

mid-seventh century, not in the eighth, as traditionally supposed, nor in the late-sixth, as the theory of the 'Pisistratean recension' would imply.

While it is true that this volume contains reiterations which could have been avoided through a more unifying revision of the individual texts, doing so would have required writing a new book. The present volume nevertheless deserves an attentive reading, especially by those interested in Homer, the new formulations of the Oral-Poetry Theory and the collaboration between Oralism and Neoanalysis. The book presents a synthesis of a lifetime of work devoted to the Homeric poetry. It is a provisory synthesis, not a final point, as it is expected that many other academic works by the author are forthcoming.

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Ruth Finnegan

Time for the World to Learn from Africa. Hearing Others' Voices. London: Bales-tier Press, 2018. 226 pp. (ISBN: 9781911221210)

Time for the world to learn from Africa is the last book by the distinguished anthropologist Ruth Finnegan, in which she summarises the major con-

clusions of her long academic career and shares her most important insights related to Africa and its cultures. Undoubtedly, it is no coincidence that *Time to learn from Africa* was published in the series *Hearing others' voices*.

Probably every researcher who has ever worked in the field of oral literature, formulaic language, literacy studies, or African literatures has been inspired by Ruth Finnegan's pioneering publications, such as *Oral literature in Africa* (1970), *Oral Poetry* (1977), or *Literacy and Orality* (1988). Finnegan is a truly multifaceted, interdisciplinary researcher – in addition to Africa, she also worked with South Pacific cultures, amateur musicians in the UK, and the history of quotation marks, to mention just a few of her other interests.

Finnegan defines her reason for undertaking to write this book in the following terms: 'one of the main points of this volume is to bring out the truth... there is so much, here and now as in past centuries that we can learn from Africa' (15). The unspoken but still fundamental purpose of this book, as is the case with most of Finnegan's later work, is to remind us about our humanness and the importance of remaining human. *Time to learn from Africa* consists of eleven chapters, the first of which is intended to remind the reader about the

richness and diversity of Africa, while the subsequent ten chapters offer a glimpse of particular aspects of culture from this continent: performance, language and its uses, praise poetry, drums, music, names, proverbs, insights about narrative, women and their role, and, finally, children, their games and the role they have. In addition to this, the book also contains suggestions for discussion and a list of literature for further reading.

Although Finnegan explicitly says at the beginning that this book was meant to be written for non-academic audiences, or, as she put it 'wise, thinking and perceptive human beings' (7), it is clear that academic researchers also fall into this category and, therefore, should not disregard it as non-scholarly source of information. Thanks to her experience and interdisciplinary profile, Finnegan manages to give a general overview of the African continent, a feat which seems to be almost impossible due to the rich array of languages, cultures, religions and traditions existing in Africa. For instance, she starts the third chapter, titled *The beauty of language*, by reminding us once again that linguistically Africa is one of the most diverse continents, although its languages might be organised into several major language families. After outlining the continent, Finnegan then brings up the topic of tone, a lin-

guistic characteristic typical of many African languages. Further, the author shifts to Bantu languages, mentions extremely rich vocabulary as their intrinsic characteristic, and discusses at length some other typical linguistic characteristics that are not easy to find in European languages. Finnegan then explains that the above provides local poets with incredibly rich resources for producing poetry. Toward the end of the chapter we understand that this strategy was chosen to debunk the popular myth that African languages lack a proper instrumentarium even for self-expression, let alone literature.

Thanks to Finnegan's signature style, which is partly inspired by the deconstruction approach, this book creates the effect of a complex, multidimensional object: the author manages to demonstrate that Africa has many identities and yet is still one. Africa is known as home to oral traditions, but we tend to forget that Africa also happens to be home to one of the oldest written literatures in the world, and all this is still Africa, Finnegan reminds us. Similarly, Africa is the continent of thousands of languages but, in a similar fashion, the author manages to find something in common and to link seemingly unrelated aspects to each other, like fitting fragments of coloured glass into beautifully kaleidoscopic

ornaments, where everything makes sense.

Although the title of this work clearly implies that it is meant to highlight the positive aspects of Africa, its history and cultures, Finnegan is perfectly aware of the dark moments of African history as well: 'Africa, and of course its children, have long been plagued by violence, famine and both man-made and natural disasters' (205), writes the author – however, immediately after that, she emphasises the ability to overgrow, adjust and self-heal that is intrinsic to the people of Africa.

Of particular interest is the chapter on women and their role in African literature, titled *The strength of women*. In the course of this chapter the author creates a picture of the women of Africa by introducing to the reader an array of imprints. She starts with images of women left by the 'external observer' from the 19th century, when women were still only literary objects, and supports her claim by offering poetic excerpts from several African cultures, including Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania. She then reminds us, however, that Africa

also knew women poets and, again, illustrates this statement with verses. Further, Finnegan raises the question of the authorship of female poetry and brings the reader's attention to the fact that, despite the idea deeply rooted in the Western world that African literature is exclusively anonymous, some African cultures, such as the Ila and Tonga cultures of Central Africa, acknowledge and appreciate female poets and their literary production. The chapter concludes with an analysis of contemporary literary narratives produced by various female authors.

Time to learn from Africa provides a highly lucid and informative piece of work with a humanitarian touch. The author, as far as this is possible, fulfils the task of showing the complexity of Africa and its cultures, reminding the reader about various aspects of these cultures and emphasising their uniqueness and unity. This book can be fully recommended to researchers working in the relevant fields.

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