

INTRODUCTION BY GUEST EDITORS

Professor MJ Melamu: Celebrating laudable Attributes in Tribute to a Professor*Andy Chebanne* and Julius Oyegoke[§]*

In the tradition of academia or university, it is important to celebrate an academic, especially a longstanding professor such as Professor Moteane John Melamu who served the University of Botswana when it still belonged to a tripartite institution, UBLS, comprising campuses in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (éSwatini). When one talks of the University of Botswana, limiting oneself to the historic 1982 institutional metamorphosis, there is a lot that is lost in the history of what it became, and how it came about (Makgala 2017). Latin has this saying, *Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*,¹ which translates as: “Fortunate or happy, who was able to know the causes of things”. The establishment of the University of Botswana (UB) therefore has a happy professoriate who know the what and how of its history and its present fortunes. When the University started to goad its able professoriate to walk away without any grace, it is the history and memory that it lost (Makgala 2017).

Why should we, Andy Chebanne and Julius Oyegoke, be the ones to preside over a festschrift of a lofty professor like Prof. Melamu, acclaimed academic, administrator and diplomat? It is a pertinent question to ask in starting, more so because Andy Chebanne is from the French Department while Julius Oyegoke was in the English Department where Prof Melamu lectured from its establishment pre- and post-1982. Our explanation is that, as former colleagues in the same Humanities Faculty, it is important that we are associated with this noble initiative. Also, when Prof. Melamu finally retired from the University in 2019, Andy Chebanne was still Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. The period witnessed the departure of many renowned professors in all disciplines because of the misfortunes of the Humanities. Painful though the development, there was not much that one could do to change the situation as it all seemed to be a product of altered perspectives. The perception or misperception that the Humanities were a shadow of a glorious past had gained popularity and found expression in influential circles, including in Government through the Tertiary Education policies. This was reflected in university admission figures which usually correlated with the sponsorship of programmes. Fewer Humanities students were being sponsored and the numbers of the candidates sponsored continued to drop because the Humanities were thought to be incapable of generating employment. However, a look at our neighbouring countries shows a story which is at variance with our own story (Makgala 2018). Therefore, our official narrative of unemployment generation by the Humanities appears to be misplaced.

By contrast, elsewhere, the Humanities are the anchor of a comprehensive university. This is historical. The Humanities are the mother of the social, natural and educational sciences. They are the nucleus of a historical university. Philosophy, anthropology, mathematics (logic, algebra, and statistics, for example) all issued from the Humanities. Law is from the Humanities, just as

* Andy Chebanne, Department of French, University of Botswana. Email: CHEBANNE@UB.AC.BW and chebanne@gmail.com

§ Julius Oyegoke, Formerly Professor of Literature in English, University of Botswana. Email: lekanoyegoke@gmail.com

¹ “Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas” (“Fortunate is he, who is able to know the causes of things”) is verse 490 of Book 2 of the “Georgics” (29 BC), by the Latin poet Virgil (70 - 19 BC). The French render the translation as – Happy is the man who grasps the cause of things.

moral philosophy, religion and theology. Hence, to call a university a comprehensive university is to acknowledge the centrality of the Humanities. In academic tradition and historical definition, the term “university” is derived from *uniuersalis* or *universitat*, that is, a preoccupation with diverse knowledge in the universe or cosmos. If historically the Church started the impetus of academic development, it is because thinkers that decided on the moral and religious fibre of life were from monasteries where also the libraries were developed. The Latin have also this to say, *In Universitat, omnia constiituat sapens.*, and this is what defines a comprehensive university as the seat of knowledge, as also espoused in Botswana national visions (Republic of Botswana 1997 and Republic of Botswana 2016). In a transitory crisis, it is important to be circumspect and have a broad-based vision for a university in Africa and elsewhere (Weeks 27 June 2015; Fako 2004; Nyamnjoh and Jua 2002). A knowledge economy, is an admirable vision which does not have to be driven by parochialism. Knowledge economy. Knowledge economy, it must be remembered, is dependent on a vital and active university wand whose impetus is traditionally championed by the professorate.

