A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages

european-language writing in sub-saharan africa

vol. 1

Akadémiai Kiadó
Budapest

These two volumes dealing with Sub-Saharan Africa aim at providing the first systematic all-embracing survey of creative writing generated in the three main European languages that were used for imaginative purposes on the Black Continent, without neglecting such less well-known evidence of African literary vitality as the works written in German, Spanish, Italian, Afrikaans ... and Latin!

The work is organized along the lines of a carefully thought out taxonomy which takes into account the fundamental dimensions of literary history: time, space, and language. For the first time also, a comprehensive system of periodization is applied to the fast growing corpus of literature that has been produced from Dakar to Dar es Salaam and from the Sahara to the Cape of Good Hope since most African states gained independence. This scholarly book, which results from the co-operation of more than sixty experts from some twenty-five countries scattered on three continents at last provides a sound scientific foundation for the study of African literature on the basis of a truly comparative, i.e., trans-national and multilingual, approach. It will be the major reference work in its field for decades to come.

Belgian scholar Albert S. Gérard is internationally known for his pioneering work in the historiography of African writing. His *Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic* (Berkeley, 1971) and his *African-Language Literatures* (Washington, 1981) are basic works providing an indispensable framework for any future historical research. His *Études de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar, 1977) and his *Essais d'Histoire littéraire africaine* (Sherbrooke, Canada, 1984) have made part of his findings available to the French-speaking audience.

AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ · BUDAPEST

EUROPEAN-LANGUAGE WRITING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

VI/1

A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF LITERATURES
IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES
SPONSORED BY THE
INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ASSOCIATION

HISTOIRE COMPARÉE DES LITTÉRATURES
DE LANGUES EUROPÉENNES
SOUS LES AUSPICES DE
L'ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE LITTÉRATURE COMPARÉE

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EUROPEAN-LANGUAGE WRITING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

EDITED BY

ALBERT S. GÉRARD

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GENERAL PREFACE TO ALL VOLUMES PUBLISHED AS PART OF THE "COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF LITERATURES"

This is one of a series of volumes in the "Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages" (hereafter: "Comparative History") sponsored by the International Comparative Literature Association. The "Comparative History" is under the editorial supervision of a "Coordinating Committee" consisting at present of sixteen scholars from various countries. The Committee appoints the directors of the particular research projects, issues general guidelines to them, monitors the genesis of the manuscript, and gives final approval before publication.

The "Comparative History" was launched by the International Comparative Literature Association in 1967. It is based on two fundamental premises: one, that the writing of literary histories confined to specific nations, peoples or languages must be complemented by the writing of literary history that coordinates related or comparable phenomena from an international point of view: two, that it is not possible for individual scholars to write such comprehensive histories but that we must now rely on structured teamwork drawing collaborators from different nations.

We have tried to select periods or movements in which the transformation of forms and ideas is lively and promotes an understanding of the historical process in literature. We have chosen epochs or currents which display a correlation of stylistic expression, where the fruitfulness of the international give and take (as opposed to the idea of national preeminence) can be demonstrated, and, through the comparative approach, significant analogies and contrasts pointed out.

Within these principles and criteria, the scholars entrusted with each project are given the latitude needed to put together the best possible volume under the circumstances. Writing a comparative literary history by way of international teamwork is a revolutionary procedure in literary historiography. Few scholars can claim ability to cover the entire range of literature relevant to the phenomenon under study. Hence the need for partial syntheses, upon which more and more truly international syntheses will be built as our project progresses.

The "Comparative History" will consist of volumes composed in either French or English. Most contributions will be written in these two languages, some will be translated into them from other languages. But we are anxious to emphasize that this in no sense reflects a hierarchy of values. To be sure, the broad and deep penetration of English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish literature must be recognized,

but the literary specificities of every nation or cultural entity, large or small, acclaimed or neglected, will be valued. As a matter of fact, no discipline is as apt to do justice to the literatures of smaller diffusion as Comparative Literature.

The charge of the Coordinating Committee is limited to the consideration of literatures in European languages. We are keenly aware of the inherent worth of literatures outside the European language orbit and are strongly supporting the newly created research and publication committees of the International Comparative Literature Association which are expected to chart the course for new projects that will include literatures of Africa, Asia, and the Americas composed in non-European languages. But the task of coordinating the historiography of literatures written in European languages is already a formidable one, and by including African and Latin American literature created in these languages we are at least entering hitherto unexplored or neglected areas of literary activity whose present or future contribution to world literature is enormous.

We realize that volumes dependent on the collaboration of many scholars from different countries and cultures will not always be evenly balanced in topic, approach, or merit. Nor is it always possible to recruit scholars for all important aspects of a particular topic. Some collaborators are unable to finish their assignments, and on occasions all efforts to replace them within a reasonable time fail. The task we are undertaking is a tremendously difficult one, but it must be pursued with patience and courage because the writing of literary history, in its effort to fulfil the mission entrusted to it by society, *must* arrive at conclusions, results, and syntheses in order to give literary scholarship significant leverage in the evolution of the Humanities.

As the current President of the Coordinating Committee, entrusted with the task of continuing and expanding the "Comparative History" launched by my predecessor, Professor Jacques Voisine of the Sorbonne, and the Secretary, Professor György M. Vajda of the Institute for Literary Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the University of Szeged, I want to pay tribute not only to their pioneering vision but also to the project directors and volume editors who have taken on, unselfishly and undauntedly, an awesome challenge on behalf of historical literary studies. Whatever the shortcomings of this or any other volume in our series, they and their collaborators deserve the warmest thanks of all men and women of good will throughout the world dedicated to vital humanistic scholarship.

Henry H. H. Remak
President, Coordinating Committee

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ALBERT S. GÉRARD

INTRODUCTION

In the course of the last quarter-century, African creative writing in European languages has been growing at an incredibly fast rate. Even if we disregard North Africa—which is more appropriately integrated into the vast domain of Muslim civilization—the literary output of that part of the continent which lies south of the Sahara has reached such proportions that several of the independent African states can now be held to have produced clearly identifiable national literatures. This unprecedented development in the literary history of the world lies exactly at the junction—and results from the cross-fertilization—of two literary traditions, both of them equally venerable, equally valuable, even though knowledge about them is very unevenly distributed in the Western world.

One, of course, is the tradition of imaginative literature in the languages that are called "modern" in the sense that they are the natural medium of the peoples who have dominated world history for fifteen centuries since the fall of the Roman Empire and the end of antiquity, that is, the peoples of Europe. For even though their historical supremacy in the economic and political life of the globe is now obviously coming to its foredoomed end, the languages and literary predilections of these peoples have apparently not yet reached the acme—which, in all likelihood, will also be temporary—of a dynamic process that has passed though a number of fairly clearly definable phases throughout those centuries.[1]

Although the average *honnête homme* in continental Europe is seldom aware of it, it is a fact that "modern" literature first arose in the far west of Europe, in those forlorn regions which had largely—in the most significant cases, completely—eschewed the military, political, linguistic and cultural imperialism of Rome: Ireland, Iceland and Great Britain. Imported by missionaries whose action was neither aided nor marred by political ambitions and military support, the writing technique gave rise, in those remote areas, to a twofold literary tradition. Part of this tradition was inevitably rooted in Latin, the language of the Church and of "civilization" as contrasted with the alleged barbarism of non-literate societies. Latin was to remain for a long time a widely used medium for the creative urge and indeed, the chosen medium of philosophy and science, not to

[1] Albert S. Gérard, *Introduction comparative à l'histoire littéraire de l'Europe et de l'Amérique* (Liège: Service de Littérature comparée de l'Université de Liège, n.d.).

mention its continued use in the Catholic Church until the middle of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Latin was a dead language, the secret tongue of a tiny élite.

The other, vernacular, tradition was to prove far more lasting and lively, all-embracing and productive. Soon after the fall of the Roman Empire the Celts of Ireland started committing to the permanence of writing what we may assume to have been the most cherished segments of their oral legacy, with its mythological, historical and legendary tales. In the seventh century A. D. the more adventurous and idealistic among them brought or re-introduced literacy and the Christian faith into Great Britain. Irish and British missionaries were to contribute most powerfully to the so-called Carolingian renaissance of the ninth century. The literary harvest during the first part of the Middle Ages was most impressive: the Irish cycles, the Welsh *Mabinogion,* the Old English *Beowulf,* the German *Hildebrandslied,* to which should be added the enormous body of poetry and narrative prose that was produced in Iceland—the *Old Edda,* skaldic poetry, the *sagas*—once the roving, bellicose Vikings had been brought in touch with the literate civilization of North-Western Europe.

Saga production takes the story well into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But a new phase had begun in the late eleventh century—after, that is, some six centuries of incontrovertible Celtic and Germanic superiority—when the Romance-speaking peoples of Europe, hitherto paralysed by the aftermath of Roman cultural imperialism and the predominance of the Roman church, joined this increasingly imposing flow of vernacular writing. The movement started simultaneously in the *langue d'oïl* (in northern France and Norman England) and in the *langue d'oc* (in southern France). The central epic trend that had characterized Celtic and Germanic writing was continued in the French *chansons de geste,* while the more refined Provençal troubadours were creating a new kind of lyrical poetry inspired by the new courtly approach to love—hitherto a theme of exceedingly minor interest in European writing! Soon the other Mediterranean peoples caught up and the following century saw the emergence of creative writing in Galician, Spanish and Italian.

The general upheaval of the Renaissance and the Reformation initiated a third step, when a significant slice of central Europe began to bring its contribution to this steadily growing vernacular corpus. Although humanism had originally aimed at the rebirth of Latin, it is highly significant that the trend soon deviated in such a way that the most important aspect of the Renaissance was the renewal of themes and forms in the vernacular literatures of the West and the creation of literate art in such hitherto practically unwritten languages as Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Croatian and Slovenian. The Reformation, with its insistence on enabling every man to become cognizant of the word of God, gave a powerful impetus to this evolution.

Luther's translation of the Bible generated modern literary German: Bible translation in many other countries stimulated the appearance—or, as in Scandinavia, the rebirth—of vernacular writing. The political power and cultural prestige of France in the seventeenth century, followed by the wide-ranging intellectual influence of Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment almost substituted French for Latin as the international language of the European élite. By the time of the French Revolution, even Russia had discarded the monopoly of the Church

language, Old Slavonic, to start experimenting with literary works written in something more closely resembling the language really spoken by men: vernacular writing now swayed over the whole of Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Meanwhile, however, another stream of thought had begun to provide new directions for the constant progress of vernacular creative writing. The romantic impulse, with its insistence on originality and naturalness as opposed to the classical concepts of convention and imitation, with its wide-spread interest in folk art as launched by Macpherson and developed by Herder and Hamann, was not only giving a new twist to the established literatures of Europe. With respect to the evolution with which we are at present concerned, it had two significant consequences. The writer's need to communicate with a larger audience than a tiny élite of effete mandarins reared in the classical languages (which included French), bolstered by a popular sense of nationhood which the growth of democratic ideas had been fostering for some time, resulted in a reappraisal of the so-called "minor" languages and led to the emergence of creative writing in, or to the literary rebirth of, languages that had been despised as mere dialects because they were not spoken by impressive millions. Previously the contribution of Dutch, say, or of the Scandinavian languages, to the literature of Europe had by no means been negligible. But the early nineteenth century saw a veritable explosion of creative activity in those "minority" languages. It also witnessed the emergence of vernacular writing in such Balkan countries as Serbia and Bulgaria.

The nationalistic spirit as evinced in literature also took on another aspect which is of far greater interest for our purpose. The expansionist fervour that had seized Europe in the days of the great discoveries continued unabated. Large numbers of migrants settled down in huge territories overseas, preferably after getting rid of the cumbersome aboriginal inhabitants. A vast European diaspora, mainly of Portuguese, Spanish, English and French origin, had thus grown, which could not fail to produce its own literature. But while its members had been—and from a political viewpoint for a long time remained—content to regard themselves as emigrant citizens of the mother countries, as the eighteenth century came to its close, a number of those colonies, especially in the Western hemisphere, began to feel the need to sever political ties which were resented as oppressive, and their writers became desirous of asserting their national identity. American literature began to separate itself from the original body of English literature, Brazilian from Portuguese, and the other literatures of Latin America from Spanish. By the end of the nineteenth century, what came later to be known as "Commonwealth literature" had spread to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. At the same time, Portuguese settlers in Angola made a beginning with Luso-African literature, and during the last decades of the century, the peculiar variety of Dutch, known as Afrikaans, which had gradually become the vehicular language in South Africa, gained official status and a start was made with Afrikaans poetry.

It might have seemed that European-language writing had reached its widest possible expansion, since it emanated practically from all parts of the world. One restriction remained, however, for this enormous literary output in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and even French (Canada), was produced by representatives of the European diaspora, authors whose ancestors had left Europe, sometimes many genera-

tions ago, but who still saw themselves as belonging to European civilization, upholding common western values, not to mention their sharing a common skin-colour. To this membership of a common European culture they clung tenaciously even when asserting with relentless obduracy their separate identity as citizens of the newly created overseas societies. Those societies, however, were multiracial. While at the beginning of the twentieth century the white man was still the accepted, though perhaps no longer unquestioned, master of global affairs, his very presence, power and prestige were bound to instil in his coloured subjects a strong determination to acquire his language, in order to communicate with him, to argue with him, to understand his values and the sources of his power, and eventually, to proclaim their own values and recover their freedom and independence.

It was as part of this complex process that literary activity in European languages spread among the more gifted and the more ambitious of the subject races. This innovation, which started the latest phase in the age-old expansion of those languages, is now in full swing, and although it has yielded interesting results, especially in English and in French in several Asiatic countries, Africa is undoubtedly the area where this type of production is growing in amount and in quality at the fastest pace: already in this, the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is legitimate to claim that the achievements of Senegal, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast, of Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, of Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique, have brought significant contributions to modern creative writing in French, English and Portuguese. It is the primary purpose of this book to offer a survey and a synthesis of the historical development of these African literatures.

Although the white man in his peerless complacency likes to entertain the notion that he was responsible for the introduction of the writing skill, and consequently of literary ability, into sub-Saharan Africa, it is useful to realize that the growth of African literature in European languages is only a particular stage in a second historical development which is fundamentally African, even though Europe has played an important role in some of its latest phases.

There is of course a primary distinction to be made between literacy and the type of artistic verbal composition which usually although somewhat mistakenly goes by the name of oral literature. We have outgrown the obsolete nineteenth-century notion that there can be no literature without literacy and that the non-literate peoples of Africa can therefore have no literature except a number of rather childish tales which come under the condescending heading "folklore".[2] There is some reason for the belief that all written literatures in their incipient stages were simply the recordings of previously existing oral works originally composed by bards, "aèdes", minstrels, skalds, "griots" whose names have inevitably fallen into oblivion. In spite of a tremendous increase in literacy campaigns, a large number of African societies outside the urban centres still live in predominantly oral cultures. Intensive research during the last few decades has shown conclusively that oral art fulfils the functions usually assigned to written activity

[2] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

in literate societies: folk tales are educational parables designed to ensure the integration of the society by inculcating in an imaginative way the principles of right behaviour; myths and aetiological stories have a scientific and philosophical function, since they purport to explain the origins and causes of phenomena: legends and praise poems are intended to ensure the continuity of group consciousness and to perpetuate the memory of the tribe's heroes and of their great deeds (one of the more questionable purposes of the teaching of history in European nation states); proverbs and other types of gnomic utterance formulate and transmit the wisdom accumulated by centuries of experience and unrecorded reflection.

It has also become clear that oral composition and performance, far from being a crude, primitive anticipation of real art, require high skill in the manipulation of language and a considerable degree of artistry. Non-literate audiences are notoriously exacting with regard to the author-performer's mastery of his medium, skill in mimicry, and loyalty to the literary traditions of the group. But while it is customary to describe African oral art as "traditional", it should not be overlooked that, in the words of an African sage, "it is not tradition to be conservative". Oral art is still very much alive in Africa today. It does not consist solely of recitals of ancestral tales and poems: it remains fascinatingly creative, responding with eloquence and wit to the historical events that are unfolding in the present and, above all, availing itself of the new media which modern technology puts at its disposal to reach a wider audience.

Once the antiquity, pervasiveness and present vigour of oral art are recognized, it must be pointed out that sub-Saharan Africa can also pride herself on a written tradition of long standing, for in the course of the last two thousand years, the writing skill was introduced into ever larger segments of the continent on three clearly identifiable occasions.[3]

During the first centuries of our era, Semitic invaders from Southern Arabia brought the Sabean script to the highlands of Ethiopia. The earliest documents extant are epigraphic, but between the fourth and the sixth centuries, the Bible was translated from the Greek into Ethiopic, soon followed by saints' lives and the Syrian *Physiologus*. The influence of Eastern Christianity upon the Coptic Church of Ethiopia is probably responsible for two features which Ethiopian literature has in common with Byzantine. One is the overwhelmingly religious and didactic character which was to pervade Ethiopian writing until the mid-twentieth century. The other is that the extremely conservative role played by Greek in Byzantium and to a lesser extent by Latin in the West was performed by the old language of Ethiopia, Ge'ez, which became the sacred tongue, the esoteric idiom of the Church. Writing in the vernacular—Old Amharic—did not begin until the fourteenth-century with the so-called *Imperial songs*, whose combination of aspects characteristic of the epic chronicle and of the praise poem was closely connected with the structures of political power. Although Ge'ez is still widely used by the more traditional writers, especially for the composition of hymns and theological treatises, Amharic was to become the standard idiom of creative writing early in the

[3] Albert S. Gérard, *African-Language Literature: An Introduction to the Literary History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1981).

twentieth century; it has now produced a sizeable amount of poetry, drama and especially prose fiction.[4]

While written art was thus being securely established in Ethiopia, a second wave of literacy swept over vast areas of sub-Saharan Africa with the Muslim conquest during the first few centuries after *hijra*. The new religion brought its own language, Arabic, and the Arabic script. But the history of Islamic writing in Black Africa shows two distinct patterns of development.

In East Africa, along the coast of the Indian Ocean and on the offshore islands such as Zanzibar, close integration of immigrants of Arab stock into the native society created a hybrid culture with its own non-Arabic language: Swahili.[5] The earliest preserved monuments of Swahili literature date from the early eighteenth century. The essential feature of Swahili writing is the predominance of narrative poetry. The eighteenth-century epics dealt mainly with the life of Muhammad and his wars against the Christians soon after *hijra*: they were based on popular Arabic accounts. But in the nineteenth century a process of secularization set in and side by side with religious epics of the traditional kind, there appeared other narrative poems recounting major events in the contemporary history of the Swahili community, such as the antagonism between the Sultan of Zanzibar and the governors of coastal towns, and, later, the resistance offered by the inland tribes to the European invasion.

Muslim writing in West Africa followed an entirely different pattern. Black West Africa was originally converted to Islam by the Berber dynasty of the Almoravids in the eleventh century, and Sudanic Islam inherited the strong fundamentalist trend which is central to Berber religion. Two stages can be traced in the historical evolution of this West African literature. Until the late eighteenth century, the Arabic language remained the sole medium of written literature. This led to the emergence of Timbuctoo as a renowned centre of Islamic learning in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and to the production there of a large number of manuscripts dealing, in Arabic verse, with the major disciplines of Muslim culture. But in the eighteenth century, the fundamentalist trend in West African Islam took on a more proselytizing posture and the need was felt to make Muslim learning available to people in their own tongues. There thus arose several literatures of a type known as *ajami*, that is, using the Arabic alphabet for non-Arabic languages. The languages concerned were Fula in various parts of West Africa, Hausa in Northern Nigeria,[6] and Wolof in Senegal. But it must be emphasized that a number of black literati have kept on producing poetry in Arabic to this day.

The Muslim cultures of Black Africa have shown uncommon resilience to the impact of Europe, presumably because they are proudly grounded in one of the great

[4] On the literary history of Ethiopia, see Enrico Cerulli, *La letteratura etiopica con un saggio sull'Oriente Cristiano* (3rd ed., Florence, 1968). More detailed information on modern Amharic writing can be found in Albert. S. Gérard, *Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), and Thomas Leiper Kane, *Ethiopian Literature in Amharic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975).

[5] One of the most convenient accounts of Swahili literature is still Lyndon Harries, *Swahili Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[6] See Mervyn Hiskett, *A History of Hausa Islamic Verse* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1975).

religions of the world. Only two of these literatures—Swahili in the East and Hausa in the West—have submitted to various forms of modernization, turning to the Roman script, availing themselves of the printing press, and adopting—although with great caution and even reluctance—such alien genres as prose fiction and stage drama. The reason for this special development seems to be that the territories where these literatures flourished were parts of the British Empire, whose representatives, unlike those of France, Portugal or Spain, gave genuine attention to the native languages and to the spreading of literacy in the African vernaculars.

After thus giving due recognition to the unquestionable seniority of Ethiopia and Muslim Africa in the creation of written literatures, it must be admitted that the most wide-spread, and indeed all-encompassing, advance toward literacy in sub-Saharan Africa was due to the European conquest and to the resulting introduction of both the Roman script and the printing press. As we survey the influence of Western colonialism on the development of literature over time, we observe that it took on two forms, each with its own characteristic features.

Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, apart from a few scattered experiments which are interesting as such but statistically meaningless, literary activity centred in British territories, especially in Southern Africa, and was almost entirely in the vernacular languages.

This process was intimately connected with religion: the written art appears to have been an offshoot of missionary activities that developed along similar lines in all British colonies. In compliance with the Protestant notion that each individual is entitled to his own interpretation of the Revelation as recorded in the Scriptures, the primary duty of Protestant missionaries was to make the Holy Bible available to the natives. Consequently, it became their first task, when reaching a new area, to reduce the local language to a written form; they then set up schools where reading and writing were taught; at the same time, they procured translations of biblical texts and of other edifying works, amongst which pride of place went to *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Thus they enabled their converts to become acquainted with the word of God. But they also encouraged them to make use of the newly acquired skill in original writing of their own, for which an outlet was offered in the vernacular journals printed on the missionary presses.

This development was inaugurated in the early nineteenth century in South Africa, where it led to the formation of Xhosa literature, now one of the most extensive among the vernacular literatures of Africa.[7] This example was soon followed in other parts of Southern Africa, and future research will no doubt show that the same procedures were also operative in other territories governed by Great Britain, and indeed in all areas —Madagascar and Togo being good examples—where Protestant missionaries had a controlling influence.

Much of this missionary-sponsored literature in African languages was for a long time primarily concerned with moral edification and the propagation of Christianity.

[7] A. C. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature: The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973). On creative writing in Xhosa and other languages of Southern Africa, see also the relevant chapters in Gérard, *Four African Literatures*.

Many hymns were composed by native converts, and some have remained highly popular with local congregations. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* became the most widely translated work of Western fiction, and it was imitated by many African authors of moralizing allegorical novels. As the nineteenth century wore on, however, there appeared vernacular writers, especially in South Africa, who were better educated and more and more outspoken about the abuses of white power. But the Berlin Conference of 1884–85 and its attendant upsurge of imperialism, colonialism and racialism put the clock back. With the fast increasing industrialization and urbanization of South Africa after World War I, black writers began to produce realistic prose fiction, but in their diagnosis of the Negro's plight they felt it advisable to lay the emphasis on the failures of individual morality rather than on the injustice and oppressiveness built into the system.

Side by side with the interest in the ideas introduced by the white man and in the situations created by his activities, a second type of inspiration was operative in vernacular writing from the very beginning. For, in British Africa at any rate, generation after generation of newly educated writers displayed immense respect for their ancient oral traditions. And as the Celtic and Germanic peoples of Western Europe had done in the early Middle Ages, they availed themselves of the technological improvement brought by the new medium to commit to writing important fragments of their oral heritage: proverbs, praise poems, tales, myths, legends, historical chronicles, etc.

Apart from the formation of Western-influenced vernacular literatures, European colonization created a second impact, mainly at a later date: the gradual—and in recent years fairly massive—appropriation of European languages by African writers for didactic and, at a later point, creative purposes. It is here that African tributaries have joined the mainstream of European-language writing, and it is with this development that the present book is concerned. Since the output of this fourth phase in the evolution of African writing is practically the only product of African literature with which even the more cultured and inquisitive members of the general reading public are at all acquainted, it is reasonable to provide some idea, however vague and provisional, of its relative importance with regard to the totality of African writing.

According to the statistical and bibliographical computations of the late Janheinz Jahn,[8] the "complete" corpus of modern creative writing produced in Black Africa by 1970 comprised 821 works in 51 African languages and 1,290 works in three European languages. As Jahn did not cover Ethiopia at all, and was little concerned with Islamic writing, much of which circulates only in manuscript form, the real number of vernacular works must be substantially higher: it must comprise at least half of the total output. This important fact cannot be overlooked. Although the very title of the series in which the present book appears precludes discussion of literature in languages other than European, the reader should realize that no comprehensive survey of Africa's contribu-

[8] Janheinz Jahn, "Modern African Literature: Bibliographical Spectrum", *Review of National Literatures*, 2 (Fall 1971), 224–242. See also Bernth Lindfors, "Researching African Literatures," *Literary Research Newsletter*, 4,1 (1979), 171–180; Albert Gérard, "The Study of African Literature: Birth and Early Growth of a New Branch of Learning," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 7,1 (1980), 67–92.

tion to the written art of the world can be achieved unless imaginative writing in African languages and in Arabic is duly taken into consideration.[9]

For our purposes, however, one especially revealing aspect is connected with the geo-political distribution of these literary works. It appears that almost all the vernacular works have been produced in countries that were once part of the British empire, so that it is possible to establish a fundamental connexion between the literary production of each African country and the nationality of its colonizers.

African countries, examined from this particular viewpoint fall into two groups. The former British territories have all developed a bilingual literary tradition, creating vernacular works to begin with, and, at a later stage, producing creative writing in English as well. By contrast no vernacular tradition of writing developed in areas that had been colonized by the French, the Portuguese and the Spanish; and as the Italians, during their short-lived occupation of Ethiopia, did their very best to suppress imaginative literature in the vernacular language altogether, it will be perceived that the basic distinction is between British and Latin cultural policies. It is clear then, that the consequences of Latin colonialism for the creation of new literatures in Africa have been very similar to the effects of Roman imperialism upon Western literature in the early Middle Ages in spite of the fact that the European presence in Africa was of much shorter duration than the Roman presence in Western Europe.

It may be said that the world audience became aware of the still embryonic existence and the tremendous potentialities of European-language literature in Africa in 1956 when *Présence Africaine* and the French-speaking intellectuals from Africa and the West Indies who elaborated the negritude concept convened a large conference of black writers and artists in Paris. When later developments are contemplated in retrospect, it is amazing to realize how fast the scholarly world scented the importance of the event, which in effect informed the world community of the passage of a whole continent from the oral to the written era. This paralleled what had happened in North-Western Europe in the early Middle Ages, and what had happened in Greece almost three thousand years ago. For the first time in history, scholars had an opportunity to observe such a process on such a scale for, after all, in many parts of Black Africa where modern European-language literature was emerging, there had been no previous tradition of written art. It was perhaps not overtly realized that careful scrutiny of what was taking place in Africa as a written literature was beginning to exist side by side with, and in some cases to supersede, the oral tradition, was bound to lead to valuable generalizations about the origins of Western literatures, indeed of the written art altogether. Actually, the kind of interest that was given to modern African works was primarily human and political in nature: they provided a vivid image of Africa as seen through African eyes, at a time

[9] Until quite recently, attention to African writing in non-European languages was limited to highly specialized journals concerned mainly with linguistics, anthropology or history. But in the course of the seventies, vernacular writing came to be increasingly scrutinized in such Western journals as *Research in African Literatures*, *Ba Shiru*, etc. The 1971 special Black Africa issue of the *Review of National Literatures* contained a significant proportion of articles centring on African-language writing. And I. D. Nikiforova's inclusion of an essay on Amharic literature in *Vzaimosvjazi afrikanskix literatur i literatur mira* (Inter-relations of African literatures and world literatures), which she edited in 1975 is typical of Soviet practice in this respect.

when political independence was in sight; they provided a unique instrument for enlarging our perception and understanding of the experiences, problems and tragedies of populations that were about to take their fates in their own hands. In consequence, much of the writing about African literature was at first mainly journalistic, a word which need have no contemptuous connotations.

