

The following is most of the text of the presentation I did at Readercon 29. I ran out of time, so I wasn't able to give the entire talk. And my Powerpoint file became corrupted, so I gave the presentation without the images, as I'd originally planned. Here, then, is the original, as requested by a couple of the folks who attended the presentation.

THE HISTORY OF HORROR LITERATURE IN AFRICA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Horror literature has not been restricted to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe, despite what critics and historians of the genre assume. Most countries which have a flourishing market for popular literature have seen natively-written horror fiction, whether in the form of dime novels, short stories, or novels. This is true of the European countries, whose horror writers are given at least a cursory mention in the broader types of horror criticism. But this is also true of countries outside of Europe, and in countries and continents where Western horror critics dare not tread, like Africa. Now, a thorough history of African horror literature is beyond the time I have today, so what follows is going to be a more limited coverage, of African horror literature in the twentieth century. I'll be going alphabetically and chronologically through three time periods: 1901-1940, 1941-1970, and 1971-2000. I'd love to be able to tell you a unified theory of African horror literature for those time periods, but there isn't one. Africa is far too large for that. What I'm going to tell you about are the individual countries in which horror fiction appeared, and the traditions, if any, of horror fiction within those countries.

In Egypt horror fiction first appeared in newspapers and dime novels. Egypt, during the late nineteenth century, was going through *al-Nahda*, a national cultural renaissance. The result of this cultural transformation was the modernization of the world of Egyptian letters. As a British protectorate during these years, Egypt had access to the latest novels and magazines from England and the Continent. The result was that by the turn of the twentieth century Egyptian newspapers were publishing translations and imitations of French popular literature (France being the cultural leader of the time), including romances, thrillers, spy stories, and, later, detective stories. Fifteen periodicals in Egypt and Lebanon specialized in publishing translations and original works of fiction. The result was the first Egyptian horror literature, published in newspapers and after 1905 in dime novels. These stories were for the most part crude imitations of Western horror stories, inspired by translations of Edgar Allan Poe, Theophile Gautier, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and others, with little if any material inspired by native Egyptian folklore or Muslim religious stories.

Angola had had intellectual and liberation movements in the 1860s and 1890s, but neither gave rise to a substantial body of literature, and the first serious Angolan novelist, António de Assis Júnior, did not begin publishing until the 1910s. His novel *O Segredo da Morta* (*The Secret of the Dead*), published in 1934, is today recognized as a first for Angolan literature. It was a combination of activist fiction, the roman feuilleton, a history and ethnography of the late 1890s in Angola, and a work of activist journalism complete with editorial comments. The plot of *O Segredo da Morta* concerns a witch who dies of sleeping sickness and then returns from the dead to haunt the living. The witch punishes and kills those who stole from her while she lay dying. To modern readers' eyes the novel is effective in using Ovimbundu and Ambundu oral traditions and folktales to create frightening moments of supernatural horror amidst the melodrama and descriptions of Luanda in the 1890s.

The best of the early Basotho writers of Lesotho was Thomas Mofolo, who in 1925 wrote *Chaka*, what the critics call the first "important" novel of "black Africa." *Chaka* is a heavily

fictionalized biography of the Zulu general Shaka kaSenzangakhona, known to Westerners as “Shaka Zulu.” Among the characters Mofolo adds to his biography of Shaka is the Mephistophelean figure of the sorcerer Isanusi, who presents Shaka with a Faustian bargain. Shaka accepts, and Isanusi is eventually responsible for Shaka magically losing his way and his soul and descending into evil and sinful ways. *Chaka* falls into the category of horror-adjacent literature, where there are horror elements, sometimes substantial, and horrifying moments, but the primary purpose of the narrative is not to frighten.

Nigerian literature in the 1930s was still largely dominated by British authors and colonial forms and modes. Daniel O. Fagunwa’s *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1938), the first significant novel written in Yoruba, was a departure. Fagunwa was a novelist, short story writer, editor, and biographer, and a devout Christian convert; his work was a landmark both in Nigeria and in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, and he has been dubbed by critics the “master ancestor to the institutional category we have come to call modern African literature.” *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* is generally seen as Fagunwa’s masterpiece. It is loosely autobiographical, although both the framing story and the folktales the narrator tells are largely mythical, dealing with a world of supernatural being of all varieties. The novel is a formidable synthesis of Yoruba folklore, Fagunwa’s own creations, and Christian sensibilities. Told in a rich, vivid, evocative language, the stories have a realistic portrait of the Yoruban environment, both literal and metaphysical, where the supernatural lives cheek by jowl with the mundane. Although Fagunwa combines folkloric aesthetics and Christian sermonizing, and further has his narrator intrude into the novel at random moments, Fagunwa’s use of the details of traditional folklore helps create imagery and moments that can frighten the unwary.

That was not his primary intention, which was to tell a picaresque story using folktales for the ultimate purpose of convincing readers to convert to Christianity. But terror from specific horrible concepts and moments was generated nonetheless.