To the point, given Prof. Melamu’s demonstrable versatility, he should not be viewed narrowly as a professor in the Humanities, Department of English, but broadly as a university (comprehensive) professor. The positive attributes of a professor which he demonstrated illustrate the real span of his academic and administrative exploits. He was at the university a renowned English lecturer and professor of English – enjoyed by all those who went through his classes, from different academic and professional disciplines (lawyers, political scientists, educationists, etc.). As a product of his versatility, he taught grammar and literature which are usually separate specialties in an English Department. He taught the majority of us who went through the various stages of the institution at University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), University of Botswana and Swaziland (UBS), and University of Botswana (UB). At various times, he served as a Head of Department, a Dean of Faculty, a Deputy Vice Chancellor AA, and as a Vice Chancellor outside the country. Not only is he an accomplished academic servant to the community and nation(s), he also discharged diplomatic service as a High Commissioner – all of which, needless to say, illustrate meritorious national service and accomplishment as an academic, serving the nation as a knowledge giver. These felicitous attributes are worthy of celebration in academia.

Prof. Melamu left UB while the University was still grappling with the development and approval of its Strategy, 2020 to 2029 (University of Botswana 2020). Nevertheless, regardless, he had contributed a lot as he had guided the development of earlier strategies such as Shaping Our Future, Semesterisation, and importantly the revised organization of the academic structure (ROAS) or RAOS proposal. Strategies have value coming from a particular historical background and hitched to a specific future. Experiences of the past give us the reason and the vision for change (Tabulawa 2007). A good sense of history is pertinent to the shaping and execution of a vision.

Whilst we acknowledge with gratitude those who responded and contributed to this Special Issue of *Botswana Notes and Records*, we also note with regret that the missing input of professors of English seems to be ascribable to the fact of the attrition of the professorate that we are witnessing in a premier comprehensive university setting, the only one of this description in the country. Notwithstanding, we are happy that the volume is made up of exciting contributions from academics based in Canada, Nigeria, United States of America, and the home front Botswana. Professor Moteane John Melamu has continued to return to Botswana and has gallantly contributed to this worthy beacon of democracy in Africa which consistently espouses and ensures the enjoyment of academic freedom and other civil liberties. So, in many ways, as some of the contributions demonstrate, the respected professor is a noble part of those who made Botswana, and those who made UB.

The contributors to this festschrift approach scholarship from a diversity of engaging

perspectives in celebration of the staying power and admirable attributes of an academic colleague who has contributed to scholarship and society in sundry ways as a professor, a creative writer, a diplomat, and a university administrator. The authors come from all corners of academia and scholarship, so to speak.

The authors in this festschrift have come from within the University of Botswana and from sister institutions outside the country in a noteworthy academic gesture of goodwill and kindred spirit. It is also recognition of the academic stature of Prof. Moteane John Melamu. Some of the contributors are former students of Prof. Melamu's during one or another of the evolutionary stages of the University of Botswana. The variety of topics and themes illustrate a beautiful intellectual variety and knowledge diversity.

"A synoptical appreciation of Moteane Melamu's Botswana short stories" by Tiro Sebina shows how the selected stories depict life in Botswana. All the stories discussed are set in Gaborone. They offer glimpses of urban life in domestic spaces, political arenas, the streets and neighbourhoods. The stories feature a variety of fallible characters with different traits, anxieties and foibles. The write-up shows how the characters act and interact in the particular circumstances they find themselves in. The stories attest to Melamu's prowess as a storyteller.

"No place for old men: Ikalanga oral narratives and ageism" by Wazha Lopang interrogates the question, Is there perhaps something in African folklore that can unravel the enigma of rejection on account of age when there is much more a person can still offer despite being an elder academic? Ikalanga oral narratives provide a visual window through which stylistic and paralinguistic features of a performer coalesce in an arena to impart a particular expectation on the audience and wider society. These expectations range from mimicking stereotypical behaviour to unorthodox violent reactions. Have oral narratives been unkind to ageism? In the Bakalanga artistic experience, characters tend to portray the old with suspicion, derision, and no small amount of fear. This paper examines the phenomenon of ageism in Ikalanga oral narrative and some narrative types from other cultural experiences.