But the scholarly approach, ponderous, élitist, persistent and reliable, intervened with uncommon rapidity. After such precursors as Bakary Traoré, whose *Le Théâtre négro-africain* (1958) surveyed the beginnings of West African drama in French, or Joseph-Marie Jadot, whose *Les Écrivains africains du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi* (1959) provided detailed information about what little writing had been done in what is now Zaïre, in 1960 Lilyan Kesteloot presented at the Université Libre de Bruxelles her epoch-making dissertation, *Les Écrivains noirs de langue française: naissance d'une littérature,* which was printed in 1963. Meanwhile, other studies appeared in book form. While Thomas Melone's *De la négritude dans la littérature africaine* and Ezekiel Mphahlele's *The African Image* combined scholarly care with the committed attitude which no African could possibly relinquish in those days when colonialism was still very much present, often only in men's memories, but sometimes, unfortunately, in actual fact, another work of 1962 was especially influential in popularizing in the West the new African authors who were rising above the literary horizon. This was Gerald Moore's *Seven African Writers,* which contained discussions of two francophone poets (Senghor and David Diop), two francophone novelists (Camara Laye and Mongo Beti), and three anglophone authors of prose fiction (Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe and Ezekiel Mphahlele). Lilyan Kesteloot was interested mainly in poetry and the negritude concept; her approach was historical and sociological. Moore gave more attention to prose writers, and his bias was fundamentally a critical one. But while in a way they thus complemented each other, they had one important thing in common: their international outlook. This was obvious in the case of Moore, whose authors came from Senegal, Cameroon, Guinea, Nigeria and South Africa. But although Lilyan Kesteloot confined herself to writings in French, her authors came from Africa (chiefly Senegal) and the West Indies. Although 1963 was chiefly marked by the publication of several studies in Portuguese on the literatures of Angola and the Cape Verde islands, this tendency to view the black world, or at any rate black Africa, as a whole was seen to spread when the Soviet Academy of Science in Moscow published *Literatura Stran Afriki* (1964) under the editorship of F. M. Breskina.

Historical circumstances, the facts of a common struggle against white supremacy, bolstered by the political ideology of Panafricanism and the cultural ideology of negritude, thus initiated an international approach which enabled African literary scholarship to eschew, at an early stage of its development, the pitfalls of the narrow nationalism that had plagued the emergence and evolution of European literary scholarship during the nineteenth century. This, it might be thought, is surely a cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving among comparatists. But it should not be forgotten that throughout the early phase of modern African literary scholarship—say, until the mid-sixties—the general topicality of African affairs, as independence was coming closer or becoming a reality, made it practically impossible for literary study to avoid preoccupations and

stances which were often more appropriate to journalism, sociology or anthropology than to the traditional literary approach, whether critical or historical. In fact, as the greater part of the creative writing that came pouring out of Africa in the wake of World War II focused on the struggle against colonial enslavement and its racialist "justifications" with the view of imposing a reassessment of and a new respect for Africa's hitherto denied identity—purposes which have admittedly little to do with art for art's sake—it is perhaps surprising that the truly scholarly approach to this new field of research gained at a tremendous pace, not only in bulk but also in quality. All the more so as few established scholars and experienced academics felt inclined to venture into the murky (perhaps murderous!) darkness of Africa's unmapped literary jungle.

The greater part of the fast-growing scholarly output dealing with African literature in European languages was concerned with critical and interpretative analysis. But after Jahn's *Bibliography* of 1965 had demonstrated the volume and variety of imaginative writing produced in Africa, and after the introduction of a special heading for "African Literature" in the *MLA Annual Bibliography* in 1966 had testified to the increasing quantity, size and sophistication of African literary scholarship, the need was felt for general overviews and historical surveys chronicling the early stirrings of this nascent literature: a unique opportunity in the whole history of literary studies. During the decade 1966–76, this ambition resulted in four remarkable attempts, which illustrated the difficulty of the task as well at its urgency. Here too, Janheinz Jahn confirmed his status as a pioneer with his *Geschichte der neoafrikanischen Literatur* (1966),[10] which took on the impossible task of dealing in a volume of less than 300 pages not only with African literature proper (in European and in African languages), but also with black writing from the Americas, including Brazil and Cuba, and with oral art on both sides of the Atlantic! In the course of the ensuing years a Hungarian scholar, Tibor Keszthelyi, attempted a less rambling survey, *Az afrikai irodalom kialakulása és fejlődése napjainkig* (African literature from the beginnings to the present day, 1971) and a group of three Czech scholars, Vladimír Klíma, Karel F. Růžička and Petr Zima, jointly authored *Literatura černé Afriky* (1972), which was translated as *Black Africa: Literature and Language* (1976).[11] This work was wisely limited in scope to sub-Saharan Africa, and as two of the joint authors were specialists in African linguistics, its coverage of vernacular writing was more comprehensive and cogent than Jahn's could possibly have been. In 1974 O. R. Dathorne came out with his bulky *The Black Mind: A History of African Literature.*[12] As individual wisdom increases with communal experience, Dathorne, who had been following closely the growth of African writing in European languages almost since its inception, devoted his more than 500 pages solely to this corpus with only two chapters of extraneous matter: a lengthy but rather random discussion of "written indigenous literatures" and a brief chapter on Africa as a theme in Caribbean literature. Finally, *La Littérature néo-africaine* (1976) by Almut Nordmann-Seifer achieved welcome concentration by eliminating any consideration of the Western hemisphere, except for Aimé Césaire. A disciple of Jahn, she found it necessary to start with a chapter on

[10] See my review in *Revue des Langues Vivantes*, 33 (1967), 416–422.
[11] See my review in *Research in African Literatures*, 10 (1979), 97–102.
[12] See my review in *Africana Journal*, 6,1 (1975), 26–27.

Bantu-language writings in Southern Africa, but, for some reason, mentioned none of the many other African languages that have been put to creative purposes.

Thanks to the courage, and the failure, of these adventurous pioneers, it had become clear by the mid-seventies that a general historical overview of African literature in European languages, taking full account of the complex variety in even this limited portion of Africa's literary output, could no longer be undertaken by any single scholar. Only a team, and a fairly substantial one, might have a chance of covering successfully a field which has grown to enormous proportions since the middle of the century, and to bring some orderliness into a diversity which resulted not only from the varied forms of the European impact, but also from the pre-existing inherent multiplicity of local cultures and from the impact on literature of the different policies adopted in the newly independent states. Hence the idea of devoting one or two volumes of the "Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages" to the African continent.

The HALEL project (History of African Literature in European Languages), as it came to be known, was informally conceived in the course of a conversation between Henry Remak and the present editor at the F.I.L.L.M. Conference held in Sydney in 1975. It was officially confirmed and accepted as part of the "Comparative History of Literature in European Languages" at the International Comparative Literature Association congress held in Budapest in 1976. In the ensuing months, contact was made with 105 scholars representing in all 22 countries: 13 declined to co-operate; 12 agreed to contribute a paper but failed to prepare it and had to be replaced; only 7 submitted papers which the editor felt were not up to the required standards.

Before a start could be made, however, and each contributor could be allocated the literary acres he/she was to clear, it was the editor's responsibility to take a decision on two basic methodological issues.

The first problem was of a semantic order. Indeed, Countee Cullen's pathetic question, "What is Africa to me?" sounded remarkably apposite. Everybody knows that Africa is a continent with a neat coastline and a number of offshore islands. In the present context, it is permissible to disregard Madagascar's refusal to be considered part of Africa: the fate of Malagasy writing in French has all too obviously been linked with that of the former French colonies on the mainland. Ideally, French writing in North Africa should be included within the purview of HALEL. But although this literature has been carefully mapped out by Jean Déjeux and a few others, little is known about the relationships which may or may not have existed between French-language writers from the Maghreb and from Sub-Saharan Africa. The influence of the ideas of Frantz Fanon, a Martinican sociologist living in Algeria, seems to be an exceptional phenomenon, and though there are rather striking thematic similarities between Maghrebi and black African writing in French, due to the similarity in the colonial situation, it has not seemed possible at the present stage to integrate Mediterranean Africa in our consideration: for the time being, it seems best to regard it as part of the Muslim world, which is not to overlook the historical fact that Islam has also made and is still making deep inroads into Sub-Saharan Africa. For the literary historian of Africa, this situation raises a problem which cannot be solved in the present state of research and must therefore be shelved until more propitious times.

From the first, the purpose of the HALEL project was to deal with creative writing in European languages produced south of the Sahara. This corpus, however, is typically what mathematicians call a fuzzy set. Although it is geographically well defined, there is neither compelling objective evidence nor unquestioned agreement as to which works and which authors constitute "African literature". True, there is a general consensus that the "colonial literature" produced by European writers who spent some time in Africa and made literary use of their African experiences for purposes of exoticism or for other reasons, should not be regarded as "African literature". But the distinction between "colonial" and "African" is not always easy to define, let alone to maintain: from Albert Camus to Karen Blixen, to Castro Soromenho, to Luandino Vieira, to Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer, obviously white writers are liable to exhibit considerable variety in the nature and strength of their connection with Africa. Once Mediterranean Africa (including Libya and Egypt) had been removed however reluctantly from HALEL's proper study, the next question that arose was whether race, as manifested in skin colour, could be regarded as a valid criterion.

It was Senghor, it seems, who, during the decade following World War II, gave currency to the French compound "négro-africain" in a variety of cultural contexts.[13] It was presumably intended to denote the difference between Black Africa and Arab Africa, but it soon became common usage among francophone scholars, probably because of the shrewd ambiguity of its connotations: the prefix "négro-"suggests that writers of African inspiration who are not negroes are excluded; read in a different way, it can be taken to mean that "la littérature négro-africaine" embraces not only African but also other "negro" writers such as the francophone West Indians from Martinique, Haiti, Guadeloupe and French Guyana. Nor is the prefix to be understood with any degree of chromatic strictness; in compliance with normal usage, "negro" refers—like "black" in the United States—to what South Africans call "non-whites"; provided a person has a drop of negro blood, he/she is a member of the club, even though her/his colour may look immaculately roseate!

It is not surprising that this definition of African literature should have come from West Africa, which has hardly been affected by the type of racial complications that arose in Portuguese Africa, the Republic of South Africa and Zimbabwe, and to which we shall revert presently. In all likelihood, the reason is that the West African colonies, protected as they were by their climate and the dreaded mosquito were not colonies of settlement. With the exception of Senegal, they have never had a large European population and the proportion of mulattos is negligible. This may also account for the radicalism of some Nigerian critics, for whom African literature can only be literature

[13] Léopold Sédar Senghor, "La civilisation négro-africaine," in M. El Kholti *et al.; Les plus beaux écrits de l'Union française et du Maghreb* (Paris: La Colombe, [1947]), pp. 163–262. See also Senghor's later essays: "Langage et poésie négro-africaine," in *Poésie et Langage* (Brussels, Maison du Poète, 1954); "Esthétique négro-africaine," *Diogène* 16 (1956), 43–61; "L'esprit de la civilisation ou les lois de la culture négro-africaine," *Présence Africaine* 8/9/10 (1956), 51–65; "De la négritude: Psychologie du Négro-Africain," *Diogène*, 37 (1962), 2–16.

by blacks and should not even be subjected to appraisal by non-Africans because only black can understand black.[14]

That the equation African = black should raise no problems in West Africa—or, for that matter, in the greater part of East Africa and in the former French and Belgian colonies of Equatorial Africa—is easy to understand in view of the racial homogeneity of those vast areas. The situation is different in the former "provinces" of Portugal where, as a by-product of miscegenation and hybridization, a significant proportion of the literate population is in fact made up of mulattos. The majority of writers are mulattos illustrating a wide chromatic spectrum. Indeed, racial definitions based on skin colour seem so irrelevant in a country like Angola that one white writer born in Luanda was a member of Agostinho Neto's government and another white Portuguese, Castro Soromenho, has his place in Angolan literary history as the founder of the Angolan novel: such men, like Cape Verdean writers, who are all mulattos, cannot by any semantic stretch of imagination be described as "négro-africains", yet they are accepted, indeed hailed, by the local readership and critics as prestigious representatives of African literature in Portuguese.

The most delicate problem, however, is connected with the literature of the Republic of South Africa. The iniquity of the apartheid system has led to a hardening of antagonistic positions with highly undesirable results for both creative writing and literary scholarship. As the South African censorship will ban any literary work criticizing the system and any scholarly work discussing any banned book or any banned author, there has been a growing tendency among the black intelligentsia, both inside and outside the country, to retaliate by placing white South African writing under a sort of mental ban. Scholars that are unquestionably "négro-Africains" usually have a very cosmopolitan outlook, but few will care to mention, let alone analyse, such writing as has been produced by white South Africans other than those in the liberal tradition of Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer; while these scholars have shown considerable critical interest in banned non-white writers, they might refuse to regard white writers as "Africans" and in all likelihood they would deny that Afrikaans is an "African" language. As one speaker put it at a conference in Nairobi in 1974, after 1948 and the Nationalist Party's accession to power in Pretoria, "no one could afford to be impartial any more"[15]: matters of life and death are here at stake, by the side of which questions of literary appreciation and scholarly evaluation fade into sybaritic insignificance. Recalling the atrocities that have taken place in the R.S.A., it is not difficult to understand and even sympathize with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's denunciation of the Paton–Gordimer brand of liberalism,

[14] For an extreme polemical example, see Ayi Kwei Armah's review of American scholar Charles Larson's *The Emergence of African Fiction* wittily entitled "Larsony" in *First World*, 1,2 (1977). 50–55, where the Ghanaian novelist claims that "Western scholars, critics of African literature included, are nothing if not Westerners working in the interests of the West. Their ideas and theories are meant to reinforce these interests, not to undercut them".

[15] R. Gacheche, "South African Writing—A Brief Survey," in *Teaching of African Literature in Schools*, ed. E. Gachukia and S. Kichamu Akivaga (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978), vol. I, pp. 195–200.

> the white liberal's dream of a day when Black and White can love one another without going through the agony of violent reckoning. Liberalism has always been sugary ideology of imperialism, it fosters the illusion in the exploited of the possibilities of peaceful settlement and painless escape from imperialist violence which anyway is not called violence but law and order.[16]

This bitter distrust of everything white may be one of the reasons why any mention of the works and lives of white South African writers is conspicuously absent from the most basic scholarly tools: Jahn's *Bibliographies* and *Who's Who,* Herdeck's *African Authors,* Lindfors' *Black African Literature in English* and even Roscoe's *Uhuru's Fire: African Literature East to South.* But it is equally revealing that South Africa's foremost black critic, Ezekiel Mphahlele has steadily refused to exclude white writers in English and in Afrikaans from the literature of his country.[17] Not even the exiled leaders of the African National Congress would be prepared to advocate driving the white population out of the country as an alien disrupting factor. Whether for good or, more probably, ill, history has shaped the Republic of South Africa into one country, albeit a polyethnic and a multiracial one, whose diverse populations willy-nilly influence each other in many respects: coming back to our topic it would be interesting to enquire how much Alan Paton's world-renowned *Cry, the Beloved Country* owes to the cheap edifying novellas that had been published previously in at least three Bantu languages. At any rate, the literary exponents of the various racial or ethnic or linguistic groups whose uneasy co-habitation gives the R.S.A. both its unenviable specificity and its tremendous potential for cultural cross-fertilization, could not but draw upon the single vast fund of common experience which, one may be pardoned to hope, will one day prove to have been the smithy where the soul of the nation has been forged.

To conclude this discussion: although fixing the limitations of the corpus which shall be here regarded as "African literature" inevitably entails a measure of arbitrariness, it has been considered safer, more congruent with the real, complex totality of sub-Saharan Africa, to refrain from exclusions based on skin colour, in full recognition that controversial marginal cases can never be entirely eliminated.

Once a modicum of precision has been achieved as to what traditional logic would call the extension and the comprehension of the concept "African literature" in the present context, an even more intricate problem arises: it has to do with the taxonomic principles that will make it possible to categorize or carve up the corpus into manageable sub-sets along as rational and practicable lines as can be devised. A mere glance at the table of contents of the more ambitious works that have tried to tackle African literature on a continental scale serves as a reminder that nascent literatures are bound to develop along the two primary dimensions of any living organism: time and space. In a work that purports to belong to "comparative *history*", the first criterion of categorization is bound therefore to be chronological. In this respect, the history of the relations between Africa and Europe—which is basic in any consideration of *African* literature in European languages—manifestly falls into two periods: the period when Africans were

[16] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "Literature and Society," ibid., pp. 36–37.
[17] See the two editions of *The African Image* (1962 and 1974).

overtly subjected to European power in the form either of the slave trade or of colonial imperialism, and the period after they had formally gained their independence. Although few would now be prepared to claim that the passage from colonial status to political independence brought instant freedom and equality to the populations concerned, it remains true that, in connection with literary developments, the event was bound to change the writers' outlook and the very content of their works. In a colonial society, where the alien power is overwhelmingly stronger than, and accepted as superior by, the oppressed, the written art is inevitably channelled towards the dead-end, of what Jahn aptly called *Zöglingsliteratur*: authors strive to imitate slavishly and often clumsily the carefully selected literary models to which they are exposed in the schools where they are taught the writing technique; they do their awkward best to absorb the assumptions regarding good and evil, truth and superstition, which make up the alleged superiority of Western civilization.

But this should not blind us to the existence of safety valves. Even when writing under stern Western eyes, a number of authors managed to voice a measure of protest: some were able to rely on the protection of liberal-minded Europeans; in other cases, the white masters themselves might regard writings designed to express unorthodox views about African "cultures", "pagan" beliefs and customs, or even the social structure of colonial society, as innocuous safety valves since the illiterate bulk of the native population had no access to them; as the colonial mind is often none of the brightest, African writers might shrewdly avail themselves of gaps in censorship procedures, or resort to esoteric forms of irony which only readers of their own status could grasp. There have been periods of tolerance, affording a degree of freedom of expression in this respect: during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, a number of freed slaves were thus enabled to express themselves most forcefully on the subject of slavery and the slave trade especially in the English language. In Africa, during a large part of the nineteenth century—before racialism became a respectable theory and a beginning was made with the ruthless colonial imperialism that was given free rein at the Berlin Conference—writers in English in Sierra Leone and along the Guinea Coast were allowed to express the black man's viewpoint in many respects, provided they did not advocate unchristian beliefs and mores. And so did vernacular (at the time, solely Xhosa) writers in South Africa until the early 1880s.[18] But the type of power relationship that resulted from the Berlin Conference, led to complete control, often with the enthusiastic co-operation of those members of the nascent intelligentsia who prided themselves on becoming black Europeans.

With independence, this sort of thing was bound to come to an end, so that there is every justification in this case for basing literary periodization on the political one. Lest it might be thought, however, that things are really neat, simple and clear-cut, a double caveat should be entered here. First, accession to independence, which might be more accurately defined as the abolition of government by a racially defined minority, did not take place everywhere at the same pace at the same date. The chronology of African independence in sub-Saharan regions began in 1957 in Ghana; by the turn of the decade

[18] See for example Albert S. Gérard, *Four African Literatures*, p. 41.

almost all British, French and Belgian colonies became self-governing; Spain gave up her small share of the Guinea coast in 1968. The Portuguese colonies had to wait until the passing of Salazar's dictatorship and its short-lived sequels to obtain their independence in the mid-seventies. While France gave up formal control over Jibouti at the end of the decade, it was not until 1980 that majority rule was installed in Zimbabwe. And as the eighties were dawning, the Republic of South Africa was still a colonial society (in the sense of the definition just given) of a particularly efficient, and therefore objectionable type. Obviously, then, the period of colonial domination over creative writing did not come to an end simultaneously throughout Africa, just as the various European languages that were to be put to literary uses were not introduced all at the same time. There is thus a blurred phase both at the beginning and at the end, and it is an incontrovertible fact that the "colonial" period of African literature in European languages came to an end sooner in West Africa (French and British), in French Equatorial Africa, in British East Africa, than it did in the territories under Portuguese rule, in Zimbabwe and in the R.S.A.: to assign any single date to the decolonization of African literature would amount to mechanical calendar-worship.

This would be all the more so as—and this is the second caveat—creative writing and imaginative writers did play a significant part in the decolonization process, at least in certain areas. For political emancipation was in each case the result of a long, multifarious struggle which it would be idle to attempt summarizing here. Focusing on the activities of the intelligentsia, however, one soon realizes that they did not take the same forms and directions everywhere. It is noteworthy, for example, that the introduction of the English language on a comparatively massive scale by freed slaves in Sierra Leone and Liberia during the early decades of the nineteenth century did not yield any significant amount of imaginative writing: the more learned among those black settlers produced mainly didactic works, sometimes of a polemical character, designed to spread better knowledge of Africa, its languages, customs and institutions. The purpose of writers such as Horton and Blyden was to dispel European ignorance, indifference and reluctance to waste money on exotic "savages". When the tightening grip of colonialism in its imperialistic post-Berlin form had stifled the ebullient intellectual life that had begun to emerge in Sierra Leone, it is equally significant to note that the new generation of intellectuals in the Gold Coast and Nigeria again favoured the same type of literature: a typical example is the first Ghanaian novelist, J. E. Casely-Hayford, whose only piece of fiction, *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), was simply a vehicle for the conveyance in an easily accessible form of the ideas which he had expounded in his treatises on traditional Fanti institutions. For reasons which are still awaiting investigation, the early black intelligentsia in British West and East Africa, from Casely-Hayford to Kwame Nkrumah, from Henry Carr to Nnamdi Azikiwe and including Jomo Kenyatta, considered that imaginative writing was less effective than discursive prose—legal, political or ethnographical—in furthering the cause of the continent, in making Africa first better known, then respected, and ultimately free. Before formal independence, creative writers in both areas were very few and such of their works as deserve mention were even fewer, except as interesting documents in the protohistory of African literature.

This was not the case everywhere, however, and inside Britain's African empire, the

emergence of two gifted writers of English in South Africa in the 1940s—Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele—also signalled the emergence of a type of prose fiction that could by no means be called *Zöglingsliteratur*. It might better be described as a literature of implicit protest for while its realistic picture of the non-whites' way of life in what was then still a dominion had been anticipated in much vernacular writing, the purpose of these two writers was not to evoke a feeling of moral guilt among their non-white readers by ascribing their characters' sufferings to moral weakness; nor was it overtly to advocate the upsetting of existing power relationship: it was rather to arouse and spread indignant awareness of the iniquity of the colonial system, in the essentially reformist hope that this might be conducive to gradual improvement in the life conditions of the underprivileged majority. As everybody knows, what occurred was precisely the reverse: the Nationalist Party's accession to power in 1948 made institutional segregation more rather than less severe, with the result that non-white writing of the sixties was primarily a literature of exile. The fact remains, however, that even under a particularly repressive colonial regime writers could emerge whose art was basically anticolonial since their writings were designed to bring out the iniquity of the system and of the interests and ideology on which it rested.

While the Union (later, the Republic) of South Africa proved to be an exception in Britain's African empire in fostering a large amount of increasingly explicit protest writing under colonial conditions, in a different sense it can be regarded as fairly representative. Indeed, broadly similar processes took place in "Latin" Africa, i.e. the colonies of France and of Portugal, suggesting that between the period of colonial subjection and the period of political independence, a period might be discerned in the course of which imaginative writing was and still is found to be a useful medium in which to formulate and broadcast the African élite's articulate awareness of the dignity and consequently the rights of African cultures and societies, this being done while their countries were/are still subjected to colonial imperialism.

It would be rather difficult to assign a precise date to the beginning of this intermediate period. What South African leader Steve Biko was later to call "Black consciousness" had received full expression as early as the mid-nineteenth century in the voluminous works of Edward W. Blyden, a typical product of the pre-imperialistic phase in the evolution of European colonialism in Africa. Any such trends were inevitably silenced by the hardening of European colonial policy after Berlin. Nevertheless, the trickle of young Africans that somehow managed to study in Europe and the United States from the turn of the century and discovered there Europe's revulsion from cultural ethnocentricity, were bound to doubt the hitherto unquestioned concept of Western cultural superiority. This did not lead to any creative outburst in English but provided abundant inspiration for many writers in French and in Portuguese.

The coining of the word "caboverdeanidade" in 1935 was probably significant of the awakening of a regional consciousness within lusophone Africa. More important, it was during the same decade that Senghor and Césaire met in Paris, an encounter which was to give birth to the concept of negritude: the impulse that was prompting the non-fictional prose writings of such as Jomo Kenyatta or Kwame Nkrumah was also at work among the francophone and lusophone poets of Africa. It reached fruition

during the first post-war decade, when Cape Verdean writers founded the literary journal *Certeza,* when Angolan poets—including Agostinho Neto—launched the nationalistic cultural movement "Vamos descobrir Angola" and when Léopold Senghor published his *Anthologie de la poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* with Jean-Paul Sartre's epoch-making preface, "Orphée noir".

After their resounding defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the French, too, were compelled to acknowledge what the British had known for many years, *viz.*, that the old type of imperialism with overt control of countless millions of non-white people overseas, was a thing of the past. The political outspokenness of the poetry and prose fiction that were published by African writers in Paris in the fifties provides ample evidence that their authors were unfettered minds, even though their countries might still be technically under French rule. In other words, like the British- and American-trained African lawyers, anthropologists and social scientists, the francophone intellectuals were mentally decolonized. They were eager to proclaim the values of their cultures and determined to wrench the tools of self-government from the hands of those who were still their masters. Indeed, the literary explosion of the fifties in French heralded the rapid growth of imaginative writing in European languages throughout independent Africa.

The exertions of the African students—black, white and mulatto—who used to meet at the *Casa dos estudantes do império* in Lisbon were not crowned with the same immediate success, literary and otherwise, as those of their opposite numbers in francophone countries. Although they occasionally managed to elude the censors' scrutiny and to issue a few collections of protest poetry and some pieces of realistic prose fiction, any attempts at political emancipation were suppressed with the utmost ruthlessness by the Salazar government. The activist stance of many black, white and mulatto African writers from the Portuguese colonies caused them to suffer a literary fate more like that of their South African than of their French colleagues: a considerable proportion of their writing was done in exile and in concentration camps; much of it remained unpublished until the Portuguese revolution of 1974 led to the foundation of five independent republics in Africa.

The period of independence, then, as reflected in imaginative writing, was preceded by a phase of crucial importance which was, from a political point of view, still part of the colonial era. Yet it was during those years that imaginative writing reflected overt discontent with the colonial system and proclaimed the revaluation of African cultures as against the racialist contempt that had prevailed since Gobineau. It helped pave the way (sometimes, as in the case of negritude, in a decisive manner) for a process of self-assertion which was not only verbal or intellectual, but also political. It seems therefore permissible from the historical point of view to divide any diachronic account of African literature into three parts, remembering all the while that no single common dating should be expected for the beginning and end of any of them.

The second dimension of African literary history is related to the location of its component parts in space. Both aspects are interconnected, for the manner in which African literature and literary studies developed in time seems to have conditioned the manner they developed in space. Thanks to negritude the African literature that first came under the scrutiny of informed world opinion was written in French; to this

literature also Lilyan Kesteloot devoted the first significant scholarly work to deal with African writing, her 1960 Brussels dissertation *Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature* (first printed in 1963). After this, and after Thomas Melone's *De la Négritude* (1962), many essays and a number of books dealing solely with francophone writing were published by French, African and West Indian cognoscenti such as Claude Wauthier (1965), Edouard Eliet (1965), Robert Pageard (1966), Robert Cornevin (1970 and 1976), Jingiri Achiriga (1973), Jacques Chevrier (1974), Iyayi Kimoni (1975), Makhily Gassama (1978) and others. British scholars such as Antony Brench (1967) evinced an early interest, culminating in the most systematic survey to-date, Dorothy Blair's *African Literature in French* (1976).

