

Interviews with Contemporary Ugandan Writers

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I have worked with writers in Uganda since 2001 when I designed and ran a series of British Council-funded development projects for writers, which ended in 2009. Those projects are now archived and can be viewed at the Centre for Transcultural Writing and Research at Lancaster University (www.transculturalwriting.com). Since that time, I have focused my work through the Kampala-based FEMRITE Women Writers Association, whose members were so helpful during my original visit.

In April 2012, I returned to Kampala to run an editorial training course for writers there. I also carried out interviews with writers, teachers, editors, publishers, and personnel at the National Curriculum Development (NCDC) office at Kymbogo University. I was curious about and frustrated by the problems that still faced Ugandan writers, especially the lack of Ugandan texts on the secondary school curriculum and the obvious issues that were expressed in the emergent writers' use of English—often (not always) formally correct and sometimes with a beguiling Ugandan inflection, but rarely with the kind of relaxed diction that showed ownership, confidence, and adaptation. Reluctant to quantify or interpret interview data in a way that might distort opinion or covertly express my own views, I used those interviews to focus a series of questions that I felt were central to current issues.

Here I engage with two writers who are well-respected in Uganda and who I have known since 2001. Julius Ocwinyo is a novelist and editor at Uganda's leading academic and literary publisher, Fountain Press; Susan Kiguli is an academic at Makerere University and a leading Ugandan poet. I distilled my original verbal questions into written form, and feature here their written answers without further mediation. In doing so, I hope that some focus might be achieved on the current contradictions facing Ugandan writers working in English in a country that has achieved an uneasy multi-party democracy and visible economic growth, and which is now entering a period of much-debated and painful curriculum reform that will affect future generations of writers and their relationship with the English language

Susan Kiguli

GM: What were the first books you read and in which language did you encounter them? When did you first read texts in English?

SK: The first books I read were both Luganda and English ones. The Luganda books were a series of well-illustrated books under what I provisionally call (because I do not remember the series) The Nakku Series. They had a female character called Nakku doing all sorts of daily activities: for example, Nakku alima, translated as “Nakku is digging” etc. These were simple books with beautiful pictures. I got these fairly early in life, between the age of four and five. I started reading English with help from my aunt at around the same time, although my aunt had started reading and telling stories to me very early in life. The English books I vividly recall are ones about Jane, a baby called Sally and a boy called Dick. These books also had marvellous pictures with Jane with her blond hair, I remember wondering why her hair was that colour, but she did fun things and that was fascinating.

GM: Can you tell us about the literary texts you studied at ‘O’ and ‘A’ Level?¹

SK: The O Level books were real fun. The reading list from Senior One was quite interesting at least to me at that age, because I did not read any racist prejudices in the books. My favourite book in Senior One was called *Montezuma’s Daughter* by H.R. Haggard. It was the adventures and the marriage of Thomas Wingfield to a Mexican princess that really captured my fancy. In Senior One, the book list had a fair helping of Haggard, including the frightening but rather engaging *King Solomon’s Mines*.

In Senior Two, the book that stands out in my memory is *Far From the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy. I remain fascinated by the descriptions of characters in the book and sentences like “When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread until they were within an unimportant distance of his ears.” In Senior Three, we were introduced to *Things Fall Apart* and *Weep Not Child* and I remember these really interested the class and we rather annoyed our teacher by endless questions about why Okonkwo took Ekwefi into his hut without a word, etc.

Achebe was definitely the darling of our Senior Three class even more than our own Kenyan neighbour Ngũgĩ, although of course he was also much loved. We also read *The Concubine* by Elechi Amadi. The African Writers Series books were a class apart because they talked about familiar things and incorporated stories from the world of folktales we had known at home.

