

BOOK REVIEW

Renée Larrier and Ousseina D. Alidou, eds. *Writing through the Visual and Virtual: Inscribing Language, Literature, and Culture in Francophone Africa and the Caribbean*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015. 369 pp. Index. \$ 54.99. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-4985-2634-0.

Writing Through the Visual and Virtual: Inscribing Language, Literature, and Culture in Francophone Africa and the Caribbean pulls back the curtain on the relationship that current literary and artistic forms in the African continent and the Caribbean Islands have maintained with traditional practices and modes of representation. With the imposition of new languages and systems of knowledge, colonization has created watershed moments in African as well as Caribbean history. The various contributions in this book, edited by Renée Larrier and Ousseina D. Alidou, refreshingly highlight the multiple ways the people of these areas have succeeded in withstanding cultural, linguistic, and political domination, during and after colonization, through the valorization as well as the reinvention of indigenous modes of writing. The editors' introduction is particularly helpful in capturing some relevant issues at stake regarding the evolution of traditional forms of writing and their current use. Larrier and Alidou in particular underscore how the introduction of new technologies has not only impacted conventional definitions of literature but also has changed the production and dissemination of African and Caribbean literary works. The volume encourages readers to deeply explore the imaginative power of these works by envisioning the relationship and dialogue between various virtual and visual scripts. It subtly demonstrates how literature coalesces with other artistic practices and aesthetically contributes to a reflection on important current socio-political and cultural issues.

Divided into six parts, the book is the result of an international conference organized in 2013. By presenting the interdisciplinary works of various scholars working in the Global North and the Global South, this volume manages to showcase the richness of perspectives and interpretations regarding literacy practices. Furthermore, this interdisciplinary approach participates in showing the multiple channels through which stories can be written and transmitted.

Part One examines the various ways written texts as well as oral performances are used to convey social and environmental messages. The four

articles in this section remind us of the important role of “visual and verbal artistry” as a practical transmission. They cover a broad range of topics, for instance the contribution of oral literature and its involvement in the social life of many African countries.

Part Two shifts the focus to the relationship between the body and the text. Several media are presented here: literature, music, photography, and artistic performance. The chapters comprising this section center their reflection on the way written texts prop up transgressive bodily practice and shore up historical testimonies. They also examine the various ways written scripts in music or photography help to tackle political issues.

The multiple artistic means through which popular cultures can impact socio-political decisions are identified in Part Three. The examples of comics, recipes, sports activities such as wrestling, and ritual celebrations show how such practices help raise awareness among the population regarding health issues and questions of identity. Involving acts of sharing, these popular activities also spark dialogues within the community and participate in the creation of a “culture of belonging.”

Part Four furthers the idea of belonging in relation to the question of education. The four chapters in this part focus on the various dimensions through which language and literacy are employed to teach and arouse reflection among children and adults. The authors of the chapters investigate several cases found in teaching materials, advertising media, and novels.

The dynamic junction between text and image is outlined in Part Five. Here, the central question concerns the way poetry, icons, and figures carry symbolic significations. All the contributions in this section provide poignant examples regarding the process through which texts and images can affect singular cultural settings.

Part Six deals with the important issue of gender. This section tackles several significant challenges: How does literature addresses patriarchal violence and domination? And also, what are the poetic mechanisms through which literature offers alternative subversive stories?

This assembly of multiple perspectives and disciplines makes *Writing through the Visual and Virtual* an engaging contribution to the field of research on literature, language, and the arts. The six sections provide an instructive viewpoint on the various methodologies and theories that can be used to analyze written texts in diverse forms, prompting readers to complicate and enlarge the common definitions given to literature. The book should be accessible to advanced undergraduates studying these topics.

Aminata Cécile Mbaye 

Queen's University

Kingston, Canada

aminata.mbaye@queensu.ca

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