

CALL FOR PAPERS

AFRICAN LITERATURE TODAY (ALT) 41: African Literature in African Languages

Guest Editors: Nduka Otiono (Carleton University) and Chiji Akoma (Villanova University)

A year after the much-celebrated Conference of African Writers of English Expression which took place in Uganda in 1962, Obiajunwa Wali published a scathing article, “The Dead End of African Literature?” in the journal *Transition* in which he criticized the privileging of African literatures written in European languages over those in indigenous African languages as evidenced by the category of African writers invited to the conference. Much has been made of his problematic attempt to define African literature and prescribe texts that fit the form, but Wali threw down an important challenge to his readers toward the end of his short essay, stating: “What one would like future conferences on African literature to devote time to, is the all-important problem of African writing in African languages, and all its implications for the development of a truly African sensibility” (*Transition*, 10 September 1963, p. 14). Central to this debate on the politics of language in African literature are two canonical essays by Africa’s foremost novelist, Chinua Achebe (“The African Writer and the English Language”) and Ngugi wa Thiong’o (“The Language of African Literature”). Sixty years have passed since that historic Makerere University conference in which indigenous African language literatures were conspicuously cast aside for those written in English or French. In the intervening years, discursive approaches such as postcolonialism, postmodernism, and World Literature (Damrosch 2003; Christopher Prendergast, 2004) have compounded the debate and stretched the binary/dichotomy between African (oral) literatures in indigenous languages and “modern” African literatures in European languages or languages of the colonizers. Given the renewed interest in this abiding question of the language of African literatures in the context of decoloniality and the promotion of prizes to recognize/encourage writing in African languages and kindle translation from, between and into African languages exemplified by the Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature, we must return to Wali’s submission and ask, **“What is the state of African literatures in African languages today?”**

The co-guest editors of ALT 41 invite articles for this special Volume, “African Literature in African Languages.”

Contributors are welcome to examine different aspects of literary production in African languages. While particularly interested in written literatures, we also invite submissions on other literary forms in African languages. Of great importance are topics on literary production, orality, readership, authorship and community ethos, African modernity, translation, and digitization. Essays that offer comparative meditations on African language literatures and African literatures in European languages toward understanding what Wali calls “a truly African sensibility” are equally welcome. Furthermore, the editors are calling for papers that highlight language systems and aesthetic values in original literary texts in African languages, as well as essays that pay attention to the regional peculiarities of literary production, which in the case of the Horn of Africa, for example, “European languages never supplanted indigenous languages” (Mazagora 2015: 5).

Contributors should please note that submissions that include extracts in African languages must be translated with permission obtained by the authors for this to be done. Such submissions must include the permission for translation from the original authors (who should also give permission for use of their works). “Fair use” rules may apply for very short excerpts: To be confirmed with the Publisher.

Articles not more than 5,000 words should be submitted as a Word document to NdukaOtiono@cunet.carleton.ca; and chiji.akoma@villanova.edu; and copied to the Series Editor: eernest@umich.edu on or before 1 November 2022.

Submissions are also invited for:

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT – short creative writing selections – poetry, short stories, one-act plays.

FEATURED ARTICLES – non-themed articles on any aspect of African Literature (not more than 5000 words).

Contributions for the Literary Supplement and Featured Articles items should be submitted as a Word document to the Series Editor: eernest@umich.edu on or before 1 November 2022.

Authors and book reviewers should follow ALT Author Guideline Submissions:

<https://boydellandbrewer.com/search-results/?series=african-literature-today>