

# Back to Africa: Literary Representations of Return in African Literatures

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## Context

After years spent in the USA as a migrant, Ifemelu, the protagonist of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), realises that her home country, Nigeria, "became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil." This "gravitational pull," as Maximilian Feldner (2019) calls it, has been perceptible in African literatures throughout the years so much so as to represent one of its constitutive features.

In the still ongoing "age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass migration" (Said 1984), the need to return found in African Literatures seems, at first glance, to be at odds with the postcolonial debates around hybridity, cosmopolitanism, and rootlessness or route-oriented belonging. As Salman Rushdie (1983) declared, "roots [...] are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places." On a similar note, drawing from the Igbo knowledge system, Chinua Achebe (1994) employs the concept of rootlessness as a metaphor for writing: "If you're rooted to a spot, you miss a lot of the grace. So you keep moving, and this is the way I think the world's stories should be told — from many different perspectives," he argued. Thus, how can return be tackled without mooring it to discourses imbued with essentialism, nationalism, and exclusion, all of which could potentially be derived from rootedness?

Perhaps, however, it is the very tension between routes and roots that should be overcome. It is what James Clifford (1997) attempted to do in his work *Routes: Travels and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. With the return, the homonymic opposition is resolved because coming back to one's roots involves the act of travelling — routes. But can one ever come back home? As beautifully shown by the novel *On Black Sisters' Street* (2011), originally written in Dutch by Nigerian writer Chika Unigwe, migrants, while abroad, might experience a kind of nostalgia. After their return, however, this nostalgia might morph into disillusion and even alienation, as shown by Obi, the protagonist of Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960).

Also, it is important to underline that people who come back are not the same as when they left: after having had to adapt to different — and sometimes hostile — environments and socio-cultural systems, returnees might face the same difficulty seen during the initial migration as they are reintegrating into their home country. The eponymous character of *Kehinde* (1994) by Buchi Emecheta, is precisely an example of such discomfort: once she comes back to Nigeria, she is forced into a polygamous relationship she struggles to accept after her husband decides to marry a second, younger woman in secret.

The return can either convey a sense of agency when triggered by the desire or need to escape from the racism and injustices of the host country, as in Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2012), or, on the contrary, a failure when it is imposed by the authorities of the host country as in Helon Habila's *Travellers* (2019).

Drawing on all these issues, the conference aims to analyse how the phenomenon of return migration has been addressed and continues to be addressed in African Literatures. Indeed, while in migration studies, from the 1990s onwards, there has been a growing interest in return migration and the ways in which it shapes individuals in terms of identity changes and cultural shifts (King and Kuschminder 2022), the same cannot be said for literary criticism. While early migration studies conducted on return mobilities tended to offer a simplistic view of such phenomena (i.e., migrants moved from their native country to the place of destination and stayed for good or decided to return back after a while), today's mobilities paradigm is way more complex and intricate. This complexity is mirrored in the recurrent *topos* of return in African literatures, which has taken multiple forms: from permanent reverse migration to brief "reconnections", i.e., provisional returns (Knudsen and Rahbek 2019) or what is perceived as a return to an ancestral land by U.S. descendants of enslaved people, as in Ghanaian-American writer Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016).

Ideas of return, whether implemented or only intentional, re-emerge in different historical periods and places across the African continent: from Kwamankra, the protagonist of *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911) by Fante writer J. E. Casely Hayford, which might be the first fictional work dealing with return from the so-called mother-country, to the omnipresent figure of what in the Anglophone post-independent period was called the "been-to" i.e. a member of the elite, generally male, who undertook a period of study abroad and returned to contribute to the building of the newly sovereign states. This is the case of Baako, the protagonist of *Fragments* (1970) by Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah. Similar figures can also be observed in the francophone context in works such as *Climbié* (1956) by Ivorian writer Bernard Binlin Dadié or *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1971) by Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane.

