

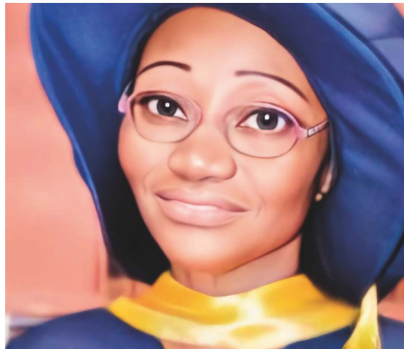


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**Globalisation and Contemporaneity: The Humanities
and Hyphenated Narratives**

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Globalisation and Contemporaneity

**The Humanities and Hyphenated
Narratives**



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INTRODUCTION

Yvonne Iden Kana Ngwa

This collection, *Globalisation and Contemporaneity : The Humanities and Hyphenated Narratives*, comprises 11 critical essays written to honour a woman, a scholar and a mentor whose very roots, school and professional careers, as well as marital and family lives portray the hybridity typical of globalisation. The essays probe into the consequences of global flows on culture, identity and language in the humanities. Put simply, globalisation can be perceived as the “cross-national flows of goods, investment, production and technology” which, according to the stalwarts of globalisation, result in a new world order (Petras 3). This new world order is one that is no longer configured to acknowledge nations as having their own sovereign space, exclusive culture, specific language and citizens with well-defined and closed identities.

The contemporary world is therefore a “world of fluid borders” to borrow from Robert Gross. Gross describes the world today as one where goods, ideas, and people flow constantly across national territories (378). This fluidity implies the decompartmentalisation of notions and realities that were previously considered to be circumscribable. More than the national, the transnational has taken centre stage in the contemporary world. Words like “multiculturalism,” “transculturalism,” and “interculturality” are more in vogue than the word “culture.” Instead of existing as closed systems, languages have been fragmented and have blended with other languages to birth lingua franca or all kinds of creoles, in the extreme cases, or have increasingly experienced the use of loan words, coinages, calques etc by their users. More than ever before, the fluidity of borders has affected the fixity of cultural identity.

This book does not seek to get into the globalisation debate amongst the hyperglobalisers, the sceptics and the transformationalists (Held et al. 3-14). Rather, it espouses the view that globalisation (however old the concept might be considered to be) is more than a cliché in the

contemporary world as its effects are unavoidably glaring in every area of human life. It therefore concurs with Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh that purport in their seminal book that globalisation has had a huge impact on thinking across the humanities, thus redefining the understanding of literature and other fields. It is this impact that globalisation has had on the humanities, especially on language and literature, that the critical essays in this collection attempt to investigate.

Yvonne Iden Kana Ngwa examines how interconnectedness in the contemporary, multicultural American society depicted in Suzan-Lori Parks's *In the Blood* affects America as a macro family. Different races, classes, sexes etc. are brought together in a melting pot and, in an attempt to regulate the co-existence of these diverse groups, a kind of hierarchisation is birthed with its inherent tensions. She further proves that these corollaries of globalisation are replicated in the nuclear family as is the case with Hester La Negrita's family in the play. La Negrita's family therefore poses as America in miniature.

Constantine Kouankem and Loveline Kongla Nsahlai probe into ways in which an upsurge in the use of technological devices in this era of globalisation results, not just in the transculturation, but also in the acculturation of Cameroonian youths. These scholars demonstrate that the acculturation of young Cameroonians is threefold : integration, assimilation, and marginalisation. Some of the consequences of this acculturation are changes in clothing and behavior, strained relationships with their parents etc.

Didachos Mbeng Afuh undertakes a re-appraisal of Henrik Ibsen's and John M. Synge's stereotypical, Nineteenth-Century representations of Norwegian and Irish bodies in *A Doll's House* and *The Shadow of the Glen* respectively. Setting these representations against the backdrop of the (re)emergence of counter-modern/traditional modes of embodiment of current global strides, Afuh concludes that the impact of globalisation is reflected in the mindscapes and collective unconsciousness of Ibsen's and Synge's characters.

Fidelis Fumbui Chiaboh investigates the difficulty of defining the identity of blacks in contemporary England with its complex cultural landscape in Bola Agbaje's *Gone Too Far!* and *Belong*. The flow of blacks from Nigeria to England in Agbaje's novels jeopardises their identity as they are rejected both in the host country, because of their colour, ascent, history, etc., and in Nigeria where they are considered as being Englishmen. The relationship between citizens in the contemporary English society is therefore intercultural.

