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World literature, Kampala 1961-1968: literary circulation in *Transition*

Erik Falk



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Résumé de l'article

Un double constat critique est à l'origine de cet article. D'une part, l'appui quasi exclusif sur le roman dans plusieurs modèles dominant le champ de la mondialisation des littératures ne repose que sur une vision très partielle de la circulation de la littérature à l'échelle globale, d'où l'intérêt d'élargir les terrains d'analyse à des supports alternatifs ou complémentaires. D'autre part, certains arguments avancés dans les études littéraires postcoloniales sur la circulation et les publics de la littérature africaine restent insuffisamment fondés empiriquement. En prenant comme terrain d'enquête le magazine littéraire *Transition*, et plus précisément sa première période ougandaise, le présent article voudrait contribuer aux deux domaines. Explorant les contenus et les modes de circulation de ce périodique, il montre que la plupart des auteur-e-s qui s'y voient publié-e-s viennent de pays africains, quand d'autres contributeur-ice-s sont britanniques, américain-e-s et caribéen-ne-s ; que si le magazine publie des textes fondateurs en prose, la poésie reste le genre littéraire le plus représenté dans ses colonnes ; que ses lecteurs et lectrices, dont une bonne part interagit activement, vivent sur le continent africain, mais aussi en Europe et aux États-Unis ; et qu'il associe enfin certaines caractéristiques d'une « petite revue » à d'autres, propres à un magazine plus commercial. Ces résultats empiriques permettent d'interroger différents paramètres au centre des conceptualisations propres à la mondialisation des littératures et aux approches postcoloniales, tels que le statut de la nation ou du champ national, les limites de la notion de « littérature » telle qu'elle s'y voit définie, ou les relations entre des modes (post)-coloniaux et « impériaux » de production et de circulation des objets littéraires.

WORLD LITERATURE, KAMPALA 1961-1968 : LITERARY CIRCULATION IN *TRANSITION*

RÉSUMÉ

Un double constat critique est à l'origine de cet article. D'une part, l'appui quasi exclusif sur le roman dans plusieurs modèles dominant le champ de la mondialisation des littératures ne repose que sur une vision très partielle de la circulation de la littérature à l'échelle globale, d'où l'intérêt d'élargir les terrains d'analyse à des supports alternatifs ou complémentaires. D'autre part, certains arguments avancés dans les études littéraires postcoloniales sur la circulation et les publics de la littérature africaine restent insuffisamment fondés empiriquement. En prenant comme terrain d'enquête le magazine littéraire *Transition*, et plus précisément sa première période ougandaise, le présent article voudrait contribuer aux deux domaines. Explorant les contenus et les modes de circulation de ce périodique, il montre que la plupart des auteur·e·s qui s'y voient publié·e·s viennent de pays africains, quand d'autres contributeur·ice·s sont britanniques, américain·e·s et caribéen·ne·s ; que si le magazine publie des textes fondateurs en prose, la poésie reste le genre littéraire le plus représenté dans ses colonnes ; que ses lecteurs et lectrices, dont une bonne part interagit activement, vivent sur le continent africain, mais aussi en Europe et aux États-Unis ; et qu'il associe enfin certaines caractéristiques d'une « petite revue » à d'autres, propres à un magazine plus commercial. Ces résultats empiriques permettent d'interroger différents paramètres au centre des conceptualisations propres à la mondialisation des littératures et aux approches postcoloniales, tels que le statut de la nation ou du champ national, les limites de la notion de « littérature » telle qu'elle s'y voit définie, ou les relations entre des modes (post-)coloniaux et « impériaux » de production et de circulation des objets littéraires.

Mots-clés : *Transition* – mondialisation des littératures – Afrique de l'Est – littérature postcoloniale – petite revue – culture de l'imprimé.

ABSTRACT

This article starts from two premises : that the almost exclusive reliance on the novel in several of the dominant elaborations of world literary models gives a very partial view of the global circulation of literature and, conse-

quently, that much can be gained through analyses of complementary or alternative media and, secondly, that certain arguments within postcolonial literary studies on the circulation and audiences of African literature are inadequately grounded empirically. Taking the literary magazine *Transition* as an example – and more precisely its first, Ugandan, period –, this article seeks to make a contribution to both fields. Through discussion of the publication's content and its circulation pattern, it shows that most of the authors published came from African countries, but also included British, American and Caribbean contributors ; that poetry was its most represented literary genre, even as the magazine published seminal prose material ; that the magazine's readers, many of whom interacted actively, were found across the African continent and in Europe and the U.S.A. ; and that *Transition* combined characteristics of « little » and « big » magazines. These empirical findings, the article argues, raise questions about key issues in world literary as well as postcolonial literary conceptualization – such as the status of the nation or the national field in world literary studies, the limitations of the notion of « literature » they use, and the relationship between (post-)colonial and « imperial » channels for production and circulation of literary artefacts.

Keywords : *Transition* – World literature – East Africa – postcolonial literature – little magazines – print culture.

One of the ongoing debates in the study of African literature concerns its circulation and its audiences. Postcolonial literary scholars like Graham Huggan, Eileen Julien, and Akin Adesokan have argued that, from the period preceding decolonization to the present, a fundamental division between the place of literary production (or, alternatively, the geographical origin of the author) and the place of consumption (or the identity of the reader) have in significant ways influenced and continue to influence literary form ¹ and the ways in which literature is read ².

Researchers approaching the question of audience from more sociological and book historical points of departure have refuted these arguments, often on empirical grounds. Sarah Brouillette,

¹ JULIEN (Eileen), « The Extroverted African Novel », in : *The Novel : History, Geography, and Culture*. Edited by Franco Moretti. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 667-700 ; ADESOKAN (Akin), « New African Writing and the Question of Audience », *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 43, n°3, 2012, p. 1-20.

