

A point of debate raised during the roundtable concerned the frequently encountered assumption that African literature (unlike other literature) needs a tremendous amount of explanation and contextualization. One speaker suggested the panelists might be overstating the need to explain the epic. Such explanation can reinforce stereotypes about African "otherness." A solution might lie in greater confidence that the literature can and will make its impact on students' minds, or it might lie in equivalent attention to context in teaching other works. Other discussion focussed on the vitality of contemporary oral traditions in heroicizing figures such as Mandela or Kabila, testifying to the continuing relevance of this form in the contemporary world. In a forthcoming essay in *Women's Studies Quarterly* on the topic of this roundtable ("A *Sin de Me*: Learning to Teach the African Oral Epic in African Literature Courses") Tom Hale discusses not only the role of women in African epic but the increasing participation of women in reciting epic and in bringing forward new narrative materials. Interested readers should consult his essay for further bibliographical references and additional discussion of pedagogy. Stephen Belcher's enormously informative work on *Epic Traditions in Africa* will be out in 1998 from Indiana University Press.

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ALA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting of April 17, 1997, East Lansing, Michigan

Present: Anne Adams (Zora), Kofi Anyidoho, Irène d'Almeida, Sandra Barkan, Odile Cazenave, Arthur Drayton, Maureen Eke, Arlene Elder, Anthony Hurley, Rene Larrier, Judith Miller, Thelma Ravel-Pinto, Pamela Smith, O.B. Traore, Louis Tremaine, Hal Wylie.

I. CALL TO ORDER

President A. Drayton called the meeting to order at 7:15 a.m.

II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda was adopted as amended.

III. RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Moved and adopted Executive Council minutes from ASA 1996, San Francisco.

IV. BUSINESS ARISING

A. **Funding Graduate Students.** S. Barkan proposed a one-time pre-dissertation fellowship of \$500.00 to support graduate students to go to Africa for research, thereby helping them to prepare for Fulbright pre-dissertation fellowships. It was agreed that a committee consisting of the President, Vice-President and Past President supervise this fellowship. Potential candidates would compete for the fellowship and should apply early in the year. Suggestions about the sources of funding include dues, the ALA endowment, and general funds. S. Barkan moved to endorse the idea in principle. It was voted and passed.

B. **Présence Africaine:** I. d'Almeida reminded the Council of Présence Africaine's request of ALA assistance to sell books at the conference. She also informed the Council that the journal would celebrate its 50th anniversary this year with a symposium in November. She wondered if the ALA would participate in the symposium. I. d'Almeida also asked about the possibility of organizing a panel on Présence Africaine at the next ALA. O. Cazenave suggested that the ALA invite Mme Diop to the conference. H. Wylie, the co-convenor of the next ALA @ Austin asked about the source of funding for Mme Diop's visit. USIA traveling speaker grant was suggested as potential source of funding. Other sources included institutional invitations or lectureship.

A. Adams encouraged the Council to establish a relationship with Présence Africaine considering its work and history. She volunteered to work with I. d'Almeida and O. Cazenave to invite Mme Diop. A. Adams also hoped that the ALA could participate officially at the journal's 50th symposium, even if it means that institutionally-sponsored participants would function as representatives of the ALA. In response to this call, A. Hurley suggested that the ALA adopt a standing policy to invite or sponsor a notable figure using 5%

conference registration dues the convenor gives the association. After some discussion, it was agreed that a committee of I. d'Almeida, J. Mayes, J. Miller explore possible funding sources for Mme Diop's visit and report to the Council at the next meeting.

V. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A. Research and Teaching: Videotaping and audio taping of invited guest artists at the conference was discussed. O. Cazenave reported that she has been able to find interviewers for almost all the attending artists. She has also drafted a letter of permission to be signed by visiting artists. Arthur asked about the cost of these interviews. O. Cazenave indicated that the ALA will pick up the cost. Council members expressed concerns centering on the interview process, transcription of interviews, housing and usage. A. Adams expressed her concern that the transcribed tape may be misused, especially if posted on the internet. S. Barkan indicated that she would seek help from her institution's attorney with the legalities. H. Wylie asked that the cost and legal implications of the video/audio taping and transcription be conveyed to him as soon as possible.

VI. ALA ELECTIONS

It was agreed that we need to give candidates more time to prepare their statements for the ALA elections. It was moved, voted and passed that states be prepared the day before the ABM. Members were encouraged to bring names for next year's nominations.

VII. ANNUALS

Members raised several issues: consideration of sequence of publication, how many to publish each year, and how often, the state of the Ghana issue, how to deal with AWP concerning pre-published items, and what to do with the backlog. AWP has agreed to help dispose of the backlog, but needs a contract. It was agreed that A. Drayton, S. Barkan and L. Tremaine discuss the issue of pre-published articles with Kassahun Checole and report details of their meeting to Council.

A. Hurley announced that his editorial team's Call for Papers for ALA 1996 Annual was successful and that their annual was almost ready for publication.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 a.m.

A CHALLENGE TO NWABUEZE

11 August 1997

Many on the outside are intrigued by the way in which events in Nigeria are being presented, interpreted and argued over. For example, in the Winter 1997 issue of the *Bulletin*, Eneka Nwabueze took William Boyd to task for some of his comments on the constitutional crisis and the Ken Saro-Wiwa affair. In doing so, he exposed himself to criticism.

For example, Nwabueze wrote that Boyd's statement that "Abacha declared the (12 June) election null and void" (*Bulletin*, Summer 1996, 5) is incorrect". He added: "The election was nullified by General Ibrahim Babangida who appointed Shonekan as the Chairman of the Interim National Government" (13).

So far so simple. In April 1996, the following point had been put to Wole Soyinka by Mikail Mumin: "But Abacha has continued to argue that his government did not annul the June 12 presidential election and that it would be unfair to ask him to vacate the seat now."

Soyinka replied in a convoluted manner as can be seen from the interview that was published in the 3 June 1996 issue of *Tell*:

I don't know to what set of morons Abacha thinks he is talking. His lies are so childish. He has lied to the entire international community. He lied to the Commonwealth. He's lied to the United Nations. The judiciary indeed stated that Shonekan's regime was totally illegal. It never said that Abacha's regime was illegal. It passed a judgement that Shonekan's so-called interim regime was illegal, that paved the way for the legitimate winner of the election to take over. What was the ground on which Shonekan's interim something was made illegal? It was simply because there was a certain process of succession and Babangida had no business overturning that process. In other words, it was a return to *status quo ante*. The winner of that election was supposed to take over. Abacha, of course, had already anticipated the illegality of Shonekan's regime and had conspired against him. Thus Abacha is guilty of treason. This is the reality. Let him face it. Anything he says is irrelevant, because he is a traitor to the mandate of the Nigerian people. It is Abacha who should be on trial, not the Gwadabes, not the Yar' Aduas, not the Obasanjos. They have nothing to do with what is going on now. They are simply the victims of Abacha's rapacity. So anything which Abacha says should be ignored as the rantings of a power hungry individual.

This does not clear up the issue, indeed it mingles a welcome grappling with underlying truths with skirmishing in an intensely personal campaign. However, put side by side the statements suggest that the ball is in Nwabueze's court — or perhaps lawyers will have to be called in to clear up the matter!

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