That the first and foremost taxonomic principle with regard to space has to be linguistic is obvious. In the course of history, the whole of Africa came under the control of the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch, the English, the Spaniards, the Belgians, the Germans and the Italians. Each of them tried to get hold of as large a chunk of African soil as possible. Each colonial nation introduced its language as the sole idiom of culture and administration throughout its territories. As each colony was made up of several ethnic groups and as it has been the policy of the new African states to preserve the colonial boundaries, European languages are still the only means of national communication throughout black Africa, the only significant exception being Tanzania.

Not all the European languages thus imposed upon the continent at one time or another had the same history, literary or otherwise. The sudden emergence of a pleiad of francophone writers in West Africa and, to a considerably lesser extent, in Central Africa, represents just one pattern: the case of Dutch was totally different. The first Dutch settlers reached the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, at a time when the southern tip of the continent was entirely occupied by Bushmen and Hottentots; when they were joined thirty years later by three hundred French Huguenots fleeing religious persecution, the Dutch language prevailed and was used for writing a number of reports and diaries; at the same time, estrangement from the motherland led to linguistic alterations which were ultimately to result in a special dialect of Dutch. The obstinate pride of the "Boers" and their hostility to metropolitan centralism crystallized around *die tale,* their own dialect which they decided to turn into a written literary language. This trend was reinforced by cultural resistance to British imperialism and in due course, while standard Dutch gradually disappeared from African soil, Afrikaans became the only European literary language to be used solely in Africa! It is the mother tongue of many white and coloured writers, that has proved extremely prolific, and has been studied with almost religious devotion and thoroughness by local scholars.

But there are other interesting and unexpected developments connected with the growth of literature in sub-Saharan Africa. At the Berlin Conference, the Germans—whose missionaries and explorers had played a considerable part in the discovery and study of Africa and her languages, first under the aegis of the British Church Missionary Society—obtained Togoland, Cameroon, Namibia and part of East Africa as their share in the scramble for Africa. By the early years of the twentieth century they had founded several *Realschulen,* whose brighter pupils where expected to go to Germany for further study: this might have given rise to an African literature written in

German. But World War I shattered any such prospects as the spoils of Germany's empire were distributed (unevenly) among the Western Allies. Only a couple of creative works were written in German, even though memories of the German occupation remained remarkably vivid.

While the literary sterility of German colonization may safely be ascribed to its defeat and premature end, other reasons must be found for the paucity of creative writing in Spanish and its total absence in Italian. Several factors are involved. For example, Spain's only foothold in black Africa was the small area which gained independence as Equatorial Guinea; with its population of less than half a million, it was not likely that this tiny colony might give birth to any large number of writers, even though Lesotho, with a little more than a million inhabitants proved to be one of the most productive African countries as regards written literature in the vernacular. As to Italy, although it gained control of little-populated coastal areas in Eritrea and Somalia in the last decade of the nineteenth century, her mastery of the most important and promising part of her African empire, Ethiopia, lasted only five years (1936–41) and was therefore too short-lived for any genuine cultural changes, except negative ones, to be effected.

On the whole, however, the fundamental cause rested in educational policy, which depended not only on high-level decision-making in the metropolis, but also on its practical application in the field by the missionaries of various denominations who for a long time remained in complete charge of the colonial educational system. In this respect, the literary map of Africa reveals an intriguing divide between British Africa and what might be called for brevity's sake Latin Africa: the former, where schools were in the hands of Protestant missionaries from many countries, have produced an impressive amount of creative writing in the people's mother tongues, whereas in the latter the study and use of vernacular languages were efficiently discouraged.[19] While the first purpose of Protestant education was to enable Africans to read the Bible, a combination of Latin centralism with Roman-Catholic authoritarianism seems to have been more conducive to the successful assimilation of the élite which was one of the overtly proclaimed justifications for colonial policy in most "Latin" countries. It is quite possible that the peculiar international status of the Congo under Leopold II accounts for the early emergence of a Kikongo written literature under Swedish and American Protestant missionaries, while the later predominance of the Belgian Catholic church may go a long way to explain the very late appearance of creative writing in French in what had become the Belgian Congo and is now known as Zaïre.

Whereas the destruction of the Ethiopian élite in 1936 and the silencing of an Amharic literature which had been successfully developing for several decades tend to show that Latin centralism in its most extreme form, Italian fascism, was extremely detrimental to literary, and indeed intellectual, progress of any kind, it should be noted that the Portuguese "provinces" were something of an exception. Indeed, Portuguese, appearing as early as the sixteenth century seems to have been the very first European

[19] I have elaborated this point in "La politique coloniale et la formation des littératures vernaculaires en Afrique britannique," *Commonwealth Miscellanies*, 1 (1974–1975), 3–10.

language to be used by black Africans; a modern lusophone literature made a start in the middle of the nineteenth century, that is, almost at the time of the birth of English writing in West Africa. The growth of this literature throughout the twentieth century, even under the Salazar regime, may have been due in part to the activity of many mulatto authors—themselves the product of Portuguese tolerance of miscegenation—whose literary activities did not clash with the official policy of assimilation which a Brazilian sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, had dubbed "lusotropicalismo". On the other hand, whereas many African protest writers of Portuguese expression were imprisoned at one time or another, especially once the process of emancipation had begun in other parts of the continent, it must be admitted that the intrinsic obtuseness and fitful inefficiency of the secret police allowed a significant amount of unorthodox writing, especially poetry, to be published in Portugal and in Africa.

Although African writing in Portuguese is of long standing and has produced a number of meaningful works, it was sadly neglected outside Portugal until a couple of years after the five colonies had become independent republics. Because they were what remained of a once considerably larger Portuguese empire and because they were widely scattered over the continent, spreading from Cape Verde to Angola and Mozambique, African works were usually studied within the framework of *literatura ultramarina* (Amândio César, 1967) or on a strictly local scale as in Carlos Ervedosa's *A literatura angolana* (1963), José Rodrigues Júnior's *Poetas de Moçambique* (1965) or Norman Araujo's *A Study of Cape Verdean Literature* (1966). But as a result of the sense of a common Africanness that developed among creative writers in the course of the sixties, the output of lusophone Africa was later studied as a self-contained whole by such pioneering scholars as Manuel Ferreira in Portugal, Gerald Moser in the United States and Elena Rjauzova in the USSR.

The overwhelming importance of the linguistic parameter is of course largely due to the babelism inherent in the verbal art. But it is also justified by the fact that the medium is the message. Language is not neutral or transparent. The colonizer's language carries the colonizer's outlook, which in turn determines the colonizer's policy. It is no accident that francophone Africa's rejection of colonization was voiced most eloquently by creative writers rather than by lawyers or anthropologists as was the case in anglophone Africa; or that the concept of negritude, which played such a conspicuous role in the cultural and, consequently, political emancipation of the continent was most convincingly elaborated in Paris: the characteristically French emphasis on *belles-lettres* on the one hand, on watertight rational thinking on the other, is here easily recognizable. And the core of truth in Mphahlele's slightly caustic observation that "the French-speaking intellectual often feels superior to *les Africains anglophones* in a measure that corresponds to the high esteem the French have for their own culture"[20] can be traced to the eighteenth century, when French seemed to be destined to take over the place of Latin as *the* universal language of modern times. Perhaps even more immediately important, the colonizer's language is the carrier of a specific literary tradition which was transmitted to the indigenous élite through the school curriculum. Writers in British

[20] Ezekiel Mphahlele, *Voices in the Whirlwind and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 183.

Africa were nurtured on Shakespeare, the Romantic poets and Victorian novels, not to mention the edifying, sentimental fiction of Bertha M. Clay and Marie Corelli provided for light reading. Their French-speaking colleagues were reared on the heroics in Corneille and Alexandre Dumas and on the classical prosody of the Parnassians. Early writers in Portuguese did their best to emulate Camoëns while the more realistic fiction of their successors was largely influenced by the Brazilian Nordeste writers.

While, then, the linguistic criterion is not one of purely formal convenience but relates intimately to the manner in which African literatures echoed, each in its own way the Western impact on local cultures, the fact that large areas in sub-Saharan Africa are united in the use of a single European language is no sufficient reason for viewing them as homogeneous sets.

Moore's little book, which rightly dealt with four francophone authors gave well-merited attention to Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola, the only anglophone West African writers of the day. Although Peter Abrahams from South Africa was undoubtedly one of the first black Africans to become a professional novelist, the overall lead by West Africa in the foundation of black writing in English was responsible for a sizable number of regional studies such as those of Judith I. Gleason (1965) and Oladele Taiwo (1968), both of whom made a not very successful effort to deal simultaneously with French and English writing from West Africa. Anglophone authors, however, were the focus of later, more successful analyses such as Adrian Roscoe's (1971) or Emmanuel Obiechina's (1975).

As to Eastern Africa, it is a matter of historical fact that it was last to take its place on the scene of African literature in English, largely thanks to the encouragement of already established black authors from West and South Africa. Although the phrase "East Africa" applied in colonial times to an "inter-territorial" entity comprising Uganda, Kenya and present-day Tanzania, it would seem that for purposes of literary classification, Eastern Africa should also include Zambia and Malawi: from 1954 to 1963, these two countries were part of the Central African Federation under the names of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, together with Southern Rhodesia. But while Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, as a colony of settlement, had closer links with South Africa, the literary development of English in Zambia and Malawi was more intimately connected first with Makerere College in Uganda, and later with the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Throughout the vicissitudes of history, East African intellectuals, writers and scholars have maintained some sense of kinship. Until the late seventies at any rate, they often preferred to present themselves as East Africans rather than Kenyans, Ugandans or Tanzanians and scholars like Chris Wanjala, Peter Nazareth or Pio Zirimu have written or edited several collections of essays dealing exclusively with East Africa.

While this regional parameter, then, offers a taxonomic pattern which has been fruitfully utilized in the past, yet the very case of East Africa illustrates the influence of another element, which tends to bring literary Africa into line with the European tradition: the principle of nationhood. After independence was proclaimed in the early sixties, the three countries that the British colonial authorities had tried to unify on an inter-territorial basis soon fell apart, as their political regimes were utterly dissimilar and

at times mutually hostile. It is of some importance to observe that the differences between the three successor states were closely reflected in the character and development of their imaginative literatures. President Nyerere's nationalist policy of promoting Swahili accounts for the dearth of creative writing in English in Tanzania as compared with the rapid growth and modernization of Swahili literature; the chaos brought to Uganda by Idi Amin Dada less than ten years after the country had become independent was responsible for the fact that Ugandan writers, who had brought a signal contribution to the growth of anglophone writing, were compelled to flee into exile, many of them to neighbouring Kenya; as to this last country, the memories of the Mau Mau movement and its repression provided the rising Kenyan literature with a highly specific theme, but it soon became the most prolific producer of imaginative writing in Eastern Africa, its output being comparable only to that of Nigeria.

Such observable, definable distinctions emphasize the growing importance of national specificity. As the decades go by and Africa's contribution to world literature increases in bulk and quality, it becomes increasingly clear that underneath the Panafrican ideal to which everybody must pay at least lip-service, each newly independent state is striving to create a sense of national identity and solidarity among its polyethnic, multilingual population. Because of its societal character, literature, especially drama and the novel, by discussing the specific national forms of existential problems that are common to the greater part of sub-Saharan Africa, can of course powerfully contribute towards the formation of national consciousness among such strata of the population as are sufficiently literate in English. And although it would be quite incongruous to speak of literature reflecting a "national character" in the sense in which the phrase is traditionally used when dealing with European literature, it stands to reason that the directions a country's literature is bound to take are largely influenced by its society, which is itself shaped by its leaders' policies: Kenyan society under Kenyatta proved conducive to the flowering of a prosperous and diversified literature in English, whereas Nyerere's policy in Tanzania was more favourable to Swahili. Nor is it by accident alone that Nkrumah's Ghana failed to stimulate the extraordinary literary effervescence which was characteristic of Nigeria in the early sixties. The historical past, too, is often responsible for specific features of the national identity: if Senegal has been occupying a leading position in the history of francophone writing throughout black Africa, that is so not only because of the dynamic personality of President Senghor, but also because the influence of the French language and civilization has been prominent at any rate in the country's coastal towns since as early as the seventeenth century.

The birth of "national literatures" in Africa was not recognized until the seventies, and then in a manner as embryonic and tentative as were the literatures themselves. This awareness was primarily due to scholars from the socialist countries, presumably because of ideological concern with the newly independent states as separate political entities. The trend was initiated in the USSR in 1964 with substantial essays by V. N. Vavilov on Ghanaian and by V. V. Ivasheva on Nigerian literature. These were soon followed by such book-length surveys as Vladimír Klíma's works on the Nigerian novel (1969) and on South African fiction (1971) and Jarmila Ortová's book on the novel in Cameroon (1972). While the Czech authors of *Black Africa* were the first to avail themselves

of the national parameter in a continent-wide survey, Cornevin followed their example in 1976 in his general overview of francophone writing, and by the end of the seventies, Western scholars had written or edited several books dealing with the literatures of single countries, especially Nigeria and (somewhat unexpectedly) the Congo.

There are two reasons why the existence of "national literatures" was not acknowledged at an earlier date. One is that before any country can be recognized to have produced a national literature, it must indeed have produced it. Even by the early eighties, several countries in Africa had not yet brought forth a body of creative writing sizable enough for the concept to be usefully or justifiably applied. Their literary output is more easily discussed in the context of a wider regional area.

The other reason is of far greater importance, for it lies in the mental habits created among scholars by the continent-wide or all-black ideologies such as Panafricanism or negritude, which in turn derived from the requirements of a unified struggle against colonialism. The shrewdest analysis of this phenomenon was made by Frantz Fanon:

> L'intellectuel colonisé qui décide de livrer combat aux mensonges colonialistes, le livrera à l'échelle du continent. Le passé est valorisé. La culture, qui est arrachée du passé pour être déployée dans toute sa splendeur, n'est pas celle de son pays. Le colonialisme, qui n'a pas nuancé ses efforts, n'a cessé d'affirmer que le nègre est un sauvage et le nègre pour lui n'était ni l'Angolais, ni le Nigérien. Il parlait du nègre. Pour le colonialisme, ce vaste continent était un repaire de sauvages, un pays infesté de superstitions et de fanatisme, voué au mépris, lourd de la malédiction de Dieu, pays d'anthropophages, pays de nègres. La condamnation du colonialisme est continentale. L'affirmation par le colonialisme que la nuit humaine a caractérisé la période antécoloniale concerne l'ensemble du continent africain. Les efforts du colonisé pour se réhabiliter et échapper à la morsure coloniale, s'inscrivent logiquement dans la même perspective que celle du colonialisme. L'intellectuel colonisé qui est parti très loin du côté de la culture occidentale et qui se met en tête de proclamer l'existence d'une culture ne le fait jamais au nom de l'Angola ou du Dahomey. La culture qui est affirmée est la culture africaine.[21]

Nor did this generalizing attitude affect black protest only: white opponents of racialist contempt for Africa and her culture(s) were likewise impelled to argue on an all-black and/or continent-wide basis. Well-known examples are Placide Tempel's *Bantu Philosophy* (first printed in the original Dutch, 1946; French translation, 1949; English translation, 1959) or Janheinz Jahn's *Muntu* (original German, 1958; French and English translations, 1961). Students of the new African literatures had to follow in their wake, was it only because there was no other workable framework. But twenty years after independence, it had become crystal-clear that this blurred vision shared by colonialists and anti-colonialists alike could not be maintained and was bound to make room for a more *nuancé* perception of the rich diversity that characterizes African societies and their cultural production.

[21] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspéro, 1961; new ed. 1968), p. 145.

Indeed, to this battery of criteria—diachronic, linguistic, regional, national—more sophisticated research may have to add yet another, if actual literary developments warrant it. All indications at present point to the earnest desire of African authorities to perpetuate the borderlines between the independent states which had been established by the colonizers: any departure from the status quo might lead to a new scramble for Africa in the form of a generalized civil war on a continental scale. In many ways, intellectuals and in particular creative writers are aware of this necessity and do what they can to foster and/or bolster a sense of nationhood in their local readers. On the other hand, a quarter-century of independent history dotted with military coups, tribal confrontations and civil wars makes it clear that for many Africans what is called in sociological parlance the "reference group", the collectivity to which he feels himself to belong, is not the new-fangled state of which he is a citizen, but his ethnic group, to which the name of "tribe" is usually attached when dealing with pre-industrial societies, although African "tribalism" corresponds most closely to the "regionalism" that has been growing for some time in Western Europe.

Writers' attitudes in the face of tribal allegiances are often ambiguous. Although the negritude concept with its passionate regard for Africa's tribal past was born among francophone black students, it is usually difficult to find out to which "tribe" a writer from French or Portuguese Africa belongs. While most of them undoubtedly have feelings of veneration and love for the tribal past, tribal beliefs, tribal customs, they seem to feel that all this is in some way uncivilized and *passé*, even if good enough for literary exploitation. A different attitude prevails in former British Africa, which has generated the only book-length study to deal with the literature produced by a "tribe" both in its own language and in English: Ernest Emenyonu's *The Rise of the Igbo Novel* (1978). This approach is still exceptional. Nevertheless the tribal affiliation of anglophone writers is usually a matter of public knowledge.

Furthermore, it is often possible to pinpoint specific differences among various ethnic groups in their contributions to the literature of the country state to which they all belong. While the Hausa's contribution to Nigerian literature in English is negligible, the Igbo are responsible for an important proportion of novels in English and have written little in their own language; the Yoruba seem to stand midway between these two extremes as they have generated an important literary corpus, especially drama, both in English and in the vernacular. There are likewise obvious dissimilarities in style, mood and themes between Ganda and Acoli writing in English in Uganda, between Kikuyu and Luo English writing in Kenya. It would certainly be a mistake to ignore this ethnic parameter altogether when mapping out the literature of any one of Africa's modern countries, even though there is a definite possibility, on the eve of the twenty-first century, that an irrepressible wave of westernization, industrialization and urbanization may engulf the living diversity of Sub-Saharan Africa and cause her writers' preoccupations and themes to fall into line with the standardized criteria that hold sway over the literature of economically "developed" countries.

By applying as rigorously as possible the five parameters thus defined to the literary production of Sub-Saharan Africa as delineated above, it is hoped that this book will offer a survey that is sufficiently exhaustive from the point of view of both history and

geography, and at the same time brings out in an intelligible way the basic patterns in the development of African literature. It is hoped that the closely co-ordinated labour of some sixty scholars will crown the meritorious endeavours of such pioneers as Jahn and Dathorne. On the other hand, it is also hoped (somewhat less ambitiously) that the work will supply a sound foundation for future research.

It is with a view to encouraging and facilitating further study that abundant bibliographical notes have been provided. Admittedly, in order to save time and newsprint, it has not seemed advisable to do this exhaustively and systematically. The reader is first referred to such admirable tools as Janheinz Jahn and Claus Peter Dressler, *Bibliography of Creative African Writing* (1971) which covers the field to 1970, or Thérèse Baratte *et al., Bibliographie des auteurs africains de langue française* (4th ed., 1979), which is regularly updated. Secondary bibliography relating to English writing until 1976 is adequately covered in Bernth Lindfors, *Black African Literature in English: A Guide to Information Sources* (1979). For lusophone literature until 1975, the reader will find all the information he needs in Gerald Moser and Manuel Ferreira, *A Bibliografia das literaturas africanas de expressão portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1983). And of course no one can do without constant recourse to the relevant section of the annual *MLA International Bibliography of Books and Articles on the Modern Languages and Literatures*. While the bibliographical appendix to the present book is designed to illustrate the birth and growth of African literary scholarship until the late seventies, the purpose of the bibliographical footnotes is to update the above-mentioned works and to list as much relevant information as is feasible concerning French writing, which bibliographical scholars have hitherto neglected most unduly.

Biographical information has likewise been kept to a minimum: for the majority of writers dealt with in this book, biographical data are of the most rudimentary kind. They are freely available in Janheinz Jahn, Ulla Schild and Almut Nordmann, *Who's Who in African Literature* (Tübingen: Erdmann, 1972) and in Donald E. Herdeck, *African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing 1300–1973* (Washington, D. C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1973).

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PART ONE

UNDER WESTERN EYES

CHAPTER 1

EARLY CONTACTS

In the course of the fifteenth century, scientific progress in Western Europe led to sensational technological improvements especially in nautical matters. These in turn enabled a number of courageous adventurers to satisfy their curiosity and/or their masters' covetousness by discovering, exploring and conquering areas of the globe the very existence of which had sometimes remained unsuspected. Under the leadership of Henry the Navigator (1394–1460) the Portuguese played a pioneering role in these discoveries. One of their major achievements was to establish Western contact with Black Africa, when Portuguese sailors reached the River Senegal in 1445 as a first step towards the discovery of a sea-route to India. From then on, relationships between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa were to gain uninterruptedly in scope, in frequency and in intensity, though not in harmony. For, unfortunately, the scientific and technological gap between black and white kept increasing as well, so that the power-relationship between the two continents was marked by an element of imbalance that fed upon itself and went on growing as decades and centuries went by.

From the beginning of the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, the staple commodities that were the object of such trade as the workings of the free market gave rise to worthless trinkets and weapons, which gratified the pride and greed of black coastal tyrants, and millions of black human beings who were sent overseas as sturdy manpower for the white man's newly acquired plantations. Though this arrangement might have been mutually satisfactory to slave traders, both white and black, it was hardly conducive to spiritual enrichment on either side. Very often, however, the compensating mechanisms inherent in the dialectics of life and therefore of history provide unforeseen positive consequences to processes of apparently unmitigated evil. One of the most significant results of the slave trade was the constitution of a sizable black diaspora in the Western hemisphere, and although its members were most shamelessly exploited and oppressed, their own vitality and the power of their host country gave them, in the course of time, a measure of cultural influence that was out of all proportion to their numbers and physical or economic power.

Diaspora writing is not the concern of this book. But in Africa and for some of those who were actually born there, even the period of slavery was not altogether unproductive. To begin with, there is some reason to think that Euro-African contacts as inaugurated in the fifteenth century might have developed differently: indeed, during the first

few decades, the seeds of a Luso-African literature were really sown, even though they were soon blighted. Secondly, slavery was of several kinds, and whereas it reached its most degrading forms in the colonial territories, Europe itself knew a milder form of bondage from which benevolence, albeit of a paternalistic kind, was no more excluded than it was from the institution as practised in Greek antiquity or in parts of the Islamic world: as the Abbé Henri Grégoire first showed in 1808,[1] a number of slaves received sufficient education and literary training to become writers. Thirdly, slavery in time became obsolete both because of the development of industrial capitalism and as a result of the growth of enlightened humanitarianism in the eighteenth century: the number of Negro authors grew in a way that can be regarded as fairly dramatic and their writings became steadily more outspoken as they played a more active part in the emancipation of their brethren.

[1] Henri Grégoire, *De la littérature des Nègres* (Paris, Maradan, 1808).

GERALD MOSER

1. THE PORTUGUESE IN AFRICA

Being the first Europeans since the fall of the Roman Empire to colonize the black peoples of Africa, the Portuguese became also the first to exert an influence in such domains as commerce and warfare on the one hand, religion and language on the other. They came filled with all the zeal and greed but also the curiosity, daring and sense of human worth that characterized Renaissance man in southern Europe, where classical antiquity and Catholic Christianity remained intimately wed. Their advance was very swift: in a little more than half a century, the Portuguese established bases and strongholds all along the African coast. After Senegal, the Guinea coast was reached about 1445. The Cape Verde islands were discovered during the following decade; previously uninhabited, they were used as a base for Portuguese enterprise on the mainland; they were peopled by an amalgamation of European settlers and slaves brought in from Guinea; as James Duffy points out, "the proportions of the amalgam are unknown, but certainly the African contribution was the greater. By the 1950 census seventy per cent of the Cape Verdian population was mulatto."[2] Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the islands of São Tomé and Principe were settled by sugar planters; they soon became the headquarters of a largely unofficial slave trade.

Once the Portuguese had established themselves securely along the Guinea coast and on the offshore islands, explorers began to move further south towards Central Africa. In 1482, Diego Cao discovered the estuary of the Zaïre river. In 1487, Bartolomeu Diaz doubled a cape which he called "of Good Hope" in his expectation that it pointed the way to the treasures of India. By the end of the century, Vasco da Gama was sailing along the Eastern coast of Africa, discovering the area that was later to become Mozambique.

It is easier to trace the earliest Portuguese impact on Africa in works of art, such as the beautiful bronzes of Benin representing soldiers bearing firearms and dressed in the typical garb of the early sixteenth century, than to detect it in what was a purely oral literature. However, traces of contacts can be found within the vast and still imperfectly explored treasure house of what was handed down as folklore to the African societies in our time. Did not a Portuguese recognize Afonso de Albuquerque, the sixteenth-century conqueror of Goa, India, in the hero of a tale told in northern Mozambique,

[2] James Duffy, *Portugal in Africa* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 33.

undoubtedly derived from accounts carried there by Indian traders?[3] The difficulty of dating such folk tales, or gnomic literature, or lyric and epic poetry is formidable since most of it does not contain specific allusions to historic figures or events. The difficulty can be overcome to some small degree by comparing versions preserved in Africa with others taken to the Americas by enslaved Africans. If both present the same Portuguese motifs, the chances are that they date back a century at least, to the time preceding the end of the transatlantic slave trade. Many folklorists have compared folk tale motifs, but even those who are most familiar with African lore in formerly Portuguese territories, such as Câmara Cascudo or Oscar Ribas, have applied the method to no more than a handful of motifs. Clearly, Portuguese and more generally European elements are common in the stories which Ribas gathered among African friends and relatives in Luanda, Angola: names, such as *Nzua* (João) and *Madia* (Maria), water spirits identified as sirens or mermaids, *Mwene Putu* (the Lord or King of Portugal) and his country, mischievous deities identified with the Devil. It remains to be decided whether these elements are old or recent.

As difficult to date is one of the most extraordinary survivals that has become part of the local folklore on the islands of São Tomé and Principe, the dramatizations of two stories from the cycle of Charlemagne. These *autos* (one-act plays) of Floripes and Carloto are performed annually with the aid of chapbooks printed and reprinted in the nineteenth century in Brazil and Portugal, but actually "introduced centuries ago", as their modern editor, Fernando Reis, maintains.[4] His claim rings true since similar dramatizations of the same stories are performed in widely scattered places: in Portugal, Brazil and south-western India.

Another source for some stories or legends is the old descriptions of African countries and their populations, which were written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One example is the Cape Verde in André Alvares de Almada's *Tratado breve dos rios de Guiné de Cabo Verde*; written in 1594 but not printed until 1733 in Lisbon, it contains the tale of the leper king of the Wolofs. Another is the Dominican friar João dos Santos' *Etiopia oriental* (Lisbon, 1609), in which he relates briefly some of the mythological and historical traditions of the countries ruled by the Kitewe and the Mwene Mutapa, such as the "Moorish" tradition linking the ancient stone fortresses called *zimbabwe* with the Biblical Queen of Sheba.

The early Portuguese historians of their country's overseas expansion offer anecdotal accounts of the Africans' reactions to their first Portuguese visitors. They tend to show Africans as surprisingly human—surprisingly because of the current prejudices about their "brutishness". Keen intelligence shone through the remarks of Budomel, king of the Wolofs, about the Christian Heaven, or the objections of Carámansa, a Guinean king to Portuguese plans for building the fortress that was to become Elmina, or the Kongo king Afonso's inquiries about the written laws of the Portuguese.[5] If only

[3] José Osório de Oliveira refers to this tale of why the *monhés* or Indian traders in Mozambique kill all lizards in his *Literatura africana* (Lisbon, 1944), p. xx.

[4] Fernando Reis, *Pôvô flogá* (São Tomé, 1969), p. 17.

[5] The observations of the Wolof king Budomel, reported by A. Cá de Mosto, of the Guinean king Carámansa, reported by João de Barros (*A Ásia*, decade I, bk. 3, ch. 2; Lisbon, 1621), and of King Afonso of the Congo, reported by Damião de Góis (*Crónica do Felicissimo Rei D. Manuel*, Pt. 4, ch. 3; Lisbon, 1656–57) will be found in António Brásio's compilation *Monumenta missionaria africana: África Ocidental* (Lisbon: Agencia Geral do Ultramar, 1953).

we had beside these anecdotes the Africans' own, presumably lost traditions of these first encounters!