² HUGGAN (Graham), *The Postcolonial Exotic : Marketing the Margins*. London, NY : Routledge, 2001, 328 p.

Caroline Davis and Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, for instance, have in turn demonstrated the implausibility of positing naïve metropolitan audiences yearning for postcolonial authenticity³ and shown the significance of Nigeria and East Africa as literary markets for African novels during the colonial and early postcolonial eras⁴.

The debate over African literary production and circulation centers on theoretical perspectives and research methods within the field of postcolonial literary studies, but it should also be replaced within the larger context of what Stefan Helgesson has described as the difficult but potentially fruitful dialogue between the research fields of world literature and postcolonial literary studies⁵. Julien's seminal article was an early effort to combine emerging world literary perspectives with postcolonial literary studies and was first published as a chapter in Franco Moretti's *The Novel* (first published as *Il Romanzo* in 2002)⁶, and both Huggan's (2001) and Brouillette's (2007) books are ambitious attempts to explain the conditions which allow postcolonial literature to circulate globally.

What is at stake in this exchange is, in Helgesson's words, the «elaboration of a global framework for literary study»⁷, and what postcolonial studies contribute is a knowledge of, and emphasis on, the effects of colonial history. One of the omissions of world literary study, as has been articulated by Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova (and to some extent by David Damrosch), is the failure to acknowledge that its concept of *literature* (together with the modes of reading *literature*) belongs in a European colonial history unfolding globally, the consequences of which produce a theory of global literary space which is Eurocentric and temporarily skewed. In his analysis of Orientalist practice on the Indian subcontinent in the late 18th and 19th centuries, Amir Mufti specifically addresses this issue, describing the historical and colonial processes – what he calls the «philological revolution»⁸ – which enabled the idea of *literature* as

³ BROUILLETTE (Sarah), *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 206 p.

⁴ SUHR-SYTSMA (Nathan), « The Extroverted African Novel and Literary Publishing in the Twenty-first Century », *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 2017, p. 339-355 ; DAVIS (Caroline), *Creating postcolonial literature*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 255 p.

⁵ HELGESSON (Stefan), « Postcolonialism and World Literature : Rethinking the Boundaries », *Interventions*, vol. 16, n°4, 2014, p. 483-500.

⁶ JULIEN (E.), « The Extroverted African Novel... », *art. cit.*, p. 2.

⁷ HELGESSON (S.), « Postcolonialism and World Literature », *art. cit.*, p. 484.

⁸ MUFTI (Amir), « Orientalism and the Institution of World Literature », *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 36, n°3, 2010, p. 458-493 ; p. 459.

used in world literary study to emerge – but which also brought the Indian region onto the world stage of literary circulation. Venkat Mani, researching the material conditions of book circulation historically, has presented a related argument, demonstrating that the idea of *world literature* – like the term itself – emerged out of concrete processes of selection, collection, and translation of written works done by scholars, translators, publishers and librarians in the 18th and 19th centuries and carried out in Europe and beyond⁹.

A narrower point of criticism can be added to Mufti's and Mani's critical analyses of world literary studies' unreflective adoption of a concept of literature: their almost exclusive dependence on the genre of the novel gives a very partial view of the global circulation of literature (a point, in fact, made by Julien in her argument on literary « extroversion »¹⁰). In their analyses of African literary periodicals, for instance, both Helgesson and Eric Bulson have discovered patterns of production and circulation that differ markedly from those pertaining to the printed book¹¹.

The present article contributes to this discussion by examining the East African literary magazine *Transition*. Focusing on the magazine's first Ugandan phase between 1961 and 1968, it raises questions about the literary material it published, its intended readers, and their location. The examination shows that the literary content of the magazine and its distribution patterns were not the same as those of book publishing, even if the two overlap. More significantly, it demonstrates that most of the authors publicized came from African countries but also included British, Caribbean and American contributors; that poetry, perhaps surprisingly, is its most represented literary genre; and, finally, that the magazine's readers were to be found across the African continent as well as in parts of Europe and the U.S.A. These findings, I suggest, represent a valuable contribution to the ongoing conceptualization of world literary space.

The ruptured history of a little magazine

Before turning to *Transition's* content and its circulation, and in order to explain my focus on a limited period in the magazine's

⁹ MANI (Venkat), *Recoding World Literature: Libraries, Print Culture and Germany's Pact with Books*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017, 360 p.; p. 22.

¹⁰ JULIEN (E.), « The Extroverted African Novel », *art. cit.*

¹¹ HELGESSON (S.), *Transnationalism in Southern African Literatures: Modernists, Realists, and the Inequality of Print Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2009, 176 p.; BULSON (Eric), *Little Magazine, World Form*. New York: Columbia University Press, coll. Modernist latitudes, [2017], XII-333 p.

life¹², it will be useful to briefly recapitulate the ruptured publishing history of *Transition*.

Transition was established in Kampala in 1961 by Rajat Neogy, a Ugandan of Indian origin who had recently returned to the country after studies in Britain. Neogy remained the magazine's editor in Uganda until 1968, when Neogy and *Transition* contributor Abu Mayanja, a Member of Parliament and lawyer, were both charged with « sedition » for publishing Mayanja's article on the Obote government's proposals for a new constitution¹³. Neogy was imprisoned for six months (Mayanja for one and a half-years), and upon his release, he fled to Ghana, which became the new home of the magazine. *Transition* relaunched in its new location in 1971. After being the editor for three more years, Neogy handed the editorship over to Wole Soyinka, who had previously contributed to the magazine. In an effort to restart the magazine, Soyinka changed its name to *Ch'indaba* in 1975, and the magazine resumed publication until 1977. It finally foundered due to financial and managerial reasons in 1979. In 1991, Soyinka helped revive the magazine together with Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr and from this date, it has been issued from the U.S.A. It is currently located at the Hutchins Centre for African and American Research at Harvard University.

