

the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it seems almost like the Marinids sent detachments to Iberia to give the excess manpower something to do ('at least they won't be making trouble around here').

A second strength with far-reaching effects was control and astute use of the gold caravan-routes extending from the sub-Sahara up through Morocco and secondly, to Tunis (the existence of the second route was surely one enticing reason to march east to seize the realm of the Hafsiids). Use of income from the gold caravans facilitated such international game-changers as the renting of an entire fleet of forty ships from the Genoese and the routine use of not a few companies but thousands of "Frankish" cavalry and Iberian archers, who were paid in cash (p. 141). This was a dynasty that in its heyday controlled great wealth. Unfortunately, the steady provision of gold to Spain and Italy provided a boost to the very economies and states which eventually brought military pressure to bear on their North African neighbors.

A third advantage the Marinid dynasty used to good effect was participation in the grain and other trade around the Mediterranean. Although the court's hand in grain and wool trade was inconsistent, the overall trend contributed to the prosperity of the region. Finally, institutional innovations such as increased religious endowments (*waqf*) and the creation of schools (*madressas*) in Fez diluted the influence of the traditional urban elite and assured control by Berber elements and allies.

Marinid nimbleness in the creation of new institutions (*madressas* and *waqf* administrations), use of outsiders within their administrations (Jewish bureaucrats, foreign mercenaries), and shrewd exploitation of gold and other trade propelled their state forward for two centuries. In the end, however, these strengths proved insufficient to enable them to acquire and make use of the technological advantages of the Renaissance. Furthermore, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century there were increasing pressures from Portugal, Spain, and eventually the Ottomans. Those later interactions must await another book.

Each generation of Berbers must face the challenge of assessing and defining Berber identity, and each generation shall respond to the challenge in its own way. Kateb Yacine's words would not have sounded strange to the Marinids, nor have they lost any relevance today.

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**Alexie Tcheuyap and Hervé A. Tchumkam. 2019. *Avoir peur: insécurité et roman en Afrique francophone*. Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval. 306 pp.**

*Avoir peur* is an ambitious study, which addresses literary practices and the "postcolonial condition" in Africa through the examination of the discourse on fear, anguish, and insecurity. Using a large corpus of detective stories and realist novels, the book's main argument is that "security as a form of freedom" and as "a guarantee against threats remains utopian in the African context impeded by the social, political and even cultural order" (p. 3; the translations are the reviewer's). To demonstrate this, Tcheuyap and Tchumkam draw from Frantz Fanon, Giorgio Agamben's "sovereign power" and "state of exception," Achille Mbembe's "necropolitics," and Laurent Jenny's "terror and the signs" among others, to suggest that detective stories and realist novels taken as "sites of terror" (Jenny) provide renewed literary paradigms (p. 11) to understand the evolving relation between life and death on the continent.

Indeed, “crisis” dominates most of the analyses of the narratives, in the form of humanitarian and ecological disasters, wars, migration tragedies, terrorism and radical Islamism, popular justice and the manipulation of the occult (p. 6), to assert that crises have become integral parts of the functioning of the state and even critical to its longevity. The texts examined reveal how the state “creates and perpetuates social fractures” (p. 6), and profit from the establishment of a “state of exception” and a discourse on “security” (p. 11).

The literary corpus involved to investigate these important themes include narratives from North and Sub-Saharan Africa and analyses reveal how African letters have engaged with the “state of crisis,” by tracing the relation between violence and the political since independence and by emphasizing how “fear” and “insecurity” clearly defined the postcolonial period and its literary practices. The book consists of three parts, each with four chapters. While some chapters are dedicated to individual authors such as Moussa Konaté (chapter 2) or Modibo Soungalo Keita (chapter 6), others explore themes, concepts, and symbolic characters that African authors have convoked to engage with and respond to the “state of crisis”: migration, the occult, and the “humanitarian reason” (chapter 3), globalization and pan-africanism (chapter 4), dissidence, family conflict, and violence (chapter 5), fraud, bluff, and madness (chapter 7), gender and death (chapter 8), policing and sycophancy (chapters 9 and 10), and terrorism (chapter 12).