Today, more than ever, characters who return abound in African literatures: Nina in *Loin de mon père* (2010) by Franco-Ivorian writer Véronique Tadjo, Ike, the anti-hero of *Foreign Gods, Inc.* (2014) by

Nigerian writer Okey Ndibe and Christine, one of the characters of *Tropical Fish: Stories Out of Entebbe* (2006) by Ugandan writer Doreen Baingana, to cite only a few examples. Like their authors, these returnees are part of a transnational context and straddle multiple nations in a way that not only makes them overcome the dichotomy between home and host country but also negotiate and redefine the meaning of "home".

## Programme

### 9.30 – 10.00 Registration and greetings

**10.00 – 11.00: Keynote Lecture** by Prof. Madhu Krishnan: Back to Africa? Return, Repatriation and the Literary Marketplace

### 11.00 – 12.30 First Panel: Between Routes and Roots: Diaspora and Ancestral Return

- Loide N. Ngiishililwa: (De)familiarization of the (Un)familiar: A Pan-Africanist and Feminist Exploration of the Travelogues by African Women and Women of the African Diaspora
- Elena Barraca: "Fly Away Home, to Zion": the Back-to-Africa Narrative in Rastafari-Reggae Lyrics
- Bouteldja Riche: Armah's Variation on Artistic Homecoming or Literary Garveyism in *Fragments* and *Two Thousand Seasons*

### 12.30 – 14.00 Lunch break

### 14.00 – 16.00 Second Panel: (Im)possible Returns

- Jihyun Kim: The Postcolonial Algeria and the Impossible Return: Assia Djebar's *The Disappearance of the French Language (La disparition de la langue française)*
- Nouzha Baba: Charting the (Im)Possibility of Return: The Predicament of Identity, Memory and Roots in Hafid Bouazza's *My Prodigal Son*
- Carlotta Moretti: Non>Returns: A Comparative Analysis of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Aventure Ambiguë*, Saidou Moussa Ba's *La promessa di Hamadi* and Pap Kouma's *Io venditore di elefanti*
- Anenechukwu Kevin Amoke: Connecting through Giving: Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*

### 16.00 - 16.30 Coffee break

### 16.30 – 18.30 Third Panel: Exchanges between Locality and Transnationality

- Gideon Brobbey: Going to Come: Ideology, Return Migration and National Development in J. E. Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* and Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*
- Bruno Ribeiro Oliveira: After Victory: When Does Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Matigari* Come Back Home?
- Ido Fuchs: 'Abd al-Karim al-Karmi and Agostinho Neto's Poems of Return, or the Poetic Community of Future Liberation
- Alessandra Di Pietro: Self-Return in Adichie's *Americanah*: A Moment of Socio-Cultural Unlearning and Reworlding

## Abstracts

Back to Africa? Return, Repatriation and the Literary Marketplace

Madhu Krishnan (University of Bristol, UK)

This talk proceeds in two primary movements. In the first, I consider the notion of return in African literatures as a thematic concern, exploring the ways in which African writers in the diaspora have engaged with the concept of return in their own published writings. From here, I pivot to consider the notion of return in a more expansive sense, turning my attention to the ways in which certain narratives of return function and are given hyper-visibility in the context of the global literary marketplace. I conclude by thinking about what 'return' might mean in a situation in which literary and intellectual capital - at least in their most visible forms - continue to remain concentrated in the Global North. What, that is, might we learn from taking a materialist approach to the notion of return, for instance the idea of 'returning' publishing to the African continent? What narratives and intellectual landscapes have been rendered less visible in material terms, and what might an attention to their work enable us to perceive about African literary writing?

