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Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinary Perspectives

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About this journal

The *International Journal of African Reflections (IJAR)*, which is housed at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, publishes multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary peer-reviewed articles that encourage and support researchers in all fields and disciplines, especially female, black and young researchers, by providing a platform to publish their work with the aim of eventually obtaining an NRF rating. The journal also intends to act as a facilitator in building a cohort of scholars from among the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral graduate students through the articles that are published in the journal. It is hoped that new epistemological ideas will emerge, and that this will contribute to improving the quality of teaching, research and learning.

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Preface

It is my privilege to present Volume 3 (2026) of the *International Journal of African Reflections* (*IJAR*), a scholarly platform that embodies iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's commitment to disseminating knowledge that is intellectually rigorous, socially responsive and firmly rooted in African realities. This issue brings together researchers from the humanities, social sciences, law, health sciences and economics to examine some of the defining questions of our time: gender justice, historical memory, land governance, Indigenous knowledge, technological change, institutional accountability, public health and sustainable development. Its interdisciplinary reach reflects a fundamental truth: the challenges confronting Africa do not respect disciplinary boundaries and our responses cannot remain confined within them.

At iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu we understand that a university is not simply a place where existing knowledge is transmitted but a public institution with a duty to imagine, test and build better futures. Our Vision 2040+ is anchored in the aspiration to become a technology-infused African university that is locally responsive, continentally consequential and globally engaged. This vision calls upon us to draw intellectual strength from our location while refusing intellectual isolation; to use technology without surrendering human judgement, and to pursue academic excellence in ways that improve the lives of the communities we serve. The *IJAR* contributes directly to this purpose by creating a credible space in which African experiences generate concepts, evidence and solutions of wider significance.

Vision 2040+ is given practical direction through the university's three signature themes: Food Futures; One Health, and Leadership, Justice and Governance. These themes are not separate institutional compartments: together, they recognise that human flourishing depends on the relationship between sustainable livelihoods, healthy communities, ecological resilience, ethical institutions and responsible leadership. The contributions to this volume illuminate these relationships precisely. Research on external debt and agricultural development reveals the fiscal conditions that can advance or impede food security and rural transformation. Scientific enquiry into the bioactivity of medicinal plants brings indigenous and community-based knowledge into productive conversation with experimental research while opening up opportunities for health innovation. Studies of land boards, apartheid regulation, gendered violence and institutional power demonstrate that development cannot be separated from justice, legitimacy and accountable governance.

The volume also engages directly with the technological future of higher education. Artificial intelligence is already altering the way universities teach, learn, conduct research and administer their responsibilities. Yet technology is never transformative merely because it is new: its value depends on whether it advances equitable access, strengthens human capability and serves clearly defined educational purposes. The analysis of AI adoption in South African higher education, together with the dialogue on literary criticism, pedagogy and the digital humanities, underscores the importance of infrastructure, digital literacy, ethical governance and critical judgement. This is central to our Vision 2040+ ambition. A technology-infused African university must be technologically capable, but it must also remain intellectually independent, ethically grounded and attentive to any inequalities that may be reproduced through innovation.

Equally important is the volume's insistence that language and interpretation are forms of social action. The analysis of feminist speech acts in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …* shows how language can challenge inherited assumptions and direct new practices. Historical research into the criminalisation of interracial relationships under apartheid reveals the opposite possibility: law and official language can classify, stigmatise and control human beings. These contributions remind us that knowledge is never detached from power. The terms through which society describes gender, race, authority, land, health and development influence what institutions permit, prohibit or neglect. Universities therefore carry a special responsibility to cultivate critical literacy: the capacity to identify the assumptions embedded in dominant categories and to formulate more just ways of understanding the world.

