

Ministry of Higher Education for
Scientific Research and Innovation

GENERAL SECRETARY

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Call for Papers

Representations of disease issues in African Written Literature

In human society, health and disease have never been the focus of medical practitioners and professionals only. They have always interested, up and down the stream, a large number of actors and disciplines. If, among other disciplines, medicine and exact sciences (such as biology and chemistry in particular) hold the upper hand in this matter, interest and contribution of the so-called human and social disciplines (philosophy, sociology, history, literature, etc.) is very often ignored and relegated in elucidation and comprehension of pathological phenomena.

However, since ancient times, health and diseases have found a breeding ground within these disciplines. *The Works and Days* (8th Century BC), written by the ancient Greek poet Hesiod, are in this regard the oldest and most accomplished version of the Pandora's box myth, according to which supreme god Zeus ordered the creation of the first woman, who, out of curiosity, lets all the evil humanity knows of out of a jar (first sickness, then madness, old-age, vice, etc.) as a retaliation for the human sin, the theft of fire by Prometheus. In his seminal

volume *Medicine and Philosophy in Classical Antiquity* (2005, p. 6), Philip Van Der Eijk echoes questions related to health and disease that nowadays various disciplines continue to ask: How do societies and individuals respond and react to pathological phenomena such as illness, pain and death? How do they construct them and how do they contextualize them? What do they recognise as pathological and what do they relegate to the rank of aberrations regarding contagious disease, sexual illness, mental illness etc.? What do answers to these questions imply in terms of social organization, institutions, values, health systems? What status do people interested in health and disease enjoy, starting with medical practitioners and professionals? How do they communicate them and how do they convince of their logic and effectiveness? How is their authority established and legitimized?

The written African literature didn't leave this question behind. In fact, illness and health are at the heart of many works of poets, playwrights, novelists and fabulists of the continent. For example, in his *L'Élytre incendiaire* (1996), the Ivorian writer Joseph Anouma depicts evil forces with an insect that brings misery and kwashiorkor to a peaceful and abundant country and enslaves its inhabitants. In Kollin Noaga's *Le retour au village* (1978), madness is presented as a symptom of socio-economic failure. Sexual impotence, through an example of El Hadj Abdou Kader Beye in Sembène Ousman's *Xala* (1973), where after being treated ineffectively by a modern doctor, a man receives treatment from a traditional healer who expiates the patient from the guilt and consequences of plundering his own poor country. The *L'épave d'Absouya* (1994), written by Jacques Prosper Bazié, gives a close-up of the dramatization of AIDS, an object of amalgamation and stigmatization. Although recent research has attempted to analyse the treatment of health and disease issues in African literary productions, this work is still emergent or barely cross-cutting. Let us at least mention the articles "La folie de la RAN ou du pawégo" of Issou Go in Kollin Noaga's *Le retour au village* (1978), "La représentation de la maladie dans les romans d'Ayi Kwei Armah"

(2007) by Kouamé Adou, "Le mal invisible: Sida et littérature africaine francophone" (2013) by Jada Miconi, and the collective works *Littérature et maladie en Afrique : image et fonction de la maladie dans la production littéraire* (2000) led by Jacqueline Bardolph, as well as *Health and mental Issues in the Literary Imagination* (2011) dirigé par Mamadou Kandji. In fact, African literary productions, as well as the critical research that aims to analyze them, contribute to enriching knowledge on health and disease issues in African societies.

This call for papers, entitled "Literature and Issues of Disease in Africa" precisely aims at deepening the treatment of health and disease issues in literary productions of the continent in a multidisciplinary and cross-cutting approach. The main question is how the past and the present issues of disease and the related value systems are addressed in the written African literature. More precisely, the aim is to diagnose, for the benefit of an academic and non-academic audience, the perception and representations of the disease by the writers and the characters, and to contribute to a better awareness of all forms of diseases, reorientation of awareness campaigns and greater effectiveness of care, treatment and health systems.

In this sense, the non-exhaustive research topics are:

- representations of health and disease;
- representations related to the environment and medicinal plants and trees;
- typology of diseases and pathologies recognized as such in African literature;
- typology of causes, origins and factors of the disease;
- social norms and diseases;
- conflicts in health systems (traditional vs. modern);
- communication, language and medical discourse;
- aestheticization of disease and/or healing;
- semiology of ceremonies and rituals of healing;

- diseases and social marginalization;
- typology, place and status of the healer;
- actors of the medical chain;
- disease and the family/social disorganization and reorganization.

The call for papers is addressed to researchers and doctoral students in Human and Social Sciences, particularly in Literature, Arts, Aesthetics – who are keen to make an innovative contribution in either of the above areas. The draft articles will be first received as abstracts of approximately 300 words. After evaluation, authors will be notified about the selected projects, who will then send their complete and revised articles, according to instructions. The revised articles will be published as a collective work at the end of January 2021.

The timetable for the call of papers is as follows:

1. Distribution of the call for papers and receipt of abstracts: from 1 May to 30 July 2020
2. Selection of abstracts by the Scientific Committee: from 31 July to 10 August 2020
3. Notifications to authors of selected texts: from 11 August to 15 August 2020
4. Receipt of final articles by the organisers: 30 November 2020
5. Instructions for the articles: from 30 November to 31 December 2020
6. Revision of the articles by authors: from 1 January to 21 January 2021
7. Receipt of revised articles: from 21 January to 10 February 2021
8. Publication of the book: 30 April 2021

Throughout the process, texts and correspondence should be sent simultaneously to the following three e-mail addresses:

1. yacou@gmx.net (Yacouba BANHORO)
2. traorekonate@yahoo.fr (Sidiki TRAORÉ)
3. africamultiple-burkina@gmail.com (Center of African Excellence / The University Joseph Ki-Zerbo)