South Africa was the comparative horror heavyweight of the Continent, producing a substantial amount of horror fiction and even supporting a few authors who specialized in horror fiction. South African horror stories of the 1901-1939 period were the product of several different cultures, merging together however unwillingly. There were the oral folklore traditions of the native South African peoples, which often contained supernatural elements or ghosts. There was the British spiritualist tradition established during the nineteenth century, which manifested itself in early and mid-twentieth century South African Gothic novels. There were East Indian folk stories, brought to South Africa in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries by Malaysian and Indonesian slaves. There were traditional folk horror stories of vampires and werewolves witches brought to South Africa by Dutch and German settlers. And there was the German Faust myth. The end result of this cultural transfer and mingling were three main types of South African horror during the pre-WW2 years: European-style horror stories, Afrikaans Gothic, and Afrikaans Magic Realism.

Foremost among the South African horror story writers of the pre-WW2 period was C. Louis Leipoldt. Leipoldt was a versatile writer, prolific as a poet, novelist, children’s book writer and author of non-fiction, and is still considered one of South Africa’s greatest poets and writers. Leipoldt also wrote three collections of ghost stories, the first and best of which, *Waar Spoke Spiel* (*Where Ghosts Play*), was published in 1924. Leipoldt’s horror fiction bears the influence of Poe; Leipoldt’s plots and tropes are Poe-esque, but his characters and fictional communities are thoroughly South African, as occasionally are his motifs.

Eugene Marais, a lawyer, naturalist, poet and writer of short stories and novels, wrote *Die*

boom in die middle van die tuin (*The Tree in the Middle of the Garden*, 1933), a fine example of the Afrikaner Gothic. The Afrikaner Gothics contain unique Gothic effects such as mystery, fear and horror within a distinctive South African environment (such as deserted farmsteads and drought-ridden areas) with authentic South African characters (including farmers, Khoisan rainmakers, and Boer soldiers). These aspects, in combination with the influence of indigenous occult traditions, bring about a distinctive Afrikaner Gothic literature. In other words, the Afrikaner Gothic is not a mere imitation of European traditions, but has original attributes.

The great surge in horror fiction would come in the 1941-1970 time period, especially in the years after World War Two, when the independence movements of the various colonies gained strength and momentum.

In Angola native fiction was largely in thrall to the model of traditional Portuguese fiction. Oscar Ribas helped to change that. A popular folklorist and spokesman for native Angolan traditions, Ribas wrote both fiction and non-fiction about traditional Angola and the Kimbundu. In *Uanga (Feitiço)* (1951) Ribas incorporated substantial amounts of Kimbundu beliefs about witchcraft and sorcery, making the plot heavily dependent on evil magic for its twists and turns and resolutions. Ribas' style is sophisticated, and his handling of Luanda's African heritage is delicate and knowledgeable, but his characters are primarily vehicles for Ribas to lecture the audience on Angolan culture and folkways. The supernatural horror elements in both works are a part of those. Ribas did not write horror literature—that is, his primary intention was not to frighten the reader, although that was a secondary intention. His primary intention was to defend traditional Angolan society against the Portuguese colonials. The horror he achieves is conveyed is primarily conceptual, about what happens to its victims. Ribas is a straightforward storyteller whose works' horror elements are conveyed in a folkloric manner. That they frightened his readers was a good thing, to Ribas, but not the best thing.

In the Congo in the late 1940s literature was entirely under the sway of the Belgian literary establishment. Paul Lomami-Tshibamba changed that, publishing in 1948 the first work of Congolese literature and a work that, in its description of both the Congolese way of life and the world of Congolese mythology, expressed an innately Congolese (rather than Belgian) viewpoint. The book, *Ngando le Crocodile (Ngando the Crocodile)*, won a Congolese literary award and subtly expressed the anti-colonialist politics of its author, who was both a writer and a literary activist, while also vividly telling the story of a supernatural journey through a spirit-haunted land. *Ngando le Crocodile* is a poetic and even mythic work possessed of detailed description of everyday life and psychologically realistic portraits of its protagonists. But unlike other retellings of native myths, as in the work of Oscar Ribas, Lomami Tshibamba's work is dark. *Ngando le Crocodile* explores Congolese metaphysics and legends, depicting a belief system of opposing supernatural good and evil forces who are omnipresent and active. The destructive power is in the hands of invisible beings who inhabit a mysterious world hidden from man, and are always ready to intervene. Death is ever-present, and usually arrives in a shockingly unexpected and frightening manner, in *Ngando*. *Ngando*'s ultimate purposes were to tell a Congolese folktale and to criticize the Belgian colonial regime, but without meaning to Lomami Tshibamba created one of the earliest works of Francophone African horror fiction.

In the 1960s the literature of Guinea, and that of Francophone African literature more generally, went through a period in which it was expected to be political as well as well-crafted. Works of fiction which looked backwards in time or which contained elements of *fantastika* were seen as embarrassments that were of no use to Guineans. In *Dramouss* (1966) Camara Laye, a political activist and writer, wrote hybrid fiction, part-Modernist and part-griot-

influenced. *Dramouss* is generally seen as Camara's weakest work, an uneasy combination of social commentary, *fantastika*, autobiography, and ethnography. However, the *fantastika* in *Dramouss* is of the dark variety, tending toward horror. The supernatural is a part of reality, though not a menacing part. But the final section of the novel is about a nightmarish Orwellian dream the protagonist has, in which he is trapped in a Kafka-esque prison and a giant preys on a helpless Guinea. Unlike much of *Dramouss*, the nightmare sequence is memorably written, with surreal elements adding to the fright.