This responsibility is particularly urgent for an institution bearing the name of Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu. His legacy represents principled leadership, disciplined service, social justice and an enduring belief in people's capacity to transform their circumstances through collective action. To honour that name, the university must ensure that its scholarship is measured not only by quantity or visibility, but also by its integrity, relevance and impact. Research must confront the lived realities of rural and historically marginalised communities; strengthen democratic institutions; protect human dignity, and contribute to a more equitable distribution of knowledge and opportunity. *IJAR* serves this mandate by enabling scholars to respond to Africa's problems without reducing the continent to a catalogue of deficiencies. It foregrounds African agency, intellectual creativity and the capacity to produce solutions.

The geographical position of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu gives this mission particular force. Our campuses are located within communities

that experience the opportunities and contradictions of contemporary development up close. Questions of rural livelihoods, public health, land, educational access, language, technology and governance are not distant research themes; they shape the everyday lives of our students, staff and surrounding communities. Vision 2040+ requires us to transform this proximity into a scholarly advantage. Community engagement must inform research questions; research must strengthen teaching; teaching must prepare graduates to act with competence and social responsibility, and innovation must yield benefits beyond the boundaries of the university.

The *IJAR* is therefore more than a publication outlet. It is part of the knowledge infrastructure through which our university advances research excellence, supports emerging and established scholars, strengthens interdisciplinary exchange and extends African scholarship into international conversations. A strong university journal safeguards rigorous peer review, promotes intellectual independence and preserves a public record of enquiry. It also enlarges the range of voices and contexts represented in global knowledge. For African universities, this work is essential to epistemic justice: not the rejection of global scholarship, but fuller and more equitable participation in its production, evaluation and circulation.

I commend the authors in this issue for having researched and placed on record difficult questions with methodological seriousness and a commitment to evidence-based knowledge dissemination. I thank the reviewers for the careful and often unseen intellectual labour through which the quality of scholarly publication is secured. I also acknowledge the Managing Editor, the Editorial Board, and the production team for sustaining *IJAR* and bringing this volume to completion. Their collective work demonstrates the institutional commitment required to convert research into an enduring scholarly resource.

As readers engage with this third volume of *IJAR*, I invite them to consider not only the individual findings in its articles but also the shared challenge they present. What kinds of universities, technologies, laws, economies and knowledge systems are needed for Africa's people to flourish? Vision 2040+ calls on iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu to help answer that question through courageous scholarship and purposeful action. The future we seek will not be produced by aspiration alone; it will be built on evidence, ethical leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration and sustained accountability to society.

This volume is a meaningful contribution to that undertaking. It affirms our confidence that African universities can generate the highest-quality knowledge while remaining responsive to place, community and history. It also renews our conviction that scholarly

reflection must lead to transformation. May the ideas gathered here stimulate further research, deepen institutional debate and inspire partnerships that advance healthy communities, sustainable livelihoods, justice and human dignity across the Eastern Cape, South Africa, the African continent, and beyond.

Prof Thandi Mgwebi
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu

Africa in transformation

Knowledge, power and institutional responsibility

Editorial for Volume 3 (2026)

This third volume of the *International Journal of African Reflections* (*IJAR*) brings together nine contributions that examine the ways in which knowledge, power and institutional responsibility shape African lives. Moving between history, gender studies, biomedical research, higher education, economics, land law, literary pragmatics, palliative care and the humanities, the volume asks what makes scholarship answerable to the societies it studies. Its coherence emerges from a shared concern with the conditions under which people acquire recognition, exercise agency, secure livelihoods and receive care. The contributions approach these concerns through different methods and at different scales, demonstrating why African scholarship needs both disciplinary precision and sustained conversation across fields.

The volume affirms Africa as a site of knowledge production, theoretical reflection and methodological enquiry. Its studies engage inherited inequalities together with contemporary pressures, attending to the institutions through which both are reproduced or challenged. Read in their published sequence, they move from the coercive regulation of intimate life and the vulnerabilities of university students to questions of scientific investigation, technological change, economic development and land governance. Feminist language, culturally responsive care and the renewal of literary criticism extend this enquiry into the meanings and practices through which social transformation becomes possible. Together, these contributions give substance to *IJAR*'s commitment to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary scholarship grounded in African realities.

