

EnterText volume 7 number 1

ABSTRACTS

Chantal Aboa, From Utopia to Dystopia

The central argument is that division, intra-racial prejudice and discrimination were the founding characteristics of the Sierra Leone and Liberia settlements. While most of the freed slaves fancied Africa as a paradise where they could live without the racism and intolerance to which they had been subjected in Europe and America, their views on this continent and its people were racist and misconceived. Therefore, once in Africa, the settlers despised African ways and resolved to discriminate against the natives. This led to decades of corrupt undemocratic rule and widespread resentment which, in turn, triggered the recent civil wars that have devastated Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Lyn Graham Barzilai, On the Brink: “Kentucky 1833”

Rita Dove’s short cameo piece, “Kentucky 1833,” ostensibly presents a conventional picture of victimage through the description of a group of slaves enjoying their one day off on a plantation, and their exploitation by the white “Massa.” Underlying this seemingly conventional text, however, Dove engages not only with concerns of victimage, but also with the deeper questions of enlightenment and self-realisation, and how these are attained.

Marija Bergam, Some Reflections on the Experience of Translating a Fragment of Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*

Poetic translation is commonly considered to be the ultimate challenge for a translator, a kind of sacred ground, where only the most creative and the most

skilful may venture. Indeed, it often happens that a poet will translate another poet, and it is this kind of translation that provokes most interest from literary/translation critics. The intricate dynamics of poetic language are well known, and the apparent impossibility of translation itself is what immediately springs to mind where Derek Walcott's work is concerned. In spite of these premises, the text proposed here is an attempt to render into Serbo-Croatian a fragment of Walcott's 1990 masterpiece *Omeros*. The third segment of the second chapter describes an epiphanic moment in the plot, where the name *Omeros* is interpreted by the narrator. The translation of the excerpt is accompanied, as suggested in the title, by a short article where the main difficulties—as well as the rewards—of the process are described, and the experience of translation is viewed as awakening one to the potentialities of his/her mother tongue.

Osita Ezeliora, *Ojemba* as Metaphor: The West African Students' Union in Context

Ojemba, Igbo word for “sojourner” or “traveller” is, perhaps, one of the most important defining symbols of the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria. Known throughout the continent and even beyond as a highly resourceful and enterprising people, their sense of adventure, business acumen, and admirable success in Western education, have come to place them on the map of the continent as one of the major peoples of Africa with a population of over thirty million people. So adventurous are these people that it is often said in jokes that should anyone find himself or herself anywhere in Africa and does not find the Igbo, the person should run for dear life, as the inhabitants of such a place are likely to be cannibals. Such wry jokes, taken seriously in some circles, finally present the Igbo as the ultimate sojourner, the quintessential traveller, *Ojemba*, whose presence, or lack of it, in any environment is indicative of the people's hospitality, or their hostility. In many ways, West Africans have sojourned the entire human planet through the course of history, and one manifestation of their doggedness and sense of freedom is in the formation, since 1925, of the West African Students' Union (WASU). The immense accomplishments of the Union's members between 1925 and the periods of the restoration of political independence in nearly all West African countries are seen in the roles of Africa's

earliest nationalists. This short paper takes the reader down memory lane, using the *Ojemba* metaphor to locate the roles of West African students in the political emancipation of many African countries, as well as some of the challenges that face contemporary West African students who are currently resident in South Africa.

Maria Cristina Fumagalli, Border (Un)Writing: Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*

Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* deals with the Saint Domingue revolt of 22 August 1791. The novel was written in 1819 and then substantially revised in 1826, just after Haiti had agreed to pay France an indemnity for property lost by the colonists during the Revolution, in order to regain access to European markets. Despite being rated as a *récit d'adolescence*, Hugo's novel has been the object of many critical studies, and has been variously defined as either reactionary or revolutionary, negrophobic or negrophile, anti-slavery or pro-slavery. This essay looks at the two versions of *Bug-Jargal* from a different perspective, in that it focuses on the novel's many references and allusions to the existence of the border between Saint Domingue and Santo Domingo, the longest and most significant land boundary in the Antilles.

Saddik Gohar, Confronting the History of Slavery and Colonisation in the Poetry of M. Al-Fayturi and Langston Hughes

In his attempt to challenge colonial hegemony and promote the colonised's sense of identity, the Sudanese African poet, Mohamed Al-Fayturi, is engaged in an intercultural dialogue with the African American poet, Langston Hughes, in order to reconstruct a history devastated by slavery and imperialism. Rooted in a revolutionary basis, the mutual dialogue between the two poets aims to dismantle colonial narratives about Africa and the black people by revising history and rewriting the story of slavery and colonisation from the viewpoint of the colonised and the oppressed. Carrying the scars of enslavement and hegemony, Langston Hughes and Mohamed Al-Fayturi poetically engage the history of racism and colonization, linking the African literary tradition with its counterpart in the United States.

Sofía Muñoz Valdivieso, Africans in Britain at the Time of Abolition: Fictional Recreations

The paper analyses two recent British novels that recreate the presence of Africans in Britain around the time of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Empire in 1807. Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) recapture the voices of the silenced slaves and bring to readers a neglected aspect of British history through their imaginative reconstruction of black life in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. Phillips chooses to reproduce the conventions of the slave narrative in *Cambridge's* story as he sets it side by side with two other accounts of the realities of plantation life; the voice of Dabydeen's protagonist undermines the power of the slave narrative as a reliable means of self-expression and a vehicle to capture the horrors of slavery. These novels contribute to the reconfiguration of British history and the understanding of its involvement in the slave trade, as they reconstruct the country's past to include the previously erased experience of black Britons.

Karina Williamson, The Antislavery Poems of John Marjoribanks

John Marjoribanks (1759-96), a little known poet from the Scottish borders, features in modern anthologies of writings on slavery and abolition as author of a powerful attack on West Indian slave society, *Slavery; An Essay in Verse* (1792). From his education at Kelso Grammar School, and probably at Edinburgh University, he absorbed the antislavery principles of the Scottish Enlightenment. But it was his direct observation of slaves in Jamaica as an army officer (1784-7) that converted him from an opponent of slavery in principle to a passionate denouncer of the slave system in practice. *Slavery; An Essay in Verse* was only one of a number of antislavery poems he wrote throughout the remainder of his short life. This paper argues that he is remarkable both for his tenacity as a protester and for his resistance to the ethos of the Jamaican plantocracy.