

African Writing beyond Africa: Breaking the Mold in Spain

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One of the outcomes of colonization and the process of decolonization was the creation and the freezing into being of a certain monolithic idea of Africanness and African tradition. By this I am not referring to the immediately transparent invention that perpetually prostrated African ways of being before European culture, but rather to ideas of Africa that Africans took on to differentiate themselves and to extol their values against those of former colonizers. The idea of “fossilized” images of African traditions is used here to communicate the absence within these images of the possibility of transculturality in the continent before the arrival of colonizers. Africa, they suggest, was standing still when it was “happened upon” by Europeans. Kwame Anthony Appiah, in *Cosmopolitanism* (2006), challenges the “purity” of cultures and of the African culture in particular. African culture, like any others, is more protean than purists would have us believe. More recently, Achille Mbembe has come up with the term “afropolitanisme”, which I would like to put simply as “African cosmopolitanism”. “Afropolitanisme” implies an awareness that rejects the idea of the standing-stillness of African culture before and/or after colonization.

Equatorial Guinean writers located in Spain today belong to worlds in constant contact and motion. Through migration they write in Spain and not in their country of birth. At the same time they are read there (in Spain), in North American universities and in their birth country. How do they navigate, or do they indeed navigate, this tension between afropolitanism and monolithic africanness in today’s transcultural environment? This will be the underlying question in my reading of various writers from Equatorial Guinea whose works are published in the former colonizing country, Spain.