Another prolonged sort of contact, the travels of African notables to Portugal, Rome, Brazil, and Holland, was relatively frequent. Among the travellers, one finds a Kongo youth who went to Lisbon in the sixteenth century and even opened a school there: "In the reign of King João III," writes Brother Luís de Sousa, "one native of the Congo Kingdom came to Lisbon. Being of a jet-black body yet of a conduct and soul as bright as crystal, he kept a public school at the castle, where he taught the humanities, being paid out of the royal exchequer and producing many good scholars."[6] Another African, who entered the priesthood, was a prince by the name of Miguel, eldest son of the Mwene Mutapa or Emperor of Mokarango in the seventeenth century; he became a Dominican friar, studied theology, obtained a master's degree, and ended his day in Goa, India, as vicar of the Church of St. Barbara.[7]

The earliest African writings in the Portuguese language, however, date from the very first decades of the Portuguese presence in the Kongo empire, whose vast territory on both sides of the estuary of the Zaïre river is now shared among the Congo Republic, Zaïre and Angola. The Portuguese established ambiguous relations with the local potentate, the Manikongo; while missionaries introduced Christianity and converted king Nzinga Nkuwu as well as his successor, who reigned as Afonso I (1507–1543), Portuguese slave traders engaged in increasingly profitable business to satisfy the growing demand for manpower on the São Tomé plantations and in the newly developing settlements in Brazil. A capital city was built at São Salvador with the help of Portuguese craftsmen. A son of the Manikongo Afonso I was appointed bishop in 1521 at the request of King Manuel of Portugal. And the earliest documents written by Africans in Portuguese are the letters which the black princes of the Manikongo wrote to the rulers of Portugal.[8] Through the formulas of sixteenth-century epistolary style permanent attitudes towards technically superior Europe may be discerned: an intense desire to improve the African position by obtaining teachers, goods, plants, animals, and weapons, manifested in repeated requests and complaints, and accompanied by expressions of hurt pride and deep-seated diffidence.

The disappointment that is increasingly apparent in these letters shows that the Kongo experiment—which has rightly been described as a "unique interlude", during which the Lisbon government really "sought to establish with an African potentate a relationship founded on alliance, plans for the spread of a Christian cultural pattern, and simple economic agreements"—deteriorated rapidly.[9] It soon lost even its semi-altruistic character, simply because Portugal could not muster the necessary resources to meet all her extensive commitments in Brazil and in East Africa, and the slave trade,

[6] Luís de Sousa, *História de São Domingos*, Pt. 2, bk. 6, ch. 10, edited by M. Lopes de Almeida (Porto: Lello & Irmão, 1977), I, p. 1123.

[7] Luís de Sousa, op. cit., part 4, book 4, chap. 14.

[8] The texts of some of the early letters of the Kongo kings to the kings of Portugal were reprinted in the collection *Gavetas da Tore do Tombo*, vol. IV (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Históricos, 1964).

[9] Duffy, op. cit., p. 38.

which had been the economic foundation of a more wide-ranging policy, soon became the sole preoccupation of Portuguese officials.

The slaves sold by the Manikongo had usually been captured among the more southerly Mbundu, whose monarch was known as the Ngola. Portuguese traders, especially from São Tomé, soon began to buy slaves directly from the Ngola, and during the second half of the sixteenth century, official interest turned away from the Kongo to focus on present-day Angola. But whereas relations with the Kongo kingdom had been of an essentially commercial nature, in 1571 a charter for the military conquest of Angola was issued in Lisbon. Although, "the prime emphasis of the charter was not on slave trade, nor on evangelisation, but on white colonisation",[10] attempts at promoting emigration to Angola in order to relieve Portugal of her overpopulation problems and economic poverty, while they were still pursued spasmodically, soon lost most of their importance as a conscious aim of colonial policy, and attention once more focused on the lucrative slave trade.

The missionaries, however, were not altogether oblivious of their educational duties. As early as 1607 a college was founded by the Jesuits in Luanda. During the second half of the seventeenth century, besides classes in Latin and casuistry for future priests, it offered courses in elementary education. It has been described as "a school in which many boys, large and small, study reading, writing and arithmetics, as well as Christian doctrine, with whom some little blacks mingle who also learn how to read, write, and say their prayers. And some who are free born continue their studies in order to become priests and take charge of the chapels in the interior, since they are natives of the country."[11] The kind of training given to those young blacks was not likely to stimulate any literary gifts they may have been endowed with. At the outset, then, authors born in Africa who, while living there or in Europe, wrote in Portuguese, were either of European or mixed descent. The peculiar permissiveness of the Portuguese towards hybridization often made them feel responsible for the education of their mulatto offspring.

Indeed, if we are to believe Janheinz Jahn, "the first author of African descent who wrote literary works in a European language" was a Portuguese mulatto by the name of Afonso Alvares, about whom little of interest is known except that he authored a few miracle plays *(autos)* about St. Anthony, St. Barbara, St. Vincent and St. James the Apostle. His dates are unknown, although it would seem that he was born in Portugal and was educated in the palace of the bishop of Evora. The only indication that has been preserved about his racial affiliation is to be found in an exchange of rather tasteless insults in verse between himself and his better-known contemporary and literary rival, Antonio Ribeiro Chiado (*c.* 1520–1591) who ungraciously described him as "a mulatto sprung from the rubbish-heap".[12] In all likelihood, his mother was one of the many

[10] David Birmingham, *The Portuguese Conquest of Angola* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 12.

[11] A. de Oliveira de Cadornega, *História geral das guerras angolanas*, (1681), ed. I. Matias Delgado (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1972). III, p. 13.

[12] Janheinz Jahn, *Geschichte der neoafrikanischen Literatur* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs Verlag, 1966) pp. 7, 19.

black slaves from Senegal and the Guinea coast whom the Portuguese monopoly over navigation with West Africa had brought to Portugal throughout the second half of the fifteenth century. They were numerous enough for the founder of modern Portuguese drama, Gil Vicente (*c.* 1470–1536) to have introduced a number of black characters in his plays for comic effect, partly through the funny kind of Afro-Portuguese pidgin they were made to speak.[13] Alvares, who belonged to the generation that followed Vicente's, did his best to imitate the master without having, as Aubrey Bell dryly commented, "a vestige of his lyrical genius or greater skill in devising a plot"; in fact, although he prided himself "that Chiado had nothing worse to throw in his face than the colour of his skin, [he] was certainly Chiado's inferior in wit and talent".[14] Nevertheless, although his plays apparently did not reach print until the beginning of the seventeenth century, some of them at least have been reprinted several times since.[15]

It was also during the first half of the sixteenth century that satirical poems were composed by one Captain Antônio Dias de Macedo who was born in Angola and was killed there in battle in 1648. One of these poems is preserved in a contemporary history, Cadornega's *História geral das guerras angolanas,* a work remarkable for first-hand information on life in Angola, gathered by its Portuguese author during over forty years spent as a soldier, settler and judge. Like any proud *conquistador,* he felt that the country he had helped to conquer and defend had become his own.

Of the religious orders, the Jesuits were doubtless most inclined towards literary pursuits, thanks to their rigorous training. Under the trying, unhealthy conditions then prevailing in the Portuguese outposts, they managed to write regular reports to their brethren in Portugal, in which they told of their missionary activities but inserted a good deal of ethnographic information that appealed to the European audience's curiosity about exotic lands. Some Jesuits composed poetry, such as the canto in the heroic metre by João Nogueira, which hailed a naval victory won in 1635 off the east coast of Africa. And they performed plays, probably in Latin, at their schools, as for example in Luanda in 1648, to celebrate the city's reconquest from the Dutch heretics.[16]

Personal misfortunes brought some poets to the African colonies, among them two prominent lawyers who were deported from Brazil for political offences. But neither the satirist Gregorio de Matos Guerra, who languished in Angola for a couple of years in the seventeenth century, nor Tomas Antônio Gonzaga, the celebrated author of touching love poems, banished to Mozambique around 1800, were able to stimulate any local talent with their presence, and they themselves wrote little during their involuntary African sojourns; nor did the merchants, physicians, and government clerks which Portuguese India supplied to Mozambique for centuries.

Mention should also be made of the meritorious fact that the early Portuguese missionaries did pay some attention to the local languages. Coming—in Brother Luís

[13] Paul Teyssier, *La Langue de Gil Vicente* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1959), pp. 230–243.

[14] Aubrey F. G. Bell, *Portuguese Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922, repr. 1970), p. 157.

[15] Afonso Álvares, *Auto de Santo Antonio,* with introduction and notes by J. de A. Lucas (Lisbon, 1948); I. S. Révah, "Edition de l'*Auto de Sam Vicente* d'Afonso Álvares," *Bulletin d'Histoire du Théâtre Portuguais,* 2 (1951), 213–253.

[16] Cadornega, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 23.

de Sousa's picturesque phrasing—like "clouds that cross seas and mountains to drench the lands of Africa with holy doctrine"[17] they recognized that their endeavours would gain in efficiency if they could address the natives in the latter's own languages. They reduced various languages to writing, such as the Kimbundu language of the Luanda region, in order to produce bi-, tri- and even quadrilingual catechisms, confession manuals, grammars and dictionaries.

The earliest catechisms seem to have been lost, such as the Franciscan friar Gaspar da Conceição's *Carthilha da doutrina crista em lingua do Congo* (Evora, 1555). The oldest catechism known to exist still is the Jesuit Father Mateus Cardoso's *Doutrina crista* in the same Kongo language (Lisbon, 1624). A Dominican is known to have composed catechisms in two Mozambican Bantu languages, those spoken in Tete and Sena respectively, two trading centers in the Zambezi valley to which the Portuguese had flocked. Written towards the end of the seventeenth century, they did not see print. Their manuscripts vanished.[18]

One of the first grammars was compiled by Pedro Dias, a Jesuit from Brazil. His little *Arte da língua de Angola* (i.e. Kimbundu) appeared in Lisbon in 1697.

Early contacts between Portugal and Black Africa were therefore an unsuccessful experiment in more senses than one. Not only did they fail to generate peaceful, mutually profitable relations between the two races, they led instead to forms of oppression and exploitation that were to prove stultifying for a long period of time. Furthermore, in the specific area of the written art, the linguistic initiatives of the early Catholic missionaries proved completely sterile. They could have laid the foundations for thriving African-language literatures. Unfortunately, what little cultural attention the Lisbon authorities gave to their colonies, even when they were dubbed "provinces", was rigidly ethnocentred, insisting on assimilation as the goal of their few schools. By the middle of the nineteenth century, when the literary awakening occurred, only a few Protestant missionaries, like Héli Chatelain from Switzerland in Angola, or a few poets like Eugénio Tavares on Cape Verde, were actively interested in promoting the literary use of the spoken tongue, whether Bantu or Creole: for more than a hundred years, creative writing in Portuguese Africa was to be solely in the language of the conquerors.

[17] Luís de Sousa, op. cit., part 3, book 4, chap. 2.
[18] The Mozambique catechisms are mentioned by Luís de Sousa, op. cit., part 4, book 4, chap. 14.

ALBERT S. GÉRARD

2. MODERN AFRICAN WRITING IN LATIN

From the middle of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had a *de facto* monopoly over trade relations with the West African coast. It was recognized *de jure* after the peace of 1479 between Alfonso V of Portugal and the Catholic monarchs of Spain. Portuguese sailors were the chief purveyors of black slaves, supplying not only Lisbon, but also several Spanish markets such as Valencia and Barcelona, and later Seville which became the most important slave market in Spain. Business was flourishing: it has been estimated that in the sixteenth century, the archdiocese of Seville had about 15,000 slaves for a population of half a million.[19] Not all these slaves were blacks; on the other hand, the archdiocese did not include the former kingdom of Granada which, until 1492, had been the last bastion of eight centuries of Islamic supremacy and where black slaves brought from the Sudan over the Mediterranean must have been proportionately more numerous.[20]

As one Argentine scholar has observed, the presence of a comparatively large number of black Africans in Portuguese and Spanish society accounts for the fact that the literatures of those two countries are distinguished by the abundance of Negro characters, which appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century in pre-dramatic dialogues in Portuguese and in Castilian.[21] Already at that early stage, the negro is mainly regarded—in Lemuel Johnson's graphic phrase—as "devil, gargoyle and buffoon".[22] Although a few writers exhibit some sympathy with the plight of the exploited and humiliated black, his main role is that of a stock comic character in drama. His main attribute is his language: significantly, a peculiar kind of Afro-Portuguese pidgin, which

[19] Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, "La esclavitud en Castilla durante la edad moderna", in *Estudios de historia social de España* (Madrid, 1952), p. 376.

[20] At any rate, this was true until the thirteenth century, when an important part of the Sudanese population had become Muslim and could therefore no longer be taken into slavery by the Arabs. The later predominance of white Christian slaves in Muslim Spain does not detract from the likelihood that blacks and mulattos must have been comparatively more numerous in Andalusia and especially in Granada than in other parts of Spain. See on this Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale I, Péninsule ibérique – France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955), especially pp. 181–247.

[21] Frida Weber de Kurlat, "El tipo del negro en el teatro de Lope de Vega: Tradición y creación," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 19 (1970), 337–359.

[22] Lemuel Johnson, *The Devil, the Gargoyle, and the Buffoon; the Negro as Metaphor in Western Literature* (Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat, 1971).

Spanish writers could aim, with double-barrelled maliciousness, both at the Africans and at the Portuguese.

The importance of this linguistic element in drama suggests that hasty deductions from literary image to social reality should be avoided. For it is a well-known fact that among the black population of the peninsula, there were many—whether slaves or freed men did not seem to matter much—who were able to speak perfectly decent Portuguese or Spanish. Those *negros ladinos*, as they were called, were granted certain privileges. But also, as P. E. Russell pointed out, "the *negro ladino* is rarely portrayed in literature because, in so far as he spoke Spanish or Portuguese correctly, he lacked what had been regarded from the start as an essential comic feature of the negro in literature;"[23] and Russell recalls, as an occasional and significant exception, a black singer and guitar player in Chiado's *Auto da natural invenção*, who annoys his employer by speaking correct Portuguese. Literature is little more than a system of verbal conventions, and it is often unwise to regard literary artefacts as faithful reflections of a social situation. It appears from some of Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* that slave owners often behaved in a most inhuman fashion towards their Negro slaves, branding their marks on their faces as if they were cattle. But at about the time the author of *Don Quijote* was composing those short stories, a German visitor to Ayamonte, on the Spanish side of the Portuguese border could observe that the slave women from São Tomé were "muy hermosas y amorosas", so that they often found husbands among the citizens of the town![24] Such items of information ought to be coordinated into a far more complex whole. This chapter, however, is simply concerned with one particular fact: the meteoric career of a Negro slave who was brought to Baena, halfway between Cordoba and Granada, towards 1530, when he was about 12, entered the service of an important aristocratic family whose most illustrious member had been one of Spain's best generals, Gonzalo Fernandez, "el Gran Capitan", and ended up as professor of Latin at the University of Granada. The story of Juan Latino is very well known and does not need to be recounted here in detail.[25]

When he was engaged as a page in the service of the Gran Capitan's grandson, the third duke of Sesa, then in his sixth year, his main task was presumably to act as a play-fellow and a constant companion, even while the child was having his lessons. Later, after the family had moved to Granada, the young Negro would accompany his master to the cathedral school and to the university of Granada. Being more strongly motivated, and probably brighter, than the third duke, he attained such proficiency in Latin and even in Greek that his master freed him so that he could pursue his studies at greater leisure. Juan got his bachelor's degree in 1546 and the title of *Licenciado* in 1557. When a chair of Latin grammar fell vacant in 1565, he was appointed to it thanks

[23] P. E. Russell, "Towards an Interpretation of Rodrigo de Reinosa's poesía negra'" in *Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age Presented to Edward M. Wilson*, ed. R. O. Jones (London: Tamesis, 1973), pp. 225–245.

[24] Ibid., p. 233.

[25] Latino was awarded a few lines in Hoefer's *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* (Paris, 1859) and two columns in the *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Barcelona, n.d.). For more recent information, see Antonio Marín Ocete, *El negro Juan Latino* (Granada: Guevara, 1925), and Valurez Burwell Spratlin, *Juan Latino: Slave and Humanist* (New York: Spinner Press, 1938).

to the protection of the archbishop of Granada. This was the acme of his academic career.

Meanwhile, his reputation as a scholar and a man gifted with such more mundane talents as uncommon musical ability, had introduced him into a few distinguished local families including that of one Don V. Carvajal, who was in charge of administering the duke of Sesa's estate. Juan was entrusted with giving Latin and guitar lessons to his daughter, doña Ana, who is claimed to have been a very proud and beautiful lady. At about the time when Giraldi Cinzio of Ferrara was writing up the tale of Othello and Desdemona for inclusion in his *Hecatommiti* (1565), doña Ana de Carvajal fell in love with her black tutor. Although some rumours have survived about an illicit love affair and a local scandal, what matters is that the young people married about 1550 and had four sons and were apparently happy for half a century.

This success story in academic and connubial matters is of concern in the present context because it was completed in later years by Juan's success as a Latin poet. His inaugural lecture of 1565 on the famous poets of antiquity is unfortunately lost, but already in 1566 he published in Madrid a quarto of Latin funeral verse: *Epitafios de la translación de los cuerpos reales (Epigrammas latinos en los tumulos de los cuerpos reales)*. Most of his works were printed in Granada between 1573 and 1576. Two of them are dedicated to Philip II, "ad catholicum et invictissimum Philippum, Dei gratia Hispaniarum regem". They consist mainly of panegyric poetry as exemplified in the *Epigrammatum liber* (1573), which Hoefer's *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* described in 1859 as "un des livres les plus rares que l'on connaisse". It contains an ode on the birth of Philip II's son ("de faelicissima serenissimi Ferdinandi principis nativitate"), which is chiefly concerned with the royal baby's father, described as a powerful king, protected by the celestial armies, intent on destroying heresy and ensuring the triumph of the true faith, chiefly by fighting against England. Other poems extol the merits of Pope Pius V, who died in 1572 ("deque sanctissimi Pii quinti"), celebrate the city of Granada, etc. The same volume contains the most ambitious venture of Juan Latino, a sort of epic entitled "Austriadis libri duo". This poem in Latin hexameters glorifies Don Juan of Austria (with whom Juan Latino was personally acquainted) for his decisive contribution to the naval battle at Lepanto, "victoria adversus perfidos turcos", which rid Venice and Italy of the Turkish threat in 1571 and, for that reason, was also commemorated, though in a different medium, by Titian.

Some Spanish students of Juan Latino have been prone to exaggerate the magnitude of his achievement. The notice in the *Enciclopedia Universal* calls him "el maestro Juan Latino", describes him as "insigne grammatico y poeta", claims that the *Austriad* "es un monumento artistico a estilo del Renacimiento, que seria uno de los mas perfectos de nuestra literatura". Students of African literature, such as Jahn and especially O. R. Dathorne, like to think that "Latino's preoccupation with panegyrics might in some measure have been the result of his African origin", finding it "more than possible" that the poet from Granada "transferred the model of the African praise poem to a European setting"![26] This is to forget that Juan Latino was very young when he left Africa: it is

[26] O. R. Dathorne, *The Black Mind; A History of African Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 69; for a detailed discussion of Latino's poetry, see pp. 69–73, and Jahn, *Geschichte*, pp. 31–35.

not very likely that a propensity for composing praise poetry should be genetically programmed. His poetry was entirely the product of his education, acting upon a good share of innate talent. Panegyric poetry, whether written or unwritten, fulfils complex and important functions: its historical use is to perpetuate the memory of the group's important leaders and of their high deeds; socially, it thus contributes to strengthening the unity and pride of the group; in authoritarian regimes, it is of obvious advantage to poets to avail themselves of their talents to court the mighty: the praise poem is a favourite genre in traditional Africa but also in Europe, as witness the numberless odes that have been composed in honour of Western royalty and Eastern potentates. Praise poetry was especially fashionable and useful in the sixteenth century, when the system of absolute monarchy was in the process of becoming established in Western Europe. Juan Latino simply followed the normal behaviour of a poet of his time when he took up panegyric poetry, the rules of which, we may recall, had just been codified by another Latin scholar, Julius Caesar Scaliger, in his *Poetices libri septem* (Lyons, 1561). There is little to distinguish Juan Latino's verse from the hundreds of praise poems that were duly turned out in those days by academic versifiers in Latin and in the vernacular languages of Western Europe. Sometimes, however, among the encomiastic hyperbole and the indispensable mythological allusions, an unexpected note of racial consciousness, or even pride, can be heard, as in some oft-quoted lines in the ode on Prince Ferdinand's birth. When Juan writes:

> Obvius Aethiopem docet Christum ore Philippus...
> Ne Aethiopi justa haec forte Philippe neges
>
> (Philip teaches Christ to the Ethiop when he meets him...
> Do not, Philip, deny the Ethiop those righteous things)

his concern with the spiritual salvation of his fellow Africans is as apparent as is his resentment of colour-based discrimination in the following lines:

> Quod si nostra tuis facies Rex nigra ministris
> Displicet, Aethiopum non placet alba viris
>
> (If our black face, O King, displeases your ministers, the white face does not please the men of Ethiopia)[27]

—a couplet which would not have sounded kindly to the ears of doña Ana, supposing her husband had taught her enough Latin to enable her to understand what he wrote.

Perhaps the greater part of Latino's literary interest, however does not lie in his own output but in the consequences of his career for the future course of Spanish literature after his death in the early years of the seventeenth century. For as the Spanish Golden Age entered its second phase a remarkable change affected the literary image of the Negro. There is little doubt that the example of Latino's career did much to endow the

[27] Quoted in Jahn, *Geschichte*, pp. 33–34.

representation of the black man with positive features which had been conspicuously lacking in earlier writing. He had not been dead for very long when Cervantes mentioned—albeit in a humorous mood—his knowledge of Latin in the *versos preliminares* to *Don Quijote* (1605).[28] It has been claimed that a brief episode in Lope de Vega's *La Dama Boba* derives from an anecdote related to Juan's courtship of doña Ana. At any rate, is has been clearly demonstrated that Lope's plays immeasurably enriched and humanized the Negro type in Spanish literature.[29] The most remarkable example of this reappraisal is to be found in a play which is entirely devoted to the black poet from Granada, *La comedia famosa de Juan Latino* by Lope's disciple, Diego Jiménez de Enciso (1585–1634).[30] The writer has skilfully placed Juan at the centre of a network of tensions which are obviously meant to be representative of a complex socio-psychological situation. Juan's academic career signals his victory over his competitor Villanueva, a converted Jew who objects to a university chair being awarded to a slave. Juan's marriage marks his triumph over racial discrimination as embodied first in doña Ana herself, and later in another suitor, the Moorish convert Fernando. Finally, the successful life and conduct of Latino, taken as a whole, are in striking contrast with the complete failure of Caneri, an unredeemed dark-skinned Moor, who fights in the *sierra* in a doomed attempt to prevent the victory of Christian civilization in Spain. Although Enciso objects to racial discrimination, he is not out to undermine the foundations of Spanish society: he has no objection to slavery as an institution. The interest of his play lies in its revaluation of the Negro insofar as the latter is shown to be a genuine human being endowed with the capability of becoming a Christian and a scholar.

There is a distinct possibility that such racial contempt as can be perceived in Portuguese and Spanish literatures of the sixteenth century was mainly social in origin: the Negro was ridiculed as a comic character on a par with the white country bumpkin, and some of the black females in Lope de Rueda's *pasos* are certainly not lacking in wit. The exemplary value of Juan Latino's career may have been all the more influential as seventeenth-century playwrights were probably not aware of the part played by Africans in the literature and thought of antiquity. It was left to Cheikh Anta Diop to tabulate this contribution in the middle of the twentieth century.[31] The fact remains, however, that the black Latinist from Granada can be seen as a frail and isolated link in a very old tradition, the tradition of African Latin writing, which he was not destined to bring to an end.

It is true that Latino had no immediate successor. One reason for this is that slavery changed in character towards the end of the sixteenth century. Man's fundamental

[28] Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Francisco Rodríguez Marín (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1941), p. 32.

[29] See Frida Weber de Kurlat, loc. cit., and "Sobre el negro como tipo cómico en el teatro español del siglo XVI," *Romance Philology*, 17 (1963), 380–391.

[30] Enciso's play, which was probably composed c. 1620, was first printed in the second part of *Comedias escogidas de las mejores de España* (Madrid, 1652). It was recently reprinted in *El encubierto y Juan Latino*, ed. Eduardo Julia Martínez (Madrid: Aldus, 1951). An English translation is available in Spratlin, op. cit., pp. 70–202. On the subject, see Annette Ivory, "Black Heroes in the Theater of Early Spain," in *Homenaje a Lydia Cabrera*, ed. Reinaldo Sánchez *et al.* (Miami: Ed. Universal, 1978), pp. 267–273, and especially Juan Latino: The Struggle of Blacks, Jews and Moors in Golden Age Spain," *Hispania*, 62 (1979), 613–618.

[31] Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et culture* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955).

inhumanity to man took on shapes of unprecedented cruelty as the requirements of the plantation system in the West Indies and in the American colonies, combined with the huge manpower needs for the budding factory system in England, led to the abandonment of indentured white labour and the wholesale transportation of black slaves to the Western hemisphere. The Portuguese lost their monopoly and Nordic nations entered the market with ruthless efficiency. The first cargo of Negro slaves was sold in Virginia by a Dutch merchant in 1659, and the trade speedily increased to huge and highly profitable proportions as African coastal chieftains also gained by their unholy partnership with white merchants. Obviously, slaves were valued for their muscles rather than for their minds and, until the second quarter of the eighteenth century, none of them seems to have been in a position to acquire anything approaching the kind of education which Juan Latino had been privileged to receive.

In the present state of our knowledge, there is every reason to believe that the seventeenth century was entirely barren of any writing by black Africans wherever the destructive rapaciousness of Europe made itself felt. Slave owners and their ideological upholders might well regard this as satisfactory evidence for the intellectual impotence of the race: in fact, writing was being practised fairly intensively not only in Ethiopia but also in the Islamic kingdoms of the Sudan, and presumably along the Swahili coast as well. Even the unfortunate men and women who had been sold into slavery and thus became the founders of the black diaspora, succeeded in keeping alive their spiritual mainsprings. Indeed, they found new inspiration in the unparalleled horror of their new condition and gave it suitable utterance in words and in music. But this remained unrecognized. As far as black writing in European languages is concerned, the seventeenth century, an intellectual golden age for so many nations, was one of deathly silence.

The abuses and cruelty of the plantation system (as compared with the occasionally benign inefficiency of domestic slavery in earlier days) were part of the authoritarian syndrome that kindled the intellectual and humanitarian revulsion of the Enlightenment towards the end of the seventeenth century. The anti-slavery movement did not begin to triumph until 1807, when the slave trade was abolished in London by an act of Parliament. But already during the second quarter of the eighteenth century a number of wealthy slave-owners in Europe had set out to disprove the notion that Negroes were subhuman creatures doomed to ineradicable savagery; they freed some of their slaves and had them educated at their own expense, thus creating the necessary preconditions for the birth of what Jahn somewhat unkindly called "guinea pig" literature.

Among the most prominent of those enlightened benefactors was the second Duke of Montagu (1688–1749), who sent one Francis Williams from his native Jamaica to English schools and up to Cambridge University. Williams was the son of free parents of African descent. He is remembered for a Latin panegyric poem on the appointment of a new governor in Jamaica, which ultimately reached print in Edward Long's three-volume *History of Jamaica* (1774), but it is doubtful whether its author can really be said to be part of African literature: there is no evidence that he ever saw the African soil.