(De)familiarization of the (un)familiar: A Pan-Africanist and Feminist exploration of the Travelogues by African Women and Women of the African Diaspora

Loide N. Nghiishililwa (University of Stellenbosch, South Africa)

This paper examines Homecoming and Cultural Dislocation in *African Journey* by Eslanda Goode Robeson and *Drawn in Colour: African Contrast* by Noluthando Noni Jabavu. Drawing from feminist and pan-Africanist theories, I explore these texts by women of the African diaspora who provide a trailblazing role in establishing travel writing by African women. I am not looking at narratives of migration but rather I explore narratives of 'homecoming'. My reading of *African Journey* and *Drawn in Colour* alongside each other, as homecoming narratives by women of the African diaspora follows Wei-Jue Huang et al.'s argument that "a subject travelling for homecoming can have a connection to a place that one has never been to" (3). I use homecoming to refer to narratives of return where African subjects in the diaspora travel back to places of their ancestry. In Robeson's case, as a descendant of African slaves, *African Journey* is a philosophical homecoming journey symbolising not a literal home return but the return to a spiritual home. *Drawn in Colour* by Jabavu narrates a more literal homecoming journey as she travels back to her childhood home after having left South Africa for England at the age of thirteen. Both writers engage with motifs of alienation, homecoming, belonging, cultural disassociation, privilege, and African modernity in emotionally nuanced depictions of their voyages. By focussing on travel narratives by black women who published their travelogues in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this paper challenges perceptions of the genre of travel writing which view it as a male-dominated genre of the global North.

Fly Away Home, to Zion": the Back-to-Africa Narrative in Rastafari-Reggae Lyrics

Elena Barraca (University of Pescara, Italy)

This paper explores the back-to-Africa narrative portrayed by a corpus of Rastafari-reggae lyrics from 1970s Jamaica. Musical texts in the African diaspora have always had the capacity to convey imaginaries of return to the ancestral land: they include the hymns of the Black Churches, Black Nationalist anthems, and, of course, Rastafari-reggae. In fact, repatriation, in its multiple forms, has been part of a long history of African resistance in the Americas, and it played a central role in movements such as Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Revivalism and, since the 1930s, the Rastafari movement. However, by the 1960s, Black radicalism had moved away from ideas of repatriation, to embrace a militant policy of social activism. Even if influenced by the radical militancy of the era, Back-to-Africa imaginaries remained a central theme for Rastafari-reggae artists. Their celebration of Africa as "fatherland" reshaped a

complex set of cultural symbols, promoting an empowering Afro-Caribbean identity, which openly opposed a “color blind” Jamaican nationalism. Considering Rastafari-reggae lyrics as a body of literature, this paper examines images of Africa and notions of repatriation in a well-defined lyrical corpus. Alternating qualitative and quantitative research, the analysis also identifies the main metaphors and rhetorical devices used by Jamaican artists to talk about their connection with the African continent. As the paper shows, in Rastafari-reggae lyrics a religiously idealized homeland, often addressed as “Zion,” intermingles with a transnational solidarity that goes beyond Africa and its diaspora. The paper demonstrates that Rastafari-reggae lyrics from the 1970s restructured images and styles from a broader back-to-Africa literature and oral tradition, adding a new tassel to a long-standing diasporic narrative of resistance, transnational connections, and collective memory.

Armah’s variation on artistic homecoming or Literary Garveyism in *Fragments* and *Two Thousand Seasons*

[Bouteldja Riche \(University of Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria\)](#)

Whether written in the early years of independence or in the early years of the twentieth century, African literatures of return seem to be repetition of Garvey’s back-to-Africa movement of the 1920s. These literatures, most particularly, those produced in West Africa in English or French have played over time variations on what I would call literary Garveyism. Literary Garveyism is thus concerned with the cultural aspect of the return to the sources, the second phase that Fanon has outlined in his triadic scheme of African literary evolution in his discussion on “African culture” in *The Wretched of the Earth*. This triadic scheme comprises assimilation, a return, and a combat phase. This research is meant to explore Ayi Kwei Armah’s problematic return to the sources or literary Garveyism in two of his novels, *Fragments* and *Two Thousand Seasons*, with particular emphasis on the notion of the gift. Contrary to Fanon, Armah’s literary homecoming is also endowed with a spirit of combat, but both in both fictions he borrows heavily from Western anthropological theories of the gift (Mauss, Bataille, etc) to make the case for the necessity to return to African roots. His African returnees are represented as ritual passengers stranded on routes of forceful migration because of the disregard of the economy of gift exchange, marked among other things by reciprocation. Armah’s literary Garveyism provides a typical case of African writers who made their artistic homecoming by problematically deploying Western methodological tools that hugely contributed to the negation of the very idea of return for an unfinished combat at home.