The opening article, AA Marwarwa and M Petse's '"The forbidden fruit": The consequences of interracial sexual relationships in apartheid South Africa', examines the 1952 case of Olaf Abraham Voster and Nomathemba Emily Nomatiti in Umtata. Through this case, the authors trace the operation of the Immorality Act 5 of 1927 and the consequences of racial regulation for those brought within its reach. Their historical analysis shows how racial domination entered intimate life through policing, prosecution and punishment. The case also directs attention to the unequal vulnerabilities of the people involved: racialised law operated within existing differences of status and power. By connecting a particular legal proceeding to a wider system of exclusion, the article demonstrates the value of archival

research to recovering the human consequences of institutionalised discrimination.

Questions of power and vulnerability continue in Keneilwe Wanthitha Mashishi, Mahlodi Monica Rebecca Makupula, Jabulani Gilford Kheswa and Mvuyisi Notole's study of sexual harassment and the mental well-being of female students at a South African tertiary institution. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten participants and guided by Power and Control Theory, the authors examine student experiences shaped by poverty, patriarchal norms, alcohol abuse and unequal relations of authority. The accounts reveal the consequences for psychological well-being and academic participation that institutional policy alone cannot adequately describe. The study recommends ongoing counselling, empowerment programmes and education on sexual harassment policies. Its place after the historical article establishes a consequential connection: the protection of dignity requires attention to be given the way power is exercised in everyday relationships, and also to the formal rules intended to govern them. For universities, student safety must surely be integral to the conditions that make learning possible.

The third contribution turns to the investigation of medicinal plants. Azola Zukisani Ntshobane, Elona Ngqayimbane, Suparna Chakraborty, Saif Khan and Talkmore Ngarivhume screen extracts of *Drimia altissima* and *Crinum macrophyllum* bulbs for anticancer, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity. Their laboratory findings identify promising responses in selected extracts, including activity against cervical cancer cell lines and strong inhibition in an anti-inflammatory assay. These are results obtained from laboratory screenings; they establish grounds for further investigation rather than clinical effectiveness. The authors accordingly call for the isolation and characterisation of active compounds. Their article contributes to this volume by showing how medicinal plant use can inform research questions that are then examined through controlled experimentation. Its significance rests in the disciplined movement from biological resources and medicinal knowledge towards evidence that can support further scientific enquiry.

ST Pika's exploration of the adoption of artificial intelligence in South African higher education shifts our attention to the infra-structures through which knowledge is taught, assessed and administered. Using Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the article considers relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability in interpreting the emerging trends and barriers. Personalised learning, student engagement and administrative efficiency feature among the potential benefits of adopting artificial intelligence, while infrastructure constraints,

digital literacy gaps, inequality and ethical concerns complicate its adoption. The analysis places institutional readiness central to the discussion: technologies acquire educational value through the conditions of their use. Investment, staff development and appropriate policies therefore belong in the same conversation as innovation. Following the biomedical study, Pika's contribution extends the volume's attention to responsible investigation and adoption, asking how promising developments can serve public purposes in unequal institutional settings.

Nnane Eric Sumelong's study of external debt sustainability and agricultural development in Cameroon broadens this institutional enquiry to national economic policy. Using data for the period 1996–2023, an Engle–Granger co-integration framework and an error-correction model, the article examines the relationships between external debt and agricultural value added. It reports a negative long-run association between long-term external debt and agricultural value added, together with a strong positive association with gross fixed capital formation. The analysis interprets debt pressures in relation to constrained fiscal space and the resources available for agricultural development. Its recommendations emphasise transparent debt governance, the protection of agricultural investment and the productive use of borrowing. By bringing rural livelihoods and agricultural capacity into the debates on debt, the article asks readers to assess macroeconomic choices balanced against their developmental consequences. The practical question is what public finance enables communities to produce, sustain and improve.