A scandal marked *Transition*'s first period. From 1962 onwards the magazine was funded by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) – an organization founded by a number of non-communist left-wing intellectuals, and based in Paris, but emerging out of American efforts to combat Soviet cultural influence across the globe. More or less from its inception, the CCF – which also funded the Nigerian Mbari Writers Club, Nigeria's *Black Orpheus*, *The New African*, and *Encounter* magazines in Africa alongside a number of publications across the world – received financial support from the C.I.A.¹⁴. When he was interviewed about the issue in 1967 – an interview which first appeared in Kenya's newspaper *Sunday Nation* and was reprinted in *Transition* – Neogy explained that his link with the CCF had formed through Ezekiel Mphahlele whom he had met

¹² The following recapitulation relies on BENSON (Peter), *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1986, 320 p. ; p. 99-288.

¹³ « Notes in transition », *Transition*, n°38, 1971, p. 43-49.

¹⁴ ROGERS (Asha), « *Black Orpheus* and the African magazines of the Congress of Cultural Freedom », in : *Campaigning Culture and the Cold War*. Edited by Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte A. Lerg. London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 331 p. ; p. 243-259.

at the Conference of African Writers of English Expression at Makerere in 1962. He claimed complete ignorance of the ties between the CCF and the C.I.A. and asserted that he had felt no pressure on editorial and publishing issues during the time the CCF funded the magazine¹⁵. Mphahlele later gave his version of the process, explaining that, as the director of the Africa program of the CCF, he had had to « bite his lip » after realizing that the C.I.A. had sponsored activities he had directed, but maintained that the organization must have remained unaware of the magazine since « [t]he C.I.A. cannot possibly believe that it can give money to organizations it has no means of controlling and still be sure that somewhere a harvest of intellectual proselytes will be forthcoming »¹⁶.

How the CCF's control over or manipulation of *Transition* (and the other magazines it sponsored) should be assessed is a matter of debate. Eric Bulson, for instance, seems to suggest that the CCF's direct impact was negligible¹⁷, while Andrew Rubin maintains that the CCF was able to maintain « control over political discourse » without interfering directly since the magazine's selection of writers was in line with the ideology of Cold War American Anti-communist policy¹⁸. The precise nature of the CCF's influence over *Transition* lies outside the scope of this article ; what matters here is a point that both Bulson and Rubin make even as they place the emphasis differently : that the magazine belonged to a network of publications and individuals, and played a significant connective role, and that this role was at least partly enabled by funding from the CCF. Bulson attributes the simultaneous publication in *Black Orpheus* and *Transition* of Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo's poetry cycle « The Lament of the Drums » to personal connections and the aborted project of launching a West African edition of *Transition* ; Rubin cites the case of Wole Soyinka, whose work was published by the (CCF sponsored) Mbari Writers Club, reviewed in *Transition*, and later promoted in *Encounter* (another publication supported by the CCF), as an example of how the CCF enabled the rapid translation and replication of texts through its publications which in turn contributed to shaping a « *transnational imaginary* » (emphasis in the original)¹⁹.

¹⁵ *Transition*, vol. 32, n°7, 1967, p. 45-46.

¹⁶ *Transition*, vol. 34, n°7, 1968, p. 5.

¹⁷ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, op. cit., p. 203.

¹⁸ RUBIN (Andrew. N.), *Archives of Authority : Empire, Culture, and the Cold War*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2012, 200 p. ; p. 56.

¹⁹ RUBIN (A.), *Archives of Authority*, op. cit., p. 58-59.

To Rubin's account, it could be added, first, that the connective dimension of African literary magazines was also immediately clear to those involved in making them, and, second, that, for *Transition*, being part of an African and global network of authors and writers was both a strength and a potential threat : merely republishing with delay material first printed in *Black Orpheus* might undermine interest in the publication as an original and exciting product, while the search for newness could risk turning it into a version of a student magazine²⁰.


Locations, literary content, and status

Over the course of its first seven-year period, *Transition* published more than 130 pieces of literary fiction, poetry, drama, and creative non-fiction. Of these, close to a hundred are poems and three are dramatic texts. Demonstrating the magazine's twin ambitions of showing both significant and new writing, the authors featured in the magazine were both established and unknown when they appeared. Several of them eventually became leading literary figures. Chinua Achebe, who contributed to the ninth issue in 1963 with an excerpt from the second chapter of his novel *Arrow of God*, had by that time already published two novels in Heinemann's *African Writers Series*, and was its current editor (picture 1). On the other hand when *Transition* published his short story, « The Return » (n°3, 1962), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (then James Ngugi) was still an unknown writer, whose literary output was, apart from a few articles in daily newspapers, one short story in *Penpoint*, a magazine linked to the English department of Makerere University²¹. Ngugi submitted a report from the Conference of African Writers of English Expression in a later issue (n°5, 1962). Ngugi's story is similar to that of John Nagenda, who, too, would contribute a short story (n°2, 1961) with not much else to show than the editorship of *Penpoint*.

²⁰ A contemporary review of *Okyeame* in *Black Orpheus* states that « The [literary magazine's] function is not much to preserve as to link. Often they stand at the very beginning of the development of local literature, setting up standards and providing a literary market for buyer and seller – the indigenous reading public and its artist ». Grace Ogot early on noted the need for *Transition* to avoid becoming « another kind of *Penpoint* » – the student magazine housed at Makerere university. BENSON (P.), *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa*, op. cit., p. 19, p. 113.

²¹ BEIJIT (Nourdin), « Heinemann's African writers series and the rise of James Ngugi », in : *The Book in Africa : Critical Debates*. Edited by Caroline Davis and David Johnson. Basingstoke, NY : Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 292 p. ; p. 223-244.