The fiction of the Ivory Coast in the 1950s was unduly influenced by the models of its colonizer's novels and short stories. Ivory Coast had not yet achieved independence, but there was a substantial anti-colonial, pro-independence movement. Bernard Dadié was a part of this movement. In his life he would become one of Africa's most distinguished man of letters; after independence he would serve the Ivorian government as the Minister of Culture. In 1955 he had already published a novel and a collection of Ivorian folktales. But *Le pagne noir* (*The Black Loincloth*, 1955) was an advance on his previous work. Dadié's second collection of retellings of Ivorian folktales and legends, *Le pagne noir* is told in a fluid, enjoyable style that strikes an admirable balance between the requirements of the modern conte and the requirement to present the folktales as if they were transcriptions of live performances of griots. The stories are colorful and linguistically vivid stories, and admirably fulfill Dadié's intention of preserving traditional Ivorian culture. However, they are not innocent, nor are several of them light-hearted. A number of the stories deal with matters of life and death, Faustian bargains, frightening talking animals, and loved ones turned revenants. Although good triumphs and evil is punished in these stories, Dadié does not scant on adding tension and frightening imagery and concepts, so that these traditional legends and folktales, generally have happy endings only to redeem the dreadfulness that the protagonists undergo. The stories in *Le pagne noir* are intended to teach moral lessons, with the horror effect on the reader being an enjoyable second-order effect.

In the 1950s in Lesotho literature was vibrant for the first time in a generation, thanks to a politicized group of authors who wrote novels objecting to the apartheid policies of neighboring South Africa's National Party government. Protest literature was the dominant genre for the Basotho, with fiction that didn't contain political elements looked down upon and deemed as irrelevant or unnecessary. In 1953, when poet, dramatist, and school teacher J.G. Mocoancoeng published *Meqoqo ea phirimana* (*Evening Stories*), he felt it necessary to format the book as a group of improving moral essays dealing with the evils of imperialism, colonialism, and apartheid. But Mocoancoeng added more to his essays on "modern themes" than political messages. In the words of one critic,

they contain...a great number of fantastic and hair-raising elements, depicting, for examples, the appearance of huge water snakes believed to cause tornadoes, ghosts, and the *thokolosi*, a supernatural being resembling a man who can only be seen by the person to whom he is sent.

Another vehicle for Basotho horror fiction during the mid-century decades was the religious fantasy novel. The main goal of such works was to promote Christianity in the face of Basotho resistance—animist beliefs were still common, especially outside of Maseru, the capital, and were moreover seen as part of the resistance against the British colonizers. But Basotho religious fantasy stories, novellas, and novels often combined Christian ideals with settings in Lesotho and creatures from Basotho folklore. D.P. Lebakeng's *Sekoting sa lihele* (*In the Depths*

of Hell, 1956) uses both Satan and a variety of demonic figures out of Basotho folklore to torment sinners from Lesotho.

In Nigeria, seven years after David Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Demons* was published, a Yoruba writer, Amos Tutuola, wrote his first full-length novel, *The Palm Wine Drinkard*. The novel was not published for another six years, in 1952, but when it was published it came from the London publishing house Faber and Faber, making it the first African novel published in English outside of Africa. Tutuola drew heavily on Fagunwa's work as a resource, although the inspiration for and most of the stuff of *The Palm Wine Drinkard* is derived from Yoruba folktales. A successful attempt to transplant oral folklore into the printed form, *Palm Wine Drinkard* is told in a uniquely idiosyncratic form of pidgin English, but the wonder and horror of the novel is felt not despite the pidgin narrative voice, but because of it. *Palm Wine Drinkard* initially came in for a great deal of criticism from Nigerian critics—Western critics were far more generous—on the grounds that the pidgin narrative voice made Nigerians look poorly educated and ignorant, but with the space of sixty years' time it can be seen that the pidgin narrative voice is poetic and even lyrical. The cumulative effect of Tutuola's pidgin narrative voice is poetic, enthralling—and terrifying. *Palm Wine Drinkard* bears no relation to western forms (although it is an epic, episodic saga-quest), nor does its content map easily on to western horror. What *Palm Wine Drinkard* is instead is a presentation of Yoruba folktale—unfamiliar, enigmatic, and strange to Western eyes—which is ultimately nightmarish, containing vivid, frightening, and grotesque imagery and moments, grim themes, and cruel elements in an odyssey filled with pain. The final result is a beautiful nightmare, filled with realism, humor, beauty, and the macabre, the grotesque, and evil.

