gloom that characterises old age. The gift of old age has become a source of curse. The poet-persona bemoans:

God, of my fathers, when the gift you were given to enjoy in your time is today a curse in my hands (29)

When Clark treats the plight of the woman in “A Mother’s Story,” he highlights the oppressive nature of a patrilinear society. Women are subject to the whims and caprices of their chauvinistic husbands:

to count the number of times I was kicked
Like a ball to my mother only
To be returned with more courtesy (30)

The husband becomes despotic to the extent that his supposed better half becomes a footmat that could be disposed of at will:

The foot mat my sons say I
Became to their father as the years
moved like barrels of palm oil ... (30)

There is the use of the complaint motif as the woman recalls how she “paddled for years through bitter storms/on the Niger ... (30). Unfortunately, her past labours do not earn her respect.

Finally, in “Homecoming,” the poet discusses the idea of the return of the native who has sojourned far from the rural town. Unfortunately, the gaiety that characterises such historic reunion is punctured by the seasons of agony unleashed by death. The poet is baffled by such a macabre harvest:

It must be more than hunger
That within a year of my coming home
Death should take six of the tender
And strong of my blood for breakfast (p.33)

Theophilus Amen Edokpayi (Abeokuta)


Editing an anthology of critical essays – to judge personally from a single, abandoned attempt – can be only slightly less enervating than undertaking a review of such a volume. In most cases, the initial idea can seem to stimulate
an almost bewildering variety of scholarly responses which demand considerable enterprise on the part of their editors in order to be put to bed beneath an adequately all-embracing cover made up of title and introduction and sequencing. That Gillian Whitlock and Helen Tiffin have achieved this in the present case is due as much, perhaps, to their editorial skill as to the fact that all the contributors to Re-Siting Queen’s English are united in having been taught and supervised by the man whom the volume honours in its inspiration, one of the pioneers of post-colonial literary criticism, Professor J.P. Matthews.

At the same time, the conventional status of Festschrift belies the vitality of most of the contributions – on first reading, I found myself turning repeatedly to my own current research to take notes from one essay or another for the fresh vista almost every one opens up on colonial and post-colonial writing, this despite the bias of the collection towards almost all things except the African literatures in English – the sole exception being Susan Gingell’s comparative study of Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman and Mesoamerican cultures.

The brief preface provides an efficient overview of the volume, which is worth repeating here and can scarcely be usefully summarized further:

Stan Dragland, Misao Dean, Lee Thompson and Gillian Whitlock have taken up [J.P. Matthews’s] insistence on the value of comparative perspectives in new and exciting ways, to fuse post-colonial analyses with feminist ones; Elizabeth Ferrier interrogates the global constructions of postmodernism from the perspective of the post-colonial local; Victor Chang re-sites Augustan perceptions in the Caribbean; and Russell McDougall and Helen Tiffin also address the re-siting and interrogation of the English literary traditions in this locality. Susan Gingell considers the politics of language re-citation in Nigeria, while Terry Goldie and Adam Shoemaker continue John’s exploration of the particular Australian-Canadian comparison. Chris Tiffin and Adrian Roscoe examine transformations of the English tradition in New Zealand in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Jim Wieland points out, John Matthews introduced us all to the riches of post-colonial literatures themselves as well as laying the foundations for subsequent critical approaches. (vii)

The volume ends with Bruce Nesbitt’s “Personal Profile” of John Matthews, and includes a list of the celebratee’s publications and of the M.A. and Ph.D. theses he has supervised over the years.

It is, of course, not only in the common academic origins but rather more in the variety of the individual authors’ approaches and personal mannerisms that the book contains much of its interest. To begin at the end rather than the beginning: in his “Writing and (Re-)Thinking,” James Wieland presents a personalized insight into the several phases of his own critical development after completing his Ph.D. in 1979, a process which for him revealed the connectedness of literary study with disparate areas of thought and theory. His