The outstanding text in Senior Four, despite the sixteenth century English, was Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet* so excited us that we got into trouble by going on the School’s Visiting Day (I was in boarding school) and signing in the Visitor’s Book that Romeo had come to visit Juliet. We signed the relationship as “star-crossed lovers.” There is no space to tell that tale but we paid for what was termed our “indiscipline”: the visitor’s book, we were sternly told, was to be signed by visitors and no one else.

In Senior Five, we read John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*; I love that book for many things but mainly for the character of cantankerous Grandpa. Grandpa forced you to analyse situations.

GM: When did you first become aware that English was both a necessary lingua franca in Uganda and a colonial language?

SK: I am afraid to admit that the realisation of English being a colonial language, the way I know it now, came rather late in life. It sharply dawned on me in my first year at University, never mind that when the National Resistance Movement took power in Uganda in 1986 the government talked about it a lot. It did not keenly sink in until we discussed at University, in different classes, the impact of expatriate writing and the question of language that Ngũgĩ popularised. It was even more painful to realise on my first visit to Britain in 1995 that the colonial language had many dialects and accents and I had to struggle to understand them all! That is a story for another interview.

On the part of English being a necessary lingua franca in Uganda, that fact trickled into my life slowly over the years. It is the language that we used in school and which seemed to be understood by people from different parts. It was the language of the headmaster (who was both black and Ugandan) at the primary boarding school I attended; we deemed it the headmaster's language because he issued the punishments for those who did not speak it well.

My most significant memory of the necessity of learning and speaking English concerns one of the biggest girls in our P.4 class who was always struggling with English and getting punished for lapsing into Luganda. I remember she was called to the front to be punished for breaking the "speak no vernacular rule" and she went pleading to the teacher: "Please Mr. Kirumira I didn't spoke! My Lord My God, I didn't spoke!"—the rest of the story can be guessed.

GM: Did this realisation mean that you had to reconcile yourself to English as a literary medium in any way?

SK: Yes, I naïvely thought from an early age, even before I formally realised the crucial role English was playing in school, that one had to master English to be able to read good stories. This was also because the interesting stories like the myths of the different ethnic groups in Uganda were taught to us in English at Primary Four level and they were so very interesting. I think I was conditioned deliberately or by the accident of history that the best stories would come my way in English and there were some really favourite stories available to me in English at an early age, for example Heidi, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, and some awesomely amazing stories we read in Primary Four about Juma Saidi and his lorry, and a crafty but really loveable man called Abdul, who told people that if they did not see his shoes then they were sinners—and the man had no shoes on his feet.

So the most interesting stories came to me in English, but I must also admit that Luganda was never far away. I loved the Bible stories,

and those were introduced to me very early in life in Luganda, and the folktales from my community came from Luganda, so I do not know what to call this double-sided experience. I cannot fully label my interest in the literary as wholly packaged in English. It is a deeply double-sided experience.

GM: African writers are represented on the Ugandan secondary school curriculum, but there are very few Ugandan writers there. Why do you think this is?

SK: People have their ready answers for this. I know you have already been told. People say that the style of Ugandan books is not good enough and I do not agree. I hear Ugandan books are not well edited—yes some are not, but there are some really good books and some of them have made their way onto the syllabus after we have bashed our heads into the wall and they stay for a time and then they are gone. I think there should be a Ugandan text on that syllabus every year without fail for both O and A level, even if it becomes a case of “Kill him for his bad verses.” I strongly think there should be Ugandan authors on the syllabus and I am rather passionate about this subject.

GM: Teachers have blamed the National Curriculum Development Council for the lack of Ugandan texts. Has their role as guardians and developers of the curriculum been compromised?

SK: The trouble with NCDC is they do not consult widely enough. They have not realised the value of partnerships between institutions within the country. I do not mind what they say, they must realise that unless they work with others and listen more carefully and appoint people with a deep understanding of the subject together with experience, none of us—well-meaning or not—will make progress.

GM: NCDC, in turn, has blamed poor use of English, lack of editorial attention, and low production standards for the rejection of Ugandan texts. Is this a fair criticism?