A near contemporary of his, one Amo, who was born around 1703 near Axim in

present-day Ghana belonged to a different category.[32] Though one of his brothers was sent as a slave to Surinam, he himself benefited by the protection of a local minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, who sent him to Holland in the hope that the Dutch West Indies Company would support him during his studies as priest and teacher. This expectation did not materialize, and Amo became instead a *protégé* of Anton Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1633–1714), a German nobleman who had been converted to Catholicism. The boy was baptized Anton Wilhelm and later studied at the University of Halle under Christian Wolff, a well-known disciple of Leibniz. He graduated in 1729 with a dissertation entitled *De jure Maurorum in Europa.* A man of a philosophical turn of mind and a highly erudite scholar who is claimed to have been familiar with Dutch, German, French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, Amo got his master's degree at the University of Wittenberg; his *dissertatio inauguralis, De humane mentis ἀπαθείᾳ seu sensionis ac facultatis sentiendi in mente humana absentia,* was published in 1734. This was followed by his *Tractatus de arte sobrie et accurate philosophandi* (1738). He taught at the universities of Wittenberg and Jena, and was even appointed court councillor by Frederic II of Prussia. Some time in the forties, he returned to his family in Africa. David Henri Gallandat (1734–1782), founder and chairman of the Zeeland Scientific Society, met him at Axim in 1753, after which date nothing is known of his later life.

Amo's education was thus entirely German, but he occasionally defended his fellow Africans and their culture against European racialism. Nothing of the kind can be said of another representative of this early period, Jacobus Eliza Joannes Capitein (1717–1747), whose parents were slaves in present-day Ghana.[33] Aged seven or eight, he was sold to a Dutch sea-captain (hence his name), who in his turn sold him to a rich merchant. When the latter retired to Holland in 1728, he took the boy with him and had him so well educated that he was admitted to study theology at the University of Leyden in 1738 after producing an essay on the pagan nations' vocation to become christianized. In March 1742, he presented his most ominously entitled *Dissertatio politico-theologica de servitute libertati christianae non contraria.* This was printed later in the year and appeared so authoritative a document in the current discussions about slavery that a Dutch translation was issued at the same time, while the Latin text was reprinted four times in fifteen months. It earned Capitein so much esteem that he was invited to preach sermons in several Dutch towns; these, too, were printed in 1742. By then, however, his conveniently orthodox view that slavery was fully consonant with Christian freedom had greatly appealed to religious and business authorities and in the autumn of 1742, Capitein was sent as a teacher and preacher to the trading post at Elmina, which the Dutch had captured from the Portuguese in 1637. He took his work to heart and went so far as to prepare a translation of the ten commandments, the creed and some basic prayers into what he called "the negro tongue"; this was printed in Leyden in 1744. But the young teacher fell in love with one of his pupils; as a Ghanaian historian reports, he "wrote a letter to the Elders of the Dutch West Indies Company in Holland, begging

[32] Burchard Brentjes, *Anton Wilhelm Amo. Der schwarze Philosoph in Halle* (Leipzig, 1976).
[33] A. Eekhof, *De negerpredikant Jacobus Elisa Joannes Capitein, 1717–1747* (The Hague, 1917); J. W. Schulto Nordholt, *Het volk dat in duisternis wandelt* (Arnhem, 1950).

to be allowed to marry an African woman who seemed to be very modest and beautiful, lest the Evil One should triumph over him. He was prepared to send her to Holland for inspection and further Christian education."[34] The said Elders were very much dismayed over Capitein's intentions, but by October 1745, the preacher had changed his mind and had married a recently arrived, faultlessly Christian European girl. This may have been partly responsible for increased hostility on the part of the small white population at Elmina. At any rate, Capitein began to feel that even in Africa a black preacher, though a Leyden graduate, was not the right man to propagate the word of God: he gave up the ministry for business, at which he showed himself equally unsuccessful until he died in 1747.

Amo's and Capitein's obscure deaths marked the end of a first phase in eighteenth-century writing by African authors. Their example confirms that those early black intellectuals had been fully assimilated into European culture. They were more numerous than is usually realized: writing in the early years of the nineteenth century, Grégoire was able to quote the names of astronomers, physicians, geographers, mathematicians, etc. But although no other went so far as to make pleas for slavery similar to Capitein's, none of them ventured to question the legitimacy of the institution or the supremacy of the white man and his civilization. They all tried to fit into the then prevailing scheme of Western values. As was the scholarly custom at the time, and as Juan Latino had done two centuries earlier, they wrote in Latin, and their work does not belong to creative literature, except for the only remaining poem of Francis Williams and a Latin elegy by Capitein on the death of his "master and friend Manger", sizeable portions of which were translated into French by Grégoire.

Significant changes were to affect African diaspora writing during the second half of the eighteenth century. The spreading of Enlightenment thinking and its humanitarian values in European intellectual circles resulted in more slaves being emancipated and more Negroes receiving the kind of formal education that could induce them to become writers. Another major trend in eighteenth-century culture was the growth of romanticism with its interest in exoticism on the one hand, and in the literary exploitation of personal experience on the other; whereas African exoticism had made an early appearance in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), towards the middle of the century there arose a flourishing school of so-called "African" novels which were numerous chiefly in France; they were usually products of uninformed fantasy, although a few of them were fictionalized accounts of Africans who really existed. The coalescence of those two trends led during the last three decades of the century to considerable public regard for a steadily growing stream of personal narratives by former slaves born in Africa. The third characteristic of African diaspora writing at the time was the predominance of English, for whereas Juan Latino had been active in Spain, Amo in Germany and Capitein in Holland, genuine African autobiography was mostly produced in England and, to a much smaller extent, in America. This was due, no doubt, to a combination of factors such as the increasing economic weight of England and the fast-growing numbers of the slave population in North America, but also to the power of abolitionist feeling among the British intelligentsia and, not least perhaps, to the English readers' interest both in narrative prose and in autobiographical stories.

[34] Willie Abraham, *The Mind of Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 125.

PAUL EDWARDS

3. EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WRITING IN ENGLISH

After the aborted attempt at Portuguese writing in the early sixteenth century and after the few black authors using Latin during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, African literature in modern European languages can be said to have made its real start during the last three decades of the eighteenth century, when Africans were found writing in English, not only in Britain but in America and Africa. As the greater part of their work was connected with the transatlantic slave trade, much of it can be regarded as the beginning either of Afro-American literature or of a modern African literature born from cross-fertilization with the Western world:[35] the two aspects are obviously not to be dissociated.

Of the many books that were issued under alleged African authorship during that period, only three can be assigned with any confidence wholly to their authors: these are the poems of Phillis Wheatley (Boston, 1773),[36] the letters of Ignatius Sancho (London 1782),[37] and the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano, also called Gustavus Vassa (London, 1789).[38] Equiano's friend Ottobah Cugoano published his *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (London, 1787) but there is ample evidence that the book must have been extensively rewritten by another hand.[39] Several of the books in English are acknowledged to be transcripts of oral narratives. James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's autobiography, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life*

[35] Obviously those writers raise a little problem in classification. One historian refuses to consider Phillis Wheatley as an "African" writer on the grounds that "she is more properly American", since she was taken from Africa when she was eight (O. R. Dathorne, "African Writers of the Eighteenth Century", in *Introduction to African Literature*, ed Ulli Beier [London: Longmans, 1967], p. 235). Equiano, who was born in Nigeria and had frequent contacts with Sierra Leone, can legitimately rank as one of the founding fathers of African literature in English. But what are we to make of Ignatius Sancho, who was born on a slave ship like Francis Williams, never saw Africa, and did not even set foot in America? No provision seems to have been made so far for the systematic study of the literature of English blacks! [Ed.]

[36] Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, here quoted from *The Poems of Phillis Wheatley*, ed. Julian D. Mason, Jr. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966).

[37] *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African. To which are prefixed, Memories of his life*, reprinted with an introduction by Paul Edwards (London: Dawsons, 1968).

[38] *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, here quoted from ed. Paul Edwards *The life of Olaudah Equiano: Or, Gustavus Vassa the African*, (London: Dawsons, 1969), a reprint of the first edition (London, 1789). See also *Equiano's Travels*, abridged and edited by Paul Edwards. (London: Heinemann Educational, 1967).

[39] See Paul Edwards (ed.) *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, by Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa* (London: Dawsons, 1969).

of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw...as Related by Himself (c. 1770) is said in a Preface to have been taken from his own mouth and committed to paper "by the elegant pen of a young lady of the town of Leominster," and John Marrant's *Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant* (1785) was, according to its title page, taken down from his own relation, arranged, corrected, and published by the Rev. Mr. Aldridge. Aldridge notes in his Preface, "I have always preserved Mr. Marrant's ideas tho' I could not his language." Other books and pamphlets by black writers are Briton Hammon's *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon* (1760); Jupiter Hammon's *Winter Piece* (1782), *An Address to the Negroes in the State of New-York* (1787) and *An Evening's Improvement* (n.d.); and *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late Awful Calamity* by A. J. and R. A. [Absalom Jones and Richard Allen] (1794).[40] Finally, there is Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture* (1798),[41] another transcript of an oral account, its Preface recording that Venture was without an education, but that "Nothing is added to what he related himself."

Before examining in detail the most important of those works, it may be useful to consider two preliminary matters: first, apart from books, which were composed by fairly exceptional individuals anyhow, private letters and other sources can give us some light about the level of competence which blacks did achieve in handling the English language, and about the function which proficiency in English might fulfil within the black community; secondly, it is of obvious historical interest to enquire about the ways in which members of that community learned their English, sometimes achieving such mastery as was needed for the composition of books.

Books published by Africans in English were often faced with readers' doubts about their authenticity. When Phillis Wheatley's poems were published, it was felt necessary to include a prefatory letter signed by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, seven clergymen and nine other gentlemen of standing, confirming that the poems "were (as we verily believe) written by Phillis." One of Equiano's reviewers, while entertaining "no doubt of the general authenticity of this very intelligent African's story," considered it "not improbable that some English writer has assisted him in the compilement: or, at least, in the correction of his book."[42] And a letter to Granville Sharp from "the Sons of Africa" (which included amongst its co-signatories both Equiano and Cugoano) was considered by Prince Hoare "evidently the composition of some person better acquainted with the construction of the English language than the poor Negro slaves can be supposed to have been."[43] At least one of the surviving

[40] The books and pamphlets by Marrant, Gronniosaw, Wheatley, Briton Hammon, Jupiter Hammon, and Jones and Allen, have all been reprinted in one volume (Nendeln: Kraus, 1972). The earliest survey of this eighteenth-century black writing is to be found in Henri Grégoire, *De la littérature des nègres*. This was soon translated into German (1809) and English (1810). For a discussion of the contemporary reception see Donatus I. Nwoga, "Humanitarianism and the Criticism of African Literature, 1770–1810," *Research in African Literatures*, 3 (1962), 171–179.

[41] The latest edition, by H. M. Selden, (Middletown, Conn., 1897), includes many anecdotes about Venture and his descendants.

[42] See Equiano, *Narrative*, pp. x–xviii, for a discussion of the book's authenticity.

[43] Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* (London 1820), pp. 368–369.

holograph letters gives weight to such doubts. In the case of Cugoano mentioned above, the eloquent periods of *Thoughts and Sentiments* published in 1787, can hardly have come from the pen of the man who wrote a letter to Sharp in 1791, beginning:

> Pardon the liberty taken in troubling you with this few lines but as there is Several Ships now going to new Brunswick I could wish to have your answer that I might be able to gived the black settlers there some kind of answer to their request, the generality of them are mediately the natives of Africa who Join the british forces Last War, they are consisting of Macanicks such as Carpenters, Smiths, Masons and farmers, this are the people that we have imediate use for in the Provence of freedom.[44]

Nevertheless, what does emerge from this letter is that Cugoano, for all his errors of grammar and spelling, must have been fluent in English, and perfectly capable of acting, as he did, as a major spokesman for the Black poor of Britain.

There are also letters, both published and unpublished, which suggest a fairly high degree of competence in English. One of these, from Prince Sandars, a black American who spent some time in Liverpool, is printed by Henry Roscoe in his biography of his father. Roscoe writes that he finds in it "a remarkable proof of what might be effected amongst the natives of Africa by due cultivation" and considers it "curious as a specimen of African literature." He adds: "Nor was this the only instance which occurred to Mr. Roscoe of the intelligence displayed by the Negro race. A servant, who lived several years in his family... had acquired, without assistance, a considerable knowledge of the French language, and had mastered the rudiments of the Latin."[45] In a footnote, Roscoe includes an interesting collection of letters written in the English of the African chiefs and traders of Calabar, providing early examples of those varieties of English (for instance, Freetown Krio, Calabar Pidgin) which cannot be discussed here, but the significance of which should be acknowledged, in view of their use by modern African writers, and their function in African societies.

More will be said later about the ways in which Africans in Britain achieved competence in English, as well as about those among them who went beyond competence and have claims to literary merit. But that they could achieve the former in a fairly short space of time is illustrated in the case of John Frederick, son of Chief Naimbanna of Sierra Leone. In Hoare's *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, we are told that he "learned, in the space of a year and a half which he passed in England, to read very fluently, and to write a letter in English without much difficulty."[46] He also appears to have been a public speaker of considerable style and presence. The following anecdote from Hoare

[44] Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments*, pp. xxi–xxiii. I suggest elsewhere that it might have been Equiano who revised *Thoughts and Sentiments*, in view of close similarities between Equiano's letters to the *Public Advertiser* (e.g., April 6, 1787; February 5, 1788) and Cugoano's book (see Equiano, *Narrative*, pp. xxxiv–xxxv).

[45] Henry Roscoe, *Life of William Roscoe* (London: Cadell, 1833), pp. 65–70.

[46] Hoare, *Memoirs*, pp. 368–369. Hoare's source of information on John Frederick must have been the *Report Delivered by the Court of Directors* of the Sierra Leone Company (1794), pp. 155–160. A slightly different version of the speech is given there.

again draws attention to what must have been a feature of crucial practical importance in the early stages of Black literature in English, oral fluency amongst Black spokesmen:

> The name of a person having been mentioned in his presence, who was understood by him to have asserted something very degrading to the general character of Africans, he broke out into very violent and vindictive language. He was immediately reminded of the Christian duty of forgiving his enemies; upon which he answered nearly in the following words: — "If a man should rob me of my money, I can forgive him; if a man should shoot at me, or try to stab me, I can forgive him; if a man should sell me and all my family to a slaveship, so that we should pass all the rest of our days in slavery in the West Indies, I can forgive him;—but" (added he, rising from his seat with much emotion) "if a man takes away the character of the people of my country, I never can forgive him." Being asked why he would not extend his forgiveness to those who took away the character of the people of his country, he answered: "if a man should try to kill me, or should sell me and my family for slaves, he would do an injury to as many as he might kill or sell; but, if any one takes away the character of Black people, that man injures Black people all over the world; and when he has once taken away their character, there is nothing which he may not do to Black people for ever after. That man, for instance, will beat Black men, and say, *Oh, it is only a Black man, why should I not beat him?* That man will make slaves of Black people; for when he has taken away their character, he will say, *Oh, they are only Black people—why should I not make them slaves?* That man will take away all the people of Africa, if he can catch them; and if you ask him, But why do you take away all these people? he will say, *Oh, they are only Black people—they are not like White people—why should I not take them?* That is the reason why I cannot forgive the man who takes away the character of the people of my country."

Sometimes, such examples of recorded anecdotes and occasional far from "well-written" letters speak more penetratingly of the feelings of the black people in Britain than do some of the printed books, and for this reason they should not be neglected in any survey of African literature. During this period, self-expression in a written, ultimately in a printed form is emerging from what can previously only have been a murmur of oral protest, barely audible through the roar of the big guns of the slavers, and the growing rumble of the abolitionists. The importance of letter-writing in political action is evidenced not only in Equiano's widely-known correspondence on slavery,[47] but in the MS. letters in the Clarkson papers in the British Museum.[48] In 1791 it was arranged that a group of free black people in Nova Scotia should join the Sierra Leone settlement. John Clarkson was Acting-Governor at the time and in all honesty made offers of land which, once the new settlers reached Sierra Leone, were not implemented. The matter was not simply one of white duplicity: for though Clarkson seems to have promised more than was in his power, his motives were the best. But the settlers were convinced that they had been ill-used. Over a period of about six years, they corresponded with Clarkson, who had by then returned to England, in the hope of gaining what they

[47] Excellently collected by Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1555–1833* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 245–272.

[48] B. M. Add. MSS. 41,262A and 41,263.

believed to be their rights. They even sent two representatives from Freetown to London, to set their case before the Sierra Leone Company, but their arguments had no effect and the mission failed. In 1800 the frustrated settlers drew up their own code of laws and rebelled against the Company,[49] but the rebellion was unsuccessful and two of them were hanged. Despite the lack of success, however, these events illustrate the growing capacity for self-help. Here is one sample from this unpublished Negroes' correspondence, illustrating the degree of written fluency in English achieved by some of the settlers:

Free town July 29 1796

Very Dear and honored Sir,

We are persuaded from that affection which you have already discovered towards us that you will be glad to hear that we and the Colony people at large are in good health and Spirits.

We have to lament that such an union as is very desireable for persons in our situation does not exist among us. There are as there always have been divisions among us; indeed Mr George and some of his people seem to think they can do no greater service for the Company or Colony than to invent and carry all the lies in their power to the Governor against those who differ from them in things that pertain to religion.

The land which we understood you gave us we have had difficulty to hold in our possession. There have been two tryals concerning it and in the last the jury gave it in our favour but as yet the matter is not quite settled.

We could say many things but after all it will amount to no more than this that we love you, and remember your labours of love and compassion towards us with gratitude, and pray that heaven may always smile upon you and yours. We have the honour and happiness to be, Sir, your Most obedient and humble servants

Luke Jordan
and Nathaniel Snowball

Daddy Moses wishes his love to you.

Not all the letters from the settlers are as ably written as this, but a good many of them are. Furthermore, even epistles written in undeniably clumsy style manage to speak with remarkable directness, so that some consideration ought to be given as to how those black writers of the eighteenth century gained their knowledge of the written language. Such knowledge should not be taken for granted: Gronniosaw, for example, could read printed texts, but was unable to read his wife's handwritten letters.[50] Others, however, had greater opportunity for learning. The largest collection of manuscript letters by an African is the correspondence of Philip Quaque (1741–1816), held in the Archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London. He lived in England from 1754 to 1766, married an English-woman (as did Equiano, Cugoano, Gronniosaw, Dr. Johnson's servant Francis Barber and many other African residents in Britain), received an education at the expense of the S.P.G., and returned to Africa where he was Chaplain

[49] For the text of the Code of Laws, see Christopher Fyfe (ed.), *Sierra Leone Inheritance* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 124–126; and for an account of the uprising and the events which led up to it, Christopher Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 81–87.

[50] See Gronniosaw, *Narrative*, p. 38.

of Cape Coast Castle for fifty years. But he had little affection for Africa. The children of his second marriage, to an African, were sent to England for an education "in order", he wrote, "to secure their tender minds from receiving the bad impressions of the country, the vile customs and practises, and above all the losing of their mother's vile jargon."[51] Many Africans were sent to England, like the Quaque children, for an education, or received it as local protégés. Dr. Johnson's Francis Barber was sent to Bishop's Stortford Grammar School, Lord Montagu sent Francis Williams to Cambridge, and Soubise, the dissolute darling of the Duchess of Queensberry, was trained as a master of fencing, horsemanship and polite conversation before being packed off to India as the result of a scandal.[52] A letter of reference survives for a black schoolteacher applying for a post at Bisley.[53]

Phillis Wheatley, who was carried off into slavery at the age of seven to Boston, travelled to England in 1773 as companion to the son of her master, and there the Countess of Huntingdon aided her "in meeting many notable members of the English society of the day. It is significant," her editor continues, "that in this company her ability as an exceptional conversationalist gained her both favour and presents, among which were a copy of the 1770 Glasgow folio edition of *Paradise Lost*, given her by the Lord Mayor of London, and a copy of Smollett's 1770 translation of *Don Quixote*, given her by the Earl of Dartmouth."[54] But Phillis had been granted opportunities rarely offered even to the less unfortunate "domestic slaves". Her biographer Rufus W. Griswold claims, perhaps with a little exaggeration, that "it is probable that but few of the white children of Boston were brought up under circumstances better calculated for the full development of their natural faculties... the best libraries were open to her: and she had opportunities for conversation with the most accomplished and distinguished persons in the city."[55]

In terms of the slave condition, clearly Phillis' circumstances were untypical, and the same is true, on the whole, of another writer to be examined more fully, Ignatius Sancho. He was brought to England aged between two and three, presumably with little or no memory of the period of enslavement aboard ship and in the Americas, where both his parents died. He had, all the same, his share of sufferings as servant to "three maiden sisters, resident at Greenwich; whose prejudices had unhappily taught them, that African

[51] For a selection of Quaque's letters and an account of his life, see Margaret Priestley, "Philip Quaque of Cape Coast," in *Africa Remembered*, ed. Philip Curtin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 99–139. It is of particular relevance to recall at this point that Quaque, while at Cape Coast, set up a school whose graduates were responsible, several years after his death, for inviting Wesleyan missionaries, whose role was to prove decisive in the emergence of a Ghanaian literature in English. See on this Albert Gérard's account of Ghanaian literary history in his *Essais d'histoire littéraire africaine* (Sherbrooke, Canada: Naaman, 1984), pp. 175–205.

[52] Accounts of Francis Barber and Soubise can be found in Shyllon, *Black People in Britain*. The number of Africans receiving an education in Britain at this time is indicated by the fact that, from Sierra Leone alone, "in 1789 an estimated number of fifty boys and twenty-eight girls...were being educated in London, Liverpool, Bristol, and Lancaster." See Paul Edwards and James Walvin, "Africans in Britain, 1500–1800" in *The African Diaspora* ed. Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 187.

[53] Richard Raikes, July 5, 1815, in the Gloucester Country Record Office.

[54] Wheatley, *Poems*, pp. xiv–xv.

[55] Quoted in Wheatley, *Poems*, p. xii.

[56] Jekyll's "Preface" to Sancho, *Letters*, pp. ii–iii.

[57] Ibid., p. iii.

ignorance was the only security for his obedience, and that to enlarge the mind of their slave would go near to emancipate his person."[56] Fortunately he was aided by the Duke of Montagu, who "admired in him a native frankness of manner as yet unbroken by servitude, and unrefined by education—He brought him frequently home to the Duchess, [and] indulged his turn for reading with presents of books."[57] On the Duke's death in 1749, when Sancho was about twenty years old, he left his three maiden ladies and took up service with the Duchess. She died shortly after, leaving him an annuity which, it seems, he swiftly dissipated. He took up service once again with the Montagu family until illness forced him to retire in 1773, when he set up as a grocer in Mayfair. He numbered Garrick and Sterne amongst his friends, and gained the promise of a biography from Dr. Johnson, though this was never written. Access to books was one of the principal needs of his life. So he writes to a young man in India:

> The mind, my dear Jack, wants food, as well as the stomach. Why then should not one wish to increase in knowledge as well as money? Young says: "Books are fair Virtue's advocates and friends;" Now my advice is, to preserve about £20 a year for two or three seasons, by which means you may gradually form a useful, elegant, little library.[58]

Sancho gives evidence in letter after letter of wide reading, as well as of a life-style that offered him access to books and ample time to read them. It is likely, all the same, that, as in the instance of Sancho's three maiden ladies, servants were not encouraged to know more English than was necessary for their duties to be carried out effectively. The story of Equiano's confrontation with Captain Doran below is an illustration.

As a seafaring slave, Equiano might be expected to have had little chance of educating himself to the level of best-selling author and principal spokesman for the black poor of London. In fact, he had considerable opportunity. What also becomes clear is his extraordinary tenacity and exceptional talent. He had his first English lessons from a boy called Richard Baker during a thirteen-week voyage (twice the usual length of time) from America to England. "For the space of two years," he tells us of his friend, "he was of very great use to me, and was my constant companion and instructor." The English families he stayed with treated him as they did their own children, and the friends of his master, Captain Pascal, the two Misses Guerin, sent him to school in Guernsey. Even at sea he attended school aboard a naval vessel, the *Namur*, and sought instruction constantly wherever it might be found.[59] He read widely in the Bible and in religious and anti-slavery tracts, and quotes, apparently from memory since the quotations are often slightly inaccurate, from the poetry of Milton, Pope and Thomas Day. There is ample evidence that in the course of preparing his book, he had access to Constantine Phipps' *Journal of a Voyage towards the North Pole* (1774), Gronniosaw's autobiography, Anthony Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1771), and several other works. He had read the controversy between James Ramsey and James Tobin, and was

[58] Ibid., p. 152 see also pp. 144, 253–4.
[59] Equiano, *Narrative*, pp. x–xviii.

sufficiently well informed to write reviews of Tobin's *Cursory Remarks* and Gordon Turnbull's *Apology for Negro Slavery* for the *Public Advertiser*.[60]

With this evidence in mind then it should not come as any great surprise that the works of Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho and Olaudah Equiano can be approached as the genuine productions of their authors, or that the reviser of Cugoano's book might have been a fellow-African, in all probability Equiano.

The earliest of the books listed at the start of this essay, Briton Hammon's fourteen-page *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man* (Boston, 1760), is essentially an argument for divine providence, as, in its way, is Equiano's, but with this difference: Equiano's book published in London in 1789, is also a penetrating examination of and attack upon slavery, whereas Hammon's book ends with its author returning in joy to his master's house in Boston ("returned to my own Native Land") after living as a captive among savages, not slave-traders or slave-masters, but Red Indians and Spaniards. He describes his capture by the Indians, his escape to Havana on a Spanish ship, service with the Governor there, his imprisonment for refusing service with the Spanish navy, and his rescue by the British navy ("the Captain, who was a true Englishman, refus'd them, and said he could not answer it, to deliver up any Englishman under English colours"). He saw action with the British fleet, was wounded in battle and recuperated in London at Greenwich Hospital, after which he worked as a sea-cook and found himself, as if by God's Providence, reunited with his master, who was a passenger aboard the ship on which he was working.[61]

The poems of Phillis Wheatley (1754–1784) also from Boston, are similarly little concerned with the matter of slavery, even though she had been taken from Senegal to Massachusetts in 1761. Her life with the Wheatley family appears to have been more like that of a poor but well-respected relative than of a slave (compare Fanny Price at Mansfield Park in Jane Austen's novel). Her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) were successful enough to go through eleven editions until 1816, although they are highly conventional and derivative, combining neo-classical diction with the elegiac mood, moralizing tone and maudlin sentimentality characteristic of much minor preromantic poetry of the time. One of her rare references to Africa is her poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America":

> 'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
> Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
> Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
> "Their colour is a diabolic die".
> Remember, *Christians, Negroes,* black as *Cain,*
> May be refin'd, and join th'angelic train.

[60] Ibid., pp. xlv–liii; see also *Public Advertiser*, January 28, 1788 and February 5, 1788, quoted in Shyllon.
[61] Briton Hammon, pp. 11, 14.

The limitations of Phillis Wheatley's poem are apparent enough: nor, given her circumstances, might we expect much more. But the extremeness of her "providential" view should be seen in contrast not only to that of Equiano below, but even to that of the comfortable Sancho.

Ignatius Sancho (1729–1780) was born on board of a slave ship and was baptized in Colombia. As a young orphan he was taken to England where he had the good fortune to attract the attention of the Duke of Montagu. While remaining for more than twenty years a butler in the Duke's household, he became sufficiently well known to be honored with lengthy biographical notices in the French *Biographie universelle* (1825), and later in the British *Dictionary of National Biography*. A prolific writer, he is claimed to have composed a number of poems and plays which never reached print. But two years after his death there appeared a two-volume work entitled *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African, To which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life,* which, to all appearances, gives the impression that, like Phillis Wheatley, he was thoroughly assimilated into polite white society. On closer examination, however, his letters reveal undercurrents of feeling absent from Phillis Wheatley's poems. His consciousness of race emerges even in joking moods:

> ... blessed times for a poor blacky grocer to hang or drown in (Letter CXIV)
> Figure to yourself, my dear Sir, a man of convexity of belly exceeding Falstaff—and a black face into the bargain (Letter CXVIII)

and there are sharp edges to the jokes at times:

> ...my hearty wishes...to all who have charity enough to admit dark faces into the fellowship of Christians. (Letter LXVI)

And though he can be very British in his attitudes to government and society, he can write to a fellow African in these terms:

> Look round upon the miserable fate of almost all of our unfortunate colour—superadded to ignorance,—see slavery, and the contempt of those very wretches who roll in affluence from our labours. Superadded to this woeful catalogue—hear the ill-bred and heart-racking abuse of the foolish vulgar. (Letter XIV)

The African correspondent however, is Soubise, the favourite of the Duchess of Queensberry, and in the same letter Sancho invites him to "look up to thy more than parents—look up to thy almost divine benefactors."

