African Literature Association

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The Conference of the African Literature Association

Funding provided by the Instructional Development Travel (IDT) Grant awarded by the Office of Faculty Development allowed me to attend the 45th Annual Conference of the African Literature Association held in Columbus Ohio, on 15-18 May 2019 as well as present my paper "Early Francophone African Women Writers in English Translation: Feminists or ‘Ordinary’ Women?"

The primary mission of the African Literature Association is to facilitate the attempts of a world-wide audience to appreciate the efforts of African writers and artists. Its annual conference brings together scholars, teachers and writers that focus on themes related to African literature. This year’s main theme revolved around issues connected to “Institutions of African Literature: Future, Present, Past,” including sessions on the following topics: publishers, institutions of literary criticism, journals of African literature, discourse founders in African literary criticism and the university campus as an institution of African literature. However, a multitude of other themes were discussed during the four-day conference. This poster presents a selection of the panels and keynote lectures that I attended.

Keynote Speaker 1: Carole Boyce Davies

"Decolonial Gaps and ‘Half the World’ Discourses" by Carole Boyce Davies, a Caribbean-American scholar, Professor of English and Africana Studies at Cornell University and a leading authority on Black women writing cross-culturally. Among her most recent books are Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones and Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones.

Keynote Speaker 2: Tsitsi Dangarembga

‘Institutions of Inclusion or Exclusion: Towards Sustainable Ecosystems of African Literature with Special Reference to Zimbabwe’ by Zimbabwean author and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga.

Since the publication of her first novel, Nervous Conditions (1988)—the first novel by a Black woman from Zimbabwe—followed by two other novels, The Book of Not (2006) and The Mournable Body (2018) in the Tambudzai Trilogy, Tsitsi Dangarembga has been a frontline writer and leading voice in global gender equity advocacies. In 1996 she directed the film Everyone’s Child, shown worldwide. Her novels and films have garnered all the accolades. Dangarembga is Director of the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa (ICAPA) Trust in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Keynote Speaker 3: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a widely acclaimed and multiple award-winning Nigerian novelist, short story writer and nonfiction writer whose opinion is sought on the most pressing global issues. She is best known for her novels Purple Hibiscus (2003), Half of a Yellow Sun (2006), and Americanah (2013). Her collection of critical essays includes We Should All Be Feminists (2014) and Dear Ijeawele: A Feminist Manifesto (2017).

For the past ten years, I have taught Francophone literature, including African literature at WMU. Attendance of the ALA conference has given me the opportunity to gain a wealth of knowledge regarding African literature in general, as well as African (Black) feminism in particular. Furthermore, the knowledge gained at the ALA conference also intersects with my current research project on the topic of francophone African literature translated into English. Many thanks to the Office of Faculty Development for their financial support.

More than 120 different panels


Below: The panel “Feminisms and African Traditional Institutions”

Presentation on the legacy of colonialism and the role of women in formerly colonized countries.

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