SK: Hmm, maybe they should go case by case and because this is our country and these are our writers; interventions can be made, but I have not seen any willingness for this to happen. I repeat: I know some well-written books produced by respected publishers that have not been considered; maybe some people are not willing to do research and do not read but speak with authority...I am just saying “maybe.” I also think it is unfair for NCDC to expect writers to lobby until their eyes are red for their books to be on the syllabus. Lucky Graham Greene, etc....they do not have to lobby!

GM: Ugandan teachers themselves have blamed a demoralised profession, differing standards between public and private schools, and a tendency for teachers to recycle the texts they themselves studied. Is this an accurate representation?

SK: I think there is some truth in those claims, but claims will not do. I think we had better think seriously about how to make everybody respect the Ugandan writer or else there may never be another Okot p' Bitek!!

GM: NCDC insists that a secondary school's text must "carry a moral message." How do you respond to that criterion for inclusion?

SK: I think I have questions about that because I do not know what exactly is meant by a moral message. There is the whole big question of what is meant by "moral." Why should we read prescriptive literature? I think literature should encourage freedom to think and explore. How can we talk about the imagination if we are constraining and limiting the books children should read? I understand somewhat better if the concern is with linguistic competence and other literary concerns, but something as subjective as morality is a complex issue to tackle.

GM: It is widely perceived that "standards" of English are falling in Uganda. Is this true from your own perception and, if so, why?

SK: Yes, standards of the so-called RP English are hanging on the edge of a steep cliff! First, the culture of talking and reading to the children at home is slowly disappearing and in its place are all sorts of unmonitored media, which do not necessarily sharpen the child's logical faculties, speaking, listening, and writing skills. In Uganda, there is what people refer to as an examination-oriented system. In fact, if you have a good idea, which is poorly expressed, you will get a mark; this was unheard of in my school time. You had to have both the idea and the skill to express it, and a teacher would not apologise for giving you a zero if you could not properly write what you wanted to say.

It is unfortunately true that children are less interested in books and more in simple hearsay. I am also puzzled when my university students do not read the notices but come and say that someone told them that the deadline for such and such was postponed! When you refer them to the noticeboard, they unabashedly say they did not read the notice! I now understand the much-whipped phrase "generation gap."

GM: Is there such a thing as "Ugandan English"—a hybrid form akin to Caribbean patois, broken English in Nigeria, or Sheng in Kenya?

SK: I do not think so. More research must be done before anyone pronounces on this. I think there is evidence of what I would call "Ugandan turn of phrase," for lack of better term. For example, this morning I heard a radio presenter confidently say that the footballer David Obua was "A born of 1984." I had heard a student of mine say that some time ago but I did not realise it was a widespread expression. There are many more examples, but for the claim to be put formally,

research must be done and analyses produced. So, at present, we cannot talk systematically about Ugandan English.

GM: Is it possible that NCDC rejects some Ugandan texts because they are not correct enough—in fact, not “English enough” in the linguistic sense?

SK: I think I believe in the Achebe approach that “this language has been given to me,” or the Gabriel Okara one: “African thought, English words.” If we raise the question of “English enough,” then a crowd of other questions come in, such as what are we to take as the accepted Standard English? Whose language is it now? What about the concept of Englishes? etc.

GM: How well are Ugandan writers represented in degree-level literature studies at Ugandan Universities?

SK: There is a whole course on Ugandan Literature and another on East African Literature. They are also taught in a number of various courses apart from the ones mentioned.

GM: Is Creative Writing being taught in teacher training colleges and universities in Uganda as an academic subject? How would you rate the desirability and importance of such developments?

SK: It is, and I think this is a really good thing. At Makerere University, Creative Writing has been taught there for a long time except for a time when it was shelved under very special circumstances but it is back and I think that is very positive. A number of the writers booming in Uganda in the 1990s and now are products of the Makerere University Creative Writing class.