Sancho exhibits a subdued tension between an affection for those who have treated him with kindness even in his servitude, and a hatred of the general principles on which such servitude is based, an attitude which is more characteristic of the writings of Olaudah Equiano. But it is clear enough in Sancho's letters, for example in his comments on Phillis Wheatley herself:

> The list of splendid—titled—learned names, in confirmation of her being the real authoress—alas! Shows how very poor the acquisition of wealth and knowledge is —without generosity—feeling—and humanity.—These good great folks—all knew —and perhaps admired—nay, praised Genius in bondage—and then, like the Priests and the Levites in sacred writ, passed by—not one good Samaritan amongst them. (Letter LVIII)

Sancho's reputation appears to have been established initially and firmly by his correspondence with Laurence Sterne, which began in 1766 when Sancho wrote enthusiastically in praise of *Tristram Shandy:*

> Reverend Sir,
> It would be an insult on your humanity (or perhaps look like it) to apologise for the liberty I am taking.—I am one of those people whom the vulgar and illiberal call "Negurs".—The first part of my life was rather unlucky, as I was placed in a family who judged ignorance the best and only security for obedience.—A little reading and writing I got by unwearied application.—The latter part of my life has been—thro' God's blessing, truly fortunate, having spent it in the service of one of the best families in the kingdom.—My chief pleasure has been books.—Philanthropy I adore.—How very much, good Sir, am I (amongst millions) indebted to you for the character of your amiable uncle Toby!—I declare, I would walk ten miles in the dog-days, to shake hands with the honest corporal.—Your sermons have touched me to the heart, and I hope have amended it, which brings me to the point.—In your tenth discourse, page seventy-eight, in the second volume—is this very affecting passage—"Consider how great a part of our species—in all ages down to this—have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their distresses.—Consider slavery—what it is—how bitter a draught—and how many millions are made to drink it."—Of all my favourite authors, not one has drawn a tear in favor of my miserable black brethren —excepting yourself, and the humane author of Sir George Ellison.—I think you will forgive me;—I am sure you will applaud me for beseeching you to give one half-hour's attention to slavery, as it is at this day practised in our West Indies. —That subject, handled in your striking manner, would ease the yoke (perhaps) of many—but if of only one—Gracious God!—what a feast to a benevolent heart! and, sure I am, you are an epicurean in acts of charity.—You, who are universally read, and as universally admired—you could not fail—Dear Sir, think in me you behold the uplifted hands of thousands of my brother Moors.—Grief (you pathetically observe) is eloquent;—figure to yourself the attitudes;—hear their supplicating addresses!—alas! you cannot refuse.—Humanity must comply—in which hope I beg permission to subscribe myself, Reverend Sir, etc.
>
> Ignatius Sancho.[62]

As is the case here, Sancho's letters can lapse into an over-sentimental manner, or become too self-consciously quaint: but at their best they are witty, engaging and sharply observed, as those on the Gordon Riots (CXXXIV–CXXXVI). Their range of topics is wide, from comic exercises on haircuts or the Shandean theme of jackasses, to proposals for establishing a naval reserve to reduce the practice of impressment, and for the reduction of the national debt by a kind of voluntary tax on property. Most of the letters,

[62] Sancho, *Letters*, xvi–xvii, pp. 70–72.

however, are to friends and often provide lively descriptions of domestic life, the birth, sicknesses and daily deeds of the "Sanchonets", his six children. He emerges as a man of many moods and many interests, rather conservative, good-natured and ever ready to help and to advise. He was also a musician and is said by his biographer Jekyll to have written a *Theory of Music*. This has not survived, but three small collections of music in the British Museum Library are likely to be Sancho's work.[63]

The narrative of John Marrant (1755–1791) and the three pamphlets by Jupiter Hammon (c. 1710–1790) are principally religious in purpose. Marrant was born of a free black family in New York. He tells us that he was at school up to the age of eleven, though, as has been said before, the preface to his book acknowledges that the manuscript required to be corrected. The tone is characteristic of many a religious pamphlet of the day: "I was now in my thirteenth year, devoted to pleasure and drinking in iniquity like water; a slave to every vice suited to my nature and to my years". But he undergoes a sudden conversion, much to the distress of his family since it takes the form of unconsciousness, and other fits and seizures. In due course he goes off into the Canadian wilderness and lives amongst the Indian tribes, principally the Cherokee, where "the Lord made all my enemies to become my great friends". Later he served with the British Navy and on his discharge lived in London for some years, joining a Methodist sect, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, in which he was ordained a minister.[64]

Jupiter Hammon's pamphlets are sermons, basically concerned with the relation of servant and master in both the heavenly and earthly senses. The printer of *An Address to the Negroes in the State of New-York* (1787) introduces it with a note:

> As this address is wrote in a better Stile than could be expected from a slave, some may be ready to doubt the genuineness of the production. The Author, as he informs in the title page, is a servant of Mr. Lloyd, and has been remarkable for his fidelity and abstinence from those vices, which he warns his brethren against. The manuscript wrote in his own hand, is in our possession. We have made no material alterations in it, except in the Spelling, which we found needed considerable correction.

The sermons are mainly exhortations to virtue, fluently but conventionally presented: but there is also a persistent strain dealing with the condition of slavery. A recurrent dilemma for converted slaves was the recognition of the cruelty and oppression of the practice, but also of the divine "providence" which had led them from the moral and spiritual "darkness" of Africa as exemplified in the Phillis Wheatley poem quoted above. So in Jupiter Hammon's *Winter Piece* we read:

> I do not attempt to teach those who I know are able to teach me, but I shall endeavour by divine assistance to enlighten the minds of my brethren: for we are

[63] Shyllon argues that these are the work of a later black musician, George Bridgetower. But the evidence points to Sancho: all three books are dedicated to members of the Montagu family, Sancho's patrons and employers, and one of the books is dedicated to Lord John Montagu of Boughton who died in 1770. Bridgetower was not born till 1779. (See Sancho, *Letters*, viii; *The Complete Peerage*, ed. H. A. Doubleday and Lord Howard de Walden [London, 1936], Vol. IX, 110–111.)

[64] Marrant, *Narrative*, pp. 9, 28.

a poor despised nation, whom God in his wise providence has permitted to be brought from their native place to a christian land.

From time to time there are hints of a less submissive view of his situation and race. He writes of his "dear fellow servants and brothers, Africans by nation" and had, it appears, been accused of "meddling" in the politics of slavery: "It hath been reported that I had petitioned the court of Hartford against freedom," he declares, but adds that "I never have said, nor done any thing...to promote or to prevent freedom; but my answer hath always been that I am a stranger here and I do not care to be concerned or to meddle with public affairs."[65]

In his *Address to the Negroes* he observes that some of his writings have been "well received, not only by those of my own colour, but by a number of the white people who thought they might do good among their servants", which could be ironic but appears more likely to be practical subservience:

> It may seem hard for us, if we think our masters wrong in holding us slaves, to obey in all things, but who of us dare dispute with God! He has commanded us to obey, and we ought to do it chearfully and freely. This should be done by us, not only because God commands, but because our own peace and comfort depend upon it. As we depend upon our masters, for what we eat and drink and wear, and for all our comfortable things of this world, we cannot be happy, unless we please them.

All the same, as in the case of Equiano to be discussed later, certain modes of irony may be the natural outcome of years of suppressed emotion; from time to time Hammon appears to cross the edge into ironic statement, as in this passage from the *Address:*

> That liberty is a great thing we know from our own natural feelings, and we may likewise judge so from the conduct of the white-people, in the late war. How much money has been spent, and how many lives has been lost, to defend their liberty. I must say that I have hoped that God would open their eyes, when they were so much engaged in liberty, to think, of the State of us poor blacks, and to pity us.[66]

By the time Hammon got his *Address* printed, he was already a seasoned writer of sorts. Indeed, he authored what must have been the first poetic work by a black man to appear in print in America, an 88-line broadside with an explicitly devotional title, *An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ with Penetential* [sic] (1761). The writer was described on the title page as "a Negro belonging to Mr. Lloyd, of Queen's village, on Long Island." Throughout his known career, Jupiter Hammon never ceased to "belong" to the Lloyd family and though he had received a modicum of education, he was certainly not in a position to express any outspoken views about his own condition. Another short work of his, which comprises an essay and a poem has an equally revealing title: *An Evening's Improvement. Shewing the Necessity of Beholding the Lamb of God, to which is added a Dialogue entitled, The Kind Master and Dutiful Servant.* This

[65] Jupiter Hammon, *A Winter Piece*, pp. 4, 8, 9.
[66] Id, *Address*, pp. 6, 8, 13.

seems to have been printed in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The poetry in it is most probably Hammon's last contribution to creative writing.

That lyricism was closely linked in his mind with religion is apparent from another broadside in verse which he had issued in Hartford, Conn., in 1778: *An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley, Ethiopian poetess, in Boston, who came from Africa at eight years of age, and soon became acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.* It was particularly apposite that Hammon should thus hail the black poetess, for they both hold a special place among the negro authors of the eighteenth century: they can truly be said to have been the pioneers of Afro-American imaginative literature. Their poetic achievement still awaits final assessment. Writing about Hammon's poems, one Afro-American poet of the early twentieth century found it necessary to remind his readers that the author "was a slave working without the advantage of a formal education" and that "only thus can allowance be made for the faulty syntax, the forced rhymes, and the strained metrical effects."[67]

A mere three decades later, Janheinz Jahn was to rebuke him for these mild strictures, comparing Hammon favourably with Wheatley because his naive, sensitive lines were more lively than her elaborate artificiality, and claiming that if *An Evening Song* "were sung polyrhythmically like a spiritual it would not sound at all laboured" because "there is a rhythm swinging through his verse, a genuinely African rhythm as can be expected"![68]

We are taken back to Britain with *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself,* a 49-page pamphlet which was printed in Bath presumably in the 1770s. A new edition appeared in Newport, R.I., in 1774 with the mention "written by himself." It was re-issued several times, once with the mention "as dictated by himself."[69] The story records its author's life up to what appear to be his mid-thirties: it begins with his early years in Bornu and his interest in "the great MAN of POWER that makes the thunder"; it describes his journey to the West African coast and his sale to slave-traders. The book deals at some length with his conversion to Christianity, but for most readers its interest is more likely to lie in the account he gives of his life in England, married to a white woman, Betty, moving from job to job and town to town, occasionally above the poverty-line, often below it. Both Equiano and Cugoano knew his book,[70] which went through several editions, and though it was ghosted for him by "the elegant pen of a young lady of Leominster", the book speaks in a plain and direct way which conveys convincingly the author's experience, as in this passage describing one of the deepest troughs of poverty into which he found himself and his family sinking:

> The snow was at this season remarkably deep, so that we could see no prospect of being relieved: In this melancholy situation, not knowing what step to pursue, I

[67] *Early Negro American Writers,* ed. Benjamin Brawley (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), p. 22.

[68] Jahn, *Geschichte,* pp. 43–44.

[69] Quotations are from the Dublin edition, (1790), pp. 8, 34, 39.

[70] Cugoano makes reference to it in *Thoughts and Sentiments,* p. 22. Equiano's description of this first contact with books clearly derives from Gronniosaw (see Equiano, *Narrative,* pp. xlvi–xlvii).

> resolved to make my case known to a gentleman's gardener, that lived near us, and intreat him to employ me: but when I came to him my courage failed me, and I was ashamed to make known our real situation: I endeavoured all I could to prevail on him to set me to work, but to no purpose, he assured me it was not in his power; but just when I was about to leave him, he asked me if I would accept some carrots? I took them with great thankfulness, and carried them home: he gave me four, they were very large and fine. We had nothing to make a fire with, so consequently could not boil them, but was glad to have them to eat raw. Our youngest child was then an infant, so that my wife was obliged to chew it, and fed her in that manner for several days. We allowed ourselves but one every day, least they should not last till we could get some other supply.

For all his sufferings, however, Gronniosaw offers little in the way of protest: in fact, rather the reverse is true; he writes of his experience of salvation:

> I cannot but admire the footsteps of Providence, astonished that I should be so wonderfully preserved! Though the grandson of a king, I have wanted bread, and should have been glad with the hardest crust I ever saw. I who at home, was surrounded and guarded by slaves, so that no indifferent person might approach me and cloathed with gold, have been inhumanly threatened with death; and frequently wanted cloathing to defend me from the inclemency of the weather; yet I never murmured, nor was I ever discontented. I am willing, and even desirous to be counted as nothing, a stranger in the world, and a pilgrim here.

Thus his endurance of poverty and the barbarities of the slave trade are part of the design of the Lord God Almighty, "so great was his mercy to take me in hand, a poor blind heathen."

Most of the books discussed so far in this section are either early (c. 1760–1770) or, in the case of Jupiter Hammon, the work of an aged man with a lifetime of suppression behind him. However, in works written after 1780, a rather less submissive spirit is to be found. After its successes in the latter half of the 1760s, the abolitionist movement began to grow in authority, and the Mansfield Decision of 1772, that recaptured slaves could not be compelled to return to their American or West Indian slavery, was a crucial case. Self-help amongst the black population of Britain was to expand from this time, and it may be significant that the two books to be published by Africans in Britain during the 1780s are by leading activists, Cugoano and Equiano. Thus, while Equiano's autobiography makes a regular bow to divine providence, this does not prevent him from protesting vigorously and at length against the cruelties of slave ownership. All four of the remaining books to be examined, published between 1787 and 1798, are in different ways works of protest.

Absalom Jones and Richard Allen's *Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People during the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793* expresses its further and more important purpose in a sub-title, *A Refutation of Some Censures Thrown upon them in some late Publications*. It is a defence of black humaneness and efficiency towards white people in the face of a mortal epidemic which attacked both black and white citizens. The argument is that black people took responsibility for caring for the sick when no white people were willing to do so, that some died in consequence, and that

while some black people were paid "extravagant prices," as the authors admit, this was because there was a market for their services and "it was natural for people in low circumstances to accept a voluntary, bounteous reward; especially under the loathsomeness of many of the sick, when nature shuddered at the thoughts of the infection, and the task assigned was aggravated by lunacy, and being left much alone with them." But beyond this, examples are given of acknowledged humane, indeed heroic service, offered freely:

> An elderly black woman nursed [him] with great diligence and attention; when recovered he asked what he must give her for [her] services—she replied "a dinner master on a cold winter's day," and thus she went from place to place rendering every service in her power without an eye to reward.

There is a strong Christian impulse behind this book, which confirms the spirit of some of those discussed earlier, but what emerges more sharply is a criticism of society. Thus the authors admit that black people were known to have stolen from the sick:

> but that they only are pointed out, and made mention of, we esteem partial and injurious; we know as many whites who are guilty of it: but this is looked over, while the blacks are held up to censure.—Is it a greater crime for a black to pilfer, that for a white to privateer?

This is a book which would reward careful study. It avoids rhetorical gestures and holds firmly to example, argument and principle. But despite its confidence and conviction, the book still required a letter from the Mayor of Philadelphia to confirm the respectability of its authors: "Their diligence, attention and decency of deportment," he declares, "afforded me, at the time, much satisfaction."[71]

Ottobah Cugoano (born 1757) was indebted to another hand for the polish given to his *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, and it has been argued above that the reviser may well have been Olaudah Equiano. Though the book contains a description of Cugoano's early life in what is now Ghana, the account is a brief one, and most of the book is taken up with arguments against slavery and those who wrote in support of it. One of those most vigorously attacked is the "Cursory Remarker," James Tobin, whose pro-slave-trade *Cursory Remarks upon the Reverend Mr Ramsay's Essay* (1785) had been reviewed by Equiano for the *Public Advertiser*. The name "Cursory Remarker" had been applied to Tobin, however, in the year previous to the publication of Cugoano's book, by Thomas Clarkson in his *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1786), a classic of the abolitionist literature from which a great deal in Cugoano's argument derives.[72] On the other hand, there are sections of the book which are direct expressions of the experience of Equiano and Cugoano, notably the discussion of the future of the Sierra Leone settlement. The two men were leading spokesmen for the black

[71] Jones and Allen, *Narrative*, pp. 7, 8, 11, 23.
[72] Cugoano acknowledges this debt in *Thoughts and Sentiments*, p. 100.

people travelling on the expedition, and Equiano was so vehement in his dissatisfaction with the way things were being run that he was dismissed from his post as Commissary for Stores.[73]

The authors (assuming Equiano's hand) put their case with some skill. Their attack on the slave-traders and slave-owners is directed not simply against the cruelty, but against the absurdity, of those who practised or defended it on grounds of precedent:

> Suppose two or three half-witted foolish fellows happened to come past a crowd of people, gazing at one which they had hung up by the neck on a tree, as a victim suffering for breaking the laws of his country, and suppose these foolish fellows went a little way in a by-path, and found some innocent person, not suspecting any harm till taken hold of by them, and could not deliver himself from them, and just because they had seen among the crowd of people which they came past, that there had been a man hung by the neck, they took it into their foolish wicked heads to hang up the poor innocent man on the next tree, and just did as they had seen others do, to please their own fancy and base foolishness, to see how he would swing. Now if any of the other people happened to come up to them, and saw what they had done, would they hesitate a moment to determine between themselves and these foolish rascals which had done wickedness? Surely not; they would immediately take hold of such stupid wicked wretches, if it was in their power, and for their brutish foolishness, have them chained in a Bedlam, or hung on a gibbet. But what would these base foolish wretches say for themselves? That they saw others do so, and they thought there had been no harm in it, and they had only done as they had seen the crowd of people do before.

The only justification for slavery, they argue, would be that a man had done some wrong to society, and even then they insist that the enslavement should only be used to compensate society for its loss: "they should be kept at some useful and laborious employment, and it might be at some embarkation, or recovering of waste ground, as there might be land recovered on rivers and shores, worth all the expence, for the benefit of the community they belonged to. The continuance of that criminal slavery and bondage, ought to be according to the nature of their crimes, with a reference to their good behaviour, either to be continued or protracted." They also raise questions about the economic advantages of the trade in slaves and draw the not uncharacteristic conclusion (see, for example, Sancho, Letter CXXXVII) that "if that country [Africa] was not annually ravished and laid waste, there might be a very considerable and profitable trade carried on with the Africans. And, should the noble Britons, who have often supported their own liberties with their lives and fortunes, extend their philanthropy to abolish the slavery and oppression of the Africans, they might have settlements and many kingdoms united in a friendly alliance with themselves, which might be greatly to their own advantage."[74]

The book was re-issued in shortened form in 1791, with an interesting additional note:

[73] Equiano, *Narrative*, pp. xxx–xlv; see also Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments*, pp. 139–142.
[74] Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments*, pp. 57, 72, 86f., and 133.

> The author proposes to open a *School,* for all such of his *complexion* as are desirous of being acquainted with the Knowledge of the *Christian Religion* and the *Laws* of *Civilisation.* His sole Motive for these Undertakings, are, that he finds several of his Countrymen, here in England, who have not only been in an unlawful Manner brought away from their peaceable Habitations, but also deprived of every Blessing of the Christian Knowledge, by their various Masters and Mistresses, either through the motive of Avarice, or the want of the Knowledge of their own Religion, which must be a great Dishonour to Christianity.[75]

Whether or not Cugoano established his school I cannot say: but it is significant that in his will, five years later, Equiano was to record his wish, too, to aid the building of schools for former slaves. Equiano's bequest is that, should his two daughters die before reaching the age of twenty-one, their inheritance was to go to the Sierra Leone Company specifically for the establishing of schools in the Colony.[76] A more aggressive spirit than that of the earlier writers is manifesting itself, as will appear in the last two works to be discussed, the autobiographies of Olaudah Equiano (1745–1797) and Venture Smith (1729–1805).

Venture Smith was captured as a slave by an invading enemy tribe, and taken to the port of Anomabu in present-day Ivory Coast, where, at around the age of eight, he was carried first to Barbados, then to Rhode Island. He grew to be a man of unusual strength, both in build and in personality, and it is clear from his narrative[77] that his masters were often hesitant about how to handle him. At the age of twenty-two he was re-sold away from his wife, Meg, and his one-month old baby, but at this point in the narrative a note is heard which is to prove characteristic: Venture, the commodity of the slave market, is obsessed with money:

> To this place I brought with me from my late master's, two johannes, three old Spanish dollars, and two thousand of coppers, besides five pounds of my wife's money.

Throughout the rest of the narrative, Venture is to emerge as the reverse of an Uncle Tom. But his protest does not take the form, as in Equiano, of work towards the abolition of slavery: rather, it displays an individual self-assertiveness, both in matters of money, and in his treatment by those supposedly in authority over him. He suffers, for example, no nonsense from his new "master's" wife:

> while she was glutting her fury with it [a whip], I reached out my great black hand, raised it up and received the blows of the whip on it which were designed for my head. Then I immediately committed the whip to the devouring fire.

[75] Ibid., pp. xii–xiii.

[76] Cambridge Record Office, Vassa Papers.

[77] *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, a Native of Africa* is a 24-page pamphlet that was first printed in New London, Conn., in 1798. I am quoting from the text as edited by H. M. Selden (Middletown, Conn., 1897).

Having loaned money to his earlier master's brother, he is receiving interest which, added to some money he has buried and some earned by fishing, enables him to buy land. This he cultivates, and "with the greatest diligence and economy, at times when my master did not require my labour, in two years I laid up ten pounds." Venture gets leave from his master to work over winter for another man, and cuts wood on Long Island on a massive scale, of which he is extremely proud: at the same time, to save up for his freedom, he economizes drastically. "Whilst I was out that time, I took up on my wages only one pair of shoes... I bought nothing I did not absolutely want. All fine clothes I despised in comparison with my interest." So he buys his freedom, and a "negro man" as well, for £60, but the latter absconds with some money, much to Venture's disgust. At the age of forty-four he has a house and a farm, and is buying more land, but the preoccupation with money during his years as a slave continues to show itself. His son dies on a whaling trip, and Venture complains that the captain "has never yet paid me the least of his wages. In my son, besides the loss of his life, I lost equal to seventy-five pounds." He buys back his wife "and thereby prevented having another child to buy as she was then pregnant. I gave forty pounds for her." His daughter dies and "the Physician's bill for attending her illness amounted to forty pounds."

At the age of sixty-nine, when he wrote his book, he had 100 acres of land and three habitable houses; he weighed 300 lbs and measured six feet round the waist. He became a legend in his own community, and his editor records a number of local stories about him, one of them about his funeral. He was buried at the top of a steep slope, so his black bearers arranged for two short men to be in front and two tall men behind. As they struggled up the hill with his gigantic coffin, one of the short men in front complained bitterly: "Durned great nigger! Ought to have quartered him and gone four times."

In Venture's narrative, there is not much left of the "providentialism" that had characterized the outlook of the early black writers. What matters is the opportunity to emerge as a man of character and authority from the crushing anonymity of enslavement, and achievement is best defined in financial terms: there is little room for the joys of religious conversion and the expectations of spiritual salvation. It is characteristic of the last book to be considered, that of Equiano, that while it makes frequent gestures towards the latter attitude, the writer being a devout Calvinist-Methodist, it also reveals striking evidence of the former. Equiano did not only help others like him, he helped himself: and for all his talk of divine benevolence, his pride in his own achievement illuminates his narrative.

For example, in the early pages of his book,[78] he does not use the idea of Providence simply to show, as earlier writers did, how lucky the slave is; he introduces ironic complexity, both to acknowledge what he feels he has gained, and to criticize those complacent enough not to see beyond that:

> Did I consider myself an European, I might say that my sufferings were great: but when I compare my lot with that of most of my countrymen, I regard myself as *a particular favourite of heaven*, and acknowledge the mercies of Providence in every occurrence of my life.

[78] See Equiano, *Narrative*, I, 3; 45–6; 176–7.

He looks back on his early life in Africa, before his enslavement at the age of eleven, as a time not of darkness, but of happiness and enlightenment:[79]

> the manners and customs of my country...had been implanted in me with great care, and made an impression on my mind, which time could not erase, and which all the adversity and variety of fortune I have since experienced served only to rivet and record; for, whether the love of one's country be real or imaginary, or a lesson of reason, or an instinct of nature, I still look back with pleasure on the first scenes of my life, though that pleasure has been for the most part mingled with sorrow.

Apart from his early life in Igbo, the opening chapters of his book describe the terrors of enslavement, including a stark account of life aboard the slave-ship. Equiano was sold to an English naval officer, and worked for him over several years aboard British ships, seeing service with the fleet during the Seven Years' War in both Canada and the Mediterranean. He learned to read and write, as well as speak English fluently having a number of opportunities for schooling, but was re-sold to American slavery at the very moment he had come to expect his release:

> Just as we had got a little below Gravesend, we came alongside of a ship which was going away the next tide for the West Indies; her name was the *Charming Sally,* Captain James Doran, and my master went on board and agreed with him for me, and in a little time I was sent for into the cabin. When I came there Captain Doran asked me if I knew him; I answered that I did not; "Then," said he, "you are now my slave." I told him my master could not sell me to him, nor to anyone else. "Why," said he, "did not your master buy you?" I confessed he did. "But I have served him," said I, "many years, and he has taken all my wages and prize-money, for I only got one sixpence during the war; besides this, I have been baptized, and by the laws of the land no man has a right to sell me." And I added, that I had heard a lawyer and others at different times tell my master so. They both then said that those people who told me so were not my friends; but I replied, "It was very extraordinary that other people did not know the law as well as they." Upon this Captain Doran said I talked too much English, and if I did not behave myself well and be quiet he had a method on board to make me.

He was next sold in America to a Quaker, Mr King, who treated him well by the standards of the slave trade. But implicit in the *Narrative* is a question: if the slave trade is in itself evil, what is a good master? Thus the book expresses what seems to have been a tension in Equiano's mind between an acknowledgement of the kindnesses shown him by his "masters", and a hatred of their involvement in slave-ownership. The very white men who aid and befriend him, in fact, are also playing their part in the appalling system which has enslaved and brutalized him and his people. Without the power to act for himself, he is forced to seek the aid of slave-owners such as his master Robert King, or

[79] A study of his sympathetic view of Islam reveals that for Equiano, one of the particular attractions of Islamic life was its resemblance in certain respect to his early life in Igboland: see Ian Duffield and Paul Edwards, "Equiano's Muslims and Christians", *Journal of African Studies,* 2 (1975–1976), 433–444. Philip Curtin in *Africa Remembered* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 14 describes Equiano's autobiography as "unique among works of its kind in the detail it supplies about the background in Africa".

slave-carriers such as Captain Farmer, in order to get his rights against the white barbarians he constantly comes up against. In consequence, the anger he has to control emerges in ironies and contradictions which reveal dramatically the true state of his mind. Notably, there are several episodes in which his "masters" require his services, and he virtually takes over their roles.[80]

In due course, he was able to gain his freedom, by means of petty trading and with the help of Captain Farmer, and in his early twenties he was back in England as a free man. He had been baptized at St. Margaret's, Westminster, when he was around thirteen, but now he felt the need for something more, and after exploring a number of creeds, he discovered himself to be among the elect and attended at Westminster Chapel, a centre of Calvinist belief. His life, however, remained one of travel. He had been a member of the Phipps Expedition to the Arctic in 1772–3, as assistant to the surgeon, Dr. Irving, and he also went with Irving to live amongst the Central American 'Mosquito' *(Miskito)* Indians. He had learned to dress hair, and travelled as a gentleman's valet on the Grand Tour of the Mediterranean, a journey of considerable importance to him since it introduced him to the Turks and so reinforced his sense of the gap between Christian belief and practice. But during the 1780s and 1790s he was mostly occupied working in Britain towards the abolition of slavery. He was appointed Commissary for Stores on the expedition of freed slaves in 1787 to settle in Sierra Leone, but appears to have stood up for his fellows too firmly for the white leaders' satisfaction and was dismissed at Plymouth.[81] He married a girl called Susan Cullen from Soham, near Cambridge, in 1792, and they had two daughters, Ann Maria and Johanna. Ann Maria died at the age of four and is commemorated on a tablet in St Andrew's Church, Chesterton, near Cambridge. Johanna survived to her twenty-first birthday at least, for legal documents exist showing that in 1816 she claimed her inheritance, a sum of £900. Equiano appears to have died a fairly prosperous man: an inventory of his money and property survives in his own hand, and includes legacies, interest on loans, and land.[82] Like Venture Smith, Equiano achieved material success: but in the English abolitionist situation, he was able to work at a political level different from that of Venture, and most of his last years were spent travelling the country, selling his book, and rallying support for abolition. He was, as Thomas Digges, a contemporary, wrote of him, "a principal instrument in bringing about the motion for a repeal of the Slave-act."[83]

[80] For a more detailed comment on this, see Paul Edwards, "Equiano and His Captains," in *Common Wealth* (Aarhus: Akademisk Boghandel, n.d. 1972), ed. Anna Rutherford pp. 18–25.

