African Football

Chris Bolsmann

Football in Africa: Conflict, Conciliation and Community
by Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (eds)
Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, Pp.xi + 301, bibliography, index
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Football is the most popular sport across the African continent. Thriving domestic leagues exist in many African countries; continent-wide club championships are played each year; and the bi-annual African Cup of Nations pits national teams against one another. Five national teams represent the continent in the FIFA World Cup held every four years. African teams have reached the quarterfinals of this specific competition. They have had even greater success in the junior world competitions and the Olympic Games, both of which they have won. South Africa will host the 2010 FIFA World Cup and this will bring the tournament to African soil for the first time. For over 50 years, African players have been exported to the lucrative leagues of Europe and have excelled, while foreign coaches have brought their skills to the continent. African football has become an integral part of the football community worldwide.

However, little of the above mentioned phenomenon has been documented in academic publications. Armstrong and Giulianotti's *Football in Africa* is an edited collection of 14 chapters that does much to address this shortfall. The authors note that there are relatively few publications on African football (see for example, Alegi, 2004; Apraku and Hesselmann, 1998; Broere and van der Drift, 1997; and Darby, 2002). The authors maintain that their collection "seeks to highlight and to help fill that lacuna with the first detailed collection of analyses of football in each region of Africa" (p. 1).

The collection is multi-disciplinary, with authors from the fields of anthropology, geography, history, political science and sociology. Thus, it provides a wide range of theoretical and empirical data in each of the chapters. In their introduction, Armstrong and Giulianotti provide a brief overview of the history of football in the colonial and postcolonial eras. They document the way football was imported into the colonies and how it was "culturally reinvented". Significantly, the authors note that football in postcolonial Africa has been influenced by the dynamics of neocolonialism and neoliberalism. In addition, traditional-belief systems that impact on the game are discussed and a variety of styles of play are documented. Football's important role in identity construction is noted and this is developed throughout the text.

The collection comprises of four parts. Part one, entitled "Contested Selections", provides a historical overview of the development of the game in four countries. Part two ("Footballing Styles") develops ideas on the manner in which the game is played and on issues of ethnicity and nation-building. Part three ("Off the Ball Movements") focuses on issues related to football away from the field of play. In the final part of the collection, entitled "Moving with the Ball", African football migration is analysed.

Part one highlights the emergence of football in colonial times, the role it played in the struggle for independence, and the creation of national identities, as well as the impact of broader structural constraints on the game in the postcolonial era. Specifically, the development of football in Algeria, Eritrea, Nigeria and Zimbabwe is analysed. It emerges from the discussion of the case studies that the development of football in each respective country occurred as a result of colonial rule. In Eritrea and Algeria, football was able to generate national identity in relation to the former colonial powers as well as neighbours, such as Ethiopia in the case of Eritrea. The emergence of football in Nigeria is analysed in relation to the triumphs of the youth team, the exodus of players to foreign leagues and the successes in women's game. In the chapter on Zimbabwe, issues of colonialism and race are explored, along with the relative decline of the game in the country due to internal political turmoil and neoliberalism more broadly.

Part two considers issues of different playing styles, ethnicity and nationalism in Zanzibar, South Africa, Mauritius and Morocco. In the discussion on the emergence of the game in Zanzibar, a fusion of local dance and music with football takes place, representing an appropriation of the colonial game. The legacy of apartheid on the development of the game amongst black South Africans is also discussed. The white regime was able eventually to regulate and control the game in South Africa after a successful non-racial league had developed. In Mauritius, the role that ethnicity, identity and regionalisation played in the development of the game is evident. In addition, the manner in which the boundaries of these concepts change and develop is also significant. In the final chapter, which analyses football in Morocco, an attempt is made to trace the origins of the game and the analogy of "chasing the ghosts" is developed. Furthermore, the role that royalty plays in using the game to create a unifying force is highlighted.

