

practical steps in this direction: to speed up the pace of pan-African unity and to strengthen South to South collaboration (p. 98). Part Two, entitled ‘Subject, Subjection and Subjectivity’, challenges the universality of the postmodern conception of the subject in conditions of late capitalism. Here again, recognizing the reality of coloniality, as reflected in the ways in which subjectivity remains colonized in the postcolonial world, makes it possible to elaborate a more productive approach to the questions of the subject, the nature of its subjections, and forms of liberation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni engages Slavoj Žižek, Judith Butler, and Ernesto Laclau, using part of their views of the subject, but at the same time indicating the extent to which the lack of a proper account of the colonial dynamic renders those views of the subject fundamentally incomplete from the perspective of African subjectivity. The author includes two chapters in which he focuses on national discourses in South Africa and Zimbabwe in order to shed more light in the unfolding drama of African subjectivity.

Part Three, entitled ‘Coloniality, Knowledge and Nationalism’ focuses on the coloniality of knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni discusses the extent to which African universities remain bastions of Eurocentrism. The author proposes that universities should take seriously African critical theories, knowledge, and indigenous knowledge systems to encourage the production of alternatives to critical discourses that pathologize as mere ‘victimhood’ African subjectivities and African nationalisms. Instead, the author proposes the search for new nationalist and pan-Africanist discourses that are democratic, embrace gender parity, and foster South-South collaborations and encounters. Overall, the book stimulates an interest in transformation in directions other than those premised on globalization, liberal cosmopolitanisms, and development.

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## A LOST ARCADIA

*Achebe and Friends at Umuahia: The Making of a Literary Elite.*

By Terri Ochiagha.

Suffolk, England: James Currey, 2015. Pp. xiii + 202. \$80, hardback (ISBN 9781847011091).

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**Key Words:** West Africa, Nigeria, arts, biography, education, intellectual, literature, modernity.

*Achebe and Friends in Umuahia: The Making of a Literary Elite*, author Terri Ochiagha explains, takes its title from *Swami and Friends* by the Indian novelist R. K. Narayan. This beloved fictional work concerns the formation of a middle-class intellectual elite. The central goal of her own book, Ochiagha asserts, is to reconstruct ‘the institutional genesis of Government College Umuahia, its changing ideological and intellectual nature, the humanistic and literary ambience in the period of 1944–52, its legacy in the mid to late 1950s, and the *primus inter pares* generation’s shared intellectual life après Government College’. The book is about the factors that stirred the inaugural moments of African

literature at Government College Umuahia, the ‘Eton of the East’, the English-style boarding school in Umudike, Umuahia, in Eastern Nigeria, where a remarkable number of Africa’s most important writers were educated in the 1940s and 1950s. What factors made Government College Umuahia the staging ground of what was to become a remarkable literary tradition? ‘What’, Ochiagha asks in short, ‘are the exact constituent ingredients and in what proportions did they coalesce into the magical formula’ that ignited the talents, and their very significant response in the making of Africa’s literary modernity? What, of that generation of African writers educated at Umuahia, can be ascribed to socialization or environment? Can the conditions at Umuahia be grasped and reproduced? Terri Ochiagha attempts to answer these questions in a tightly written and magnificently told account.

Ochiagha casts important light on the conditions and practices that made a place like Umuahia unique in the molding of young imagination and talent in the colonial period. Was it a fluke or deliberate? In the end, Ochiagha does not answer all these questions, but she does touch on the aspect of British colonial education that yielded these fruits in the age of colonialism and decolonization. In the emergence of some of the major African writers of that age – Chinua Achebe, Chike Momah, Christopher Okigbo, V. C. Ike, Elechi Amadi, I. N. C. Aniebo, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and, to some extent, the poet Gabriel Okara – all from one place, we glimpse the making of a tradition that in the end, feels occluded because it could not be sustained in the postcolonial environment. The Government Colleges, such as Umuahia, were the site of colonial mimicry. However, even as sites of the formation of ‘colonial/postcolonial subjectivities’, they remain, Ochiagha reminds us, ‘virtually unmapped terrain’ that remains ‘outside the public and scholarly gaze’. A link between African literature and an Anglican spirit, the result of the ‘psycho-cultural’ effect attendant upon strategic acculturation through the elitism of the English public school model, is an intriguing and powerful subtext of Ochiagha’s argument. Fanon would have come very handy here for Ochiagha, who missed the chance to explore the psycho-cultural aspect of Umuahian education and its effect on the writers a little further, for what should have been a rounder perspective.

