

only manages to whistle through the jumble of voices. The christening of Laborieux recalls Macon Dead, Milkman, Stamps Paid, but the difference in the political undertone parallels not just the different artistic temperaments of the two novelists but also that between the colonial experiences in France and the United States. An illiterate man pronounces Jean-Raphael as An-Afarel, and one can easily dismiss this as a result of blissful ignorance. In Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Doctor Street was deliberately renamed Not Doctor Street, because the doctor in question was not recognised by the white establishment.

Very often the reader is reminded that Esternome is incoherent about the meaning of freedom; even the Word Scratcher laments Marie-Sophie's perniskety narration. This points a finger at the undependability of memory, but the remaining four fingers point to the intractability of Martinique's oppressive history. Despite the multivoicedness there is a heavy silence at the heart of the novel. This is best repre-



sented by the last of the Mentohs, Papa Tolone, the old blackman of the Doum. Silence is the mark of the Mentoh, Derek Walcott's 'patrician of the New World' who incarnates the attributes of an ancestor: equanimity, quiet, distrust of revolt.

The story of *Texaco* is orally told. It is clear, from the very structure of the narration, that someone who has been told an incoherent story is recapitulating, stressing its orality. One thing follows the other: since it is to be

a narrated story, it has to be partly in Creole. In each of the three generations of narration - Esternome, Marie-Sophie and the Word Scratcher, there are several stumblings. The Word Scratcher suffers the most, stumbling "into that uncrossable barrier which separates the spoken word from the writing to be done, which distinguishes the writing done from the word lost."

Lucky diver that he is, the Word Scratcher emerges, drenched in the waters of harsh history, his teeth glistening with a peal: *Texaco*.

Akin Adesokan is a novelist who lives in Lagos

Patrick Chamoiseau

African studies companion

Ranti Osunfowora

Hans M. Zell & Cecile Lomer, (eds) **THE AFRICAN STUDIES COMPANION: A RESOURCE GUIDE AND DIRECTORY**, (Second Revised edition) Hans Zell Publishers, Oxford, 1997, 276pp.

ALTHOUGH the second revised edition of *The African Studies Companion: A Resource Guide and Directory* is broad in scope and coverage, it will be more useful for Africanist scholars, researchers and information specialists based in Europe and America than their colleagues based in Africa. Nonetheless, the compilation has potentials which if exploited can lead to the development of the information service delivery in Africa.

The aims of this new edition of the Com-

panion have remained the same as the first edition published in 1989. According to its compilers, it is intended as a desktop companion and working tool providing quick and easy access to a wide range of relevant information to scholars, teachers, students and others involved in any aspect of African Studies. It is also expected to be valuable for African reference and collection/development librarians.

To ensure the achievement of these laudable aims, the companion has brought to-

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gether a wider range of sources of information in the African studies including annotated listings of the major reference tools, current bibliographies and continuing sources, journals and magazines (in whatever form published - printed, audio/video and other electronic format including the internet). The compilation also lists major libraries, publishers with African studies lists, dealers and distributors of African studies materials, the major regional and international organisations and it also identifies donor agencies and foundations active in Africa and or supporting research on Africa. In other sections of this valuable compilation are a listing of African Studies associations and societies, academic and literary awards in African studies, African literature fields and the final section is a listing of the most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms in African studies.

It is however the determination of the scope of the work that yielded a lot of resources based in Europe and America. According to the compilers, although the scope has been widened slightly for this new edition, the majority of listings identify general and current sources of information and for the most part of those in English. This would mean that resources mainly of a multidisciplinary nature and focusing on the whole or a substantial part of the African continent are featured. However, resources of specialist nature and focusing on a whole or part of an African country are featured in several of other sources - most of which are also produced by Hans Zell Publishers listed in the relevant sections of the Companion.

Apart from Europe and America-based Africanist workers who will find this compilation more useful as most of the resources listed are located with or are easily accessed by them, their colleagues based in Africa should also find the Companion valuable. For one reason a lot of the resources listed in the compilation can be made available to African libraries and information centres through library cooperation and networking arrangement. It is also an open-secret that the most up-to-date comprehensive and well organised managed information resources on any aspect of African Studies are based in Europe and America, this compilation would enable the Africa-based researcher to know what and where the resources are in his effort to exploit them.

And if Africa-based information community decides that the best thing is to develop local information resources, as no one can feature what does not exist, even here the compilation has come handy. It has done this in many ways, one of which is by invariably showing the areas of efficiency and deficiency in information service delivery for Africa that information professionals can exploit. Since the local market is always low on local information services and products produced in Africa, the companion has exposed a lot of ready markets in hard currency and in fact organisations and agencies that will not only support research but I want to believe also supports information service development in Africa.

A library scientist, Osunfowora is of Abadina Media Resource Centre, University of Ibadan

Texts on regeneration

Segun Adekoya

O *SIRIS RISING*, Ayi Kwei Armah's sixth novel, breaks a silence of seventeen years and thematises an African-American's search for her African roots. The quest motif takes the form of the eternal love triangle and is drawn against the background of the Egyptian fertility myth of Iris and Osiris. Ast, the quester and the orthocentre of the love triangle represents Iris, a matriarch figure, the Egyptian goddess of agriculture, love, and the sea. Asar, the creative revolutionary killed by his compatriot and jealous rival, represents Osiris, the Egyptian royal mortuary and vegetation god whose death and resurrection are believed to bring salvation to his worshippers. Seth, the murderer, represents Set who in the Iris-Osiris myth symbolises night and evil. The novel

Abubakar Gimba, *GOLDEN APPLES*, Vantage Press, New York, 1997, 290pp.

Ayi Kwei Armah, *OSIRIS RISING*, Per Ankh Publishers, Popenguine, Senegal, 1995, 305pp.

dramatises the struggle between Good (Asar) and Evil (Seth) for the heart of Love (Ast).

The principle of alterity governs its characterisation, development of plot and themes. Founded on the day-night dialectics, the Iris-Osiris myth lends itself to the use of

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