In part three, the impact of football off the field is discussed in relation to Cameroon, Liberia, and Kenya. With regard to Cameroon, the discussion is focused on the expression of "anti-colonial" sentiments during the World Cup held in France in 1998. These sentiments were directed against the French national team despite that a number of its players were of African heritage. Indeed, the World Cup is seen as anti-Third World. In the chapter on Liberia, the focus is on the period during and after the civil war and the emergence of George Weah as arguably Africa's most important football talent in the modern era. In addition, the development of a project to aid children displaced by the civil war is analysed. A football team emerged from this project that was able to compete in an organised league.

The theme of football and development is also discussed in the chapter on Kenya, where the focus is on the Nairobi-based Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA). MYSA developed into a non-governmental organisation (NGO) of 14,000 members with football as its primary focus. MYSA's senior football team has been able to progress to the Kenyan national league and compete in a continental competition. The chapter argues that MYSA has been able to develop self-esteem for its members, improve the living conditions of a community and create a sense of identity.

The final section of the collection explores football migration. Chapter 12 explores three "geographies" in relation to migration. These are: the conventional export of players from Africa; the view of African football in neo-colonial terms; and, finally, an exploration of the "imaginative geographies" of African players. The discussion is not related to a specific geographic area of Africa, but rather considers the three processes and their manifestations across the continent. A case study of an African football migrant is used to highlight the plight of these young men. Chapter 13 briefly touches on social and political issues and the development of the game in Mozambique, but the primary focus is a transcript of an interview with Eusebio. Born in Mozambique, Eusebio played for Benfica in Portugal and captained the Portuguese national team; in the process, he became arguably Portugal and Africa's most celebrated footballer. The interview is useful as a number of the themes discussed in preceding chapters re-emerge in the quotes from Eusebio.

In conclusion, a wide variety of themes are discussed and explored in *Football in Africa*. Some chapters focus on very specific time frames in the development of the game whereas others provide broad and sweeping overviews of football in certain countries. Owing to the multi-disciplinary nature of the collection, this book should appeal to readers across disciplines. *Football in Africa* is an important contribution to the study of the world's most popular sport on the continent. The collection fills an important gap in our knowledge of the game but also highlights the need for further investigation across the continent on a number of different themes in relation to the game of football.

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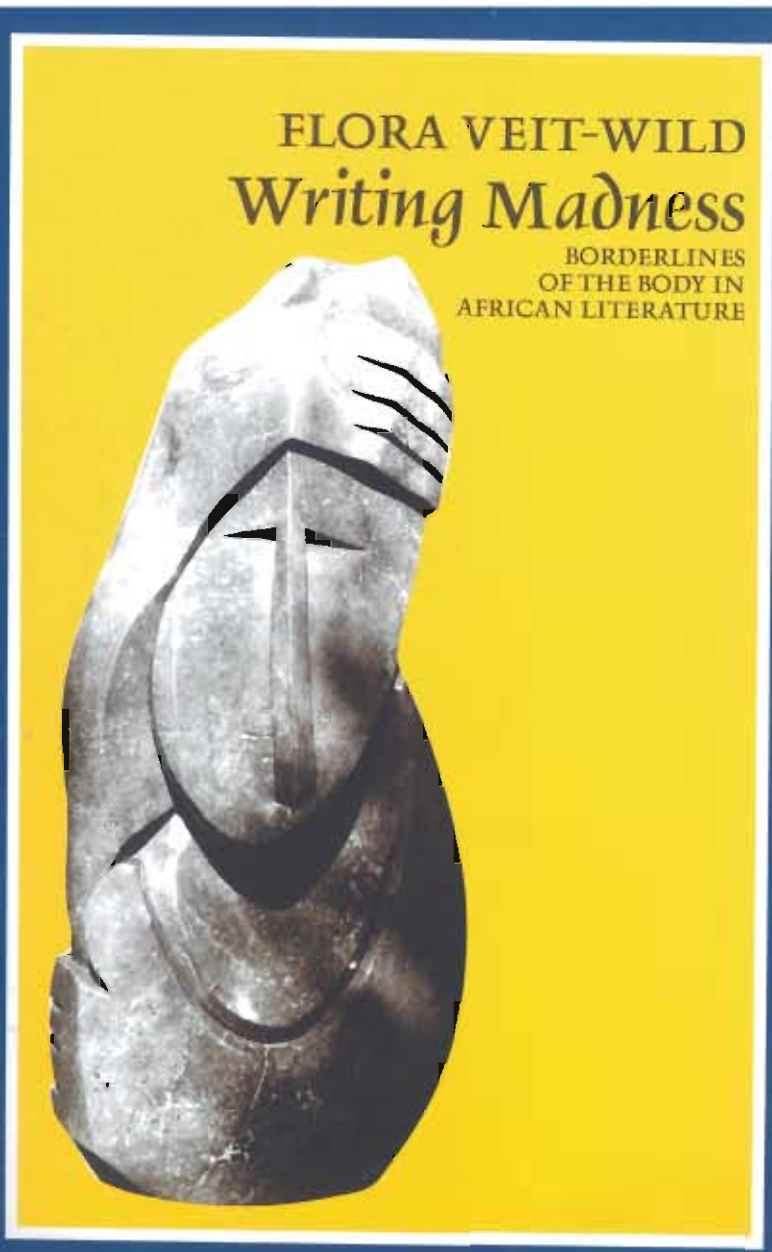