The Postcolonial Algeria and the Impossible Return: Assia Djébar’s *The Disappearance of the French Language* (*La disparition de la langue française*)

[Jihyun Kim \(Sogang University of Seoul, South Korea\)](#)

The late novel *The Disappearance of the French Language* (*La disparition de la langue française*) by the Algerian-French writer Assia Djébar presents the paradox of a character’s “impossible return” from France to his homeland. The main character, Berkane, returns to the Casbah in Algiers in the fall of 1991 after leaving his childhood home and spending two decades in France, but a turbulent civil war turns his nostalgia into disillusionment. During the power struggle between the military regime and the dogmatic Islamic National Salvation Front, the repression of the use of the French language intensified, such as the ban on teaching French in universities. In this context, the disappearance of Berkane, who was writing a novel in French, in September 1993, leaving only the traces of his overturned car, symbolizes the reality of post-colonial Algeria. As the title of the film suggests, this reality is characterized by the suppression of the French language. Berkane’s situation resonates with that of Djébar, a writer who is unable to establish a stable identity in both his homeland and abroad. In this context, Djébar, who worked in Algeria for a short time or left the country altogether, characterizes his writing as “writing in exile,” a perception shared by Algerian francophone



writers in similar situations. However, the action of Nadjia, the female character who stimulated Berkane's desire to write an autobiographical novel and who went into exile in Italy, invites us to imagine a universe based on a humanistic ethos. This study sheds light on the political and social context of post-colonial Algeria in the 1990s through the character's failure to return and the search for new possibilities of the female character.

Charting the (Im)Possibility of Return: The Predicament of Identity, Memory and Roots in Hafid Bouazza's *My Prodigal Son*

Nouzha Baba (University of Leiden, Netherlands)

The concepts of identity, memory and return have become contested issues in postcolonial cultural discourses, but also thematic complex in Dutch literature of Moroccan migration. The Moroccan-Dutch author Hafid Bouazza's short story "My Prodigal Son", published in his collection *Abdullah's Feet* (2000), treats the narrator-protagonist—a son of Moroccan migrant father and Dutch mother's—quest for understanding his past culture and roots in order to come to terms with the changing aspects of his identity and memory. In this paper, I analyse how Bouazza's short story contests the notions of identity and memory, as well as charts the (im)possibility of return to the homeland's cultural and ethnic roots. The author's "travelling memory" (Erll) brings to the fore the predicament of past culture and geography as "haunting legacies" (Schwab), as well as problematizes the notion of return for migrants' Dutch-born children. I argue, then, that Bouazza's narrative is a productive literary form of self-representation, of contesting roots and challenging the idea of return for migrants' subsequent generations, whose identity is shaped by hybrid forms of belonging. Bouazza's narrative depicts the Moroccan-Dutch protagonist as being well immersed in cultural transformation, looking with aversion to the cultural memory of homeland, and celebrating instead dynamics of uprooting. Therefore, I argue that the writer breaks both thematic and stylistic boundaries to end up refuting the idea of return, deconstructing identity and writing homelessness.