Most chapters combined investigations about realism and the detective novel as a genre considering whether “fear” and “insecurity” have led to the development of specific narrative features. The analysis provides definitions for a “political bildungsroman” (chapter 3), considers “murder as an esthetic category” (chapter 6), and describes the narrative logics of writing about madness (chapter 7). The book closes with an epilogue, which starts with a powerful critique of the silence about the death of writers such as Mongo Béti and Driss Chraïbi, and their subsequent disappearance from the literary landscape. The authors then reflect on what they call the “auctorial insecurity” (p. 269) in African letters, questioning through an analysis of popular genres whether the “popularity of an author” could depend on the genre.

At times, the book exhibits some limitations. While celebrating *à juste titre* the works of Ambroise Kom, Bernard Mouralis, Pius Ngandu Nkashama, and Mildred Mortimer, it is sometimes difficult to find references to additional critics and commentaries on African literature. For instance, this is not the first study on the detective novel or insecurity in African literature. The authors mention several times a special issue of the journal *Notre Librairie* and yet they barely engage with its findings on the detective story. This would have perhaps contributed to better articulate some of the readings of the narratives examined and some of the findings of the book. An additional comment could be made about the absence of references to the “child soldier” in a study on fear, insecurity, violence, and literature. It is also difficult to understand why Moussa Konaté and Williams Sassine have not been included in the epilogue, as the biographies of both authors are indeed central to the argument made. Lastly, the authors sometimes tend to take the selected fictional novels as documents to draw conclusions about contemporary Africa. This is particularly true regarding commentaries made about Malian society and traditions often presented in the study as homogenous and rather stagnant, missing nuances about its evolution.

These limitations aside, the book is a valuable contribution to the discipline and certainly opens avenues for future research in African literatures. The study of North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa literature in conjunction represents an important step to reduce the gap between these two domains of study. The authors show how vibrant the detective novel has become, a development that calls for further examination. By incorporating the works of Moussa Konaté, Williams Sassine, and Modibo Soungalo Keita, writers who are clearly underrepresented in the study of African literatures, Tcheuyap and Tchumka explain the crucial contribution of these stimulating authors to the history of African letters through innovative narrative and generic practices combined with audacious ideologies. The study speaks to contemporary urgencies and uncertainties (as in the chapter dedicated to Islamism and terrorism) and engages with the crucial debate on the Sahelian crisis over the last eight years. The combination of insightful literary analysis, engagement with theory, and openings to relevant new contemporary literary production allows the authors to convincingly demonstrate how African letters consistently engage with some of the ordeals of postcolonial African societies.

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**Hedley Twidle. 2019. *Experiments with Truth: Narrative Non-Fiction and the Coming of Democracy in South Africa*. Suffolk: James Currey. 250 pp.**

The non-fictions of South Africa's transition emerge from, and are written out of, a historically particular, often densely personal situation. Yet at the same time, they enact a reckoning in language with a bitter and compromised past, drawing its poison, writing it out (p. 224). The author of this book, Hedley Twidle is a writer of narrative non-fiction as well as a literary scholar. *Experiments with Truth* is indeed a familiar terrain for him having specialized in 20<sup>th</sup> century, Southern African and world literatures. The book focuses on non-fictional form in modern South African literature by considering a fuzzy set of narrative modes involving an aesthetic selection of novels, short-fiction, poetry, and drama. Twidle examines how various non-fiction writer read or misread the literary novel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The book is composed of ten chapters. In the introduction, Twidle attempts to understand the “surge of narrative energy” surrounding non-fictional modes in a particular time and place. On the other hand, he attempts to avoid an insular approach, as well as the narrative of exceptionalism in which many texts about South Africa's political ‘miracle’ find themselves implicated (p. 8). Chapter 2 tracks a cluster of figures and events that have remained recalcitrant to now familiar narratives of struggle, liberation, truth, and reconciliation. This chapter concentrates on the story of Demetrios Tsafendas who killed Hendrik Verwoerd—prime minister and architect of apartheid—in 1966. For this Twidle refers to the archive of official documents, myths, and personal reembrace that surrounds Tsafendas. The author here explores artistic responses to the Tsafendas story and tries to find what narrative logics are operating and what are their consequences, along with what cultural forms might be adequate for a life story that is in one sense, useless but at the same time intensely significant and overdetermined (p. 30). By referring to Tsafendas's life, his aim has not been to recover a submerged subaltern history. Rather, he attempted to track different artistic and formal strategies to engage in the