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Review : The Yambo Ouologuem reader : the duty of violence, a Black ghostwriter's letter to France, and the thousand and one bibles of sex by Christopher Wise.

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parodies, critiques, and overturns Conrad's modernism through a postmodernism that is as radical as it is unclassifiable. Just as Eugene Marais falls between mainstream Afrikanerdom and San vulnerability, so Marechera is "considered both too African for Europe and too European for Africa" (33).

The highlight of the collection for me, one that profoundly illustrates the productiveness of the imbrication between echoes of contextualizing intertexts and boundary-crossing African writers, is the chapter on Tayeb Salih, Shakespeare, and Fanon. Gagiano demonstrates how Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* explicitly "signifies upon Shakespeare's *Othello*" (146). Like Marechera's parody of Conrad, Salih, in a feat of genre gymnastics, both echoes the Shakespearean context and also overturns it. Gagiano, herself party to the spiraling communal project, explains in a footnote that this complex device of language, of "signifying" as subversive weapon in the arsenal of black writers, is taken from Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in his *The Signifying Monkey* (146). And so, getting to the heart of what gives coherence to the best part of this collection of essays, Gagiano observes that "both Shakespeare and Salih have made important contributions to what Fanon calls 'the world-wide struggle of mankind for his freedom'" (153).

I do not think that this collection particularly focuses on "evil." Rather, it demonstrates this extraordinary human struggle for transcendence, often against horrible odds. This is the profound "communal enterprise" that cuts across time and place. I did feel that a few of the essays were stand-alones that did not particularly make sense in terms of this collection. However, where coherence is not particularly achieved, in terms of a unified perspective for the book, the different essays are always informative, perceptive and full of the humility that insists that a critic should read a text on the terms of the writer of it, and not with a fully scripted already written agenda.

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The Yambo Ouologuem Reader: The Duty of Violence, A Black Ghostwriter's Letter to France, and the Thousand and one Bibles of Sex

CHRISTOPHER WISE, TRANS. AND ED.
Trenton, NJ: Africa World P, 2008.

The reissuing of Yambo Ouologuem's 1968 novel *Le devoir de violence* in a new English translation is a tremendous service to those teaching African literature in anglophone contexts. The increasing lack of availability of the older catalogue of African literature is constantly confounding and to be lamented. This publication marks a step in the right direction of making these out-of-print works available to a new generation of students of African literature. As Christopher Wise notes

in his preface, the historical and literary importance of this novel in particular is indisputable. Whether read as a response to Senghorian Negritude, an example of postindependence pessimism, or a complicated metacommentary on the status of postcoloniality (whatever that may mean), this novel provides fertile grounds for investigating a variety of concerns central to many courses in African literary studies. Wise adds to his translation of the novel a brief preface that is a lightly revised version of a previously published essay and supplementary materials by Ouologuem. These include a translation of the entire 1968 collection of satirical essays, *Lettre à la France nègre*, one brief story from the pornographic short stories (*Les mille et une bibles de sexe*, 1969) published under the pseudonym Otto Rudolph, and in an appendix, a famous short essay by Kaye Whiteman "In Defense of Yambo Ouologuem" (1972).

The supplementary material definitely enriches the experience of reading the novel. It runs the risk, however, of perpetuating one of Wise's central concerns about the reception of this novel: the reading of Ouologuem's text in and against its European context to the exclusion of West African histories, traditions, and politics. In the preface (and many other essays), Wise eloquently and convincingly argues that the African histories of ethnicity, Islamic conversion, and oral traditions ought to be considered as the primary points of reference for Ouologuem's novel. The supplementary materials "bound" to this translation, however, bring the reader back to the "scandalous" charges of plagiarism leveled against the novel. This is somewhat ameliorated by Wise's inclusion of a brief list of "Suggestions for Further Reading" that include a number of sources dedicated to West African history.

The new translation hews more closely to a literal rendering of the 1968 Editions de Seuil text than the canonical 1971 Manheim translation. Indeed, some of the differences in translation are striking. Two points of divergence in particular could have used some commentary from Wise: his choice to change the title from "Bound to Violence," which, among other things, has accrued a forty-year history, to the new "The Duty of Violence," and Wise's choice to replace Manheim's translation of "la negraille" from "niggertrash" to the patently less offensive "black rabble." Wise does make a small note about this second change, but only as a footnote to the added materials from *Lettre à la France nègre*. He does not address the reasons behind his choice to change the title of the novel. These departures from the established translation departure bear some explanation.

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