FLORA VEIT-WILD

Writing Madness

BORDERLINES OF THE BODY IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

Introducing the perspective of 'writing madness' into African literature means seeing that literature from a different angle, through the lenses of writers who have ruffled up the surface of realist representation and have explored issues and styles that represent a trespassing of borders, introducing an element of risk and instability.

This study follows the transformation from colonial narratives projecting settlers' horror of the 'heart of darkness' onto the African body and mind, to African writers' interaction with these narratives and their own projections of what constitutes madness in a colonial and postcolonial world. The regional focus is on writers from Southern Africa: Dambudzo Marechera, Lesego Rampolokeng, Bessie Head and Tsitsi Dangarembga, but also included are writers from francophone and East Africa, Sony Labou Tansi and Rebeka Njau, and an analysis of how writing by women displays the gendered violence of the process of mental colonisation.

'Flora Veit-Wild has adopted a unique perspective, or series of perspectives, based on the notion of "madness" – perceived madness, madness as device, actual madness, and the world as mad...While the book will mainly interest the whole range of students, teachers and researchers in the field of African literature, it will also be of great interest to social anthropologists and specialists in mental illness.' – Clive Wake, Emeritus Professor of Modern French & African Literature at the University of Kent, Canterbury

Flora Veit-Wild is Professor of African Literature at Humboldt University, Berlin

Contents: Introduction – Madness in the Colony: Exclusion & Projection – Black Hamlet: Engaging with the African Healer – Surrealism in Africa? From Rimbaud to Césaire – Mad Writing, Writing Madness: Dambudzo Marechera – Time's Gone Mad: Rhyming & Ranting of Lesego Rampolokeng – The Grotesque Body of the Post-Colony: Sony Labou Tansi – Wandering Wombs: Bodily Boundaries in African Oral Culture – Nervous Conditions as Sites of Resistance: Bessie Head, Rebeka Njau & Tsitsi Dangarembga – Tsitsi Dangarembga's Film *Kare Kare Zvako*: The Survival of the Butchered Woman