Achille Fossi and **Léonie Claire Dongmo Fogho** undertake a cross-cultural and semiotic study of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* in order to show how the woman is discriminated against, dehumanised, objectified and relegated to the background across cultures. The infliction of psychological and physical violence on women is thus a global phenomenon, as much as mysogyny is a universal reality.

Derick J. Mbungang x-rays Caryl Phillips' decentring of Western historical narratives through the memory recollection of slaves in his neo-slave narratives. In line with Arjun Appadurai's ideoscapes concerned with the global circulation of ideologies and oppositional discourses, he shows how Phillips reconstructs history through the memory retrieval of his slave characters.

Judith Go'oh Ngantu Kome contends that John Okada's stereotypical representation of female characters in his *No No Boy* results in the marginalisation of this female caste and the masculinisation of Okada's narrative. Situating her analyses within a context where the global flow of people has resulted in the emergence of a people with a hyphenated identity— Japanese Americans— Ngantu thus highlights the extremely marginal position of the female Japanese American.

Jude T. Berinyuy establishes the fact that, in Cameroon, 'Prof' (clipped from "Professor" that refers to the highest ranked academics in English) is swapped for Professor and/or teacher of any level and this sometimes causes the problem of intelligibility. This accrues from the co-existence of English and French. The contiguity of languages being

a trait of globalisation, the dual use of ‘Prof’ is a spill over of French. Berinyuy concludes that this spill over from the French Language devalues the university don since it becomes difficult to differentiate between the former and every other teacher when the word ‘Prof’ is used.

Roger Bofua resorts to travel literature to capture the way characters in Herman Melville’s *Typee* get caught up with the transcultural and the multicultural as they travel to foreign climes. The dialogue amongst diverse cultures that ensues results in mixtures and adaptations that are typical of globalisation. Thus, both the European explorers and the natives visited can be considered as being cosmopolites.

Meroline Engoro Kaka postulates that, although the characters depicted by Bole Butake in his *Family Saga* are plagued by crisis and binary sentimentalities which threaten their peaceful co-existence, the playwright suggests that the peaceful co-habitation of the two linguistic groups is possible in his fictional Cameroon. Given current global trends, binary polarities should no longer define human relationships and stand in the way of peaceful co-existence.

Thierry S. K. Bouobda, in his hermeneutical considerations of Ndachi-Tagne’s *La reine captive*, explores one of the novel’s interpretations despite its aporias, fissures, self-subversions and ambiguities which make it impossible to assign any single meaning to it. In this exploratory reading, Bouobda corroborates the author’s reading of the novel as the continent of Africa that is entangled in a complex web because of the intrusion of Western, imperial forces. He shows that this allegory is best incarnated by Mangwa, the novel’s heroine, who is caught up at the crossroads of civilisations because of the onslaught of globalisation.

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BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Christine M. T. Djockoua

A childhood environment may not tell a person's whole story nor fully define his/her identity, yet it is the stepping stone to these elements. I have many times been asked the following question: "Who are you?" This main question has often been followed by these subsequent ones:

Are you Francophone or Anglophone?

Are you Bamileke or Duala?

What is surprising is the fact that these questions are usually asked by people I have lived or worked with for a long time. To some I answer "I don't know" and to others I say "I am who I am". My replies should not be misconstrued as ignorance of my origins.

Born and bred in Njombe, a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multiracial agrarian village (today one will call this location a small town), I quickly learnt that a child belongs more to his/her community than to his/her biological parents. This was the community ethic that prevailed in this small village when I was born to two Abo parents; my father was from Souza and my mother from Miang, two villages in the Mounjo division of the Littoral Region. The community ethic in Njombe required of a child to render services to all his/her "mothers" and "fathers", irrespective of their tribe, religion, language and race. One may wonder why I talk about race, so it is necessary to mention that the two main companies that used to grow bananas and other fruits were managed by whites, French natives.