GM: What effect does the relatively low profile of Ugandan writers and writing have on Ugandan culture, education, and literature development?

SK: It makes us appear stagnant. I think a people’s identity is centred in many ways in their oral and written literature. Writing is a way of talking about oneself and, as Achebe always said, it is important for one to tell one’s story. The writers tell the various stories of a nation’s being, so if the writing is invisible, then the picture will be incomplete. Writing creates and encourages debate, and even though it is imaginative writing, it will almost inevitably project certain perceptions and ignite various debates. A good example is the debates on nationalism colonialism, elitism, culture etc. that Okot p’Bitek’s poems have spurred to date. I dare to say that a nation whose writers are not recognised is half asleep.

GM: Does the low profile of Ugandan writers and writing within Uganda affect perceptions of Ugandan literature beyond Uganda?

SK: Definitely. Many people do not think there are writers beyond Okot p'Bitek. If Uganda is silent about its writers, then who is expected to talk about them? It is the responsibility of Ugandan literary critics to discuss and write about our writers in order to let others know about them. The writer Ama Ata Aidoo once said that the best way to kill a writer is for the critics to ignore that writer. I think that is exactly what is happening in Uganda. People write books and nothing is said about them in literary fora, either in Uganda or elsewhere.

GM: A growing number of Ugandan writers (Moses Isegawa, Goretti Kyomuhendo, Monica Arak de Nyeko, Jackee Batanda) are now part of the Ugandan diaspora. How do you think such migrations might affect Ugandan literature in future years?

SK: Maybe it may do for us what other migrations have done for other countries. It may produce a Buchi Emecheta, sustain an Achebe or Soyinka who know and support the others at home. I am sure you have followed the developments of the Africa Writers Trust (AWT).

GM: Are there ways in which the educational sector, writers and publishers in Uganda can unite to address some of the problems facing their literature and its reception both within and outside Uganda?

SK: Yes, there are small efforts here and there, but there is a need to do more.

GM: Can you recommend five Ugandan texts in English that you think deserve to be more widely read both within and outside Uganda?

SK: *Song Of Lawino* by Okot p' Bitek (1966), *Upon This Mountain* by Timothy Wangusa (1989), *Invisible Weevil* by Mary Karooro Okurut (1998), *Fate of the Banished* by Julius Ocwinyo (1997), *Waiting* by Goretti Kyomuhendo (2006)

Biographical Note

Susan Nalugwa Kiguli is an academic and poet. She is a Senior Lecturer and Head in the Department of Literature, Makerere University. She holds a PhD in English from The University of Leeds (UK) sponsored by the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme. She also has a Masters of Letters in Literary Linguistics from the University of Strathclyde, (UK), and a Masters of Arts (Literature) and a B.A. (Education) from Makerere University, Uganda. She is the African Studies Association Presidential Fellow, 2011. She has also held the American Council of Learned Societies/African Humanities Fellowship, 2010-2011 and, as part of the fellowship, she was a researcher in Residence at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of Western Cape, South Africa. Her research interests fall

mainly in the area of Oral and Written African Poetry, Popular Song and Performance Theory. She has served as the chairperson of FEMRITE, Uganda Women Writers' Association.

Her first collection of poems *The African Saga* was published by Femrite Publishers Ltd. (Uganda) in 1998 and her second collection, which is a bilingual edition in English-German, *Home Floats in a Distance/Zuhause Treibt in der Ferne*, was published by Afrika Wunderhon in 2012. She has performed at number of festivals including Poetry Africa Festival in Kwazulu-Natal, The International Literature Festival 2008, Berlin and the BIGSAS Literaturfestival 2012. Her poetry is also widely anthologised. She has written a number of scholarly articles and book chapters on her research areas of interest and co-edited a number of books.

Julius Ocwinyo

GM: What were the first books you read and in which language did you encounter them? When did you first read texts in English?

