

EDITORIAL

Naledi N. Kgolo-Lotshwao¹

Volume 35 of *Marang: Journal of Language and Literature* comes at the tail end of a series of events commemorating the University of Botswana's (UB) 40th anniversary. The volume also coincides with the rise of UB's global rankings. According to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023, UB has not only "maintained its position as the top ranked university in Botswana," but "is now sitting at 1018 out of 1799 universities that were ranked from 104 countries". Further, "the University of Botswana at 23rd position climbed the Sub-Saharan rankings, improving on the previous two years performance and outperforming for the first time the University of South Africa (UNISA) as well as 16 other Sub-Saharan universities which achieved a lower ranking than UB" (UB, 2022).

Established in the early years of UB's existence, *Marang* is very much a part of UB's evolution. It is therefore a humble contribution not only to its 40 years of existence, but also to its research agenda and rise in international rankings. Initially a paper-based edition, *Marang* has transformed significantly over the years and is now published online, thus making it available to a larger audience with internet connectivity both locally and internationally. As per tradition, Volume 35 brings together a collection of papers on language and literature, ranging from bold interpretations of using language as a form of cultural archaeology to nostalgic musings of death and how it touches humanity.

Consistent with UB's 40th anniversary, Volume 35 opens with Wazha Lopang's paper in which he reflects how the university, in its fledgling years, was beset by tragedy. The article examines a letter that Bessie Head wrote to a friend following the death of Fantisi Gaothobogwe in 1976, a young driver who was working with four other volunteers on behalf of the Botswana University Campus Appeal. The article uses existentialism to uncover the purpose of humanity and how death can trigger feelings of community and nation building. Selma Shiyoka's paper continues the shroud of death by investigating genocide in Jasper Utley's *The Lie of the Land* (2017). With its setting as German South West Africa, the present day Namibia, the novel narrates a period of infamy in what is now referred to as the first genocide of the 20th century. Novels on the atrocities on the Herero and the Nama abound, but what makes Shiyoka's article stand out is how the racial undertones of the text seem to make it acceptable because the indigenous populations were traumatized and dehumanised. Nii Teiko's article moves away from the sombre mood of death. It blends the historical with the contemporary by comparing two literary juggernauts, Ben Jonson and Wole Soyinka. Teiko shows how creativity straddles the moat of space and time in his analysis of Jonson's *Volpone* (1605) and Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963). The

¹ Editor, *Marang: Journal of Language and Literature*, Department of English, University of Botswana, Botswana. Email: kgolon@ub.ac.bw

paper concludes that although Soyinka's dramatic skills echo Jonson's, the former's skills express originality in the artistic choices he makes.

The article that follows moves away from literature to language and the world of nominal groups in selected fictional and non-fictional texts. Toyese Dahunsi and Joel Olaleye look at 12 different text types and employ the Hallidayan experiential and logico-semantic grammatical models. Their work reveals interesting knowledge about text types and the frequency of structural elements in editorials, textbooks, religious texts, and poetry. Their paper offers a good understanding of the structure and text which are based on structural variations of nominal groups. This understanding is useful when it comes to determining the correct use, analysis, and interpretation of nominal groups in English.

Helen Ugah's article enters the realm of social media, a platform that is increasingly finding mileage in academia. Ugah's study makes a case for memes. The article shows how pragmatic acts and memes express varied reactions and receptions to pressing social and political issues in Nigeria. It is somewhat unorthodox to use social media to highlight serious issues best found in mainstream media, but Ugah highlights the versatile, if not misunderstood, world of the internet. Lovemore Mutonga's article explores the consonant phoneme inventory of Nda, a once marginalised language spoken in the Manicaland province in Zimbabwe. The study identifies Nda consonants and categorises them into simplex and complex segments. Mutonga's research resides in the mono-segmental analysis of Nda complex segments from a feature geometry perspective. This study contributes to Zimbabwean linguistic research which has, for 82 years, associated Nda with Shona, by showing how Nda differentiates simplex and complex consonant phonemes.

The penultimate article by Mthokozisi Moyo and Agnes Nombembe uses the Afrocentric theory to discuss the history of eight Xhosa toponyms in the Mbembesi area of Zimbabwe's Matebeleland Province. The study's major finding is the realisation that Xhosa toponyms in Mbembesi are to a large extent descriptive locatives. Some of these locatives are linked to various clans found among the Xhosa, while some are linked to chiefs of various clans in the villages. The last article in this volume is Florence Nwaefuna's examination of gender in the personal names of the Igbo people of Ibusa, in the Delta State of Nigeria. The article reveals that names ascribed to males are associated with objects of social significance while female ones generally comment on mundane things. Interestingly, the article shows that names which were thought to be negative were in fact positive because of the context under which they were given.

Volume 35, therefore, has a diverse feel to it and will appeal to both the linguist and literary scholar. Against the 40-year celebration of UB's existence, it is hoped that this volume will be appreciated as a modest contribution to the growth of knowledge in line with the University's strategy of creating a future for the knowledge generation.

Works cited

University of Botswana. (2022, October 19). *UB's progress in driving the knowledge economy* [Press Release]. <https://www.facebook.com/UbMmadikolo/photos/a.2122585234682581/3338063513134741/?type=3>