Non-returns: A Comparative Analysis of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Aventure Ambiguë*, Saidou Moussa Ba's *La promessa di Hamadi* and Pap Khouma's *Io venditore di elefanti*

Carlotta Moretti (University of Paris Nanterre, France)

The archetype of the homecoming is a literary topos that has its roots in the Homeric *nóstos*: the coming-back journey of the hero, which - albeit troubled - ends with the reunification with his land, loved ones, and eventually with himself. However, the analysis focuses on more bitter and tragic counterparts to this return, such as the epilogues of the Senegalese writers Cheikh Hamidou Kane in the novel *L'Aventure Ambiguë*, Saidou Moussa Ba with *La promessa di Hamadi* (*Hamadi's Promise*) and Pap Khouma in the novel *I was an elephant salesman*. This study aims to analyze the different epilogues of these novels - written in French and Italian - which are disappointing and sometimes so infamous that they can be considered non-returns. Samba, the protagonist of Kane's novel- returning from Paris - experiences an inner drama that turns out to be an intense ambiguity. The protagonist will not find comfort in returning to his hometown to such an extent that he will die. The homecoming of the two Italian novel protagonists - Pap and Hamadi - will also be for one disappointing and tragic for the other. Making use of the neologism coined by Marc Augé - the non-place - or a space as a contrast to anthropological places, therefore all those spaces that have the prerogative of not being identity-making, relational, and historical - this study proposes a comparative analysis of a non- return to Senegal; trying to understand the reason for a *nóstos* without a happy ending.

Connecting through Giving: Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*

Anenechukwu Kevin Amoke (University of Lancaster and University of Nigeria)

Contemporary perspectives on migration studies in postcolonial literature often conceptualize the connection between home/nation and diaspora in spatial and economic terms and in relation to mobility. This is so even among scholars of Afropolitanism. Therefore, discussions about the 'motherland' focus on diaspora interventions that seek to rebuild the nation or a yearning to re/experience its landscapes and re-live shared memories with loved ones. Other critical voices idealise the nation, re-inventing the aura that migration narratives attribute to the diaspora to lure a countermovement from the global North to the South in the form of re-migration. Thus, postcolonial theories and criticisms continue to situate the homeland at the centre of reading of the migration genre. This paper takes a different approach to this interaction. It argues that contemporary postcolonial literature on migration, particularly texts on illegal migration and its underground economies, re-articulate returns and connections through the model of gift-giving. Bringing gift theory, a largely anthropological tool, into literary criticism, it seeks to explore how kin obligations cause identity negotiations between diaspora subjects and communities they left behind in the global South. It examines how those in the diaspora in Darko's novel negotiate power, belonging, and spaces of (gender) exclusion through remittances and how the local space shapes such negotiations. It argues that the power of the local over the diaspora and vice versa is constructed and exercised within the economy of the gift and its politics.

Going to Come: Ideology, Return Migration and National Development in J. E. Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* and Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*

Gideon Brobbey (University of Ottawa, Canada)

Most of the research in migration studies in African Literature tend to focus on only contemporary African migrants. However, the representations of colonial African migrants who embark on what Madhu Krishnan calls "temporary migration to the imperial metropole, usually undertaken under the auspices of colonial education" (p. 144), offers new ways of looking at the nexus between return migration and national development. These colonial migrant characters appear to operate by the unwritten code of "going to come." They travel like the proverbial Sankofa bird with their eyes looking back to the nation they have left behind. This paper asks, what new ways of reconceiving return migration might be gleaned from the colonial representations of the African migrant? How does ideology influence the colonial African migrant's contribution to national development? In my discussion of J. E. Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* and Kobina Sekyi's *The Blinkards*, I argue that the mindset of return among colonial African migrants is sustained by a unique commitment to ideologies of African self-worth and nation-building, which if revisited today would invigorate the contemporary migrant's drive towards national development on the continent. For instance, if African professionals trained in the West saw it as a matter of an ideological imperative to contribute to the development of the continent through temporary or permanent return migration, much of the desired positive change would be achieved. The two colonial African texts I focus on in this paper present characters who in spite of retaining their connection with colonial institutions, strongly advocate the critical place of African ideas and African involvement in nation-building. They depict returnee colonial migrants such as Mr. Onyimdze and Kwamankra as ambassadors for development and guards of the rights and cultural values of the people.