JO: The first books were in Acholi, one of the Lwo languages. This was at a rural school where the policy was to teach Primary 1 and 2 in the local language and English as a subject. I think I read the first book in English in Primary 3, and it was an Oxford University Press textbook with a very interesting character called Abdul.

GM Can you tell us about the literary texts you studied at 'O' and 'A' Level?

JO: I didn't study Literature at 'O' level, but I remember the titles included staples such as *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespearean drama), *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespearean drama), *Betrayal in the City* (Imbuga, Kenyan drama), *The Burdens* (Ruganda, Ugandan drama), *Black Mamba* (Ruganda, Ugandan drama), *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, Nigerian prose), *The Concubine* (Amadi, Nigerian prose), *The River Between* (Ngũgĩ, Kenyan prose), *Weep Not Child* (Ngũgĩ, Kenyan prose), *The African Child* (Laye, Guinean prose), *Carcase for Hounds* (Mwangi, Kenyan prose), *Mine Boy* (Abrahams, South African prose), *Song of Lawino* (Okot, Ugandan poetry), and *Song of Ocol* (Okot, Ugandan poetry). At 'A' level, where I first took up Literature, we had *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, American prose), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Hardy, British prose), *Petals of Blood* (Ngũgĩ, Kenyan prose), *A Passage to India* (Forster, British prose), *In the Castle of My Skin* (Lamming, Barbadian prose), and *Macbeth* (Shakespearean drama). I forget the rest, but I don't think that a Ugandan book was included.

GM: When did you first become aware that English was both a necessary lingua franca in Uganda and a colonial language?

JO: I was more aware of English being a colonial language than a lingua franca. This is largely because, apart from school, there were few other places where the people I was in regular contact with used English. My parents, being semi-literate, used mostly my mother tongue and Kiswahili—the latter because my dad had seen action in World War II as part of the King’s African Rifles and had gone into the Prisons Service after he was demobbed.

GM: Did this realisation mean that you had to reconcile yourself to English as a literary medium in any way?

JO: I don’t think there was need for me to reconcile myself. It was more like I felt that English was a tool that needed acquiring, albeit with a little difficulty, for it was the frame upon which our whole education would be constructed. Its usefulness as a literary medium is something that I became conscious of later, especially when I laid my hands—accidentally—on my dad’s King’s James Version Bible. I wonder why he bought it in the first place since his English was so meagre. The language in that Bible was stately and the quaintness of the vocabulary and syntax made it seem “exotic.” For the first time, the literary possibilities of English became apparent.

GM: African writers are represented on the Ugandan secondary school curriculum, but there are very few Ugandan writers there. Why do you think this is?

JO: I think it is partly because both the teachers and schools would rather stick with what they have rather than have something new. The teachers, because of the effort required to prepare to teach a new text; the schools, because they frequently lack the resources required to stock new texts. As for NCDC, I think partly it is lethargy and partly the belief that good literature began and ended with the first-generation writers. Furthermore, I have this sense that because what is foreign—Nigerian, Kenyan, South African, for example—has a novelty that what is local doesn’t have, it is often deemed “superior.” I believe that NCDC have not been spared this assumption, either.

GM: Teachers have blamed the National Curriculum Development Council for the lack of Ugandan texts. Has their role as guardians and developers of the curriculum been compromised?

JO: I think that for some time there was the belief at NCDC that no Ugandan book, apart from the first-generation ones, was good enough to merit inclusion. I remember being told one time, by one of the then senior officials, that none of the recent Ugandan works of literature was worth considering. Further probing on my part revealed that the official had not read any of the books she was dismissing as not worthwhile. So I think lethargy plays a large part in this lack of progress.

GM: NCDC, in turn, has blamed poor use of English, lack of editorial attention, and low production standards for the rejection of Ugandan texts. Is this a fair criticism?

JO: The criticism is fair to a certain extent. I'm aware that some of the books are not properly edited, or are of little literary merit, or that their production quality is poor. Still, that doesn't explain why the people at NCDC don't point out what specifically is the problem with each of the books sent to them for vetting.