Quite a different writer was Obi Egbuna, a novelist, playwright, and political activist. His *Daughters of the Sun and Other Stories* (1970) is a collection of four short stories whose intent is to show the superiority of native African culture to that of white interlopers and foreigners. As part of his story-telling, however, Egbuna uses the tactics of fear literature to horrify his white readers, who are likely to identify with the white characters in the stories and to be horrified by the bad ends they come to. One critic summarizes *Daughters of the Sun's* contents: "An elderly catechist challenges the power of the village 'Divinity' with terrible results; a right-wing settler clashes with a Black Power leader; an American medical student discovers that a 'witch doctor' has powers greater than his own."

In the late 1940s Senegalese literature was dominated by the expectations that writers would imitate French writers and avoid the influence of traditional Senegalese culture. One of the writers who changed this state of affairs was Birago Diop, a poet who published three collections of folktales and legends in 1947, 1958, and 1963. Diop's intention was to present, in clear French, African oral literature in a written form. Diop succeeded marvelously, providing Francophone African with seminal models of native oral stories. Diop's greatest achievement was not to tell African stories to a white audience; nearly all of his stories are aimed the Wolof and Senegalese audiences rather than white readers. Diop's greatest achievement was his skill in creating a well-written prose equivalent to the living realities of the griots' oral performances. Vivid and engaging, Diop's retellings of these oral stories include all the griots' nuances of dialogue and gesture, while also making use of a variety of storytelling techniques, including those Diop learned from western literature. The stories themselves are a combination of realism, humor, satire, and fantasy, and work as fables and legends, as moral lessons, and as allegories for the ordinary human condition. Many of them are animal fables, though a number, more generally serious, lack animals and replace them with malign spirits. These stories use both chilling

concepts and effects and tragic irony and the sudden reversal of fortune to frighten the reader into learning the right lesson. Diop's work is primarily intended to teach—frightening the reader happens to be one of the good teaching methods.

In Sierra Leone poet Lenrie Peters wrote only one novel: *The Second Round* (1965). That novel was enough to provoke controversy, as its subject matter—rape, incest, madness, matricide, violence, acedia—was deemed both inappropriate for a novel by an African author, and not African enough, meaning it didn't deal with specifically African issues such as colonialism, imperialism, and racism. About an alienated doctor returned to Freetown after years away, *The Second Round* is a thoroughly—and non-supernaturally—Gothic novel, the first in West African letters and one that is “removed from African tradition” and—in defiance of the trends of the time in serious African literature, universal in application.

South African horror literature in the mid-century decades largely fell into the three categories previously described: European-style horror stories, Afrikaner Gothic, and Afrikaner magical realism. One of the foremost practitioners of European-style horror stories in both the 1930s and the 1940s was I.D. du Plessis, an academic and writer of everything from poetry to ethnographies to novels to biographies. In the field of horror he published four collections of short stories, the first (in 1935) retellings of Afrikaner folklore and the other three (1941, 1942, 1966) a mixture of folktales and original work. Du Plessis' ghost stories are a mix of Afrikaner, native South African, and Malay concepts, creatures and settings. Du Plessis' original work has also been described as "Afrikaner neo-Gothic," with mysterious and supernatural elements, including vampires, ghosts, and hauntings.

A much different author writing European-style horror stories was Maria Elizabeth Rothmann, a journalist and social worker who served on the Carnegie Committee. Under the pseudonym of “M.E.R.” she wrote a variety of novels, short stories, and essays and pieces for local newspapers. Her collection *Uit en Tuis* (*Out and Home*, 1946) is a group of pieces written for newspapers and magazines over the preceding two decades. A number of the pieces are sensitive sketches which delicately handle the dynamics of difficult relationships, whether romantic, platonic, or familial. But a number of the pieces are horror stories, which are, in Rothmann's words, “ghost stories for black workers who have a grudge against their employers.” Afrikaner ghost stories of the mid-century decades, both before 1948 and after, often express similar racial fears, but Rothmann's stories were the first to express not only sympathy for the workers rather than for management—needless to say, a radical stance in conservative post-war South Africa—but sympathy for the blacks in the story rather than the whites. As in her mainstream work, Rothmann tells her ghost stories with an uncommon touch for relationships, with a marked sympathy for women (especially those in mixed marriages), and with a careful touch for the proper deployment and use of the frightening concept or moment.

Henriette Grové was an award-winning writer of plays and prose. She began making a name for herself by writing romance serials for women's magazines under the name “Linda Joubert.” One of her earliest novels, *Meulenhof se Mense* (*Meulenhof's People*, 1956), was a special kind of romance, however. Critics have come to regard it as one of the foremost South African Gothic romances of the mid-century decades. An epistolary novel, *Meulenhof se Mense* is well-written, nicely balancing the competing demands of the romance novel, the epistolary novel, and the Gothic. More than that, however, is Grové's eager embrace of the techniques of the Gothic novel used by Gothic authors to create tension and fear in their readers. *Meulenhof se Mense* is a feverish, intense novel, full of overheated melodrama, suppressed emotion and eroticism, and the usual Gothic elements. There are deliberately-created parallels between

Meulenhof se Mense and *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*. These parallels, and the general inspiration which Grové drew from those classics, give *Meulenhof se Mense* a sense of familiarity but also allowed Grové to take from those three works techniques of making the audience uneasy, tense, and frightened. Grové adds specifically South African elements to *Meulenhof se Mense*, though, including witchcraft and a sinister midwife.