"Affective value and novelistic staying power in *Stay with Me* by Tomi Oyegoke asserts that the twentieth century stands out in literary history as a period of massive experimentation with devices of form in all genres of literature. The postmodern period witnessed the use of literary devices by writers to blunt the traditional boundaries which seemed to separate the genres from one another. The crisscrossing of literary boundaries by creative writing using literary devices has had a beneficial effect on literature by deepening reader empathy with character and action in prose fiction. This essay looks at the adroit exportation of the device of melodrama, usually associated with theatre, into a realist novel, *Stay with Me* by Ayobami Adébáyò and the implication for related devices of surprise and suspense, and realism.

"Broken monody: sounds as presages of war in Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths*" by Sola Ogunbayo argues that poetry is closely knit to music and as such it remains the prince of the genres despite the comparatively more recent arrival of the realist novel on the popular scene. Critical commentary continues to revisit Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths* in part because of the union of music and poetry in this fascinating collection of lyrical lines. Okigbo was as a person a talented musical instrumentalist, hence the almost magical hold of his poetry on the listener/reader. There is also the rich suggestiveness in his lyrical composition that is a product of sound, olfactory and visual imagery, for example, as well as an unmistakable ear for ominous signals reaching out to the present from the future. Also, the poetry illustrates the age-old designation of a poet as a prophet, a visionary. This essay examines some of the ways in which *Labyrinths* speaks eloquently to the past, present

and futuristic trajectories of Nigeria's experience as a postcolony.

“Discursive slippage, church mafia, and the editorial dilemma of ‘an untold African narrative’” by Lekan Oyegoke submits that there seems to be no longer a clear-cut demarcation between fact and fiction, between the temporal and the spiritual, between the tangible and the intangible; both language and literature seem caught in a surreal time warp that strains credibility in the experiences of living and reading. A recent book by M. S. Ramabulana titled *Church Mafia: Captured by secret powers – an untold African narrative* presents an opportunity to examine a few presumptions in the genre of writing referred to as life story which is about a type of experience that is commonly associated with spirituality and the intangible presenting itself as tangible and credible. The book is in the class of extended testimony in prose. It raises some interesting posers which have literary and spiritual implication and are the subject of speculation in this essay.

“Melamu's use of absurd humour as a narrative technique in ‘The Unweeded Garden’” by Daniel Koketso examines narrative techniques in Moteane Melamu's *The Unweeded Garden*. It uses the incongruity theory of humour to argue that the short story uses laughter not only to titillate the reader but to comment on gender relations. Melamu was a scholar of Shakespeare, and in writing the short story he would have been influenced by some of the characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The influence is seen particularly in his choice of the title and the idea of procrastination which are some of the common features in the play and the short story.

“Universitarian contingencies: when downsizing is equal to downgrading” by Lekan Oyegoke posits that the university's durability has been ensured by two factors, namely, society's respect for knowledge and, for its part, the institution's regard for university tradition emanating from within its campuses. The stability of the institution created an environment in which knowledge could gestate and hatch excellence in all disciplines and the disciplines could shape perspectives and positively influence the course of history. This is all a description of the university, as an institution configured by knowledge, excellence and its own unique tradition, the three important elements responsible for the enduring prestige enjoyed by knowledge institutions the likes of the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford. In Western societies, as far as universities are concerned, changing emphasis in the attitude to specific knowledge disciplines is usually nuanced and reasoned, not hasty and impulsive. Despite the ascendancy of STEM in academic and public discourse, the Department of English or Department of History, for example, still thrives in mainstream and other universities. It has not been shut down because of some signal inability to generate IGR (internally generated revenue) for its self-sustenance. The fact is rather that the humanities disciplines are still enjoying respect and patronage. By contrast, in Africa, the attitude to the advent of STEM in discourse and policy execution has tended to be sentimental and precipitate. This essay attempts a speculative examination of a few policy challenges that might be posed by the issue of STEM versus STEAM in the life of a university.

