens, the author exposes the brutality of colonial administrative practices in colonial Zimbabwe.

The critique on state atrocities is carried forward in the next article which looks at ‘The state security apparatus and political repression in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of blood* and *Devil on the cross*’. Using Ngugi’s two novels as the basis for its argument, this article contends that the agents of state security in these novels are ironically agents of oppression and anti-revolutionaries. The political repression that engulfs post-independence Kenya is therefore inevitable, as the article surmises.

The last article in this issue revisits Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel *Changes: a love story* from a perspective that is decidedly post-feminist. Contending that Esi is ‘a female chauvinist’, the author goes further to demonstrate how her dream of finding love in marriage dissipates because of her uncompromising feminist values. The views of the author constitute a bitter pill to swallow, but these are issues that we constantly need to re-think in an attempt to find workable solutions to gender inequality.

The seven articles in this issue apply various theoretical perspectives – at times even opposing ones – in their reading of texts. Ultimately, they convey the need to redefine theory as we continue to engage with African literary works.

In line with *Imbizo*’s vision to deepen dialogue between African scholars, we have decided to include interviews in the issues published in 2016. The first interview appears in this issue. It is an interview with renowned African literature scholar Eckhard Breitinger in which the interviewer engages him on the evolution

of Anglophone Cameroon drama and particularly Bole Butake's contribution to that process.

We hope that the contents of this issue will engage African scholars who will in turn be motivated to submit their articles to *Imbizo*.

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