GM: Ugandan teachers themselves have blamed a demoralised profession, differing standards between public and private schools, and a tendency for teachers to recycle the texts they themselves studied. Is this an accurate representation?

JO: I think so. Many of those I've spoken to have asked me whether it is worthwhile taking up a new book when few people seem prepared to appreciate their effort. On the other hand, there's the complaint, mostly on the part of school administrators, that stocking a new literature text requires quite a large outlay, which many of the schools teaching literature cannot afford.

GM: NCDC insists that a secondary school text must "carry a moral message." How do you respond to that criterion for inclusion?

JO: That is actually one of the criteria on which they base their selections. I find the notion of "moral message" quite fuzzy; I wonder whether someone could refine it and fit it neatly enough into the Ugandan context so that it becomes concrete. In any case, what "moral message" does *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Taming of the Shrew*, or even *Things Fall Apart* carry?

GM: It is widely perceived that "standards" of English are falling in Uganda. Is this true from your own perception and, if so, why?

JO: I think it is falling, not in the sense of it becoming less "British," but in the sense that the younger Ugandans use it in a rather muddled manner—their grasp of grammar is limited, there is little sense especially in what they write, they don't seem to understand that different registers exist, their spelling ranges from poor to atrocious, and sometimes they fail to relate what they are saying to their immediate environment.

As for the reasons, I think one of them is that their exposure to written language is characterised by the study of badly written, unedited pamphlets. Many of the young people I know are quite averse to properly edited and published textbooks and works of literature—they find reading them "too much work." Also, unlike in the past where the Okot p'Bitek and Chinua Achebes and other well-spoken folk, especially those in the professions, were the role models, today it's people who speak "ghetto" English—whether they are American

(and a lot of the cultural icons of the youth come from that country) or Caribbean or even Ugandan. And these are the people they emulate.

GM: Is there such a thing as “Ugandan English”—a hybrid form akin to Caribbean patois, broken English in Nigeria, or Shen in Kenya?

JO: I don’t think so. There is a consistency in Nigerian pidgin and Caribbean patois, for example, that is not quite evident in the way English is used in Uganda. What is noticeable in Uganda is that those who belong to the various language groups tend to speak English differently—smuggling into English their speech mannerisms, their thought patterns, their syntactic peculiarities.

GM: Is it possible that NCDC rejects some Ugandan texts because they are not correct enough—in fact, not “English enough” in the linguistic sense?

JO: I haven’t heard anybody talk about that yet. What I’ve heard some say is the lack of originality and the lack of universal concerns—that is, something that is typically Ugandan, as reflected in the syntax, the turns of phrase, for instance, but that other people would find themselves connecting with.

GM: How well are Ugandan writers represented in degree-level literature studies at Ugandan Universities?

JO: At Makerere University, the authors include Okot p’Bitek (*Song of Lawino*), A. Bukenya (*The Bride*), G. Kyomuhendo (*The First Daughter*), T. Wangusa (*Upon This Mountain*), and myself (*Fate of the Banished*). Some of the authors taught at Kyambogo University are Arthur Gakwandi whose book, *Kosiya Kifefe*, was at one time on the ‘A’ level syllabus and myself (*Fate of the Banished* and *Footprints of the Outsider*). Some Ugandan books are taught at Gulu University too.

GM: Is Creative Writing being taught in teacher training colleges and universities in Uganda as an academic subject? How would you rate the desirability and importance of such developments?

JO: Creative Writing was taught at Makerere University for some time and then dropped. I have yet to hear of a teacher training college or any other university where it has ever been taught.

GM: What effect does the relatively low profile of Ugandan writers and writing have on Ugandan culture, education and literature development?