“Eurocentrism: Plato, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Tournier's Friday” by Jean-Raoul AUSTIN de DROUILLARD submits that Ernest Gellner (1994) contending with Edward Said (1993:169) critiquing Western attitudes towards the East in *Culture and Imperialism*, wrote the following: “At the heart of European culture during the many decades of imperial expansion lay an undeterred and unrelenting Eurocentrism”. This assertion leads to a question which constitutes the starting point of this article. Why do Europeans venerate so deeply their culture, and why do they think of it as if it were somehow transcending the everyday world? It is Plato's fault. This essay is a speculative contention of the foregoing assertion using theorists and characters (as tropes) from philosophy and literature of antiquity and contemporary experience.

“Feminist ecology, despoliation and resilience in environmental education” by Bolatumi Oyegoke explains that the simple word “environment” has become synonymous with “human habitat” which is in turn an understatement because this habitat does not belong to humans alone, it is shared with animal and plant life whose diversity is comparable to that of human life. The characteristic diversity of the species of the human habitat or planet Earth came under threat from the activities that were undertaken by humans on behalf of development. Historical phases of human development are referred to as industrial revolutions which have so far counted up to four, according to scholars. These phases of development in human history coincide with periods of the greatest damage to the environment resulting in a systematic disappearance of the species from the human habitat the source of the natural resources that have driven the industrial revolutions and is at the same time the dustbin into which waste products from the associated industrial and household activities are thrown. This essay examines feminist ecology, despoliation and resilience in environmental education.

“Chinua Achebe’s use of language in ‘the theme of Change’: The case of Things Fall Apart” by Setumile Morapedi discusses the theme of change in Things Fall apart, showing how Chinua Achebe has handled language to demonstrate the conflicts that occurred between the people of Umuofia and the white missionaries over the threat of change of the Igbo culture. The missionaries look at the Igbo culture despicably and want Igbo people to follow Christian religion. It is shown through some characters like Okonkwo who is portrayed as strongly resisting change from his culture to the white man’s religion, and his son Nwoye who epitomises some of the Igbo people who give up their culture and follow the white man’s religion. The paper shows how Okonkwo’s refusal to give up some aspects of his culture and adopt the white man’s religion finally destroys him as he ends up committing suicide. The message that is communicated here is the importance of considering other people’s cultures for purposes of growth and development. In the process of preservation of one’s culture, one should learn to accommodate other people’s cultures and adapt some aspects that are of use for them.

“Hermeneutical aesthetic and writerly excursions in gastronomy” by Lekan Oyegoke explains that the issue of food plays a prominent role in life and, by extension, literature, and it is garnering new interest in some circles of the medical profession for a reason different from the obvious one that food is one in a line of four life survival items. Human life is dependent on the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sleep we have, and the food we eat, in that order of urgency. Food comes last on the imperative scale, but it is by no means inferior to the other three life sustaining elements. Food is not only of gastronomic importance, it is also of spiritual significance, as illustrated by the fall of Adam and Eve in the biblical account of the advent of sin in human history. The progeny of much literature is located in biblical narrative as is contained in the Holy Bible, therefore, food is in general ascribed a prominent role in secular literature. The novel attempt by medical science to correlate what people eat with sickness or healthfulness is an interesting development because it shows that the food choices humans make can be a matter of life and death, literally. This essay evaluates the role of food in biblical and other narratives in relation to real life experience.

“Diplomatic foolery: A look at Melamu’s use of Juvernallian satire in *Odyssey*” by Wazha Lopang attempts to unpack how Melamu wields Juvernallian satire in his short story, *Odyssey*, which appears in his collection of short stories titled *The Unweeded Garden* (2006). The story is told through the lens of a protagonist with untested diplomatic skills on the continent. The satire explores how the absurd clash between the stoic, aloof world of the diplomat is thrown into a cultural malaise of vice and spontaneity. Framed in realism the article how humour can tear away the veil of moral

degeneration in our neo-colonial society.