The next article, by Akame Winslow Melle and Akwe Ngole Ray Junior, examines four land management boards in Cameroon through the lens of legal pluralism. The Land Consultative Board, Site Board Commission, Inter-Village Boundary Settlement Commission and Farmer–Grazer Commission operate where statutory rules, customary authority and administrative practice intersect. Drawing on legal materials, interviews and comparative African experiences, the authors identify procedural ambiguity, bureaucratic delay and institutional constraints that limit dispute resolution. They argue for reforms that combine customary legitimacy with clearer safeguards, digitisation, gender inclusion and more effective administration. Its position after the agricultural development study renders the relationship between productive investment and land governance particularly visible. Land sustains livelihoods, but it also carries histories of belonging, authority and communal obligation; the institutions responsible for land management must respond appropriately to these overlapping claims if their decisions are to command confidence.

Gabriel Ndamzi Amadi's 'Doing feminism with words: a Searlean speech act analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's *Dear Ijeawele …*' then turns to the capacity of language to challenge inherited authority. Analysing 239 coded units from Adichie's manifesto, Amadi shows how assertives contest naturalised gender assumptions and directives translate feminist argument into practices of parenting and socialisation. Commissives and expressives establish ethical and affective positioning, while quasi-declaratives attempt to rename or reclassify familiar gendered categories. The recognition of hybrid forms also allows the article to test the usefulness and limits of its theoretical framework. This contribution returns the volume to gendered power at the level of ordinary speech and conduct. It demonstrates how feminist writing can intervene in the vocabularies through which inequality becomes familiar and in the practices through which it is passed from one generation to another.

The eighth contribution, K Zweni, A Mavembela and G Mkukuli's 'Decolonising South African palliative care psychosocial services for mental health benefit: eclectic context', brings the relationship between recognition and institutional responsibility into end-of-life care. Guided by an ecological perspective and an eclectic narrative review, the authors examine the ways patients' social, cultural and spiritual environments shape their experiences of care. They argue that the exclusion of African beliefs and knowledge systems can undermine culturally responsive psychosocial support, and they advocate their inclusion alongside allopathic approaches in healthcare training, policy and practice. The article offers a framework for reform rather than a clinical evaluation of a new intervention. Read alongside the earlier biomedical contribution, it widens the volume's understanding of health: research into biological activity and attention to the meanings through which patients experience suffering respond to different complementary dimensions of care. Respect for patient preferences and cultural diversity is central to that relationship.

The volume concludes with 'Beyond the Ibadan School', Mark Ighile's dialogue with Emeritus Professor Dan Izevbaye on literary criticism, pedagogy and digital humanities. Reflecting on six decades of scholarship, the conversation revisits the relationships between text, context, authorship, audience and interpretation. Its discussion of a declining tutorial culture and campus collegiality underscores the social conditions through which critical judgement develops. Its treatment of canon formation asks how intellectual inheritance can remain responsive to changing publics and media. Returning to the questions raised by Pika, the dialogue considers digital tools and artificial intelligence as supports for enquiry whose usefulness depends

on humanistic judgement and ethical interpretation. This is a fitting conclusion to the sequence: an issue concerned with institutional transformation ends by examining the ways in which scholars learn to interpret, evaluate and transmit knowledge responsibly.

Through these contributions, institutional legitimacy emerges as a demanding practical achievement. Courts, universities, land boards, healthcare services and fiscal systems exercise authority in ways that affect people's opportunities and vulnerabilities. Their legitimacy depends on how that authority is justified, scrutinised and experienced. The articles illuminate this problem through distinct forms of evidence, from a historical prosecution and students' accounts to legal analysis and economic modelling. Together, they encourage a conception of reform that is attentive to everyday consequences: access to education, security of livelihood, recognition of claims and dignity in care.

The volume also clarifies why the recognition of African knowledge must be accompanied by methodological care. Archival interpretation, laboratory screening, qualitative interviews, narrative synthesis, speech-act analysis and econometrics support different kinds of claim. Bringing them into conversation requires respect being shown for those differences. Medicinal knowledge can generate research questions; cultural understanding can inform care; literary criticism can examine the terms through which values are communicated. None of these contributions needs to assume the methods of another to acquire intellectual worth. Their collective strength lies in making evidence, interpretation and the limits of inference visible while responding to problems that exceed any single discipline.

We thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for their critical engagement, and the editorial and production teams for the sustained work that makes scholarly publication possible. Their efforts support a journal that is committed to widening participation in research while maintaining the rigour on which scholarly trust depends. For emerging and established researchers alike, that commitment entails the opportunity to contribute and the responsibility to formulate arguments that others can examine, question and develop.

Volume Three of *IJAR* invites readers to consider African scholarship through the quality of the understanding it produces and the opportunities it opens up. Its contributions recover histories of exclusion, scrutinise present institutions and propose directions for change without resolving their differences into a single account of Africa. Their shared achievement is to render the relationship between knowledge and responsibility concrete. *IJAR* advances that relationship

by providing a space in which African experiences inform enquiry, African intellectual resources shape interpretation and scholarship remains answerable to the people whose lives give its questions urgency.

Prof Enongene Mirabeau Sone
and
Dr Thoahlane Thoahlane
Editors, *International Journal of African Reflections*

Beyond the Ibadan School: a dialogue on literary criticism, pedagogy and digital humanities

Mark Ighile*

Dan Izevbaye†

Abstract

This interview with Emeritus Professor Dan Izevbaye unveils the progressive terrain of African literary criticism, pedagogy and the humanities during six decades of scholarship, from the foundational pillars of literature – text, context and the intrinsic space of the author – to the decolonisation of cultural consciousness, Professor Izevbaye ponders dispassionately on the evolving phases of Nigerian higher education, including the decline of the tutorial system and the collapse of campus collegiality. The engaging and critical conversation covers the intersection of traditional humanities, interdisciplinarity and post-humanist digital technologies. While revalidating the central function of literary criticism in shaping ethical values and communal identity, Professor Izevbaye argues for new, thematic canon formation in the Digital Age while positioning artificial intelligence as a supportive tool that cannot replace humanistic judgment, critical intelligence or moral interpretation.

Keywords: African literature, literary criticism, digital humanities, pedagogy, decolonisation, Ibadan School, post-humanism, artificial intelligence, critical intelligence, canon formation

1. Introduction

This interview with Emeritus Professor Dan Izevbaye investigates the foundational principles of literature and literary criticism in the evolving contexts of African, postcolonial and digital humanities. Reflecting on more than six decades of teaching and scholarship, the Distinguished Professor discusses the centrality of text, context, audience and criticism while also interrogating the shifting role of authorship, pedagogy and canon formation. The conversation traces the transformation of the humanities from print-based traditions

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to interdisciplinary and digitally mediated knowledge systems, highlighting both their possibilities and their ethical challenges. Particular attention is paid to the role of African literature in decolonising cultural consciousness and reshaping global literary hierarchies. The interview also engages contemporary debates on artificial intelligence (AI), literary intelligence and critical judgement, reaffirming the enduring necessity of humanistic values in literary evaluation and cultural interpretation.

2. Foundational pillars of literature and literary criticism

My first response to what the principal pillars of literature and literary criticism could be is to say that literature rests on certain foundational pillars, some of which are stable across time while others shift according to historical, cultural and social circumstances. I arrange these pillars in the following order:

First, there is the text itself. Without a text – either oral or written – there can be no literature. The text is the irreducible foundation of literary activity.

Second, there is the context, which must be understood in both aesthetic and social terms. Context includes artistic traditions, cultural values and, centrally, the audience. There are two levels of audience: the primary audience consists of ordinary users of literature – listeners in oral cultures or readers in literate societies – who engage with literature for meaning, pleasure or instruction; the secondary audience is the critic, who functions as an intermediary between text and audience.

Although the critic is not averse to aesthetic pleasure, criticism plays a decisive role in determining a work's durability, evaluative status and cultural significance. Critics help audiences to recognise quality, distinguish enduring from ephemeral works and interpret new or difficult texts.