P.J. Nienaber was one of South Africa's leading men of letters during his heyday, which ran from the mid-1930s to 1990. Most of what he wrote and edited was non-fiction literary history and criticism; he was, essentially, South Africa's Harold Bloom during the six decades of his literary reign. In 1966, unusually for Nienaber, he made an attempt at writing horror stories, in *Geeste en gedaantes (Spirits and Shapes)*. At the time of the collection's writing there had been a substantial gap in the production of horror stories in South Africa since the 1930s. Nienaber seemingly felt that what the South African marketplace needed was a collection of ghost stories that mixed Poe with Langenhoven, Leipoldt, and Marais. The result was only intermittently frightening or successful, and did not spark a wave of imitators.

In 1969, with South African drama going through a turbulent period of full of protest theater, P.G. du Plessis wrote what quickly became the standout protest play of the 1960s, *Die nag van Legio (The Night of Legion)*. Du Plessis would go on to become an important Afrikaner writer, playwright, and academic, but *Die nag van Legio* is his best-known work. About five patients stuck in a psychiatric hospital, one of whom is evil, *Die nag van Legio* was groundbreaking not just for its message, a furious shout against the South African status quo and the reigning National Party, but also for its stagecraft. *Die nag van Legio* is magical-realism theater, about psychiatric illness, emotional trauma, and murder. Of relevance to this work is the fact that the evil antagonist, Dogoman, is not merely evil, but possessed by dozens of demons and capable of black magic, which he uses in a unbearably tense scene to murder the protagonist—who, it turns out, was the child of a witch. Dogoman uses his magical powers to control the other characters and subject them to his rule. Gothic elements (the setting of the insane asylum, the ruined detritus on the stage) and stage trickery (the lights grow slowly redder as Dogoman uses his powers) add to the tension and fright felt by the play's viewers.

1971-2000: The effect of liberation from colonization was remarkable on many levels for the African countries, but in the fields of popular literature liberation did not automatically result in the creation of original, genuinely local popular literature. Most African writers of popular literature, in the years and decades after liberation, wrote stories and novels which, as in the days before liberation, were influenced, whether lightly or heavily, by the European models which the writers had been educated in and which had been the sole or great majority of what had been available to read before liberation. It wasn't until the 1990s that African popular literature became genuinely African and genuinely local and specific to each country. This is true of horror literature as well as other popular literature genres. Interestingly, the distribution of horror literature on the continent was, by the year 2000, even: of 43 stories from four post-2000 English language anthologies of African literature, six were horror, coming from the North (Mauritania), the South (South Africa), the East (Kenya, Uganda), and the West (Cameroon, Nigeria).

In the Congo in 1972 Paul Lomami-Tshibamba published *La Récompense de la Cruauté (The Recompense of Cruelty)*. *La Récompense de la Cruauté* addresses social and political issues through allegory published as popular literature. In the case of *La Récompense*, the popular literature is a novel about a gigantic wild beast with the body of a dinosaur and the head of a human, topped by the crest of an iguanodon. The local Catholic missionaries push the local colonial administrator to kill what they view as a demon, so administrator organizes an

expedition composed of scientists and troops. After a long trip into the wilderness, they find the creature and shoot it dead, but as it dies it expels poisonous gas which agonizingly kills the entire expedition. *La Récompense* is as mentioned an allegory about colonized and colonizer, with the expedition representing not just the Belgians but those Africans who have allied themselves with the Belgians—the “representatives of the colonial order”—and the creature representing native Congolese, who, just as the creature did, will pay back the murderous colonizers with a cruelty of their own. The horror of *La Récompense* comes not through the presence of the creature—it has an expressive human head (albeit one the size of four or five normal human heads)—but through what is done to it by the merciless Europeans and their African troops, what happens when the creature dies, what is done to the European & African troops as the creature dies, and the implicit cruelty of the colonial order itself.

Sony Lab'ou Tansi was a novelist, short story writer, playwright, and poet. Tansi's play, *Conscience de tracteur* (*Conscience of the Tractor*, 1973), is set in the future year of 1995, on the eve of the 35th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Coldora, somewhere in Central Africa. An old scientist, known as “Le Vieux” (“The Ancient One”), who considers himself a modern Noah, believes that a new “Cosmocide” is necessary, to wipe out humanity and rid the world of mankind's vices and sins. *Le Vieux* begins to carry out his plan to save humanity through genocide and selective rebirth, using six androids whose mission is to kill everyone on Earth except a select few thousand, who will be brought to *Le Vieux*'s underground city and kept safe for the nine years necessary for the Earth to recover from *Le Vieux*'s light-based doomsday device. Unfortunately, *Le Vieux*'s “Rational Revoution” is stopped by Leiso, the General-President of Coldora who wants to hold on to his power above all else. *Conscience de tracteur* works on several levels: as a trial of science, which appears as the apprentice magician of whom Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels spoke in *The Communist Manifesto*: it can no longer control the forces it has triggered; as a plaint against the West, whose reliance on science has come, in Tansi's view, at the cost of the human heart; and as a horror narrative, in which the stage devices, the portrayal of *Le Vieux* as a mad scientist gone genocidal in his partial senility, and the portrayed examples of science not being able to stop dictatorships, much less the collective madness science has spawned, are all aimed at and succeed at making the play's viewer deeply uneasy, if not outright frightened.

