personal development: "It was with my stories and novels, my offering of what I was learning about the life within me and around me, that I entered the commonality of my country" (132). But the paradox of her inability to speak of "my people" remained with her. Only when the injustices of apartheid legislation were finally ended with the elections of April 1994, was it resolved. Her comment on the process provides a remarkable conclusion to a book which is full of insight:

What this means to our millions is something beyond price or reckoning that we know we shall have to work to put into practice, just as we worked for liberation. We know we have to perform what Flaubert called "the most difficult and least glamorous of all tasks: transition." This is the reality of freedom. This is the great matter.

I am a small matter, but for myself there is something immediate, extraordinary, of strong personal meaning. That other world that was the world is no longer the world. My country is the world, whole, a synthesis. I am no longer a colonial. I may now speak of "my people." (134).

Geoffrey V. Davis (Aachen)


The volume contains an introduction and thirteen studies of individual works and authors as well as of themes in a national literature. The issue's subtitle promises new trends and generations of writers, but the selection is fairly conservative: only one piece considers Francophone writing, the remainder cover English-language writing, thus ignoring the contributions of writing in Arabic and indigenous languages. One article — on Ken Saro-Wiwa — does consider "Rotten" and Pidgin English. Of the nations covered, Nigeria is the subject of five articles, emphasizing that country's continuing dominance in English-language writing, two essays deal with Zimbabwean literature, one reviews South African theatre, and the remaining three are on Cliff Lubwa p'Chong, Syl Cheney-Coker, and Kojo Laing respectively. All but three of the volume's contributors are based at African universities. A cursory review of the Index reveals a predilection for African critical voices and left-leaning textual analyses that focus on the writers' commitment. Contemporary theory is largely absent: terms associated with Postcolonial Studies, for example, are outnumbered by citations on imagery: "postcolonial" (four),
"decolonization" (one), "hibridity" [sic] (one); "imagery" (sixteen). A New Critical textual emphasis predominates. This focus may concern some readers, but the emphasis on text and language, aligned to a cultural politics that places literature at the centre of resistance is commendable, heeding as it does Edward Said's advice:

The intellectual’s representations ... are always tied to and ought to remain an organic part of an ongoing experience in society: of the poor, the disadvantaged, the voiceless, the unrepresented, the powerless. These are equally concrete and ongoing; they cannot survive being transfigured into creeds, religious declarations, professional methods.

The issue as a whole, however, does not fulfil its early promise.

Eldred Jones’ brief “Editorial Article” makes a number of claims, but they are supported more by the narrow range of the selections than by the current state of African writing and criticism. The first claim is innocuous enough: “It is ... possible to distinguish in the literatures of most countries pre-independence from post-independence literature but only as trends rather than a sudden break” (1). The influx of magic realism in works like Vassanji’s *The Gunny Sack* is but one notable example of a break from the more realist works that preceded political “independence.” Jones rightly points out the upsurge in women’s writing since independence (1), yet only one article selected, Rosemary Moyana’s, discusses women’s writing in any detail. Jones undercuts that development, moreover, when he stresses that it “breaks out of the limited concerns of women into the wider field of national life and politics.” (2) War, the writers’ engagement, and the political nature of African literature are countouning trends. (3) Jones remarks that the writers “are committed to the cause of the ordinary people ...” (2) Not a single article relies on any empirical research to test this ongoing claim of populist relevance, not even to the limited extent of citing sales figures in Africa. Many of the works – Zimbabwean writers, Saro-Wiwa and Osofisan excepted – are published in former or current imperial centres. What is the distribution rate, especially in light of several African countries’ balance of payment problems? Similarly, little attention is paid to the literacy rates (they are increasing in urban areas) and the attendant constrictions this places on the definition of “ordinary people.”

Lilyan Kesteloot’s “Turning Point in the Francophone/African Novel: the Eighties and Nineties” has been heavily edited; perhaps this is why the thesis is found in the final paragraph:

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2 (London: Heinemann, 1989)