[81] See above, note 73.

[82] Cambridge Record Office, Vassa Papers.

[83] Equiano, *Narrative*, Appendix B, p. xii.

CHAPTER II

WEST AFRICA

The life story and the literary achievements of Equiano and of his late eighteenth-century contemporaries, however clumsy and unskilled they may often have been, are of paramount historical importance, for they are the fountainhead from which the two main streams of black writing in European languages were to spring forth. One, heralded by Phillis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon, was to lead, after many vicissitudes and in the face of great difficulties to the flowering of Afro-American writing, one of the most significant contributions of the black section of the United States' population to the wealth and diversity of American civilization in its most positive aspects. With that side of the Negro literary tradition this book is not concerned. But the other stream takes us to the very heart of our preoccupations. For after the ill-starred Afro-Portuguese episode of the sixteenth century, it was in West Africa in the nineteenth century that European languages, and in the first place English, were used for literary purposes by a significant number of truly gifted authors and thinkers. This sudden development had been made possible by one aspect of the abolitionists' action with which Equiano was closely connected: the repatriation of freed slaves to what was assumed to be their native continent, even though many of them were actually born in America or the West Indies, where their families had sometimes been residing for generations.

As a new home for those freed slaves, British anti-slavery societies elected Sierra Leone in 1787; in 1822, their American counterparts chose Liberia. Even though they may be presumed to have been hostile to the system that had enslaved their race, those slaves had deeply imbibed the values of the Western world. They were committed to Christianity and to education. They were inspired by an ideal of social promotion into some sort of bourgeois respectability. In a sense, then, the early outposts of Western civilization in West Africa were manned by blacks. Of unique importance for the literary history of Africa was the fact that those first black settlers coming from overseas spoke English as their mother tongue and were deeply convinced of the superiority of the English language as a medium of civilized intercourse over the dialects of the allegedly primitive and savage populations whose territories they were infiltrating.

The main agent of the abolitionist movement on the spot was the Church Missionary Society which was created in 1795, one of the first and certainly the most prominent among a number of Protestant missionary societies which were to become extremely active on African soil and greatly influence the fate and directions of African literature.

As mentioned in the Introduction, they were responsible for the emergence and growth of vernacular-language literatures. But English writing was also conditioned in its orientations by missionary attitudes and black responses to them. In a general way, it may be claimed that the kind of situation that was prevalent by the end of the first quarter of the century accounted for the early primacy of may be called, in a very broad sense, "didactic," over imaginative writing: the strain of zealous earnestness in the Anglo-Saxon Puritan mind, which was the black settlers' model, was not conducive to indulgence in the emotional flights of lyricism or the imaginative fancies of fiction. Instead, the Protestant determination to make the word of God available to every human being caused linguistic studies to make great strides, missionary scholars such as the illustrious Koelle being followed, not by creoles, but by such liberated Africans as Ajayi Crowther. Further, although christianization and westernization were the goal of the educated blacks both in Sierra Leone and in Liberia, they resented white authority which was the inevitable counterpart of financial control: much of the writing that was done in English throughout the nineteenth century was concerned with historical, ethnological, judicial, educational and political matters and was designed to free Africa—sometimes, more modestly, West Africa—from European tutelage.

Creative writing—poetry, drama, prose fiction—did not arise until much later—until, with very few exceptions, the twentieth century. A case might be made for the notion that the birth and growth (however slow) of imaginative writing were a result of the hardening of the colonial system after the Berlin Conference in 1885. This can be said to have marked a turning point in Europe's general attitude towards Africa: the benevolence of humanitarianism and the moderation of legitimate trade made room for stark imperialism and ruthless exploitation; African progress in education was checked; public discussion of political themes was repressed and suppressed; since African participation in administration was overtly reduced, the educated African was encouraged, somewhat hypocritically, to seek an outlet in imaginative writing. This process was especially conspicuous in the French colonies, and in this way, the first half of the twentieth century paved the way for the coalescence of poetic fancy and ideological casuistry that was to generate the concept of negritude.

ROBERT W. JULY[1]

1. THE PRIMACY OF DIDACTIC WRITING IN ENGLISH AND IN FRENCH

The early histories of settlement in Sierra Leone and Liberia were superficially similar. The sites of Freetown and Monrovia were both chosen as havens where former slaves might find a fresh start in a new life. In England and America, philanthropists were instrumental in providing substantial support toward the expenses of transport and initial development and toward the continued success of each venture. During the early years of the nineteenth century, the struggling first efforts took root; permanent establishments developed that became the bases for today's independent states.

Similarities in objective and circumstance did not reflect similarities in population. The settlements of Liberia were founded for American blacks, freemen or manumitted slaves, who sought surcease of the persecutions of a racially conditioned society. In Sierra Leone, Freetown and the villages that grew up around it, accommodated at first small numbers of former slaves from America or the sugar islands, but eventually its lands became the home of West African liberated slaves taken by British men-of-war from slave ships as they turned to sea from the African coast and headed for the Atlantic passage.

There were other differences. The settlers at Freetown were much more numerous and heterogeneous. By 1840 some 60,000 Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and others had been put down there to supplement the modest population of former slaves. In Liberia, by contrast, blacks from America made up the bulk of the citizenry, but hesitant emigration and heavy mortality kept the population low; by 1850 they still numbered under 3000. By 1850, however, these few were citizens of an independent black nation, weak and impecunious, though sovereign. In neighbouring Sierra Leone philanthropy prospered, but yet it did so in the firm hands of a British colonial administration supplemented by the educational and spiritual guidance of a British missionary establishment.

Among settler populations, differences in background and make-up produced differing forms of cultural life and ideological concerns. In Sierra Leone, British administrators and missionaries were committed to developing a sturdy yeomanry—Christian farmers and hard-working freeholders in emulation of the English husbandman back

[1] For a detailed account of African writing in West Africa during the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth see Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (London: Faber, 1968) [Ed.].

home. The growing numbers of West Africans resettled at Freetown were not averse to the pursuit of this aim, but progress was necessarily limited by time and the habits of a former way of life. In Liberia the large majority of settlers was already westernized and Christian. Even before independence came in 1847, there had never been many white officials living among the colonists; what was more, the Americo-Liberians quickly became accustomed to freedom of action as they pressed successfully for growing political self-direction. Despite their African ancestry, they tended to look down upon the indigenous population as uncivilized. In thought and action they often seemed more like European colonists than black men come home again.

Literacy among former slaves was necessarily limited. Even so, there was readership for a newspaper, the *Liberia Herald,* founded in 1829 and appearing at monthly and semi-monthly intervals. Most of the copy came from foreign journals, but there were also local news and extensive editorial comment on a wide range of Liberian affairs. Edward Blyden served briefly as editor during the 1850s, but the paper's chief director during the early years of its existence was Hilary Teague (d. 1853), the son of a Virginia clergyman who had brought his family to Liberia in 1821. Between 1835 and 1849, Teague was both proprietor and editor of the paper, which was largely a one-man enterprise. Teague was obliged to perform at many levels—political commentator, economic analyst, poet, raconteur, humorist, moralist, exhorter to national progress, essayist, and even composer of the Liberian hymn to independence. Apparently set to the music of "America," this effort ended with characteristic flourishes:

All hail Liberia | Hail |
Favour'd by God all hail |
Hail happy Land |
From virtue ne'er remove;
By peace, and truth, and love...
So shall thou stand.

Ordinarily Teague expressed himself somewhat more prosaically, but his recurrent theme of Liberian progress evoked much the same sentiments. During the 1840s, the prospect of independence brought forth many self-analytical utterances and assessments of national destiny. The busy editor was quick to utilize the opportunity his columns provided:

> Humanity is on our side—and our side are truth, morality and religion and all their influences: and God himself is on our side... let us prove ourselves worthy of the boon we ask—a name, a home, a place in the land of the living. Thus pleading we shall be successful; and Liberia shall live before God and before the nations of the earth; and become the focus where the rays of light emanating from other lands shall meet: hence they shall go out, diverging in every direction as they fly, piercing the darkness which from ages like a sable pall has mantled the generations of our father-land until liberty and law and religion and love shall kindle a blaze of glory in this benighted land.[2]

[2] *Liberia Herald* (August 26, 1847; May 31, 1845).

Reference to the pall over a benighted land was no accident. Liberian settlers were continually troubled by their relations with the indigenous peoples of their adopted country. Emotionally, they recognized a kinship, but the practicalities of securing land and developing trade often led to serious frictions. Eventually these frictions hardened into mutual hostility, but in the early days of Liberian independence, settler attitudes were a fluctuating battleground between racial attraction and a colonialist mentality based upon their firm conviction of cultural superiority. The Liberian Declaration of Independence, of which Teague was author, spoke only of racial persecution in America, and the Constitution of 1847 in fact denied citizenship to the indigenous African until he had passed through an elaborate process of naturalization.

This ambivalence was apparent in the writings of another leading emigré from America, Alexander Crummell (1819–1898), a black clergyman who lived in Liberia for two decades beginning in 1853 and who published numerous essays dealing with Liberia, and more broadly, with the destiny of the black man the world over. Crummell was proud of his African heritage and proud of the people from whom he had originally sprung. Again and again in his writings he returned to the concept of racial purity, a thoroughbred strain, he reported, that in Africa produced people of remarkable symmetry, strength and bodily beauty. Living in a lovely land of majestic mountains and flowered valleys crossed by charming streams, the African, said Crummell, grew up strong, healthy, vigorous, long-lived, industrious and hospitable.

It was not enough, however. Africa had languished, continued Crummell, suffering in isolation from the mainstream of modern Western civilization. Denied the spiritual refreshment of Christian teaching, the African lapsed into paganism and idolatry, and these in turn spawned licentiousness, cruelty, and the degradation of women. Help was therefore needed, help from the outside, but under no circumstance should it come from the white man with his "stained and gory hand," not even from the well-intentioned but ineffectual white missionary. "This sacred glory is reserved," Crummell concluded,

> as compensation to the offspring of this race who themselves have been suffering the sad inflictions of servitude in foreign lands. The children of Africa scattered abroad in distant lands are the indigenous agency—the men... who are yet to accomplish the large and noble work of uplifting Africa from degradation.[3]

Up the coast at Freetown, the publication of newspapers also came early. At first they were official government gazettes though they published local news along with the state notices and proclamations. By mid-century, settler-owned papers had also begun to appear, a development that swelled steadily over the ensuing years.[4]

Whatever creative outlet these journals provided, the main source of literary effort came from another direction. British missions active in the Sierra Leone Colony since the beginning of the nineteenth century, had come for purposes of Christian conversion,

[3] Alexander Crummell Papers, Schomburg Collection, New York, Ms. C–23. See also "Sermon on Redemption of Africa", ibid., and A. Crummell, *Africa and America* (Springfield, Mass.: Wiley, 1891). pp. 433–453.

[4] Christopher Fyfe, "The Sierra Leone Press in the Nineteenth Century," *Sierra Leone Studies*, N. S., No. 8 (June, 1957), 226–236.

but they soon added to their duties the development of an African clergy. In time a substantial number of African ministers emerged, among them those with wide-ranging interests in African political and cultural affairs to supplement their more purely theological preoccupations. Like Alexander Crummell in Liberia, these men spoke and wrote extensively on matters of race, economic development, nation building and Africa's relationship with the West. Many received their schooling at the Church Missionary Society's institution at Fourah Bay which developed eventually into a centre of educational and intellectual activity serving all of British West Africa.

In time the name of Fourah Bay came to be associated with a number of West Africa's leading figures, but perhaps its most illustrious alumnus was among its earliest graduates. In 1827, Samuel Ajayi Crowther (c. 1806–1891) destined to become West Africa's first black bishop, enrolled in the Christian Institution just then moved to its new site at Fourah Bay. Scarcely more than a boy, young Crowther had already endured the trauma of enslavement in his native Yoruba country, embarkation on a Portuguese slaver, and then recapture by a British man-of-war which brought him to freedom in the haven of the Sierra Leone estuary.

In the years that followed his schooling at Fourah Bay, Crowther served as missionary and explorer under C.M.S. auspices, making several trips up the Niger River and eventually establishing mission stations at a number of river points. In 1864, he was appointed bishop of the territories of West Africa, comprising the Niger establishments from the delta to the Benue river confluence.

Crowther's missions were sponsored by the Church Missionary Society as part of its programme for the development of West Africa—to establish growing points where productive cultivation of cash crops by christianized farmers would replace the depressing regimen of slave raiding and paganism that had laid its hand on so much of West Africa. Crowther was a strong advocate of this doctrine of "the Bible and the plough," and throughout his long career as head of the Niger mission his primary purpose was to demonstrate its soundness and create a new life in West Africa based upon its precepts.

In a formal sense Bishop Crowther was not a literary figure. His writings, though copious, took mainly the form of letters and diaries dealing with his mission activities. The accounts of his Niger trips were subsequently published in book form,[5] however, and many of his reports to C.M.S. headquarters in London appeared in the missionary periodicals. From these documents there emerges a coherent view of West Africa, its needs and its possibilities, as seen by a man of West Africa deeply concerned with the advancement of his people.

At the bottom of Crowther's thinking was his conviction that traditional Africa would have to abandon many of its older ways in favour of more modern institutions as developed in the West. To begin with, there were the teachings of Christ, an ancient faith but the only true religion, now flourishing in Europe and needed to dispel the ignorance and superstition within Africa both of paganism and of Islam. Beyond this,

[5] Samuel A. Crowther, *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers* (London: Church Missionary House, 1855). Reprinted with an introduction by J. F. A. Ajayi (London: Cass, 1970).

there was the science of modern agriculture which could employ able villagers in the production of such valuable exports as cotton, tobacco, indigo, groundnuts, arrowroot, and cayenne pepper. Finally, there were light industries to be established, processing the many agricultural products of West Africa, adding their measure of wealth and providing much work for a growing body of craftsmen.

Interest in modernizing influences from the West did not blind Crowther either to European faults or to the advantages of many of Africa's traditional institutions. To be sure, Christianity was an essential ingredient, but Christ's teachings were best disseminated by Africans themselves, by mission workers like Crowther who understood the people and who could stand up to the rigours of the climate. Beyond this, there were indigenous customs, proverbs, songs, and fables which could be employed with advantage to enrich precept and clarify doctrine. Crowther urged his mission workers to learn the local languages so that their preaching might be more effective, and at various times he published grammars of Yoruba, Nupe, and Igbo and translated parts of the Scriptures into Yoruba.[6] Even Arabic was urged upon his workers, the better to do battle against a false faith that helped hold his people in their depressed state.

Crowther's career ended in frustration, since at the end of his life he was superseded by missionaries from England whom he and the Niger missions had originally been chosen to replace. Even this ultimate disappointment could not dim his conviction, however, that the development of his people would always require the partnership of Europe and Africa. Over thirty years earlier, in charging his mission helpers at Lokoja, where the Niger and Benue meet, he had given his most eloquent statement of this faith:

> Africa has neither knowledge nor skill to devise plans to bring out her vast resources for her own improvement; and for want of Christian enlightenment, cruelty and barbarity overspread the land to an incredible degree. Therefore to claim Africa for the Africans alone, is to claim for her the right of a continued ignorance to practise cruelty and acts of barbarity as her perpetual inheritance. For it is certain, unless help came from without, a nation can never rise much above its present state.[7]

Bishop Crowther's deference to Western standards was in part an understanding of the advantages of modernization, in part a reflection of an earlier age long before the full force of colonialism had come upon West Africa. Later generations were no less convinced of the need for development, but they were to be much more sceptical with regard to the motives, and to some extent, the institutions, of the West. Both in word and deed, two later products, James Johnson (c. 1836–1917) and Africanus Horton (1835–1883), offered clear testimony to this shifting emphasis.

Like Bishop Crowther, James Johnson left Fourah Bay to join the ministry and the missionary effort in West Africa. By contrast, Horton continued his studies at Edinburgh University in the field of medicine, returning to West Africa where he served out a successful twenty-year career as medical officer in the British West African military

[6] See especially, S. A. Crowther, *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language* (London: Seeley, 1852). For detailed information about Crowther's contribution to African linguistics, see Paul E. Hair, *The Early Study of Nigerian Languages* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967).

[7] Crowther's Charge at Lokoja, September 13, 1869, Church Missionary Society Archives, CA3/O4A.

force. Horton's interests and activities went far beyond his official work, however. As a scientist, he became absorbed in the study of tropical environment and disease, and in 1867 published a survey covering the West African physical and medical climate.[8] Scientific training also led Horton to a spirited defence of Africa against racial theories then emanating from Europe, especially from England with Robert Knox's *Races of Men* (London, 1850) and from France with Gobineau's far more influential *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (Paris, 1853). Horton's interest in West Africa and its future brought forth writings that offered blueprints for the creation of independent states comprising such groups as the Yoruba, Ibo, Fanti, Ga, and his own people, the creoles of Sierra Leone.

Horton's racial arguments were closely related to his ideas on political independence. In his major work, *West African Countries and Peoples* (London, 1868), Horton gave details of the formation of sovereign West African nations, but the work is subtitled, "a Vindication of the African Race," and contains his most telling arguments in refutation of the then current assertions of African racial inferiority. For Horton, the development of independent states in West Africa came logically from his conviction that the races of the world differed in no consequential way in their physical and intellectual capabilities. His evidence was empirical—a medical man with years of practical experience arriving at conclusions from first-hand laboratory and clinical evidence. There were, he found, no discernible differences among races in such manifestations as skeletal structure, physiological maturation or mental acuity. "I claim the existence of the attribute of a common humanity in the African", Horton asserted. "The amount of moral and intellectual endowments exhibited by him, as originally conferred by nature, is the same, or nearly so, as that found amongst the European nations."[9]

What Horton did concede was a temporary ascendancy of European culture, but this, he insisted, was based totally on factors of environment and history. There was a time, he continued when Britons painted their bodies, lived in hollow trees, and, in their barbarism, made the worst of slaves. In those years, when Rome held sway, Africa too was ascendant, sharing its learning with the Greeks, sheltering the early Christian church, and eventually conserving much of the ancient learning when Rome expired. In time, Africa too fell into darkness as Europe rose to its present heights of achievement. The wheel must turn again, continued Horton. The slave trade and its depressing effects are ending. Europe stands ready to share the fruits of its achievement. Freed from oppression, the African moves forward eager to improve his lot and eventually to regain his former eminence.

How was this to be done? First, there was the continued dissemination both of Christianity and of modernizing institutions through the missionary effort. More than that, however, it was for the African himself to direct and propel his renascence. Already

[8] J. A. B. Horton, *Physical and Medical Climate and Meteorology of the West Coast of Africa* (London: Churchill, 1867). For extracts from Horton's works see *Africanus Horton*, ed. Davidson Nicol (Harlow: Longmans, 1969); see also Christopher Fyfe, *Africanus Horton, West African Scientist and Patriot* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[9] J. A. B. Horton, *West African Countries and Peoples* (London, 1868) repr. with introduction by George Shepperson (Edinburgh: University Press, 1969), p. 27.

this work was underway in Sierra Leone through the exertion of the receptive creoles, and there was every reason to hope that this impulse would spread widely among the other peoples of West Africa.

For Horton, the primary engine of reform was education. At various times he urged the establishment of medical and vocational instruction, the training of teachers, more and better primary schools, and, finally, a university for West Africa. This institution, expanding the facilities of Fourah Bay College, would offer the usual classical curriculum of the day, but Horton also urged attention to subjects that directly involved the West African environment—chiefly the physical and biological sciences "which are closely connected with our daily wants and conveniences... and cure many defects in the wit and intellectual faculties... Do we not find that the greatness of civilized countries, depends on the development and practical application of these studies? And to whom then must Africa look for the ultimate development of her vast resources, and in what school are the majority of those who would be called upon to act their part in regenerated Africa be taught?"[10]

Horton's vision of university education and independent West African nations anticipated the future by a century, conceived as it was on the eve of Europe's colonial incursion into Africa. At the time, others in West Africa were less sanguine in their expectations, particularly of the doubtful benefits to be gained from the West. A leading voice among these sceptics and among those West African clergy who followed Crowther in the quest for an indigenous Christian church and missionary movement, was James Johnson, Horton's contemporary.

Like Crowther, James Johnson was not a writer in any professional sense.[11] As a pastor and a missionary, however, he spoke out publicly on many matters, his opinions were widely reported in the missionary journals, and he contributed regularly to the newspapers in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Wherever he went, he expressed views that were controversial, but there was an inner consistency in them that conditioned word and action. On the one hand, Johnson was the exemplary Christian missionary, devoted to the task of combating what he regarded as the superstitions and ignorance of paganism and Islam. On the other, he was the unswerving proponent of African culture, custom, language and thought. Whether he was baptizing children with African names, often against the wishes of their parents, whether he was attacking European dress and social custom as inappropriate to the West African ambiance, whether he was pressing for schooling that concentrated on African-oriented curricula, James Johnson was concerned with the task of bringing together the two strands of Africa and Christ.

These efforts were not always well understood, but for Johnson there was no paradox. Conceived in Asia, nurtured in Africa, and radiated through Europe, Christ's teachings were for him clearly universal. They were as appropriate in Lagos as they were in London. The gospel was equally at home in Yoruba and in English. Even such local customs as domestic slavery and polygamy, said Johnson, called for tactful accommoda-

[10] Quoted in *The Jubilee and Centenary Volume of Fourah Bay College*, ed. T. J. Thompson (Freetown: Elsiemay Printing Works, 1930), pp. 54–56.

[11] See E. A. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836–1917* (London: Cass, 1970).

tion within the universal church where they might respond to the "quiet ameliorative influence of the missionary's teaching."

Nevertheless, Johnson warned, it was essential that the African should not fall into an uncritical imitation of Europe. Self-improvement required self-assertion. The African who patterns himself on Europe, he said, even in the interests of civilization, courts cultural annihilation. At the very point of achievement, he will discover that the essential man has disappeared. "The African is not there and the European whom we think we imitate is not there." What is left is nothing.[12]

The convictions of James Johnson, though firmly held, were not unique to him. Indeed, they drew much inspiration from the thinking of another West African clergyman whose ideas on Africa, the black man and his relations with the Western world, were to have a pervasive influence on his contemporaries and on the generations that followed. Edward W. Blyden (1832–1912) was a West Indian who arrived in Liberia as a young émigré in 1851, but came to occupy a pre-eminent, albeit controversial, position in the affairs of that West African state down into the early years of the twentieth century. As a scholar, author and educator, Blyden came to develop views on African cultural independence and racial integrity that dominated the West African scene throughout his long life.[13]

What distinguishes Blyden from others of his time, is the completeness of his doctrines, which he constructed into something like a philosophical testimonial to the importance and integrity of the black man. Others enunciated special perceptions–Crowther his Christian modernization, James Johnson the promotion of African customs, or Horton his emphasis on racial equality. By contrast, Blyden was able to construct a system that was thorough-going and self-consistent, that recognized the obvious fact of Europe's strength and achievement, yet preserved an honoured place in heaven's firmament for Africa.

Blyden was a prolific essayist and a popular public speaker; hence, he had ample opportunity to give voice to opinions that came to be some of the earliest and most eloquent expressions of black pride.[14] From his extensive writings there emerges a nineteenth-century version of what later came to be known as negritude. Blyden began by accepting some of the premises of European racial theorists, then proceeded to add innovations of his own. It was true, he said, that the world's races varied from one another; this was immediately clear from their physical disparity and their cultural diversity. What was not valid, however, was the conclusion circulating among certain European racial anthropologists that the racial differences could be ordered into a

[12] *The Nigerian Pioneer* (August 3, 1917); *The Lagos Weekly Record* (May 2, 1896). See also James Johnson, *Yoruba Heathenism* (Exeter: Townsend, 1899).

[13] Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832–1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[14] Many of Blyden's short works were printed separately, but a number were also brought together in collections, most notably: The *Report on the Falaba Expedition, 1872* (Sierra Leone: Government Office, 1872), in which he described his journey to the Muslim interior of Sierra Leone; *From West Africa to Palestine* (Freetown: Sawyerr, 1873), his account of a trip to the Middle East in the early 1870s; *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (London: Wittingham, 1888); and *African Life and Customs* (London: Phillips, 1908). See also *Black Spokesman. Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, ed. Hollis R. Lynch (London: Cass, 1971).

hierarchy from high to low, or good to bad. Racial variations were just that, said Blyden—not better or worse, just different.

This led to a number of important corollaries. Each race in its uniqueness has something special to contribute to human perfectibility; indeed, for Blyden, an ordained minister, each race was no less than an integral part of God's transcendent nature. Each contributed its unique share to the divine totality, each represented some special facet of God's thought and beauty. "The whole of mankind," Blyden concluded, "is a vast representation of the Deity".[15]

What qualities did each race contribute? The European, said Blyden, was didactic, materialistic, dominant. He excelled in science and politics, building great cities, imposing his peace by force, putting an end to the horrors of the slave trade. "He is God's ruler, God's soldier, God's policeman," Blyden conceded; yet, in his materialism and secularism, "the tendency of the West Aryan genius is ever to divorce God from his works... Man is an end, not a means. The highest man is the highest end to which all things else must bow."

Where the European was assertive, all-conquering of man and environment, Blyden saw the African as sympathetic in spirit and profound in his morality. Anticipating by half a century Senghor and the apostles of negritude, he pointed to three elements of African culture through which the African's sympathetic nature could develop its special contribution to universal civilization. First, there was the strong sense of community, exemplified in the close ties of extended family, the sharing of the land, or the cooperative care in each village for the young, the aged, the infirm or the helpless. Next, sympathy toward man extended to sympathy toward nature. The African was consonant with nature, living close to the soil, avoiding the restraints of clothing, bathing in nearby streams, adjusting to the rhythm of the seasons, using nature's book as his school. "His real work," Blyden stated, "is to speak to the earth and let it teach him."

Communion with nature and man suggested communion with God, and Blyden had no doubt that the African personality showed much greater spiritual affinity than those of other races, especially the European. This was apparent in the worship of the ancestors, in the ever-close relationship between religious thought and everyday practice, in Africa's historic role as protector of the great worldwide faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Thus concluded Blyden, when one anticipates the contribution that each race will make to man's perfectibility, it is service that one may expect from the African:

> Africa's lot resembles Him also who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant... And if the principle laid down by Christ is... that he who would be chief must become the servant of all, then we see the position which Africa and the Africans must ultimately occupy.

[15] Blyden quotations on this and the following pages are from: *The African Problem and the Method of Its Solution* (Washington, D. C.: Gibson, 1890), p. 23; *Proceedings at the Banquet in Honour of Edward Wilmot Blyden* (London: Phillips, 1907), p. 41; *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, pp. 44, 278; *African Life and Customs*, p. 9; *Africa's Service to the World, A Pledge of Her Successful Future* (London: Doulton, n.d. [1880?]) p. 12; *The Prospects of the African* (London: Imray and Doulton, n.d. [1874?]), p. 7; *Lagos Standard* (October 24, 1906).