“Translating Camfranglais literature: Exegesis, jugglery, cultural and semantic signification” by Peter Wuteh Vakunta explains that code-switching refers to the alternate use of more than one code in a single speech act, a phenomenon that Haugan refers to as the “the alternate use of two languages, including everything from the introduction of a single unassimilated word up to a complete sentence or more into the context of another language” (see Omole, p.58). In other words, these writers tend to transpose the imprint of their cultural backgrounds onto fictional works, thereby creating a third code—camfranglais. Camfranglais is a hybrid language spoken in the Republic of Cameroon where English, French and 248 indigenous languages co-exist. It is a medley of French, English, Pidgin and borrowings from local languages. This paper examines some aspects of the complexity of the language situation in Cameroon including the nuanced implication for translation in the field of literature.

“Epistemes, etiquette, praxis and the Anglo-African cultural experience” by Lekan Oyegoke asserts that reflected in culture are patterns of behaviour which are classified as correct or wrong and therefore acceptable or reprehensible. Acceptable behaviour occupies such an important role in human experience that the society formulates codes of conduct which are enshrined in language in a given culture. The proverb is studied today as a literary form associated with Orature or oral literature; its genesis in the oral traditions is closely connected to its functional value in communicating precepts that regulate human behaviour. It also contains wisdom based on the observation of experience which sheds light on certain aspects of human life. Like everything else, these codes of behaviour change with time and circumstances. This essay examines some of the ways in which the attitudes to some of the codes of conduct which emanated from the Renaissance Age, and whose ripple effects spilt into the Victorian Age and were felt by postcolonies such as Nigeria, have been affected by changing times and circumstances.

“Anglicism in French: Why are the French concerned?” by Phemelo Kewagamang contends that the social role of language as an identifier is more profound as it is how a community identifies itself and express their belonging to a common enjoyable culture and other complex expressions in their way of life. So, there is no language community that will consciously discard this extraordinary tool of social communication. When a language is invaded, therefore, there is a lot that is at stake and the invasion is construed as a profound attack on the community, its identity, pride and indeed, its culture. Often, such an invasion on a language is felt and seen as a form of colonialism, and speakers feel diminished as the new language becomes an imposition and an agent of de-culturalisation. This essay examines some of the intricacies of language politics manifested in the historical relationship between English and French.

“English as a form of neo-colonialism in Botswana” by Andy Chebanne contends that English is by practice an official language in Botswana. This role means that it takes all significant functional roles in the economy, administration, politics, and education. Since this practice is not based on a language policy, it is difficult to understand the rationale of favouring English in Botswana, where Setswana is spoken by 75% of the population and it is understood by even a higher percentage. There are also other languages that have an important regional communication role. The arguments made in this article are that the English language hegemony is tantamount to linguistic imperialism and is a permutation of linguistic colonialism in a sovereign country such as Botswana. The arguments raised here seek to contribute to fresh debates of linguistic decolonialization in Africa. It is the view of this article that promoting Setswana and other local languages will make sense in the educational domain and in the construction of a national linguistic and cultural identity.

“Notes on pronunciation problems of Bakgalagari and Bakalanga speakers of English” by Kemmony Monaka and Andy Chebanne argues that the effect and consequence of bad pronunciation of English are from habits that were entrenched during colonialism by Britain, and have, unfortunately, persisted. They also submit that if Setswana speakers were fortunate that Setswana was later used in the classroom, nothing helped the speakers of languages such as Shekgalagari and iKalanga. Their poor pronunciation of English is for the most part traceable to their mother tongue. This article presents a preliminary discussion on these pronunciation challenges. Their discussion seeks also to contribute to debates on challenges of learning English as a foreign language. The authors submit further that the realisation of these phonetic struggles may also contribute to better teaching strategies for English in Botswana.