Terri Ochiagha’s book, the story of a remarkable place and a remarkable time, is also the story of the heroic exertion of dedicated people – English and African educators – who did the work of the British Empire in quiet places, unaware of how it might turn out. E. H. Duckworth and Robert Fisher, whose idealism and sensitivity to the reality of an Africa under colonialism led them to disregard the strictures of colonial public education policy, launched the innovative experiment that laid the foundation for Government College Umuahia. William Simpson’s ‘Text-Book Act’ may account for the intellectual orientation of the writers that came out of Umuahia. Adrian P. L. ‘Apple’ Slater’s English lessons prompted Chinua Achebe to scribble a note of gratitude at the publication of *Arrow of God*, for ‘the man who taught me respect for language’.

The book relates the story of the attempt to transplant English values in the creation of elite sites of privilege through schools modeled after Eton, Rugby, Harrow, and Marlborough. Terri Ochiagha captures these mimetic attempts finely in ways that make the 1940s and 1950s feel like a lost arcadia in West African education. With an impressive use of archival sources and interviews of the living writers, *Achebe and Friends in Umuahia* explains how the evolution of Government College Umuahia as a British colonial

experiment in public education came to mirror the emergence of a colonial elite. Their new and conditioned sensibilities, in due course, shaped the initial development of modern African Art and Literature. Chinua Achebe, one of these important beneficiaries of an Umuhian education, gave some thought, in a general way, to this subject in his own book, *The Education of a British Protected Child*. Terri Ochiagha's book provides a multi-perspectival historical look at this hallowed site.

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## WHITES AT WAR

*World War I in Africa: The Forgotten Conflict among the European Powers.*

By Anne Samson.

London: I. B. Tauris, 2013. Pp. x + 306. £59.50, hardback (ISBN 9781890761190).

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**Key Words:** Military, politics, violence, war.

Africa's role in the First World War has become the focus of renewed interest of late. This surge in scholarly and public focus is linked to the war's centenary, to the commemorative impulses it generates, and to new questions being asked about how and why the war was fought around the world. Anne Samson's *World War I in Africa*, an expansion of her doctoral thesis (also published by I. B. Tauris in 2006), contributes to this growing field by offering a clearly-written narrative that foregrounds individual actors as shapers of the war's operations and outcomes. Samson is especially interested in the roles played by individuals in planning and executing the relatively well-known East African campaign, although she also devotes a chapter to the lesser-known campaign in Southwest Africa. Throughout, Samson draws the reader's attention to the interplay between politicians and military leaders at different levels. She convincingly demonstrates that in order to understand why Southwest and East Africa became embroiled in the war at all, we must also understand how individuals in London, Pretoria, Berlin, and elsewhere came to view war in Africa as essential to their wider efforts in the Great War.

The book's title misleads somewhat, inasmuch as it suggests wider coverage of the war on the African continent. The campaigns fought in the German colonies of Togo and Cameroon receive very little coverage. But Samson's emphasis on the East and Southwest African campaigns serves her larger purpose of concentrating on the key South African and German leaders involved: General Jan Christian Smuts and General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. Although others such as General Jaap Van Deventer and Lord Kitchener also feature in the narrative, it is clear that Samson's main interest is in showing the decisive and active roles Smuts and Lettow-Vorbeck played in determining the course and outcome of the war. The text succinctly encapsulates allied interests as well, illustrating how Belgium, Portugal, and France sought to benefit from the war in East Africa through their alliances with Great Britain, and how South Africa hoped to