Tansi published *La vie et demie* in 1979. Set in the vast, imaginary African country of Katamalanasie, *La vie et demie* is about the tyranny of a dictatorship—an obvious commentary by Tansi on the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko—and the resistance to the dictator. The leader of the Resistance is the “Providential Guide,” Martial, a dead man who refuses to die and who takes refuge in the body of his daughter. *La vie et demie* is generally viewed as a prime example of francophone African magic realism. *La vie et demie*, which cannily makes selective use of the usual African stereotypes, has all the usual horrors of a tinpot African dictatorship, including ritualized cannibalism, torture, assassination, and rape, but adds to it science fictional horrors, including stinging mutant insects and radio-controlled ray-gun-wielding drones in the shape of insects.

Thematically quite similar to *La vie et demie* was Pius Ngandu Nkashama's *Yakouta* (1995). Ngandu, an academic, created, in *Yakouta*, a horror novel that also contains an ultimately hopeful note. The titular woman has seen her father assassinated by a group of witches on the orders of the cruel tyrant of a nameless country where the action takes place. *Yakouta* herself has been tortured, raped, and mutilated. But she rises to become a messianic figure to her people and ultimately overthrows the despot. *Yakouta* is, in the words of one critic, “representative of

fragmented narration, a style that overturns realistic writing through disruptions and uses language as a marker of unspeakable experiences, uncured ills and unforgettable violence throughout Congolese history.” Ngandu does not avoid detailing the horrors done to Yakouta, describing them in language that almost becomes poetic at times, and does not allow the reader to look away from the cruelty and terror of the “mad tyrant,” creating a novel that, despite the happy ending drags the reader into the territory of fear literature from almost the first page.

In Ghana the surge in publishing following independence in 1957 produced a range of fiction both serious and commercial in the 1960s and 1970s, from conspiracy thrillers to science fiction to horror. A leading example of the latter was Nii Yemoh Ofoli’s *The Messenger of Death* (1979). In the novel a husband and wife are preyed upon by a witch, who kills off the couple’s children, and the couple must discover the identity of the witch before all their children die. An entertaining mix of 1970s narrative style and traditional Ghanaian folklore, *The Messenger of Death* is horrifying both because of its content and because of the description of the scenes involving the witch.

In Guinea, Alioum Fantouré’s *Le récit du cirque* (*A Circus Story*, 1976) does not use—or need to use—supernatural elements to terrify its readers. Instead, Fantouré simply shows the more extreme examples by which African dictatorships oppress and terrify their citizens, and uses them to educate—and frighten—his readers. One critic describes the play as follows:

A captive audience locked literally into a theatre become gradually involved in the devastating spectacle being acted out on stage, a “circus” of horror and suffering in an African dictatorship complete with political trials and concentration camps. There is no final curtain, only newsreel shots being projected onto a screen as the actors turn to watch the panic-stricken spectators seek an exit which is not there.

In Kenya, literature after independence in 1964 went through a long period in which its writers grappled with the long-term effects of colonialism. The greatest influences on Kenyan writers during this period was Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and the Mau Mau Rebellion of 1952-1964. The greatest influence on Kenyan authors of popular literature were Nigerian models, including Onitsha marketplace literature, and Western models. David G. Maillu is a prime example of these Western-influenced writers. A writer, publisher, painter, musician, Maillu is best known for his dozens of popular novels. *Kadosa* (1979) is about a Kenyan scholar who is visited by an extraterrestrial ghost, a femme fatale named Kadosa who has superhuman powers and uses them horrifically against the scholar.

Kadosa is, like much of Maillu’s work, a page-turner, very competently told with strong (if somewhat broad) characterization, though most academic critics find it undisciplined, unrefined, uncouth, and outrageously excessive, and of course beneath serious consideration due to its generic self-identification. But as horror, *Kadosa* works exceptionally well. Maillu describes the protagonist’s hallucinations and dreams in intense and vividly-described terms.

Karanja we Kang’ethe is an academic. In 1989 he wrote *Mission to Gehenna*, in which the protagonists are (without explanation) transported to Gehenna, the domain of “Satan Lucifer,” where they have a series of terrifying encounters. Gehenna is an allegory for Kenya in the late 1980s, and its central village, Ahera (Hades), is quite similar to Nairobi. One critic summarizes the novel: “Satan is dictator in a land where cheating, corruption, and killing are commonplace; politicians are greedy, slums abound; religion is corrupt; and there are epidemic diseases (including AIDS) and employment problems.” *Mission to Gehenna* works as a

straightforward horror narrative and as an allegory for contemporary Kenya, but the novel also works as a Gothic. *Mission to Gehenna* has a Gothic setting (Satan Lucifer's very Gothically described castle-cum-palace-cum-mausoleum-cum-domicile), a Gothic atmosphere of mystery and suspense (described in Gothic terms), supernatural and mysteriously inexplicable events, overwrought emotions, two women modeled on the vampire women from *Dracula*, and even an intercalated poem.

