

women in positions of authority. It is not surprising to discover that some non-Indian Idahoans believed it was “folly to give the best land to the Indians.” What is revealing, however, is that Fletcher and Gay persisted, even though they received little support from local Indian agents. It is odd that leading women’s studies/history journals have not reviewed this book; it is their loss, because Gay’s letters and photographs make an important contribution to the history of women and cultural contact in the American West.

—Gretchen Harvey  
Arizona State University

**Simon Gikandi. *Reading the African Novel.* (Portsmouth, NH; Heinemann, 1987) xi, 172 pp., \$15.00.**

Gikandi, has added an excellent critical work to his earlier volumes on new African writers. Employing the techniques of modern criticism, he analyzes significant works of eleven African writers including, among others, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ferdinand Oyono, and Ayi Kwei Armah. He is concerned with the form-content relationship in the novels examined, as well as the part played by centers of consciousness of main characters. As he states, he set out to “show how . . . life and consciousness” move from external reality of the novel to “interiority.”

All the novels are concerned with the peoples of the post-colonial era and deal variously with the search for or the recovery of a national and a personal identity, or the relationship between the two. A reader of this criticism will find that although Gikandi is sympathetic to all the novelists, he does identify technical problems that a few of the authors face. His citation of these points does not detract from his overall appreciation of their artistic successes.

Gikandi categorizes the novels examined into parabolical, biographical, subjective, and political narratives. In a fifth chapter “Rereading the African Novel,” he deals mainly with myth in the modern novel. In each chapter, for purposes of astute comparing, he pairs or groups fictionalists who may have similar approaches, themes or techniques. For example in the chapter on psychological novels, he compares Camara Laye’s work with Armah’s since both novelists are deeply believing narrators and regard themselves as traditional storytellers.

In his chapter on the biographical narrative, he finds in each author chosen narrators in the process of self interpretation. Each is a colonized African. This is true in Fernando’s *Houseboy*, Mongo Beti’s *Mission to Kala*, and Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure*.

“The Subjective Narrative” singularly deals with the problems of isolation. In the novels chosen for analysis and illustration, there is an expression of dissatisfaction with the present. Focus is upon Armah’s earlier work and the novels of Wole Soyinka.

The distinction that Gikandi makes in the political novels is their concern with “community, character and consciousness” in works by Sembene Ousmane, Alex La Guma, and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. The first author’s *God’s Bits of Wood* deals with the anti-colonial fight: in La Guma’s work, *In the Fog of the Season’s End*, the focus is upon the anti-apartheid struggle, and the last, *Petals of Blood*, centers on Kenyan neo-colonialism. These works have parallelisms: they are fictions of crisis and the characters are placed in an ideological framework dealing with the future of communities. The authors would appear to have written their novels with patterns for changing “African reality.”

Finally, the last chapter examines the importance of myth, both traditional and contemporary. Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* and Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* provide the works for Gikandi’s analyses.

In summation, Gikandi’s work is an absolute must for study for those interested in the African novel. Because of the ground it breaks, it may well serve as germinal for needed critical works on this fiction.

—Cortland P. Auser  
Bronx Community College (CUNY)

**Howard L. Harrod. *Renewing the World*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987) xiv, 214 pp., \$22.50.**

Howard Harrod’s work provides an interpretation of the religious and moral world of the Arapaho, Crow, Cheyenne and Blackfeet tribes of the Northwestern Plains. Well aware that the material he is utilizing represents interpretations by early ethnographers, he transcends this hermeneutical problem to provide an idealized reconstruction of this world guided by the theories of Schutz and Geertz and the work of Joseph Brown.

His goal is to represent and provide a deeper understanding of the rich religious and moral heritage of these peoples. In this he succeeds well. He covers encounters with the sacred based in individual vision seeking, the significance of cosmologies, manipulation of key symbols such as bundles, and renewals effected through focal rituals such as the Crow Tobacco Society and the Sun Dance. In his most striking chapter, the