After Victory: When Does Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari Come Back Home?

Bruno Ribeiro Oliveira (University of Granada, Spain)

Matigari, the anti-colonial freedom fighter, returns from the victorious guerrilla of decolonization but finds that everything he fought for was not attained. The fellow Africans who stood with the colonizer, now govern as the previous white rulers. This is one of the message of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *Matigari* (1986). The guerrillas who fought in jungles

and hills left a colonized world and came back to an independent but neocolonial order. Ngugi's *Matigari* lead us through a representation of post-colonial Africa where hope in social, political, economic and epistemological change has been abandoned. Working through the idea of a transition between two periods (colonial to neocolonial), the book tells us that decolonization has failed and that the only way to achieve it is by revolutionary war. Similar to the examples of the Mau Mau and Amílcar Cabral, and based on theories of Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah, the novel explores the idea of return to a land that has not changed. Using it as source of representation of the politics of post-colonial Kenya and Africa, *Matigari* runs through time and space to connect different historical periods and different colonized regions with one aim: to tell the masses that the struggle for decolonization still continues. The symbolism works to clarify the reader on the nature of the world and how to act over it. It allows us to survey that, return, be it through two different times, places or cultures, does not equal change for better. By understanding the return of *Matigari*, we unearth how the world works (according to the writer).

'Abd al-Karim al-Karmi and Agostinho Neto's Poems of Return, or the Poetic Community of Future Liberation

Ido Fuchs (University of Tel Aviv, Israel)

In 1953, during his refuge in Damascus, the Palestinian poet 'Abd al-Karim al-Karmi published his poem "*Sana'ud*" (We Shall Return in Arabic). In this poem, I claim, al-Karmi articulates the figure of return as a transnational poetic community's liberated future. Drawing from the notion of an open future for this community, I will suggest a possible transnational trajectory for this community. My paper will thus compare al-Karmi's poem with the 1961 poem, "Havemos de Voltar" (We Shall Return in Portuguese), by the Angolan Agostinho Neto. Beyond their titles, the rationale for the two poems' comparison is similarities in their historical conditions – colonialism, exile, and an anti-colonial liberation struggle – as well as similarities in the features of the figure of return. Not only similarity connects the two poets, but also solidarity. Both poets were associated with the Afro-Asian Writers' Association (AAWA), a literary and solidarity organization founded in the late 1950s. The paper will thus discuss some features of the AAWA. Firstly, to introduce another basis for the Palestinian-Angolan comparison and evoke a much-forgotten literary and revolutionist relationship between Palestine and Africa in general, and Angola in Particular. Secondly, the discussion will present a comparison of both poems with the AAWA's own notion of a poetic community's liberated future. In this manner, the AAWA and the literary comparison will unfold as another potential trajectory for the return and the poetic community of the future liberation.

Self-Return in Adichie's *Americanah*: A Moment of Socio-Cultural Unlearning and Reworlding

Alessandra Di Pietro (Independent scholar)

*Americanah* (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie famously recounts the life of a Nigerian woman in the United States and her decision to move back to Africa. In this sense, Ifemelu's return is mostly narrated in the final part of the novel. The protagonist's decision to move back to Nigeria, however, is actually mentioned at the very beginning of the story, posing as a sort of narrative framework, almost as if this homecoming is *de facto* the core of the whole novel. From this perspective, Ifemelu's movement of self-return to Nigeria can be analysed as a process of socio-cultural unlearning: a moment in which Ifemelu unlearns the gendered and racialised socio-cultural frameworks she has unconsciously assimilated after years spent living in the United States. Furthermore, such a form of unlearning can also be configured as a moment of reconstruction and reworlding once Ifemelu returns to Lagos, a possibility to open up the narrative to an alternative space of representation against stereotyped images of the African continent. This presentation reflects on how Ifemelu's physical movement of self-return

unfolds throughout the novel as a way for the protagonist to reclaim her agency as a “resisting subject” against westernised cultural frameworks.