Ibrahim Kuni is one of the best known of the new generation of Libyan novelists, although his fame is limited to the Arab world. In 1990 he published *The Bleeding of the Stone*. A novel in which the desert is lovingly described and is as much a character as the protagonist, *The Bleeding of the Stone* is about Asouf, a Bedouin Muslim herdsman in the mountain desert of southern Libya. Unfortunately, two Arab and one American hunters intrude on his world, eventually torturing him to find out where the sacred *waddan* (mouflon sheep) is hiding. Asouf becomes one with the *waddan*, transforming into it, and is slaughtered by the hunters. This killing fulfills an apocalyptic Tuareg prophesy about the end of the world. One of the foremost works of Arab-language magic realism of the 1990s, *The Bleeding of the Stone* intertwines the lives of Tuaregs, jinn, and animals; its relevance here lies in the number of gruesomely violent scenes, including the crucifixion of Asouf, in the general degradation that outsiders, especially Westerners, bring to the desert and creatures that Asouf loves, and in the aforementioned apocalyptic ending, in which the waters of the sea flood the desert.

Mauritania, under the rule of juntas and despots for the great majority of the 1970-2000 time period, has had a low literacy rate and a literature which is controlled by the government and restricted by law. Nonetheless, the Arabic tradition of storytelling continued to manifest itself in a few Mauritanian authors. Moussa Ould Ebnou is one of those, his work in the 1990s establishing him as one of the most innovative writers in the world of Arabic letters. His *Barzakh* (*City of Winds*, 1993) features a protagonist who is trapped in a cycle of death and rebirth, always finding himself in a new and different but still misery-laden situation. In each cycle there is a Westerner or Westerners who try to exploit and despoil the virgin land or a virgin planet, in the future using advanced technology as a means of slavery and evil.

Barzakh is, as one critic puts it, a "potent satire on the assault of technology on a virgin African world and an elegy on the innocence of man soiled by greed and mighty technocratic powers. A symbolic novel engaging the fantastic, it relates the history of human avarice, corruption, injustice, violence, sinister technological hegemony, and above all the story of the death of the heart." Moussa Ould Ebnou is a writer of great sophistication and style who deftly handles the more fantastic and science fictional moments while also emphasizing the horrific aspects of how the Westerners act upon indigenous peoples.

After independence in 1968, Mauritanian literature went through a long phase in which the major concerns of Mauritanian writers were topics like multiracialism, miscegenation, exoticism, racial and social conflicts, and coolitude. Mauritanian popular literature during this time period, which ran more or less unabated to the end of the century, suffered, with the traditional Western divide between "high" and "low" literature becoming pronounced, and the contempt shown by "high" literature writers and publishers negatively affecting the critical view of "low" novels and stories. "Low" Mauritanian literature (a.k.a. popular Mauritanian literature) demonstrated a mix of indigenous culture along with east African, Indian, and Chinese cultures. One example of popular Mauritanian literature was C.S. Mahadoo's collection of five horror short stories, *Twilight Escapism* (1974). Mahadoo, a writer about whom nothing is known, wrote horror stories with titles like "The Lady of the Coffin," "The Grave-Diggers," and "Baboo Blagueur" ("Baboo the

Joker"). The stories make use of indigenous, east African, and Indian myths to tell straightforward stories of horror that would not have been out of place in *Weird Tales*.

With independence in 1960 came the opportunity for Nigerian authors to write in Hausa and Igbo rather than just English, and to address issues such as corruption, racism, and imperialism/colonialism, rather than to write folklore-influenced narratives. Mimetic, realistic stories and novels were preferred rather than those taking part in *fantastika*. Nonetheless, there were some authors who mixed *fantastika* into their realistic writing.

Elechi Amadi was a member of the Nigerian Army, an academic, and a writer of mimetic and genre fiction. Amadi's *The Great Ponds* (1973) is about a pair of eastern Nigerian villages who conduct a war over the fishing rights to the titular ponds. The war between the two villages becomes psychic and supernatural, with the winning side barely surviving. Then a dreadful sickness—the byproduct, everyone thinks, of the supernatural war—spreads through both villages and even to those villages several days' walk away. The Africans call this sickness “the wrath of Ogbunabuli,” but Westerners know it as the Influenza epidemic of 1918. Amadi's purpose in writing *The Great Ponds* was to demonstrate how “primitive” man dealt with a natural disaster, with herbs and magic and a strong attitude in the face of ignorance—much in the same way that Western medicine, with its prescriptions and medicine, dealt with it. The horror in *The Great Ponds* comes from two sources: the physical and supernatural harms done to various characters by the psychic and supernatural war, and from the mounting knowledge that the war is damaging everyone, so that there will be no easy recovery from it—and then the realization that the influenza epidemic is occurring, and the knowledge of just how many will die because of it.