Nagenda also contributed a report from the African Writers Conference, and later had another short story published (n°5, 1962 ; n°6-7, 1962). Less known than Ngugi, Nagenda went on to have three novels published, one of which, *The Seasons of Tomas Tebo*, by Heinemann in the *African Writers Series*. Christopher Okigbo, David Rubadiri, Bessie Head, and Taban Lo Liyong were all at the beginning of their literary careers when they contributed literary works to the magazine ²².

CONTRIBUTORS	
<p>The final draft of CHINUA ACHEBE'S new novel, <i>Arrow of God</i>, was completed late in January this year. The chapter we print in this issue is the first preview of the novel to be published. Both his earlier novels, <i>No Longer at Ease</i> and <i>Things Fall Apart</i> are available as paperbacks (Heinemann) and were listed as best sellers in Uganda in February</p>  <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Chinua Achebe</p> <p>ELIMO NJAU is now Assistant Director of the Sorbsie Gallery. Efu Sutherland, the Ghanaian poetess, remarking on the first Congress of Africanists to Rajat Neogy in Accra, said that the whole point of the conference was made for her when she heard Elimo Njau's speech. (The Chairman tried to cut him short but the audience would not allow it.) The article printed in this issue is a version of the speech.</p>	<p>DENIS WILLIAMS is West Indian. He lectured in graphic art at Khartoum before taking his present position at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ife in Nigeria. The article on Sudanese Calligraphy is part of a larger project he is currently working on, to be published by MBARI, Ibadan.</p> <p>TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER is regarded in Sweden as the leading young poet of his generation—a country that has no shortage of good poets. Swedish is a difficult language to translate from, and the poems presented here were chosen partly because they were more suitable for translation into English than others. Even so, the results are tentative. This is the first appearance of Tranströmer in the English-speaking world.</p> <p>AIG HIGO, to whom readers were introduced in <i>Transition 8</i>, is a new poet from Nigeria. A larger selection of his work appears in this number.</p> <p>ROBIE MACAULEY is Editor of the <i>Kenyon Review</i> (Ohio).</p> <p>JOHN BUTLER is Headmaster of the Kabaka's Secondary School in the Lubiri.</p> <p>SUKHI SINGH was born in Tanganyika. Has worked with publishers in Bombay and London and is now with an international organisation in Dar es Salaam. He plays the sitar.</p> <p>ERISA KIRONDE is Chairman of the Uganda Electricity Board.</p> <p>NAOMI MITCHISON was born in Edinburgh in 1897. She has a long list of publications — her first was published in 1923, and her most recent in 1958. Her brother is J. B. S. Haldane, the distinguished scientist. Her favourite hobby: being somewhere else. (At the time of writing: Bechuanaland).</p> <p>RALPH TANNER is in Mombasa where he runs the Extra-Mural department of the University of East Africa.</p>
	<p>CRANE CHANTRY is a well-known British journalist who lived in East and Central Africa for a number of years and has returned regularly for protracted visits.</p> <p>ADRIAN ROWE-EVANS is Secretary of Makerere University College. His wife, Prudence, who is <i>Transition's</i> Secretary, is a cartoonist. (Sir David Low, the cartoonist).</p> <p>EDWARD VAN AELSTYN is Editor of the <i>Northwest Review</i>, published in Eugene, Oregon. For permission to reprint his review of Robert Jungk's new book, we wish to make grateful acknowledgement both to him and the <i>Northwest Review</i>.</p> <p>LOUISE ATCHESON is a young American writer who is working on a collection of short stories. She has been living in Paris for the last six months.</p> <p>ELIZABETH HOYT is Professor of Economics at the University of Iowa.</p> <p>GERALD TCHICAYA U TAM'SI was born in 1931 near Brazzaville in the Middle Congo. In 1946 he went to Paris with his father, who was the first African Deputy for his country in the French National Assembly. He has published four volumes of poetry: <i>Le Masvais-Sang</i> (1955), <i>Feu de Brousse</i> (1957), <i>A Triche-Coeur</i>, (1960), and <i>Epitome</i> (1962). The poem <i>The Hearse</i> comes from <i>A Triche-Coeur</i>. Each of his books is really one long poem, where the same vocabulary of images is constantly handled and explored anew. He is the most intense and prolific of the French-speaking poets now writing. His early volumes are now out of print and shortly will be re-issued (with English translations by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier) by Mbari Publications in Nigeria.</p> <p>JAMES MCAULEY is Editor of <i>Quadrant</i>, a leading Australian literary quarterly.</p>

Picture 1 – Contributions to n°9, 1963 included a chapter from Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*.

Many of the emerging writers presented in *Transition* did not reach the literary heights of Achebe, Ngugi, or Nadine Gordimer who contributed the short story « Some Monday for Sure » in issue

²² Bessie Head contributed the short story « Sorrow Food » in *Transition* n°30, 1967, a year before the publication of her first novel ; Taban Lo Liyong had « Two stories » published in n°36, 1968 ; Christopher Okigbo's poetry appeared in n°5, 1962 (« The Limits I-IV ») and n°18, 1965 (« Lament of the Drums ») ; David Rubadiri contributed with poetry in n°20, 1965, two years before his *Bride Price* was published. See relevant entries in GIKANDI (Simon), *The Encyclopaedia of African Literature*. London and New York : Routledge, 2003, 645 p., and, on Okigbo, SUHR-SYTSMA (N.), « Christopher Okigbo, print, and the poetry of postcolonial modernity », *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 43, n°2, 2012, p. 40-62.

n°18, 1965. Some of them contributed literary writing but were then engaged in other intellectual commitments. This is the case with Robert Serumaga, who became the president of the Association of Commonwealth Language and Literature at Makerere for a period, and Aig Higo, who eventually found employment at Heinemann²³. Some, like Roland Hindmarsh and Adrian Rowe-Evans, contributed occasional poems and remained reviewers for, or collaborators to, the magazine. Others, still, appeared in the magazine, but did not become public figures at all.