## Bio

**Madhu Krishnan** is Professor of African, World and Comparative Literatures in the Department of English at the University of Bristol, UK. She is author of three books: *Contemporary African Literature in English: Global Locations, Postcolonial Identifications* (2014), *Writing Spatiality in West Africa: Colonial Legacies in the Anglophone/Francophone Novel* (2018); and *Contingent Canons: African Literature and the Politics of Location* (2018). Her research considers contemporary African writing in the context of transnational, world and global literary production. She is particularly interested in the ways in which literary writing contributes to, subverts and is shaped by a broader, a priori image of “Africa” circulating in a global imaginary, as well as the varied and contested registrations of this process across differing scales of expression and geography.

**Loide N. Nghiishilwa** is a PhD candidate from Stellenbosch University, South Africa. As an early researcher, she is very keen to participate in the Back to Africa: Literary Representations of Return in African Literatures Conference (Condorcet). Her interest in exploring travel accounts of African women and women of the African diaspora categorically derives from her position as an African woman. She is curious about the contributions made to the public discourse about travel writing by black women.

**Elena Barreca** holds a master’s degree in European, American and Postcolonial Literatures from Ca’ Foscari University of Venice and a Ph.D. degree in Languages, Literatures and Cultures in Contact from the “G. D’Annunzio” University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy. Her Ph.D. project focuses on the systematical study of Rastafari-reggae lyrics from 1970s Jamaica: her research uncovers the inner merits of the genre as a body of literature and a system of thought, and locates Rastafari-reggae discourse within the wider history of Africa in the Americas. The thesis benefitted from a year of research at the University of West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica.

**Bouteldja Riche** teaches African literature at the university of Tizi-Ouzou. He has written a research on the use and abuse of myth in Armah’s novels and the deployment of the trickster figure of Ananse in the fictions of the same author.

**Jihyun Kim** has been Assistant Professor at the Department of European Culture at Sogang University (Seoul, South Korea) since 2022, where she teaches French and Francophone literature and culture. Her dissertation on the work of Assia Djébar is entitled *Les voix polyphoniques des femmes algériennes* (2018). She has translated Assia Djébar’s *L’amour, la fantasia* into Korean (2015). Her research focuses on autobiographical women’s writing in relation to postcolonialism, cultural diversity and the social status of the French language in Maghrebian Francophone literature.

**Nouzha Baba** is completing her PhD project at LUCAS: Leiden University Center for the Arts in Society. In her thesis *Culturalism and Its Discontents: Comparative Studies in Rhetoric, Theory and Literature*, she undertakes an interdisciplinary comparative research about contemporary European socio-political rhetoric, cultural theory and literature of Moroccan migration. Her areas of research include comparative literature and cultural analysis; Post-9/11 literature, politics and ethics; postcolonialism, postmodernism and globalism; identity, memory and gender studies. During her doctorate studies, Baba has participated in numerous international conferences and in summer/winter schools; she has also published chapters in edited books, as well as articles in renowned international peer-reviewed journals. Her publications include: “Caught in a Space of Dislocation: Cultural Hybridity Reconsidered in Tahar Ben Jelloun’s *Les Yeux baissés*” in *W(h)ither Identity: Positioning the Self and Transforming the Social* (2015); “Transcultural Reflections on Identity, Memory and Gender in Naima El Bezaz’s *Vinexvrouwen*” in *Gendered Bodies on the Move: Re-understanding Women’s Migratory Experiences* (2022); ““Doubt is Salutary in our Certainties:” Religious Fundamentalism, Terrorism and Identity in Driss Chraïbi’s Post-Postcolonial Detective

Fiction.” In *Postcolonial Interventions: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2023).

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