The third is the author, who produces the text but does not control its reception. In many oral traditions, authorship is anonymous or unstable, as texts are continually reworked by communities. Even in literate cultures, once a text is released, it becomes communal property. This explains why authorship occupies a paradoxical position: indispensable to production yet marginal for interpretation and reception.

This hierarchy explains why 20th-century criticism debated the relevance of authorial intention. Language belongs to the community, not the individual writer, and meanings often exceed authorial intent.

Finally, these three pillars are not immune to historical disruption. Colonial and postcolonial encounters have destabilised inherited literary hierarchies. Chinua Achebe's critique of Joseph Conrad is a

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classic example of how colonial texts can be re-evaluated – and in some cases demoted – when they are subjected to Afrocentric critical scrutiny. Similar reassessments apply to works such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare's *The tempest*, particularly in their representations of colonised people.

3. Reflections on six decades of teaching in the humanities

The past six decades of teaching in the humanities has provided me with a rich dose of experience. My teaching career spans multiple phases rather than a simple chronology. I taught in Nigerian public universities – primarily Ibadan, Lagos and Benin – before enjoying extended periods as a visiting lecturer and professor in the United Kingdom, South Africa and the United States. I later spent 15 years at Bowen University before returning to Ibadan.

The most formative periods were my early and late Nigerian phases. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, African literature was newly introduced into university curricula. Students were deeply enthusiastic; punctuality was unquestioned and intellectual curiosity and passion were intense. The students encountered African texts as living discoveries rather than as inherited traditions.

Over time, though, changes in student demographics, funding structures and institutional culture altered this atmosphere. The increase in enrolments strained tutorial systems, which were eventually discontinued. Digital technologies later transformed reading practices as students increasingly relied on electronic devices instead of physical texts.

Equally significant was the culture of collegiality that once defined universities such as Ibadan. Our lives were once expressed by communal spaces: we met in common rooms to relax and chat – the tea or coffee was merely an excuse for colleagues to gather. The senior staff club was another hub, featuring a swimming pool and delicacies where families gathered in the evenings. The Arts Theatre (now the Wole Soyinka Theatre) was a focal point. At 20:00, the lights would go down and a play would begin. Trenchard Hall served as the centre for classical and Christian music.

During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, people from the city would flood the campus for these events. This is where the term 'Town and Gown' found its root meaning: the university and the community were inextricably linked. However, political upheavals, especially the Nigerian Civil War and post-war ethnic realignments, weakened these bonds, reshaping academic life.

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Funding remains a central concern: the rapid proliferation of universities without corresponding investment undermined the infrastructure, teaching quality and staff morale. Student activism, once highly informed and principled, also changed in character as institutional pressures mounted.

4. Decline of the tutorial system

Regarding the decline of the tutorial system, two factors were decisive. First, tutorials thrived in small classes and produced exceptional students. But when the student intake increased dramatically, the system became unsustainable. Second, administrative and financial pressures led universities to prioritise large lectures over intensive mentorship. It is sad to observe that the loss of tutorials represents a decline in pedagogical intimacy rather than in intellectual necessity.

5. Traditional humanities, post-humanities and interdisciplinarity

My critical perception of the intersection between traditional humanities and post-humanist digital approaches is tricky. My experience as a university administrator exposed me to interdisciplinary models that echo the Renaissance ideal of integrated knowledge. The humanities at one stage fragmented into narrow specialisations – literature, linguistics, theatre, music – but contemporary challenges demand their reintegration.

This convergence mirrors older intellectual traditions in which art, science, religion and philosophy were interconnected. Today's digital humanities are reviving this synthesis, enabling collaboration across disciplines. Literature is increasingly intersecting with medicine, technology, environmental studies and communication sciences. However, this convergence also raises ethical concerns.

For instance, technology enhances human capacity, but it also risks dehumanisation – through ecological destruction, the mechanisation of the bod and the erosion of memory and imagination. Plato warned against similar dangers arising from the invention of writing. The challenge is to ensure that technology serves humanity rather than replaces it.