As the examples given here indicate, most writers introduced in *Transition* were African, and they came from a range of countries : South Africa (Gordimer and Dennis Brutus), Botswana (Head), Nigeria (Achebe, Okigbo), Uganda (Lo Liyong, Rubadiri, Nagenda), Kenya (Ngugi and Leonard Kibera) and more. While *Transition* was an English-language magazine, and overwhelmingly published texts by English-language African writers, there were exceptions to this rule, like Gerald Tchicaya U'Tam'si (whose name can be seen in picture 1), whose poetry was translated from French. A few British writers participated (D.J. Enright and Michael Thorpe), as did the American Paul Theroux, who was deeply involved with the magazine and contributed poems and, above all, articles. There were also the occasional outliers : a few Indian poets like G. S. Sharat Chandu and Sukhi Singh contributed poetry, and the Swedish poets and writers Thomas Tranströmer and Birgitta Trotzig appeared in the magazine in the period studied here.

Dependent on benevolent funders (however controversial) and catering to advanced readerly tastes, *Transition* was in many respects a « little » magazine and seemed to cherish that status²⁴. Most of what *Transition* publicized was previously unpublished and the magazine offered an outlet – perhaps especially for a literary genre such as poetry – in a context where few publishing options existed. Its readership also consisted largely of intellectual and sophisticated readers. In some respects, however, *Transition* had the appearance of a « big » commercial magazine. It had covers in color, included

²³ BENSON (P.), *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²⁴ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, *op. cit.*, p. 4-5. In an article with obvious self-mirroring references one contributor describes the mission of the literary magazine as « keep[ing] some of the current dissent moving [...] maintain[ing] a base for the new writers who may come along at any time, and [...] uphold[ing] intellectual standards in a non-intellectual society ». See MACAULEY (Robie), « The Little Magazines », *Transition*, vol. 3, n°9, 1963, p. 24.

advertisements from the first issue, and had a comparably large print-run for a cultural magazine, at one point reaching 12 000 copies²⁵.

However, neither « little » nor « big » labels fully capture *Transition*'s position in the literary landscape. Most European – or Anglophone – literary magazines that emerged in the early 20th century, responded, as Bulson has observed, to « an increasingly commercialized literary culture » and were « little » in their defense of artistic autonomy and their positions on the small-scale pole of publication – which was possible through their employment of comparatively cheap print technology and the loose organizational structures that set it apart from the publishing industry²⁶. Their activities emerged out of developed national literary fields – even as they were part of transnational networks²⁷. This was not the case for little African magazines which operated in what were literary « fields-in-formation »²⁸ whose borders were not primarily national. In the case of *Transition*, collaborators and competitors were not Ugandan publications or publishers, but other African, British, or American actors like *Présence africaine*, *Black Orpheus*, and, possibly, magazines like *Africa Report*.

Transition's contributors were deeply engaged in debating literary value. The extensive coverage of the Conference of African Writers of English Expression of 1962 (n°5) offers one example of this engagement, as does the debate on the languages of African literature staged in 1963 (n°10)²⁹. The literary review arguably presents an even more significant mode of literary criticism since the selection of authors very clearly outlines the magazine's literary circuits. Given *Transition*'s commitment to literary topics, it may seem surprising that the genre is not put to more systematic use : of the more than 600 texts printed in *Transition*, around 30 are reviews of literary works. The selection of authors reviewed and debated in the magazine's pages deserves attention, however, because it demonstrates the magazine's continental ambitions. A majority of texts were on African writers, some of whom had either contributed

²⁵ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

²⁶ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

²⁷ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

²⁸ HELGESSON (S.), *Transnationalism in Southern African Literatures*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁹ WALI (Obiajunwa), « The dead end of African literature ? », *Transition*, vol. 3, n°10, 1963, p. 13-15 ; MPHABLELE (Ezekiel), « African literature and universities : a report on two conferences to discuss African literature and the university curriculum », *Transition*, vol. 3, n°10, 1963, p. 16-18 ; OKARA (Gabriel), « African Speech... English Words », *Transition*, vol. 3, n°10, 1963, p. 15-16.

articles or literary texts to the magazine previously, like Achebe, Ngugi, Gordimer, and Head. English literature was very modestly represented : two of Graham Greene's African texts, *The Burnt-Out Case* and « Convoy to West Africa », are reviewed (issue n°8 also features an article on « D.H. Lawrence and Sex »³⁰). France, or at least the writer Jean Genet, attracted some attention : Ben Mkapa contributed an article on « The Blacks » in the first issue ; Ian Watson one on Genet's dramatic universe in 1967 (n°29). A few years into its existence, and having already published an excerpt from Denis William's *Other Leopards* (n°11, 1963) and an article by Kenneth Ramchand (« Decolonization in West Indian Literature » ; n°22, 1965), the magazine took an interest in writers from what Paul Gilroy has called « The Black Atlantic ». It reviewed contemporary Caribbean writers' books like Edward Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage* in 1967 (n°32) and V.S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* in 1966 (n°26), and devoted an issue in 1967 to black American poetry reviewing LeRoi Jones's *Home*, Robert Hayden's *A Ballad of Remembrance* and a number of Harlem Renaissance poets. It also published a contribution by James Baldwin (on the painter Beauford Delaney ; n°18, 1965).

