Felix Houphouet-Boigny University

Department of English

MASTER 1

COMMONWEALTH & LITERARY INSTITUTIONS

DJIMAN Kasimi, Professor

OUTLINE

-Preliminary Remarks

-Writers

-Publishers / Publishing Houses

-Critical Bodies

Objective: The course must render readable the literary institutions pertaining to this region known as the “commonwealth.” Among the many countries of the commonwealth, emphasis will be laid upon a couple of African countries, precisely four (4) as a showcase.

Preliminary Remarks

The commonwealth is a political organization connecting the United Kingdom and 53 countries built on November 19, 1926. The guiding principle of this movement is to relate people on the basis of the English language.

It must be emphasized that some countries are part of the commonwealth as an organization even if they did not have historical, colonial links with the United Kingdom. One may quote here such African countries as Mozambique and Rwanda.

If Jacques Dubois is to be believed, literary institutions can be seen as “productive or managerial infrastructures in the literary filed.” What emerges therefore is that a literary institution is nothing but a body in charge of the production of literary works.

The four African countries are the following ones:

South Africa / Nigeria / Kenya / Ghana

Writers

The presentation of writers here is not contentwise. The point is to inform students about the literary productions of a couple of writers in the four countries under discussion.

South Africa

**Bessie Head**

*When Rain Clouds Gather*, 1968

*Maru*, 1971

*A Question of Power*, 1973

**John Maxwell Coetzee**

*Waiting for the Barbarians*, 1980

*Disgrace*, 1999

*Elisabeth Costello*, 2003

*The Childhood of Jesus*, 2003

**Andre Brink**

*Looking on Darkness*, 1974

*A Dry White Season*, 1979

*A Chain of Voices*, 1981

*Rumours of Rain*, 1978

**Zakes Mda**

*The Sculptors of Mapungubwe*, 2012

*Let us Play*, 1998

**Nadine Gordimer**

*The House Gun*, 1998

*The Conservationist*, 1974

*Burger’s Daughter*, 1979

*July’s People*, 1981

Nigeria

**Ben Okri**

*The Famished Road*, 1991

*The Age of Magic*, 2014

*A Time for New Dreams*, 2011

*An African Elegy*, 1992

*Mental Fight*, 1999

**Wole Soyinka**

*Season of Anomy*, 1972

*Alapata Apata*, 2011

*Mandela’s Earth and Other Poems*, 1988

*Early Poems*, 1997

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

*Purple Hibiscus*, 2003

*Half of a Yellow Sun*, 2006

*The Thing Around Your Neck*, 2009

**Helon Habila**

*Oil on Water*, 2010

*Measuring Time*, 2007

*Waiting for an Angel*, 2004

Kenya

**Ngugi wa Thiong’o**

*A Grain of Wheat*, 1967

*Matigari*, 1986

*Devil on the Cross*, 2006

**Mukoma wa Ngugi**

*Black Star Nairobi*, 2013

*Nairobi Heat*, 2009

*Hurling Words at Consciousness*, 2006

**Meja Mwangi**

*Blood Brothers*, 2009

*The Big Chiefs*, 2007

*Power*, 2009

*The Boy Gift*, 2006

**Grace Ogot**

*The Graduate*, 1980

*The Island of Tears*, 1980

*The Strange Bride*, 1989

**Binyavanga Wainaina**

*Discovering Home*, 2001

*One Day I Will Write about this Place: A Memoir*, 2011

Ghana

**Nii Ayi Kwei Parkes**

*The Makings of You*, 2010

*Ballast*, 2008

*Tail of the Blue Bird*, 2009

**Ayi Kwei Armah**

*The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 1968

*Why Are We So Blest?,* 1971

*Two Thousand Seasons*, 1973

**Kofi Awoonor**

*This Earth, My Brother*…,1971

*The House by the Sea*, 1978

*Until the Morning After*, 1987

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, 1965

*Anowa*, 1970

*No Sweetness Here*, 1970

Publishers

A publisher is a person or a company whose business is the publication of books.

It plays an important role as it contributes to the dissemination of the literary object. In other words, without it, there is no literary object.

Two types will be distinguished here:

-at the national level

-at the international level

The national level: Here examples of publishers will be given in each of the four countries under discussion.

**South Africa**

*Penguin Books*

*Pearson*

**Nigeria**

*Evans Brothers*

*Minaj Publishers*

**Kenya**

*East African Educational Publisher*

*Focus Publishers Ltd*

**Ghana**

Macmillan Global Publishing Group

*Spectrum Ltd*

At the International Level

**South Africa**

Cambridge University Press

Macmillan Education South Africa

**Nigeria**

Oxford University Press Nigeria

Longman Nigeria

**Kenya**

Longman Kenya

Macmillan Kenya

**Ghana**

Cambridge University Press

Oxford University Press

Critical Bodies

They help in legitimizing or delegitimizing literary works as they assess productions. I will examine here three (3) points:

-Journals / Reviews

South Africa

*New Contrast*

*Prufrock*

Nigeria

*Journal of Nigerian Languages and Literatures*

*Okike: An African journal of New Writing*

Kenya

*Kwani?*

*The Nairobi Journal of Literature*

Ghana

*Okyeame*

*Poetry Link Journal*

-Prizes

South Africa

The University of Johannesburg Prize

Barry Rouge Fiction Prize

Nigeria

The Wole Soyinka Prize for literature

Company’s Nigerian Prize for literature

Kenya

Jomo Kenyatta Prize for literature

Wahome Mutahi Prize for literature

Ghana

Ghana Literary Prize Foundation

Golden Baobab Prizes for literature

-Schools /Universities

Whatever the case, it must be made clear that these bodies contribute to the promotion of literary works. As Bernth Lindfors argues: “Special libraries and research centers have been built, new journals founded, chairs and professorships of literature established…with the aim of promoting African literature.” In other words, schools and universities are excellent means of legitimizing or delegitimizing a given literary work.

Schools and Universities are important means of promoting African literature. In a research dating back from 2000, authors getting the greatest attention in African university literary courses were the following ones:

Wole Soyinka/ Ngugi wa Thiong’o/ Chinua Achebe/ Ayi Kwei Armah

Those top four are called by Bernth Lindfors “the biggest trees”