

between Modocs and whites in the 1830s and 1840s are poorly described. Why Modocs initiated mutilation attacks on the occupants of white wagon trains during those decades is unclear. There is no proof presented that the wagon trains were actually disrupting Modoc hunting nor any record offered of Modoc complaints. The fact that Modocs may have been perpetuating a modified Plains-style warfare for individual prestige is not examined. Murray does provide some description of Modoc culture, but that description does not—with the exception of the portrayal of the roles of shaman and “chief”—enable the reader to understand the war’s events. Nor does Murray illuminate the position of women in Modoc society. Women act as interpreters and defend Jack’s group, but we also read about the slave trade in women, peddling wives and sisters to miners as prostitutes, and men gambling away their spouses. How significant and respected was the role of women in society and war?

Notwithstanding Murray’s problems, *The Modocs and Their War* is an accurate and very interesting account of that conflict which inspired other Indian groups to resist white intervention in their affairs. It is a useful work for both scholar and lay person.

— Lyle Koehler
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Emmanuel Ngara. *Art and Ideology in the African Novel*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, 1985) ix, 126 pp., \$12.50 paper.

The sub-title of this enigmatic book is “A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African Writing.” The first of the two parts of the books deals primarily with definitions of Marxist aesthetics. For a serious work, not only are the cliches and terminology tiresome but the choice of quotations is unfortunate. Ngara quotes Marx’s and Engel’s opinion that Dickens, Thackeray, Emily Bronte and Gaskell wrote novels “whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together.” Ngara adds a pronouncement from Mao Tse-Tung on art and literature: “. . . all literature and art belong to definite political lines. There is in fact, no such thing as art for art’s sake . . .” Commitment is all.

The second part of Ngara’s book discusses four novels—one each by Sembene Ousmene, Alex LaGuma, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Nadine Gordimer, and he does each a disservice by attempting to fit them into a

Marxist formula. It appears that writers who show concern for social problems, including Dickens and company as well as African writers, have been influenced by Marxist principles. Ngara adds his own commentary: “. . . beggars, prostitutes, thieves, and other people of no definite occupation who have sunk to the lower depth of society, are the natural consequence of the capitalist mode of production.” Elsewhere, however, Ngara is more careful to be historically accurate, and he admits that Marxist criticism has “serious shortcomings.”

In contrast to the major portion of the book, Ngara’s index, bibliography, notes, and especially his capsule commentaries on more than fifty African writers and political figures make the book worthy of attention. In literature he ranges from Achebe and Dennis Brutus to Soyinka and Tutuolo, and in politics from Biko and Bagral to Luthuli and Nyerere. These passages come from an unquestionably knowledgeable person, and may even be described as brilliant.

It is not the fervent Marxist dogma which makes the scholar-diplomat Ngara enigmatic. Rather it is when the professor of literature turns politician with the statement that “. . . a significant number of African countries have chosen [to be] allied to socialist countries which are much more prepared than the West to give them material assistance”

Is Ngara saying that ideology is for sale to the highest cash bidder? After teaching in universities in Lesotho and Swaziland and serving as a diplomat from Zimbabwe, Ngara is now an administrator at the University of Zimbabwe.

— Jean Bright
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Beverly Ormerod. *An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel*. Studies in Caribbean Literature. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, 1985) 152 pp., \$12.50.

Beverly Ormerod displays real expertise in *An Introduction to the French Caribbean Novel*. She is a West Indian herself, and she knows the background and culture of the Caribbean: its African slave origins and the present quest for pan-Caribbean identity. After post-graduate research at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, she earned her doctorate in French at Cambridge University. When necessary, she translates the