6. Literary criticism in the age of convergence

In the context of this convergence of disciplines, literary criticism enables the assimilation of diverse knowledge into an imaginative form. Historically, writers such as John Donne incorporated scientific and geographical discoveries into poetry. We are returning to that model.

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Criticism also articulates literature's social function: language development, cultural memory, ethical reflection and communal identity. Whereas literature does not build bridges in the same sense as engineering does, it shapes consciousness, values and historical continuity. It should be stressed that the idea that literature does not build bridges should be understood in the immediate context – bridges such as the engineer's physical structure across divided spaces. Figuratively, literature does build bridges by creating the continuity provided in translations and adaptations, to name the two basic devices. Not as obvious are the appropriation, the intersections and the interlinks between disciplines – the extension of points of view by literature and history, and the deepening of the understanding of and insight into human nature enabled by the interaction of medical and literary texts and personnel.

Literature has contributed significantly to humanistic development in Africa. The central task of African literature has been the decolonisation of the mind. Political independence did not dismantle economic, cultural or intellectual dependency; but literature challenged colonial misrepresentations, asserted African histories and civilisations, and restored cultural confidence.

From Leopold Sedar Senghor to Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, African writers have contested the Eurocentric monopoly on civilisation. Journalism and literary criticism extended this influence, particularly during moments of political crisis. Literature therefore remains indispensable to Africa's ongoing struggle for intellectual and cultural autonomy.

7. New media, digital humanities and the African canon

New media constitute a revolution comparable to writing and print. They integrate oral, written and visual forms while transcending spatial and temporal limitations. They also enable interdisciplinary scholarship, marking a new Renaissance.

Digital platforms democratise access to knowledge, allowing African scholars and writers to draw on global research while correcting historical misrepresentations. AI, although limited to existing data, can enhance accuracy and breadth in literary representation.

This shift demands new canons grounded in interdisciplinarity, gender studies, peace and conflict studies and cultural hybridity. Canon formation will increasingly be thematic rather than departmental.

I do not think that digital media diminish the author's role in interpretation further. This is because the author has always been an initiator rather than a final authority. Once released, a text belongs to

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the community. Digital reproduction accelerates this process through adaptation, dramatisation and reinterpretation.

Language itself is communal property; meanings evolve beyond intention. This underlies the concept of the 'intentional fallacy'. The critic's task is not to recover intention but to evaluate meaning, form, ethics and cultural relevance.

8. Understanding AI, literary intelligence and critical intelligence

In establishing the relationship between AI, literary intelligence and critical intelligence, it is instructive to advise that AI should remain a tool, not a master. It can assist research and representation but it lacks consciousness, imagination and ethical judgement. Literary intelligence transcends available data, while critical intelligence discriminates value – distinguishing excellence from mediocrity and aligning art with moral and cultural responsibility.

The critic must remain a humanist, one who safeguards ethical standards and social justice. AI may support criticism, but it cannot replace human judgement.

9. Conclusion

This interview underscores Professor Izevbaye's enduring vision: of literature as communal, ethical, interdisciplinary and resistant to domination – whether colonial, technological or ideological. The Digital Age, rather than erasing humanistic values, offers an opportunity to renew them within a broader, more inclusive intellectual horizon.

Biographical details

Dan Izevbaye is an Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Ibadan and one of Africa's most distinguished literary critics. A pioneer of the 'Ibadan School' of criticism, his work has been instrumental in defining the parameters of African literary aesthetics. In a career spanning six decades, he has held prestigious visiting professorship positions at the universities of Kent, Canterbury, Pennsylvania and of Texas, Austin, as a Fulbright Scholar. Professor Izevbaye served as the Pioneer Provost of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Ibadan and later played a transformative role at Bowen University, Iwo. His scholarship, which focuses on the intersection of oral tradition and modern African poetry and fiction, remains foundational to the discipline of literary criticism.

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