Transnational circulation and readership

The contributors and reviewed authors of *Transition* came, as demonstrated above, from many locations. What *audience* did *Transition* imagine for itself? In the rare editorial statements that address the magazine's readership, Neogy describes it as « essentially aimed at thinking people », a magazine for « literate » readers and the « cultural elite »³¹. In the period covered here, the magazine had articles on, respectively, human rights, violence, and love in Africa (n°18, 1965 ; n°21, 1965 ; n°17, 1964) ; it offered analyses of Nkrumah's leadership, white expatriates in Africa, and various aspects of the East African union (n°26, 1966 ; n°32, 1967 ; n°1, 1961 ; n°3, 1962 ; n°20, 1965) ; it explored the existence and possibilities of African literature (n°10, 1963 ; n°18, 1965) ; and it debated the new constitutions in Uganda (n°32, 1967) – the consequences of which, as noted above, was the imprisonment of Neogy and Mayanja. Indeed, as Peter Benson has remarked, *Transition's*

³⁰ The reviews of Greene are found in *Transition* n°1, 1961, p. 41, and n°2, 1961, p. 43 ; the article on Lawrence by Peter Nazareth in n°8, 1963, p. 38-43.

³¹ NEOGY (Rajat), « Do Magazines Culture ? », *Transition*, n°24, 1966, p. 30-32.

ambitions to be a platform for debate were at times more important than its cultural and literary interests³².

The magazine's non-edited content, such as advertisements, casts further light on *Transition's* projected audience. Many of the companies which advertised in the magazine remained the same throughout the period discussed here. The presence of English-based international publishers is perhaps no surprise; Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press (picture 2), and Heinemann all appeared almost without interruption from 1961 to 1968. Perhaps equally unsurprising are the advertisements for other magazines and journals with African focus, like *The New African*, *Central African Examiner*, *Africa Report*, while others, published in more distant places or with slightly different foci, appear less self-evident. This can be said about German *Neues Afrika*, the Oregon-based *Northwest Review*, and *Poetry Singapore*. The CCF-sponsored *Black Orpheus* placed an advert in the very first issue of *Transition*.

The image shows two pages from the magazine *Transition*. The left page is an advertisement for Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., featuring several book titles by African authors. The right page is an advertisement for Cambridge University Press, featuring a book by Margaret Macpherson and another by J.T. Saunders.

T. M. ALUKO
One Man, One Matchet
 "... an enchanting story of a cocoa community in Western Nigeria where the country's shift from colony to independent nation is acted out in terms of serious-farical conflict between a "black whiteman" District Officer, and Benjamin Benjamin—journalist and politician."
The Times Literary Supplement
 "... a genuine contribution to African fiction in English."
The Spectator.
 Hardback 16s. African Writers Series 5s 6d.

JAMES NGUGI
The River Between
 James Ngugi's first novel *Weep Not, Child* was enthusiastically received. *The River Between* is also about Kenya, and tells the tragic story of two lovers, separated by different beliefs and backgrounds of their families, living in two villages between which runs the Honia river. 18s
 Edited by DAVID COOK
Origin East Africa
 A collection of poetry, short stories and plays written whilst all the contributors were at Makerere University College, Kampala, and published originally in *Pepoind*. An excellent introduction to the foremost East African writers.
African Writers Series, 5s 6d.

Edited by RICHARD RIVE
Quartet
 A collection of sixteen stories by four of South Africa's most talented writers, Richard Rive, James Matthews, Alf Wannenburgh and Alex La Guma. It has been called 'a milestone in the history of South African literature, and is of enormous social as well as literary importance.'
African Writers Series, 6s 6d.
 15 Queen St. Mayfair London W1

HEINEMANN
 EDUCATIONAL BOOKS LTD.
 15 Queen St. Mayfair London W1

TRANSITION 18
CAMBRIDGE

They Built for the Future
 MARGARET MACPHERSON
 Makerere College opened in 1922 with 14 day boys. In 1962 when this history ends it had 1000 graduate and undergraduate students and numbered amongst its Old Boys President Nyere and Mr Milton Obote. Mrs Macpherson lectures in English there and has already compiled the College Register. She has written a valuable record of the progress made by a great college which is now part of the new University of East Africa. 25s. net

University College, Ibadan
 J. T. SAUNDERS
 An illustrated history of the college from its opening in 1948 to the present day. Dr Saunders, the second Principal, begins with an outline of education in Nigeria from the time of the first missionaries and concludes with his views on the future of university education in the country. "The style of the book is very readable. It is a profound work." *Nigeria Magazine* 27s. 6d. net

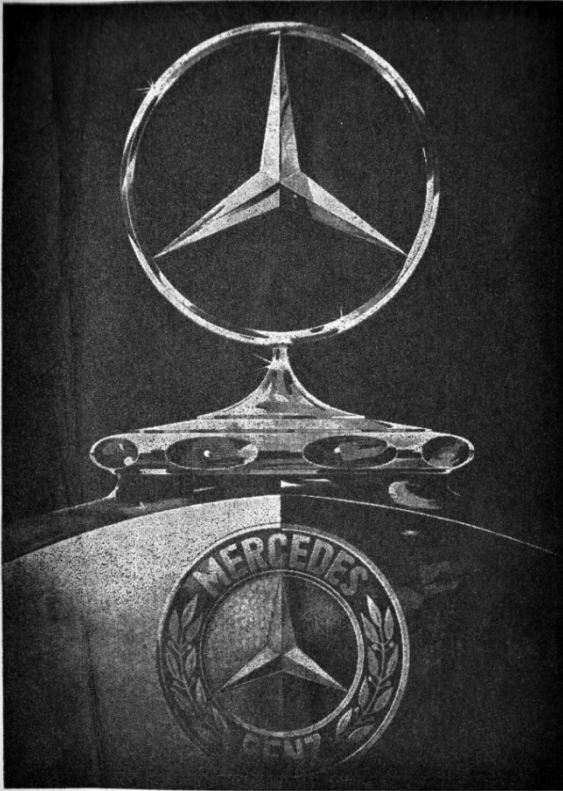
The Leopard Hunt & The Devil at Yolahun Bridge
 ABIJOSEH NICOL
 Two stories for upper forms of secondary schools or the general reader. Both are about a British official in a tricky situation. In *The Leopard Hunt*, Mr Nicol amusingly describes the exploits of a Resident in Northern Nigeria. The second story is set in the Kissy Hills where a District Officer and an African engineer face unearthly happenings at Yolahun Bridge. Ready 196S. Cloth, about 12s. 6d. net
 Paperback, about 6s. 6d.