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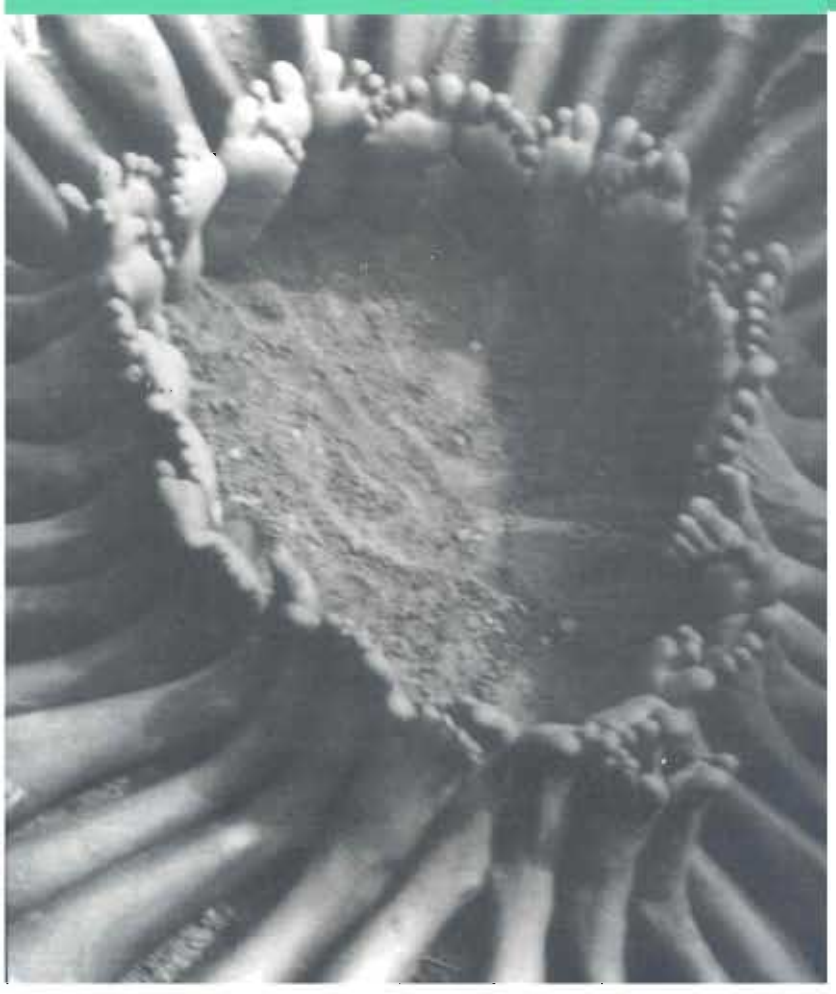
Guest Editor • **Michael Etherton**

African Theatre Youth



African Theatre provides a focus for research, critical discussion, information and creativity in the vigorous field of African theatre and performance. Each annual issue concentrates on a major topic and through its resolutely pan-African coverage and accessible style, broadens the debates to all interested in drama and the many roles it plays in contemporary African life. The editors and editorial board bring together an impressive range of experience in African theatre. The next issue will be on *Companies*.

This volume presents studies of theatre that young Africans have made and performed to audiences across the continent. It shows a wide range of work, much of which depicts the crises that young Africans face as they enter the world of adult relationships and compromises.

The contributions, by adults who are deeply involved with the theatre of young Africans, recount the inspiration and enthusiasm that has led to the artistic achievement and powerful creativity of this work. Michael Etherton's introduction analyses its artistic scope and political impact. What emerges from the voices of the young people themselves is how they are using theatre and performance to struggle for their rights and for positive changes in their lives.

Contents: Introduction by Michael Etherton – Creating for & with Children in Ghana. Efua Sutherland: a Retrospective by Esi Sutherland-Addy – Competitive Youth Theatre Festivals in Ghana by Awo Mana Asiedu – Three Malawian Student Performances by Pia Thielmann – African Youth, Performance & the HIV/AIDS Epidemic by Esiaba Irobi – Young People's Drama & Social Action in Northern Nigeria by Ogah Steve Abah – Promenade Theatre in a Sudanese Reformatory by Ali Campbell – Youth Theatre in the Displaced People's Camps of Khartoum by Luke Dixon – Theatre with Street Children in Senegal by Rosa Stonrac McCreery – West African Child Rights Theatre for Development by Michael Etherton – The Impact of Child Rights Theatre in Sierra Leone by Paul Moclair – *Sewit* Children's Theatre in Eritrea by Christine Matzke & Jane Plastow – Project Phakama. Stories of South Africa, London & Lesotho by Yvonne Banning, Caroline Calburn & Lucy Richardson – Approaching Theatre Work with Children in Zimbabwe by Robert Mshengu Kavanagh – Young People's Theatre in Zambia by Dave Pammenter – Hopeful Youth Drama in Kibera, Kenya by Phan Y Ly – Playscript: *The Ghosts Return* devised by students at the University of Botswana; transcribed & with an introduction by David Kerr – Book Reviews

Cover: based on a photograph of a traditional children's game from northern Ghana, Sutherland Research Archive (© Estate of Efua T. Sutherland)

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