Although French was the language of education in the primary schools of this location, Pidgin English was the lingua franca that facilitated communication among all the Cameroonian tribes and the immigrants from other African countries. Before I entered the Foumban Government Secondary School (CEG) (where I was taught English for the first time) after I had passed the common entrance examination and

obtained the First School Leaving Certificate, I could read and speak Pidgin fluently, as “*Mami Water*”, a local newspaper in Pidgin English freely circulated. In the Fouban Secondary School, Maths, French and English were my favourite subjects, and the principal, a French native, favoured academic exchanges between his pupils and those of the PSS of Kumba. Immersion programmes were organised by both institutions to encourage French and English speaking pupils to communicate and share their cultures in both languages.

Fouban was also the town where I met my French teacher with whom I lived for six years. She acted as my second mother, paid my school fees and bought me the necessary school equipment until I was admitted into ENS (Ecole Normale Supérieure) and was given a scholarship. Living with a white for six years exposed me to the Western culture and made me understand, early in my life, that human beings have similar feelings, experiences and responses. Consequently, I no longer perceived the difference in skin colour as a barrier and neither did my French teacher.

I was in form three when my benefactor was transferred to Yaoundé. She took me along and I was admitted into the Government Bilingual Secondary School (Collège Bilingue d’Application) where all the courses were taught in French and English to both French and English speaking pupils. After this Bilingual Secondary School, I had to pursue a Baccalauréat programme at the Lycée Général Leclerc and later a programme in Bilingual Studies at ENS and at the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences of the University of Yaoundé. The Bilingual Programme required of a student to learn a third foreign language: Spanish or German. So, after my studies at ENS, I could be posted as a teacher of Spanish, French or English. I was therefore posted to the Lycée Général Leclerc in September 1978 to teach English. Since that year, English became my main language of education, research etc. Before I completed my studies at ENS, I had married Mr André Marcel Djockoua, a native of the Western Region, despite the opposition of some members of our families who thought that our tribal difference was a barrier that we were not supposed to transcend.

My career at the University of Yaoundé 1 started in March 2000, when I was recruited in the Department of English of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences. This career was boosted by people from different tribes, nationalities and races. So to the question “Who are you?” I can answer that “I am a woman of many worlds”.

My childhood environment and my experiences as an adolescent, adult and elderly person have taught me the following lessons:

- 1) Hard work and strong will help us to overcome obstacles we consider insuperable.
- 2) A service that we willingly render to a fellow human allows us to plough ahead because it opens doors.
- 3) We should not always be at the receiving end but we must also be at the giving end. We should make other people benefit from the opportunities that we have been given.
- 4) We should be true to ourselves; we should chastise evils and praise achievements in a bid to promote merit.

Now, one question remains unanswered: “Have I really implemented these teachings?”

Only time will provide an answer.

**TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR
CHRISTINE MANYAKA TOKO
DJOCKOUA**

EULOGY FOR PROFESSOR CHRISTINE MANYAKA TOKO DJOCKOUA

I wish to start my brief appreciation of Prof. C.M.T. Djockoua from where her autobiography ended, by answering the question she asked. She asked whether she has implemented the lessons she has learned through her life experiences. My answer is, “Yes, you have!”

I knew Ma Djockoua, as she is fondly called in the Department of English, in 2001, when I was transferred from the University of Dschang to the University of Yaoundé 1. Since then, we have been much more than friends; we have been sisters. Indeed, I consider her my elder sister. Her sisterly advice has contributed greatly in making me reach the highest rank in the university teaching and research career.

Because of some negative attitudes manifested by some colleagues in my Department towards my research interests, I was disappointed and discouraged. I therefore made up my mind to work only towards becoming a Senior Lecturer and stop there until retirement. However, Ma Djockoua would not let me be. She did everything she could to keep encouraging me not to give up in such a way, but to continue working as an academic. For example, she requested for my doctorate thesis, skimmed through it, and directed me how I could publish a book with some of the ideas contained in that thesis, though relating them to the Cameroonian context, since the thesis research material was based on Northern Ireland, UK.

There are other requirements, of course, for changing grades from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor, which I fulfilled. But it seems as if, in our Cameroonian context, a book publication is one of the ‘unwritten’ criteria for such a promotion. I did publish a book, and I owe this to my ‘Big Sister,’ Ma Djockoua. Once I became Associate Professor, it was easy for me to continue to work hard for the next step: Full Professor.

I am usually considered to be very stern and strict at work by both students and colleagues, and Ma Djockoua is the same kind of person. We both hate injustice, laziness and disorder, so we clicked together very well. Professor Djockoua’s friendliness, generosity, commitment