From all booksellers
 CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Picture 2 – Publishers and magazines were some of *Transition's* stable advertising customers.

³² BENSON (P.), *Black Orpheus, Transition, and Modern Cultural Awakening in Africa*, op. cit., p. 132.

Other advertising mainstays included banks like Barclays Bank and Baroda Bank, insurance companies like Crusader Insurance, and car companies like Mercedes-Benz (picture 3), Peugeot and Toyota. Air lines companies like Sabena appeared a few years into the magazine's existence. A tendency in the magazine's advertising is the disappearance of smaller, local companies, like Wynn's Friction Proofing, George Tapp Company, and Kampala's Canton restaurant, which appear in the first year, in favour of larger, international corporations and companies with activities related to *Transition's*.



Sole Agents in Uganda :

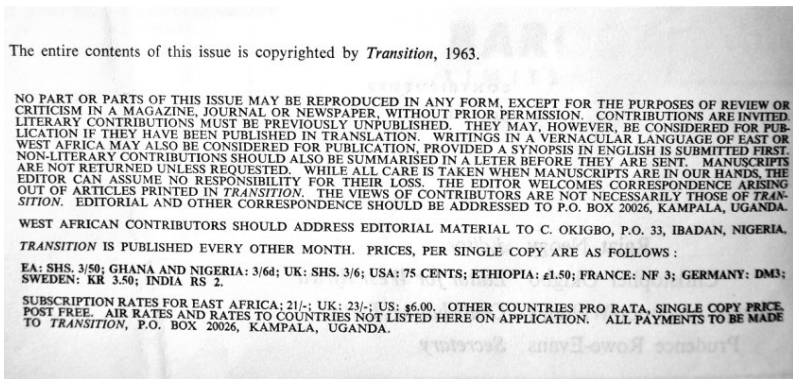
D. T. DOBIE & CO. (U) LTD.

P.O. Box 2312 KAMPALA Phone 3196/7

TRANSITION is printed by Uganda Argus Limited P.O. Box 20081, Kampala and is published by TRANSITION, 34 Mbuya Hill, P.O. Box 20026 Kampala, Uganda.

Picture 3 – Mercedes-Benz advertised frequently in *Transition*.

The intelligent and privileged readers *Transition* strove to have did not, in its own view, reside only in Africa, as is testified by the inclusion in each issue of a list of currencies which could be used to purchase the magazine. From the first issue, the magazine's prices are given in Ugandan, Kenyan and Tanzanian shillings, alongside British, American, and South African currencies. After a few years, the publication comes with an impressive list of additional currencies in which the magazine can be bought: Ghanaian and Nigerian, Ethiopian and French, German, Swedish and Indian prices are all listed (picture 4). The international readership is specifically targeted in a 1966 advertising campaign by the Uganda Tourist Board which addresses « Transition's international readers who may plan to visit Uganda » (e.g. n°22, 1965).



Picture 4 – Price listings of *Transition* in various currencies.

It is difficult to know with precision to what extent the actual readers of *Transition* matched its intended audience. The magazine circulated widely and it circulated internationally: the figure of 12 000 copies referenced above is taken from a celebratory article in *The New York Times*, which was cited alongside other international newspapers' praise in Paul Theroux's column in the magazine's own pages, but the information is solitary and has not been verified³³. In the absence of reliable data, an estimate of the magazine's readership can be made by examining letters to the editor, as Stephanie Newell has done for West African colonial newspapers. For Newell, the newspapers' inclusion of the genre, and the stream of letters that were sent to the newspapers she studies, served several purposes. It testified to the editors' willingness to dialogue with its readers, it functioned as a marketing device, and it served to build provisional

³³ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, op. cit., p. 212.

communities of readers³⁴. Several of the letters printed in *Transition* were clearly used for marketing, a fact which can probably be explained by Neogy's marketing sense and his willingness to stir debate, but *Transition* seriously intended to converse with its readers. From the beginning, letters to the editor were a standing feature, and they were given ample space. In a magazine whose issues ran to around 50 pages, and several of the articles were three or four pages long, the letters filled as many pages. On particularly controversial topics, such as Nkrumah's status and legacy, and white expatriates in Africa, letters carried on the debate for consecutive issues, and were even reprinted with the article³⁵. Beside marketing and self-praise, the letters served other important functions. Most of the magazine's debates played out through letters to the editor, and the form helped levelling the playing field and allowed the individual reader to debate on equal terms with more prominent or privileged writers. This democratization of discussion was an explicit objective of Neogy's, who advocated an editorial policy of what he called « aggressive non-prejudice »³⁶. An example of Neogy's belief in the important role of the format can be seen in the magazine's criticism of the Ugandan constitution. After the publication of Mayanja's article, Neogy asked for, and subsequently published, a letter of defence by the government, written by Akena-Adoko, chief advisor to President Obote³⁷.

As Eric Bulson observes, apart from establishing a community of contributors and readers, *Transition*'s letters section also created continuity and a kind of composite present for the magazine ; readers

could engage in conversation about current cultural and literary events without any significant time lag. Time was indeed passing between the issues, usually two or three months, but the back-and-forth helped make what was being published more urgent³⁸.

This community of letter-writers, it has already been hinted, were a distinctly international crowd. In the period covered here, letters reached the magazine from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi,

³⁴ NEWELL (Stephanie), « Articulating Empire : Newspaper Readerships in Colonial West Africa », *New Formations*, n°73, 2011, p. 26-42.

³⁵ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, op. cit., p. 214.

³⁶ NEOGY (R.), « Do Magazines Culture ? », art. cit., p. 31.

³⁷ « Notes in Transition », *Transition*, n°38, 1971, p. 43.

