

African attitude towards death and dying, the N'ganga, the guardian of the Shona way of life' etc.

On the section on mass media there are 14 entries. Provincial newspapers such as *Gweru Times*, the *Cheziya Gokwe Post*, *Kwayedza*, to list a few, were excluded.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the publication is an invaluable source of information for interested readers, lecturers, researchers and persons working in the area of development.

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Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work By Flora Veit-Wild. Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, London, Melbourne, Munich, New York, Hans Zell Publishers, 1992, xvi, 419pp., ISBN 9-908307-29-2, Z\$36.

This unusual book is a stunning achievement — a labour of love by the German-born Flora Veit-Wild. She sets out to trace the influences which shaped the outlook of one of Zimbabwe's most controversial writers, the late Dambudzo Marechera. For the first time those who have read Marechera's *House of Hunger* (1978), which won the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1978, and his novels, *Black Sunlight* (1980) and *The Black Insider* (1990), have an opportunity to understand the life of the author, his views on art, history, culture, sex, violence and what he sees as the endemic brutalities of the twentieth century civilization. The book reveals at length Marechera's relentless engagement with world literatures, those he enjoyed most and the writers who influenced him.

In terms of structure, the book is flexibly constructed and dependant on particular phases of Marechera's life, the places he visited and the people he interacted with. Most gripping are the revelations about his childhood in the ghettos of colonial Rusape, his experiences at secondary school and his reactions to English society and to the somewhat staid academic traditions of Oxford University, which he attended in Britain after his expulsion from the then University of Rhodesia in 1973. Particularly harrowing is the section chronicling Marechera's life as a tramp in London with no fixed address or recognized identity and social role. Fascinating to observe is the way the destitute writer relied on the generally sympathetic but increasingly frustrated Heinemann publisher, James Currey. The book also says much on Marechera's unorthodox rise to international fame, which reaches its peak during his visit to the cultural festival held in Berlin in 1979. Marechera relished the limelight of the occasion, gave a dramatic performance and projected himself as a rebel writer waging a guerrilla war in the world of literature. Flora Veit-Wild's book also chronicles Marechera's subsequent return to an independent Zimbabwe and the isolation and disappointment he encountered. Significantly, what Marechera says about himself, Zimbabwe and Africa,

bitter though it is, is very helpful to anyone striving to understand fully his later works: *Mindblast* (1984), *The Black Insider* (1990) and *Cemetery of the Mind* (1992).

What the literary researcher will find helpful are the numerous interviews and various recollections by Marechera himself. Arguably these constitute the core of the book and are supplemented by testimonial statements culled from confidential school records and university files on Marechera which Flora Veit-Wild unearthed in Zimbabwe, Britain and Europe. Substantial parts of the book are also based on confidential readers' reports on Marechera's work received by Heinemann Publishers over the years. Of particular interest to scholars of African literature is the light the book sheds on the process of publication and the degree to which African literature in European languages is only a screened version of the original. Also implicitly raised in the book are questions relating to the problematic role of publishers in promoting specific trends of writing and the impact this has on the overall picture of African literature.

Standing out in the source book is the personality of the writer. Marechera emerges as a challenging paradoxical figure, captivating to friends and foes alike — a person with an extraordinary capacity to elicit the goodwill and to incur the displeasure of Blacks and Whites both in Zimbabwe and Britain. He comes across as the proverbial scourge ripping apart those values and conventions cherished across generations. Marechera's dismissive attitude towards the African past and his relentless opposition to colonialism and to any forms of oppression are part of his iconoclastic vision. The same vision also defines his attitude to languages. Here is what Marechera said when, in a characteristically unorthodox manner, he interviewed himself:

Shona was part of the ghetto daemon I was trying to escape. Shona had been placed within the context of a degraded, mind-wrenching experience from which apparently the only escape was into the English language and education. The English language was automatically connected with the plush and seeming splendour of the White side of town. As far as expressing the creative turmoil within my head was concerned, I took to the English language as a duck takes to water. I was therefore a keen accomplice and student in my own mental colonisation. At the same time of course there was the unease, the shock of being suddenly struck by stuttering, of being deserted by the very medium I was to use in all my art. This perhaps is the undergrowth of my experimental use of English, standing it on its head, brutalising it into a more malleable shape for my own purposes. For a black writer the language is very racist; you have to have harrowing fights and hair-raising panga duels with the language before you can make it what you want it to do. It is so for the feminists. English is very male . . . (pp. 3-4).

Marechera's efforts to subvert and recast the English language for his own creative purposes are in fact part of his wider effort to question in a radical way what Africa and the rest of the world have often taken for granted. He is as scathing towards Western culture and society as he is towards Negritude, African personality and African nationalism. His writings

do not easily fall in line with the thrust of protest African literature. His is an unsettling voice closer perhaps to A. Kwei Armah's in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence* (1968). Flora Veit-Wild's book captures in detail the complex and often conflicting facets of Marechera's life and art. The work of Marechera and his life are shown as closely related and near the anarchist tradition. The book is accessible to most members of the public and a more than welcome source of information for literary scholars.

Literary works referred to in the text

ARMAH A. K., *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (London, Heinemann, 1963).

MARECHERA D., *House of Hunger* (London, Heinemann, 1978).

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OULOQUEM Y., *Bound to Violence* (Oxford, Heinemann Int., 1968).

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AIDS: Action Now: Information, Prevention and Support in Zimbabwe
By H. Jackson. Harare, Aids Counselling Trust and School of Social Work,
2nd edn., 1992, xvii, 334 pp., ISBN 0-7974-1146-1, Z\$25.

The second edition of *AIDS: Action Now* is so substantially revised that it scarcely resembles the first edition. The new edition bears the stamp of the author's own longstanding involvement in AIDS research, prevention and treatment programmes. The chapters are well chosen, covering most major areas of AIDS activity. The book is comprehensive, insightful and readable. It skilfully interweaves scientific publications, workshop proceedings, conference papers, donor-agency reports, newspaper articles, letters and interviews with AIDS workers. Its presentation is appealing as it includes numerous maps, graphs, charts, cartoons, samples of educational materials and photographs. Well-chosen quotations heighten the reader's interest. Boxes are skilfully used to complement the main text, particularly in highlighting the key points at the end of the chapter. Each chapter also contains reference lists.

The book begins with a chapter on the global, regional and national epidemiology of HIV and AIDS. The global review is excellent, as is the