JO: This question makes me think about the musicians. For a long time, Ugandan musicians were unnoticeable and as a result not a lot of people wished to be part of that industry—and no one took them seriously either. Now the industry is flourishing because of the

“celebrity” status of its practitioners. I think in a country like Uganda where not a lot of people read for pleasure, where communities are largely oral, people would listen more to writers, would take them more seriously, if they were more visible. Ugandan society generally finds writers a mysterious lot, and doesn’t understand their moral, social, and political roles. Creating this visibility would entail a lot of work, perhaps beginning with defining what role the Ugandan writer should play in their country and how to ensure that the way they play the role has a noticeable impact. Otherwise, Uganda will miss out on the sensibilities, articulacy and broad knowledge of the writer.

GM: Does the low profile of Ugandan writers and writing within Uganda affect perceptions of Ugandan literature beyond Uganda?

JO: I think so. I’ve met non-Ugandans who think that, because the Ugandan writers who have the most visibility are the winners of international prizes for short stories, such as the Caine Prize and the Commonwealth prize, and of course those living in the diaspora, such as Isegawa, no serious home-grown Ugandan novels exist.

GM: A growing number of Ugandan writers (Moses Isegawa, Goretti Kyomuhendo, Monica Arak de Nyeko, Jackee Batanda) are now part of the Ugandan diaspora. How do you think such migrations might affect Ugandan literature in future years?

JO: They’ll affect Ugandan writing in two ways. One, the migrations will raise the profile of Ugandan literature outside the country’s borders. Two, they will give rise to Ugandan literature that is diasporic in nature, in that some of the works will look at Uganda from the outside while others will attempt to grapple with the existential realities of life in the diaspora.

GM: Are there ways in which the educational sector, writers and publishers in Uganda can unite to address some of the problems facing their literature and its reception both within and outside Uganda?

JO: The publishers have a strong association, the Uganda Publishers Association, but their aim embraces the use of as many of their materials as possible in the schools at all levels. Their focus is not limited to works of literature. Perhaps we writers ourselves should set up an association that would work together with the publishers to pressure the education sector to use more and more of our books.

GM: Can you recommend five Ugandan texts in English that you think deserve to be more widely read both within and outside Uganda?

JO: *Tropical Fish* by D. Baingana (2005), *Secrets No More* by G. Kyomuhendo (1999), *Aida, Hurray for Somo and Other Stories* by A. Ejjet (2004), *The Corrupt, the Quick and the Dead* by T. Rushedge

(2012), *Pale Souls Abroad and Other Stories* by U. Chuka-Kibuuka
(2005)

Biographical Note

Julius Ocwinyo, born in northern Uganda in 1961, is an Associate Editor at Fountain Publishers, Uganda's leading publishing house. He holds a DipEd (Kyambogo University), a certificate in French pedagogy (University of Burundi), and a BEd (Makerere University). He joined the publishing industry after a 10-year teaching career. His most notable publications include the novel *Fate of the Banished* (1997), an 'A' level set text; three poems ("I Am Not My Brother's Keeper," "Aids-Death," and "Cinema God") in *Fountain Poetry Anthology* (2000); and the fictional works *Footprints of the Outsider* (2002), *The Unfulfilled Dream* (2002), *When Hare Stole Ghost's Drum* (2005), *The Price of Grandma's Love* (2009). His school textbooks include *Fountain Junior English Dictionary* (2006) and *Fountain Progressive English Course for Secondary Schools* (2010). Currently, he is writing an adult novel entitled *The Man without a Name*.

Biographical Note on the Interviewer

Graham Mort is Professor of Creative Writing and Transcultural Literature at Lancaster University, where he directs the Centre for Transcultural Writing and research. *Visibility: New & Selected Poems*, was published by Seren in 2007, when he was also winner of the Bridport Competition short story prize. His book of short fiction, *Touch*, was published by Seren in 2010 and won the Edge Hill Prize in the following year. A new book of poems, *Cusp*, came out from Seren in 2011.

Note

1. British style secondary school examinations taken at age 16 ('O' levels) and 18 ('A' levels).