³⁸ BULSON (E.), *Little Magazine, World Form*, op. cit., p. 215.

Canada, the U.S.A., Nigeria, Britain, and Sweden, many of them with contact addresses at universities.

In the first years of Ugandan independence, *Transition* established itself as a highly transnational English-language publication both in terms of the writers it featured and the readers it imagined and reached. Its primary literary focus was on African writing and criticism, but it extended its interest to Britain, to France, the U.S.A. and the Caribbean. Its readers entered into dialogue with the magazine and each other from locations in the U.S.A., the U.K., Nigeria and South Africa among others. Importantly, *Transition* was also its own source of literature, publishing mostly original material, most of which, particularly the poems, appears to have been exclusive. In the case of Ngugi, Nagenda, Head and Rubadiri, for instance, *Transition's* readers were able to read the writers before they were published by a British publisher.

An examination of the activities of a literary magazine like *Transition*, this article has suggested, can contribute valuably to conceptualizations of world literary space, not least by critically questioning paradigms emerging out of strands in postcolonial and world literary studies.

First, as mentioned earlier, some postcolonial literary scholars, such as Julien, Huggan and Adesokan, have posited that African literature, particularly in European languages, is conditioned by a fundamental division of labour. African novels in English, the argument goes, are deeply shaped by their being produced by authors originating in Africa and being consumed by audiences in Europe and the U.S.A. Book historical studies, as referenced above, have in several cases dismissed these arguments on empirical grounds. The examination of *Transition's* published literature and its readership, as made visible in the letters to the editor, I have argued here, confirms the view that there existed an extensive (if also dispersed and highly exclusive) African readership for literature produced in Africa in the period covered here.

Second, certain postcolonial literary scholars mentioned in this article, such as Helgesson, Mufti and Mani, bring crucial critical-historical insights to theorizations of the world literary space – such as on the term *literature*, and the idea of the national vernacular as the basis for comparative study: what Mufti calls «nation-

thinking »³⁹. « Nation-thinking » informs Casanova's model to the extent that the nation is seen as the primary literary field, and further that exchange and competition are seen as occurring either within or between these national fields⁴⁰.

Helgesson and Davis have, in different ways, shown the limited applicability of the concept of the national field in (post)colonial African situations, Helgesson by observing that late colonial or early post-colonial African countries were « fields-in-formation »⁴¹ rather than fully-developed literary fields, Davis by demonstrating that late colonial African literary markets were « dual » rather than structured according to large-scale and small-scale poles of literary production. In the case of *Transition*, it is highly problematic to describe the newly independent Uganda as a literary field in which the magazine operates. The contemporary Ugandan political situation, and its legal framework, certainly impacted on the magazine, but it positioned itself not in relation to Ugandan but in relation to other African, and possibly American, publications. Similarly, its contributors were not primarily positioned nationally but in relation to other African, British, and American writers. *Transition's* appearance as a hybrid publication difficult to place along a small-scale / large-scale division further emphasises the difficulty of translating the field-concept to the current setting without substantial adjustments. The magazine displayed both « little » and « big » characteristics, included advertisement and had large print runs, at least temporarily, but also actively sought out new writing, and nursed oppositional and provocative positions.

Thirdly, this article confirms that privileging the genre of the novel and the printed book in world literary theorization, as Helgesson and Bulson show (and Julien reminds us), prevents us from seeing literary circulation which is tied to other media and, consequently, risks giving an unnecessarily partial description of world literary space. *Transition's* border-crossing activities – the literature it published, and the literature it reviewed and discussed – demonstrates that writing, both original, reproduced, and commented on, travels in circuits different from, but partly overlapping

³⁹ MUFTI (Amir), *Forget English! : Orientalisms and World Literatures*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 2016, 304 p. ; p. 97.

⁴⁰ « [E]ach writer's position must necessarily be a double one, twice defined : each writer is situated once according to the position he or she occupies in a national space, and then once again according to the place that this occupies within the world space ». CASANOVA (Pascale), « Literature as a World », *New Left Review*, n°31, 2005, p. 71-90 ; p. 81.

⁴¹ HELGESSON (S.), *Transnationalism in Southern African Literatures*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

with, those of the novel and the printed book – that is the literature emanating from the book industry. This is exemplified by much of the poetry publicized in the magazine which circulated through *Transition's* distribution channels but was not picked up by publishing.

Fourth, and related, if *Transition*, like other literary postcolonial magazines, responded to decolonization rather than commercialization, as Bulson concludes, this response must be described as occurring both within a continuing hold of colonial structures for cultural production and dissemination and a shift of global power to the USA. On the one hand, *Transition*, as we have seen, was a source of original literary writing, but many of the literary texts circulated outside the magazine's distribution network when they were published in book form (before or, more often, after having appeared in *Transition*) – which was the case with Achebe, Ngugi, Head, Gordimer, Nagenda and others – and were drawn into what was basically a colonial publishing network. The magazine in this way constituted a breeding ground for U.K.-based globally active publishers like Heinemann Educational Publishers and Oxford University Press. The inverse significance of the British publishing industry for the magazine is equally evident : most of the literature discussed and reviewed in the magazine was published by British publishers. On the other hand, the presence of *Transition* readers in the U.S.A. and the magazine's interest in (black) American writing show the pull of metropolises beyond the colonial. This split attention shows the co-existence of several cultural centres – albeit of an « older » one with a « newer » one – that contrasts with Casanova's positing of a linear temporality in which single literary centers succeed each other to act as « Greenwich meridians »⁴² of literary modernity, endowing symbolic capital and devising literary standards.

■ Erik FALK⁴³

⁴² CASANOVA (Pascale), *The World Republic of Letters* [édition originale 1999]. Translated by M.B. DeBevoise. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, *Convergences*, 2004, XIII-420 p. ; p. 88.

⁴³ The Nordic Africa Institute.