

# INTRODUCTION

## *Gift Mheta*

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Chinua Achebe, a prolific Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic who was generally regarded as a luminary figure in modern African literature, died on the 21st of March 2013. Following his death, Chinua Achebe's life and literary achievements were celebrated in different ways across the globe. The Durban University of Technology Writing Centre decided to honour this distinguished scholar of African literature by conducting a creative writing competition in his name. The competition was conducted to promote both academic and creative writing among students. The broad theme for the competition was tradition and modernity and the sub-themes were identity and self-representation, rural-urban divide, pan Africanism, colonial encounter and its consequences, post independent Africa, gender, culture and society, and redefining traditional African culture. This competition was the genesis of many creative writing competitions at the Durban University of Technology (DUT); it has over the years grown in leaps and bounds, and this volume of the competition's winning entries bears testimony.

The competition, which has become an annual event, resonates with the DUT ENVISION2030 Strategic Perspective 1: Stewardship Objective 4: Creativity for the inspiration of innovation and entrepreneurship. It is an initiative aimed at producing well-rounded graduates – graduates who are not just fashion designers, engineers, biotechnologists, somatologists, accountants, IT technicians, dental technologists, etc. – but graduates who are also creative and effective writers, graduates who can identify the

challenges bedevilling their society and write about how such problems can be tackled.

Since its inception in 2013 to date, the competition themes have been carefully selected to provide students with an opportunity to engage with issues that matter to African society. It resonates with the call for decolonisation of universities and curricula. The importance of carrying the decolonisation agenda forward is well-summed up by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o who unequivocally states that

Education is a means of knowledge about ourselves...After we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective... All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation and their contribution towards understanding ourselves. In suggesting this we are not rejecting other streams, especially the western stream.

The competition therefore has provided DUT students with the platform to think and write critically about what it means to be an African. It allows them to appreciate and question African traditions, values, fears and aspirations. Above all, the competition provides students with a voice on critical topics such as education, human rights, peace-building, unity, social justice, democracy, gender-based violence, non-violence, dialogue, service delivery, civic engagement, love, and so forth.

This volume curates the winning entries of the DUT annual creative writing competition structured chronologically from 2015 to 2021. The winning entries are presented from the first prize winner to the third prize in the essay/opinion piece, poetry and short story categories respectively. Sixty-three entries are included in this book.

This book is aimed at anyone who loves reading. It is the outcome of a collective effort by the annual creative writing competition task team at DUT. Through this volume, we hope that budding writers will be inspired to write more. In the words of Eneke the bird in *Things Fall Apart* “Since man has learned to shoot without missing, I have learned to fly without perching”. Keep inspiring many readers through creative writing. Do not stop.

We hope you will enjoy reading and using this book, and look forward to your comments on how we can improve it for future editions.

## References

Achebe, Chinua. 2006. *Things Fall Apart*. Penguin Classics. London, England: Penguin Classics.

Wa Thiong’o N. 1994. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. London, England: James Currey Ltd.

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