his breadth of reading and knowledge, Professor Miller fails to confront directly the crucial question of Islam in Francophone African literature; it is with novels such as *L'Aventure ambiguë* and *La Regard du rot* that the contextualizing, Afrocentric approach commended and most ably demonstrated by Professor Miller is most sorely required. Whereas Professor Mortimer, in her discussions of Camara Laye, Ahmadou Kourouma and Mariama Bâ, dwells primarily on the overt themes of the works in question, making of them essentially 'statements' in fictional form by their authors, Professor Miller is eager to track down the discontinuities and ambivalences within the texts and to bring out the problematical nature of both writing and reading in the Francophone African context: Professor Mortimer is concerned essentially with conscious meanings, Professor Miller rather with the textual unconscious. Professor Miller is particularly adept at drawing major insights from seemingly minor points of detail: from the uncertainty—at least for the Euro-American reader—of a writer's name (Camara Laye or Laye Camara?), from a particular narrative technique (free indirect style in *Les Soleils des indépendances*) or from the distinctive use made by an African woman writer of a 'typically European' literary form such as the epistolary novel. Perhaps each of the studies of individual texts is too long for the material it contains, but each demonstrates beyond question the validity of the broadly-based, contextualizing reading that Professor Miller is advocating. *Journeys Through the French African Novel* is a fine example of the thematically oriented criticism that has dominated the study of Francophone African writing for the last thirty years: it is perhaps the best currently available introduction to the principal concerns of writers in French north and south of the Sahara. But it is clearly *Theories of Africans*, informed as it is by anthropological writing by both Euro-Americans and Africans, by the 'new' African philosophy of V. Y. Mudimbe, Paulin Hountondji and others and by contemporary Euro-American deconstructionist criticism, that points the way to future study in the field.

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Blaine Harden was sent by *The Washington Post* in 1984 to Ethiopia to cover the great famine and to convey in words what millions of viewers in the USA and Europe were seeing nightly on their televisions of the starving and the dying. Then followed three and a half years as the paper's Nairobi correspondent. His constituency stretched from East to West Africa, taking in Zaire and Sudan. He was encouraged to visit remoter parts and 'to take time to write well'. *Dispatches* emerged from this experience, each chapter focussing on one major event, journey or personal encounter, set in a wider context of information and explanation beyond the space available in the columns of *The Post*. They should be most valuable to the general reader who wants both the feel of Africa in the late eighties and a better understanding of the contemporary scene, political and social, how it operates and how it has been manipulated by Big Men—the Mobutus, Amins and the Does—by the world agencies, and by the superpowers.

Harden writes well, conveying atmosphere, relating the particular or bizarre to the wider generality, not hesitating to shock, but without excess or over-indulgence. He has the eye for a good quote and is himself very quotable. His extended profile of the Big Man introducing Chapter 6, 'The Good, The Bad and The Greedy', is likely to find its way into many books on African politics. 'His face is on the money. His photograph hangs in every office in his realm. His ministers wear gold pins with
tiny photographs of Him on the lapels of their tailored pin-striped suits. He names streets, football stadiums, hospitals and universities after himself, etc. etc.

The journey by river boat to Kinshasa reveals the stench, squalor and danger to health, of joining three thousand others on a tug, pushing five rusted barges that are for ten days an overcrowded African market, part disco, part brothel, and even abattoir; and continuously open for river business, conducted on the principles of Mobutuism that you only survive by extracting from someone else. Writing that emerges from acute observation has nothing to fear from the competition of television, in this instance a recently broadcast Great River Journey: each medium can complement the other.

High marks also to Harden’s account of the legal battle for the body of S. M. Otieno, the deceased Kenyan lawyer of Luo stock who had been married for over twenty years to a Kikuyu wife. This has the tension of a good story. It progressively reveals tribal polarities—Luo concern for life after death, Kikuyu thirst for present power and prosperity, both firmly entrenched in African sexism—African women being yoked to cultures that keep them pregnant and powerless, but tied so often to the pitiless drudgery of farm labour. Harden alleges the President was manipulating Luo–Kikuyu feelings in fixing the verdict in this lawsuit that had held the attention of all Nairobi for weeks on end; it seemed intended to be a public humiliation for the Kikuyu.

A brief review cannot do justice to the interest and variety of the material here. Although much that Harden describes is anarchic and troubling, he is not wholly pessimistic. He puts his faith in Africans themselves, seeing their own way out of their difficulties now the continent is no longer the arena for superpower conflict and popular feeling is rising for a return to democracy. Farmers too are bringing more produce to market as they know they will be better rewarded. The remarkable reconciliation in Nigeria after the Civil War was no mere chance occurrence. Africa will recover from its wounds, so many self-inflicted: in the words of the motto emblazoned on a West coast mammy-waggon, ‘No condition is permanent’. He has high hopes for Nigeria, although its population may reach 618 million in fifty years time on present projections!

In a paperback edition these Dispatches could reach a wider readership that is not likely to be disappointed.

Chesham

CHARLES ARMOUR