“The Social Development Policy Mismanagement of the Khoisan Ethnic Affairs” by Budzani Mogara uses the post-colonial theoretical perspective to analyze the social situation of the Khoisan or San ethnic groups in Botswana. Due to their social history of hunter-gathers, these minority communities in Botswana have been dominated and marginalized through the actions of current social policies which excluded them from specific social and cultural developments that should sustain their existing as distinct ethnic communities. They do not have rights to their language and culture, and do not have any development policy consideration for a reservation of land where they could exercise and enjoy their rights as people that bear their ethnic identities. The egalitarian approach used by the government has no guarantee that the Khoisan can preserve their identity, language and culture. The argument of the paper is that when such policies are applied to people, their socio-cultural affairs are mismanaged. This social condition is akin to post-colonialism and its consequences is that in modernity, ethnic groups such as the Khoisan can experience death of their cultures and languages.

“Food culture in Botswana: a need for documentation” by Kagiso Jacob Sello explains that the subject of food is not the preserve of nutritionists. It is an important subject of attention in cultural anthropology because food can be a cultural code of communication apart from the purpose it serves in ensuring human and animal survival on planet Earth. The way food is prepared is capable of speaking volumes in each culture just as the manner in which it is served and eaten can pass on a lot of information. French cuisine is famous among Europeans, but not much is ever heard about food in many parts of Africa. This paper examines a few lacunae and possible palliative measures in the subject of food culture in Botswana.

“Required and urgent: An upgrade of Pidgin English in the Cameroonian Tower of Babel” by Peter Wuteh Vakunta contends that the problem with Cameroon’s brand of bilingualism is that it does not grant official status to any of the indigenous languages existent in the country. The product of this status quo is that Cameroonians are divided into disparate groups with distinctive linguistic loyalties that often breed internal strife, undermine effective inter-ethnic relationships and threaten the very survival of the nation-state. In the absence of a dependable language policy, Cameroon’s most pressing need remains that of a common medium of communication and instruction that is inclusive of all social strata and ethnic identities. This paper makes a case for the official adoption of Pidgin English in Cameroon by drawing attention to some of the sociolinguistic benefits that would accrue to the country in the process.

“Women, waste management and environmental opportunism” by Bolatumi Oyegoke is a discussion of some of the activities routinely undertaken by women in connection with a little but significant aspect of the environment. The location is a small part of the human habitat named Osun State in Africa’s most populous country. A feature of the environment that is under focus is waste

management which is a process that includes waste generation, collection, disposal, re-cycling, and treatment. Women provide crucial agency in the process. Ecofeminism enables this study of an instance of how much is taken from the environment while the environment is rewarded with waste with implications for environmental sustainability.

“The Emergence and Challenges of Post-Liberation Pan-Hurutshe Renaissance in Southern Africa” by Christian John Makgala and Christopher Ntau examines the plight of the various Bahurutshe ethnic groups found in three neighbouring Southern African countries of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. It demonstrates how the groups split from the original morafe (ethnic group) into various entities which experienced varying vicissitudes of fate in the pre-colonial, colonial and apartheid South Africa and Namibia. The end of apartheid or the post-liberation period in South Africa saw various ethnic groups in the three countries (and even Zimbabwe) engaging in a Renaissance movement characterized by holding annual festivals for cross-border unity and preservation of their culture with a view for cultural or heritage tourism. In this regard the Bahurutshe appeared on the scenario by 2011 but before they could consolidate their cross-border movement they lost their pioneering, pivotal and dynamic coordinator, the Botswana-based Moses Lekaukau who died 2015, and this robbed the movement the force it needed going forward. Hence, it declined after a very short period.

In conclusion, this academic initiative also serves in a way to celebrate the University of Botswana at 40. We thank the Botswana Society for the collaboration through this publication in *Botswana Notes and Records*. It seems an interesting coincidence that a festschrift in honour of Professor Moteane John Melamu, who is himself an embodiment of University of Botswana history and academic tradition, is contained in the acclaimed *Botswana Notes and Records* devoted to preserving worthy items of history and tradition for academic and societal use.

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