Dillibe Onyeama is a Nigerian author of popular literature. Although he is perhaps best known for his autobiographical expose of the shocking racism at Eton in the 1960s, Onyeama also wrote a variety of occult and supernatural horror novels during the 1970s and 1980s, with titles like *Juju*, *Secret Society*, *Revenge of the Medicine Man*, and *Godfathers of Voodoo*. Onyeama's work will never be confused with art, but it succeeds finely at being readable and suitably frightening. His narratives are Nigeria-centric and incorporate substantial amounts of Igbo folklore and mythology, so that *Juju* is about a witch whose wicked nature and evil supernatural behavior manifest in her son, so that the witch's tormenting of the Igbo community lasts for over seventy years. *Secret Society* is about the secret society of the Leopard Men, who specialized in brutal attacks on the British colonizers as a means to protect the traditional Igbo way of life; they emerge in the 1970s in London to avenge the death of a young Igbo woman at the hands of a British hunter. *Revenge of the Medicine Man* depicts what happens when the titular magic-worker is crossed, and *Godfathers of Voodoo* explores in fictional form the ties between voodoo and Igbo beliefs and religion.

Ben Okri is generally considered one of Nigeria's foremost postmodernists and magic realists. He is best known for *The Famished Road* (1991). *The Famished Road* is about Azaro, an abiku or “spirit child” who has ties to the world of the supernatural. He has “boiling hallucinations” and can see the grotesque and invisible demons and witches who prey on his family and neighbors in their Nigerian ghetto community. Besides the residents of the phantasmagoric supernatural world, Azaro also sees the corruption, violence, and greed that possess the humans who wield power and influence over his community, and the squalor and violence that occur in his community. In *The Famished Road* Azaro's community, like mankind itself, is doomed to repeat the errors and mistakes of their past and to fight corruption and evil in each generation without ever achieving the moral and spiritual progress necessary to redeem the world. *The Famished Road* is magic realism (a label Okri himself objects to) of a distinctive sort,

African in vocabulary, structure, humor, and lore rather than Central or South American. The novel is energetic, with potent imagery and a slowly mounting momentum. The novel is also disquieting and even horrific, not only because of the residents of the world of the supernatural, but because of the frightening violence and conditions of Azaro's ghetto.

Rwanda does not have a strong literary culture, but individual Rwandan writers began to make a name for themselves in the years immediately before and after the genocide of the Tutsi in 1994. One such writer was Antoine M. Ruti, who in 1992 wrote *Affamez-les, ils vous adoreront*, a dark, surrealistic, allegorical narrative of far-future science fiction. Set in the year 47947, in a peaceful civilization of mice and rats ruled by the universal muscat *Macromyx XCVI* the Elegant, *Affamez-les* describes (via its journalist rat narrator) the political and scientific issues of the past. In describing the past, the narrator describes the world of the humans, and portrays that world and the technological horrors it spawned in explicit, horrifying terms. *Affamez-les* features a surrealist and anachronistic juxtaposition of historical facts and fictional elements along with a deliberately confused spatial universe and an almost gleeful portrayal of horrific technological actions and achievements.

The revival of interest among Senegalese writers in the short story form led to a rise in Senegalese *fantastika*, usually in the form of narratives inspired by traditional myths and legends. Historian Amadou N'Diaye's *Assoka, ou les derniers jours de Koumbi* (*Assoka, or The Last Days of Koumbi*, 1973) is an elaborate epicohistorical novel with a complex action and a large cast, based on the legend of the serpent-fetish Wagadu. There is a splendidly horrific setting of sacred woods, witches' caves, hoaxed supernatural effects, melodramatic episodes of kidnapping, attempted rape, last-minute rescues, violent deaths, gladiatorial contests, and even an African version of the Trojan horse.

Until the 1980s Sierra Leone's progress in the field of creative writing was slow compared to other West African countries. But during the 1980s Sierra Leonean authors began producing respectable works of fiction. One such was R. Sarif Easmon, a doctor, political agitator, and writer who in 1981 published *The Feud*, a collection of short stories with contemporary African and European settings and supernatural themes and elements. Story titles include "The black Madonna," "The mad woman," and "Disenchantment," and are told in a contemporary European style with no other intent but to frighten the reader.

Anna M. Louw's *Vos* (1999) was a rare exception to the disdain held by South African *literateurs* for genre work, as *Vos* was both shortlisted for the M-Net Prize and a Gothic modeled on the myth of Faust. *Vos* is about Hendrik Vos (an Afrikaner version of Heinrich Faust), a churchgoer and farmer in a drought-stricken part of northwest South Africa. Prayers for rain don't work, so Vos tells God that unless He sends rain, Vos will take matters into his own hands. He does so by making a deal with the devil ("Grootbass," the "Prince of this World") via a Bushman rainmaker. The rains come, but only for the area in which Vos has his farm, and though he is initially prosperous Vos suffers through a series of defeats, from his wife and son leaving him to disasters and plagues besetting the farm. Vos dies with less than he had before he made the deal with the Grootbass. The combination of Gothic elements (the harsh, wasted setting that functions as a character, the deal-with-the-devil), the Faust myth, and the indigenous elements combine to make *Vos* disquieting and thoroughly Afrikaner Gothic.