It followed for Blyden that service and spirituality would eventually converge and Africa would become in time the conservatory of the world's good conscience. "The world has yet to witness the forging of the great chain which is to bind the nations together in equal fellowship and friendly union," he exulted. "I mean the mighty principle of Love... Many are of opinion that this crowning work is left for the African."

Blyden's theories of unique and complementary racial characteristics contained the germ of another important but controversial idea. Races were separate but equal, he said. Is it not best they stay apart? When they come together, they confound and confuse each other. In Africa, the European has shown little adaptability to land and climate. Where he has left his mark, as in coastal communities, he has replaced mental and physical vigour with moral laxity and slave-mongering. In America, continued Blyden, the black man has been forced into slavery. He has been compelled to live by the white man's standards. His schooling has been exclusively according to the principles of Western education. As a result of this alien indoctrination, the black man is not "the companion, the equal, the comrade of the white man, but his imitator, his ape, his parasite. To be himself... is to be nothing."

Thus, said Blyden, let each race pursue its own genius without interference. Let the African remain at home. Let the black man in America return to his ancestral land, the purpose for which the haven of Liberia was originally created. Let education in Africa concentrate on the history, the society, the physical environment of Africa. Let Christianity lead the African to an understanding of God's love, but let it be practised in the idioms of Africa, not through the alien teachings of European churches. Above all, concluded Blyden, let there be no miscegenation. "No race can part with its natural and essential qualities," he warned. "The pure [specimen] of the Negro race... considers segregation as desirable, in view of the corruptions which without it he suffers in his blood."

Blyden's views on miscegenation were not emphasized in his writings for fear of offending white philanthropists or influential mulattos, either in the Americas or in Africa. Many of the most important settlers in Liberia were of mixed blood, and there were those among the Freetown creoles like Samuel Lewis the barrister and distinguished legislative councillor, who, mulatto or not, were little attracted by Blyden's more extreme pronouncements.

In the Gold Coast settlements a similar aloofness might have been detected, although, by the 1870s, many leading Gold Coast Africans had become disenchanted with Western pretentions, particularly as exemplified by the British statesmanship of the time. In quick succession, there had come the unannounced exchange of Dutch and British Gold Coast trading forts, the scuttling of the Fanti Confederation movement supported by Africanus Horton as part of his grand scheme for West African independence, a military campaign into Ashanti, and finally the arbitrary establishment of the Gold Coast Colony in 1874. What particularly irked the Gold Coast men was the unilateral action of the British government, leading to annexation without either consultation or conquest and in violation of what they regarded as prior agreements by treaty between equal sovereign powers.

The Gold Coast at the time was administered from Freetown, and Africanus Horton, who was on administrative duty in the coastal town of Sekondi, came out in support of the Fanti Confederation in which he saw the incipient materialization of his grand scheme for West African independence. He was strongly critical of British policy throughout the episode,[16] and was followed by other Western-educated Africans— local merchants, journalists and clergymen, quick to point to the vagaries of colonial rule.

Eventually, criticism in the Gold Coast Colony came into the hands of a younger generation of English-trained lawyers including John Mensah Sarbah (1864–1910) and Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford (1866–1930). These professional men were the offspring of a generation of well-to-do Fanti merchants who had attained literacy at the Methodist school which had taken the place of the institution created at Cape Coast castle by Philip Quaque. Those businessmen were responsible for launching the first newspapers in the Gold Coast. They usually had their sons educated at Fourah Bay College, before sending them off to some British university. Both Mensah Sarbah and Casely Hayford combined authorship with their political activism. The latter was involved during his long career in editorial direction and feature writing for several newspapers, prepared a number of anti-government tracts dealing with such issues as land utilization and the disposal of natural resources, and in 1911 produced a long and evocative novel, *Ethiopia Unbound,* which dealt with a wide range of racial issues.[17] Mensah Sarbah's literary output was less eclectic—three substantial volumes covering the customary law of the Fanti, most particularly *Fanti National Constitution,* published in 1906 and representing the essence of his thinking.[18]

Mensah Sarbah's critique of colonial administration adopted a historical method, his analysis concentrating on legal and political institutions. The British presence in the forts of the Gold Coast, he insisted, had come originally through treaties, especially the bonds of 1844. These agreements did not grant sovereignty, said Mensah Sarbah. There had been no subsequent purchase or conquest of territory. By what right, then, did the British arrogate their authority? They claimed usage and physical presence, he continued, and they implied that in any case they were dealing with uncivilized, disorganized barbarians. Once again they were in error, for the Fanti, among others, had a long history of workable, effective government:

> Gold Coast territory was not an uninhabited district... or an inhabited territory obtained by conquest or cession. Whether the inhabitants were taken to be half or wholly savages, they had their aboriginal tribal government, each regularly established, invested with the rights of sovereignty and exercising its powers... A study of treaties of friendship and protection existing between England and several Gold Coast rulers does not support the view that it was contemplated at least by these rulers and their people that they would be deprived of their judicial powers and other rights of sovereignty.

[16] J. A. B. Horton, *Letters on the Political Condition of the Gold Coast* (London: Johnson, 1870; repr. with introduction by E. A. Ayandele, London: Cass, 1970).

[17] Of Casely Hayford's other works, the most important are *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1903; repr. London: Cass, 1970), and *United West Africa* (London: Phillips, 1919).

[18] See Azu Crabbe, *John Mensah Sarbah* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1972).

It was clear, Mensah Sarbah pointed out, that the British authority was illegal, a fact of life, which, he sadly concluded, did not make it any the less real. Nevertheless, since there was a long history of effective local customs and institutions, was it not good administrative practice for the British to make good use of these well-tried ways? Above all, was there not a useful place in the colonial government for the African, educated in the West but sensitive to the ways of traditional life? In such a way might the best of the old and the new be brought together in fruitful communion.[19]

Although John Mensah Sarbah served with distinction on the Gold Coast legislative council, the British were characteristically cool toward the educated African, suspicious of his motives, uncertain of his loyalty, and basically contemptuous of his learning. With Joseph E. Casely Hayford they encountered another Gold Coast man who had absorbed much from the West but who responded to British suspicion with a scepticism of his own.

As seen in his writings and public pronouncements, particularly in the years before World War I, Casely Hayford was unwavering in his concern to instil an attitude of self-respect in the black man, in Africa or elsewhere. Self-respect would come, Casely Hayford was certain, with recognition of the shortcomings of materialistic, hypocritical, godless Europe, as measured against the moral and ethical strength of Africa's ancient institutions. There was much of Edward Blyden in this attitude, a debt that Casely Hayford freely acknowledged; yet, there was also the authentic ring of genuine conviction. The black man is physically perfect and superbly adapted to succeed in the struggle for existence, Casely Hayford announced in the opening pages of his autobiographical novel, *Ethiopia Unbound.* He has developed a successful system of familial living as yet unknown in the West. He has, moreover, qualities of heart and soul that may one day come to be the world's spiritual salvation: "When Western Nations... have exhausted their energy in the vain struggle for the things which satisfy not... it would be to these people to whom the world would turn for inspiration, seeing... in them... those elements which make for pure altruism, the leaven of all human experience."[20]

For a brief time, the war gave great encouragement to democrats and advocates of national self-determination. In Africa, leaders like Casely Hayford looked forward to greater participation in the deliberations of colonial administrations, but, in fact, they were entering upon a period during which European powers would inaugurate a far more vigorous control of their overseas territories.

It was a bad time for African nationalists unable or unwilling to recognize the reality of imperial power. Those capable of cooperation, like J. E. K. Aggrey (1875–1927), the Gold Coast educator and assistant vice principal of Achimota College, gained a measure of fame and influence. For Casely Hayford, still imbued with a sense of racial preeminence, the war's end signalled an effort to initiate Panafrican solidarity through his National Congress of British West Africa. He hoped that this organization linking nationalists in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Gambia might lead to self-

[19] John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution* (London: Clowes, 1906; repr. with introduction by Hollis R. Lynch London: Cass, 1968). For a discussion of this novel, see George Lang's contribution below. [Ed.]

[20] *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (London: Phillips, 1911; repr. London: Cass, 1969), pp. 1–2.

determination for West Africans within the British empire; more than that, he sought a vehicle through which the black man might achieve the elusive goal of world moral leadership.

As an activist, Casely Hayford had no great respect for Aggrey's moderate principles. A saint, he called his younger contemporary. Such advocacy of black white cooperation, said Casely Hayford, would only work for those few idealists who, like Aggrey, could still smile and turn the other cheek in the face of the insults, the scourgings and the lynchings. "Until white world opinion becomes radically and basically changed in the direction of respecting the common civic rights of Africans generally," Casely Hayford warned, "it is but waste breath to preach saintliness and self-mastery to Africans."[21] Nevertheless, in those difficult post-war days, it was the African who was forced to adapt to the colonial situation. Under the disapproving eye of the British administration, the National Congress struggled for life and achieved little. In his final years, Casely Hayford himself reluctantly accepted the reality of British power. "There never was a time... in the history of this country," he announced after joining the new legislative council in 1927, "when the basis of cooperation between the Government and the governed... was more secure and more settled." It was indeed secure but largely on British terms.[22]

Casely Hayford's latter-day accommodation was due to circumstances forced on one whose instincts rose in defense of his own people; yet as an African educated in the West, Casely Hayford was sympathetic toward Western modernizing influences and sought their advantages for Africa. Like Blyden, Horton and other writers of English whom the preceding generation had produced in Sierra Leone and in Liberia, he was a man of two worlds. Ideally, these worlds complemented each other, but often they were at war, pulling the individual now this way and now that.

In Nigeria, two contemporaries of Casely Hayford exemplified this struggle between African and Western values. Each contained a mixture of both within himself, but each advocated his own amalgam as the ideal. Both thoroughgoing nationalists, intent on productive self-direction for their country. Nevertheless, in their mutual hostility, neither Herbert Macaulay (1864–1946) nor Henry Carr (1863–1944) could see merit in each other's position, nor could they comprehend their basic community of purpose.

During his long life Henry Carr held a number of positions in the colonial administration of Nigeria, but his main work was in public education where he urged that westernized curricula be adapted to African conditions.[23] As school inspector, he did not always feel his efforts were appreciated by his superiors, but he never failed to support the administration because he was genuinely convinced that Britain was helping his country and its people to assert themselves in the modern world. It was not a question of losing African identity, as some of his critics averred. "It should not... be supposed that an African ceases to be an African because he acquires European culture," Carr

[21] J. E. Casely Hayford, *The Disabilities of the Black Folk and their Treatment, with an Appeal to the Labour Party* (Accra, 1929).
[22] Gold Coast, *Legislative Council Debates* (February 25, 1929).
[23] *Henry Carr: Lectures and Speeches*, ed. C. O. Taiwo (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

insisted. "The African remains at heart an African in spite of his Europeanization, for the highest ideals of humanity are the common heritage of a common humanity in all its diversity."[24]

In his official reports and public pronouncements, Carr's educational principles were practical, never doctrinaire. Missionary education, he felt, lacked realism in concentrating too much on the world to come; beyond that, many schools were excessively preoccupied with high-minded but meaningless abstractions like "civilization", "art", and "industry". Let the curriculum, he urged, deal with the history, the geography and other aspects of the world in which the students live; let there be utilitarian courses that stress comparative training in languages or commercial arithmetic and book-keeping; let education clarify national purpose through an understanding of traditional culture—"the aspiration of a true patriot is that his country should be looked upon as the founder or sustainer of a virtuous civilization not inferior to that of the leading nations of the world."[25] Above all, Carr concluded:

> We need always to remember that our object is not only to produce pupils with a certain amount of knowledge, or with a certain degree of intelligence and manual skill, but also, and chiefly, to inculcate morals, manners and good tastes. Our work is succeeding only in so far as we are able to teach our children... to have due regard for cleanliness, obedience, decent language, truth, kindness, sympathy, sobriety, thrift.[26]

In seeking out and imposing universal standards of achievement, Carr differed little from his chief antagonist, Herbert Macaulay; yet, during the years between the two world wars, the two came into bitter conflict over the cause of Nigerian national development. Carr, the pragmatist, was no blind respecter of tradition. Thus he was always ready to adopt foreign technology and ideology, so long as it represented progress in his eyes. Thus, too, he could publicly urge the *eleko* or king of Lagos to abandon obsolete traditional ceremonies and empty powers in favour of a modern education that would allow him and his family to resume their leading positions in serving their people and community.

For Herbert Macaulay, however, cooperation with the colonial administration was anathema. He found the British officials arrogant and supercilious, their treatment of traditional rulers and institutions especially insensitive. Arrogant and vain himself, quick to take offence at real or imaginary slight, Macaulay made a career of baiting the administration, examining its activities and finding them illegal and arbitrary, just as did Mensah Sarbah and Casely Hayford on the Gold Coast.

As pamphleteer, newspaper correspondent, editor of his own journal, and rousing public speaker, Macaulay maintained a steady barrage against official policy, seeking throughout his long life to check, circumscribe, erode and replace British authority in

[24] Nigeria, *Legislative Council Debates* (March 9, 1938).
[25] Henry Carr, "Introduction to Julius Ojo-Cole," in *A Collection of Yoruba Thoughts* (Lagos: Nigerian Press, 1931).
[26] Henry Carr, *General Report for the Year 1898 on the Schools in the Colony of Lagos* (Lagos, 1899), pp. 11–12.

Lagos, and in Nigeria generally. He was a worthy opponent, giving as good as he received from such adversaries as Lord Lugard, Sir Hugh Clifford and Governor Donald Cameron. His championship of the *eleko* in all his traditional majesty lasted for thirty years of incessant skirmishing, and ended with what was generally regarded as substantial concessions on the part of the administration. Otherwise, Macaulay was questioning land legislation, challenging the government's taxing authority, contesting the African seats on the legislative council, and, of course, attacking his old adversary, Henry Carr. It was an era of high-flown prolixity, and Macaulay could deliver with the best. Characteristic of his style was this broadside at Henry Carr:

> His political character has derived a positively carmine tinge from the peculiar trait of his sporadic temper and unflinching spirit of revenge; and from that supercilious air of self-conceit, the offspring of an irresistible fascination engendered in his ill-cultured mind by the nauseous and revolting phantoms of his own supreme superiority.[27]

Carr dismissed such fulminations as "the ravings of a lunatic." It was unfortunate that these two, complementary in talents, could not work together toward their common goals.[28]

Political conviction was not the only force moving West African writers. There were those who were more concerned with the quiet, less contentious world of scholarship —reconstructing the history or examining the culture of their people—although even in these cases racial pride or attachment to the cause of African civilization were often motivating factors. In Sierra Leone, the generation of Horton and Blyden was also graced with two historians of no mean format, A.B.C. (for Aaron Belisarius Cosimo) Sibthorpe (1835–1916) and Samuel Johnson (1846–1901), whose major works appeared at the end of the century. Sibthorpe's *History of Sierra Leone* (London, 1867–1881?), is one of the first historical studies to stress social history.[29] In his capacity as a schoolteacher, it was Sibthorpe's purpose to fill the need for adequate teaching material; but there were deeper considerations:

> It is the historian that gives duration to kingdoms and empires, puts them as individual portrait before rising generations to scan their good and bad deeds, and learn from their misfortunes, the punishment of evil, and the peaceful reward of righteousness. In short, without the historian every kingdom is but Jonah's gourd, grow in the dawn and perish with the twilight. History is the soul of empires.[30]

But Samuel Johnson was an even more significant character. Like his namesake James Johnson and like his elder, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, he was an Aku, that is, a member of the community of Yoruba liberated slaves who had been settled in Freetown.

[27] Herbert Macaulay, *Henry Carr Must Go* (Lagos, 1924), p. 27.
[28] *The Lagos Weekly Reporter* (May 24–31, 1924).
[29] Sibthorpe's *History* went through a third edition in 1906; it has been recently reprinted with an introduction by Robert W. July (London: Cass, 1970).
[30] *Sierra Leone Weekly News* (February 18, 1893).

The fact that Herbert Macaulay was also of Aku origin, being the grandson of Bishop Crowther on the maternal side, is typical of the Akus' determination to return to their mother country, or at any rate to keep its memory green in the minds of their compatriots. Crowther's contribution to the study of the Yoruba language has already been mentioned, as has James Johnson's understanding of Yoruba religion. Samuel Johnson devoted the greater part of his life to a monumental *History of the Yorubas,* which was finished by 1897, although it did not reach print until 1921. Since then, however, Johnson's life work has become the Yoruba Holinshed, providing source material for a large number of plays and novels, both in English and in Yoruba.

In gathering his materials over many years, Samuel Johnson was moved by "a purely patriotic motive, that the history of our father-land might not be lost in oblivion." Beyond this may be sensed the anguish of the missionary pastor, dedicated to the healing of body and soul, but obliged to watch in helpless frustration as the Yoruba civil wars of the nineteenth century visited slaughter and destruction on his people. Thus, implicit in Johnson's detailed account of these conflicts was his view of the futility of warfare, the narrowness of prejudice, and the tyranny of false pride. During the later stages of the wars, Johnson was more than an observer, for he worked actively to bring the contenders to accord. When at last peace came, his description of the popular relief embodied without doubt some of its author's own sentiments:

> To the vast majority of the common people it was like the opening of a prison door: and no one who witnessed the patient, long-suffering, and toiling mass of humanity that week by week streamed to and from the coast with their produce...could refrain from heaving a sigh of gratification on the magnitude of the beneficial results...The first night...large fires were lighted, and all the men and women sitting round, spent the hours in recounting their sufferings and losses for years...They continued thus far into the night, and occasionally raised loud huzzahs for the merciful deliverance, and the prospect of freedom of trade, and the discharge of their debts which the long period of...war had imposed upon every individual in the interior countries.[31]

The westernized African intellectual's central preoccupation with the history of his own people, which was to provide inspiration for a large number of creative works, largely accounts for the fact that in the English literature of West Africa, historical research emerged simultaneously with political speculation. Indeed, the very first book in English to have come from the Gold Coast was the work of another historian of the same generation, Carl Christian Reindorf (1834–1917), a mulatto of partly Danish and partly Ga origin. He was connected with the Basler Missionsgesellschaft, who was spreading the Gospel among the Twi as the Methodist missionary society was doing among the Fanti. Indeed, his *History of the Gold Coast and Asante,* though written in English, was published in Basel (1895). Like that of his contemporaries Johnson and Sibthorpe, Reindorf's purpose was not merely antiquarian, but he had a patriotic purpose which he described somewhat obscurely in his preface:

[31] Samuel Johnson, *History of the Yorubas* (Lagos: C. M. S. Bookshop, 1921), pp. vii and 623.

> If a nation's history is the nation's ... measure-tape, then it brings the past of that nation to its own view ... to see whether progress or retrogression is in operation, and also as a means of judging our nation by others.[32]

However clumsy this may sound, the fact remains that the first two generations of anglophone West African intellectuals were a unique phenomenon on the Black continent. It is not too much to say that they had elaborated all the basic tenets of negritude long before the word came into being. They had created a fully integrated image of the African personality with its strong sense of spiritual values, of communion with nature and of communal life; they had brought out the rationale underlying many indigenous institutions, from polygamy through communal ownership of land to native systems of government and so-called heathenism. They had recognized the need for Africa to seek entry into the modern world, mainly through a reinterpretation of Christianity, improved education and forms of collective allegiance wider than tribal ones. They had stressed Africa's historical contribution to world civilization, and they had provided a balanced assessment of the two sides of Europe as a bearer of good and of evil. On the one hand, the Panafrican ideals that at times seemed to move them (as in the title of Casely Hayford's novel) may have smacked of starry-eyed utopianism; on the other hand, their concern with local institutions (as exemplified in Casely Hayford's and Mensah Sarbah's works on the Fanti) may have been redolent of tribalism. At any rate, in the climate in which they were reared, in which they received their intellectual training, before the relations between Europe and Africa were thoroughly corrupted by racialism and imperialistic exploitation, it was not altogether unrealistic to contemplate the constitution of an independent West African federation. If their teaching and preaching did not have the same impact that negritude was to achieve in the mid-twentieth century, that was because of the changes that were occurring in Europe, the seat of economic and military power. Their revaluation of African cultures sounded unwarrantedly pretentious in the face of the pseudo-Darwinian racialism that began to infect influential European circles in the middle of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the growth of naked imperialism, the tightening of colonial policy, the voracious needs of economic exploitation and the British system of indirect rule through preferably illiterate "native authorities" obliged the educated intelligentsia to withdraw upon itself, or else to seek more radical, often subversive ways of promoting African nationalism.

There is no doubt that this early development of English writing in West Africa was due primarily to the immigration of English-speaking blacks both in Sierra Leone and in Liberia, and to the fact that the Freetown creoles set a model for the indigenous "liberated Africans" who joined them in large numbers during the first few decades of the nineteenth century. A second factor was the spreading influence of both creoles and liberated Africans, especially the Akus, throughout such parts of West Africa as were coming under British control; to this must be adduced the fact that among the Fanti of Southern Ghana, these Sierra Leone expatriates, whose rôle was roughly similar to that of Irish and Anglo-Saxon monks on the European continent at the beginning of

[32] *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p. x.

the Middle Ages, found a soil that had been prepared by the educational activities of Philip Quaque and the Methodist missionaries who succeeded him. A third factor was the constructive attitude which was maintained until soon after the middle of the century by the European missionaries sent by the C.M.S. and by local British administrators.

No such factors prevailed in Senegal, even though French influence, based on the fort of Saint-Louis, had been paramount there since the seventeenth century. Only a very slight amount of French writing appeared in the nineteenth century, and, as was to be the case with Portuguese, it was essentially the work of mulattos from the island of Gorée.[33] The earliest of these was Léopold Panet (c. 1819–1859), who had had enough schooling to be appointed "écrivain temporaire". In 1846 he accompanied a French expedition from Saint-Louis to Mogador in Morocco; Panet's contributions to that expedition earned him the cross of the *Légion d'Honneur*; later, when the French determined to establish an overland link between Senegal and Algeria, it was Panet who was selected for the attempt because of his experience and his knowledge of local customs and language. What resulted in 1850 was not only an epoch-making voyage through the Mauritanian desert, but publication that same year of the first book-length literary work by a West African author writing in the French language.[34]

Three years later, another mulatto from Gorée, the abbé P. D. Boilat (1816–1901) published his *Esquisses sénégalaises*. A contemporary of Panet, Boilat as a young man was trained in France for the priesthood, returning to Senegal to launch a secondary school in Saint-Louis under official sponsorship. The school had a brief and stormy existence during the 1840s, but it was also during those busy years that Boilat successfully collected the material for his *Esquisses sénégalaises*.

This was a wide-ranging volume including material on the indigenous peoples of the interior as well as the more westernized coastal communities. Boilat's observations centred on social and cultural affairs, but he dealt with historical background where he deemed it appropriate, especially when tracing the influence of Europe in forming the mulatto societies of Gorée and Saint-Louis. As might be expected from a Roman Catholic priest, there was a good deal of discussion of religious matters, including the influence of Islam, while educational theories and practice were also aired, chiefly in support of Boilat's own institution.

Boilat's essential theme was the rich variety of land and people in Senegal, a land of beauty and potential greatness, he averred, once it had been introduced to the beneficent influence of Christianity and Western civilization. Boilat's long residence in France had made him a thorough-going advocate of French assimilation. When this had been achieved, Boilat assured his readers, what wonders would not Africa know, as it had done in the glorious days of the early Church fathers:

[33] See Robert Cornevin, *Littératures d'Afrique noire de langue française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), pp. 109–118.

[34] It did not appear in book form, however, but was first printed in the *Revue coloniale* for November and December 1850 under the title "La relation d'un voyage du Sénégal à Soueira (Mogador), par Léopold Panet, indigène sénégalais." More than a century later, it was published, with a preface by Léopold Sédar Senghor, as *Première exploration du Sahara occidental* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1968).

> This land of Africa, today so barbarous, so savage... this corner of the world least known and until this moment forsaken, has had its moments of glory and prosperity. Many centuries before our time, she produced the world's foremost luminaries; fathers of the Church whose scholarly works still excite the imagination. They were Africans just like us—Saint Augustine, the greatest scholar of his century, the famous Tertullian, Saint Cyprian, and so many others in whose veins flowed African blood. These were universal men.[35]

It was a matter of no small merit—partly due, we may presume, to Boilat's classical and theological training—thus to recall that Africa had brought her by no means negligible share to the literary flowering of Christian writing at the time of the Latin fathers. But the tiny rivulet of French writing that had begun to spring up with Panet and Boilat in the middle years of the century soon dried up, and even such a diligent researcher as Robert Cornevin has been unable to unearth any significant writing in French between those years and the end of World War I.

[35] P. D. Boilat, *Esquisses sénégalaises* (Paris: Bertrand, 1853), pp. 321–322.

2. CREATIVE WRITING IN ENGLISH: EMERGENCE AND STAGNATION

While African didactic prose of the nineteenth century has already received considerable learned attention, little is known as yet about the first manifestations of imaginative literature. Although the reason may well be that very little was produced, more intensive research into the local newspapers and journals of the period is no doubt overdue. In the present sorry state of our knowledge, generalizations are most hazardous. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to show that creative writing started earlier in English than it did in French. Partly, this must have been due to the prestige and intellectual influence of an English-speaking black community. To this should presumably be added the greater flexibility of the English language, acceptable knowledge of which can more easily be achieved than is the case with French. The trend seems to have begun in Liberia in the nineteenth century and to have spread to the Gold Coast and Nigeria in the twentieth; but whereas in the latter two countries, and especially in Nigeria, this preparatory phase was to give way to an unparalleled explosion in the 1960s, Liberian writing was to evolve very slowly and can hardly claim even now to have reached a level comparable to that of the other anglophone countries of West Africa.

FEMI OJO-ADE

LIBERIA

A thorough understanding and analysis of the evolution of English-language literature in Liberia cannot be achieved without a complementary examination of her history. This should not at all surprise the student of African literature; for, as has often been asserted, here perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, literature is a major element of culture which, in turn, is definitively linked to the historical process. The intricate network thus described is even more significant in the Liberian example when one considers the facts: a country founded in 1822, declared independent by her black English-speaking settlers in 1847, yet with a paucity of writing and an astonishing mediocrity of quality in the small number of works produced. A close study of the socio-historico-cultural evolution should help to explain Liberia's peculiarity.

The freed slaves who returned from America to Africa, to settle in the country called

Liberia, regarded themselves as refugees, with negative reasons for coming to the ancestral continent. Their declaration of independence clearly shows their attitude:

> We the people of Liberia were originally the inhabitants of the United States of North America... We looked with anxiety abroad for some asylum from this deep degradation.[36]

They were not buoyed up by any morally elevating notion of a "return to the source" and their declaration makes no mention of Africa as the lost and found motherland, even though Africa was for many of them their homeland of only one or two generations back. Indeed, descendants of those first settlers have lamented their inability to reap the advantages of *colonialism*.

The word "colonialism" might sound strange or shocking, coming as it does, from Africans referring to their relationship to other Africans. It is, however, the most appropriate word in this context; for, it is true that a "colonial, or dependency situation"[37] existed between the first settlers and the natives they found on the land and, to all intents and purposes, that "colonial" situation has not yet been totally eradicated in Liberia.

The Americo-Liberians, as the descendants of the first settlers are called, are estimated at less than 10 per cent of the population. They live on the coast, mostly in or around Monrovia (the capital named for American President James Monroe) and have largely maintained a monopoly of the economy, education, politics and government of the country. In conjunction with the church, which has always functioned as a vital social institution,[38] the Americo-Liberian establishment has excluded the original inhabitants from social privileges and participation in fashioning the national destiny.

Moreover, America is close to the heart of these "exiles", who have endeavoured to reproduce the American culture on African soil.

> These were Americans, and their views of Africa and Africans were essentially those of 19th century whites in the United States. The bonds of culture were stronger than the bonds of race, and the settlers clung tenaciously to the subtle differences that set them apart from the tribal "savages" in their midst. It was not then (nor is it today) unusual to hear tribal people refer to the Americo-Liberians as 'white' people.[39]

America has trained many of the members of the élite now ruling the country. Liberia is regarded in American circles as different from other African countries and

[36] Quoted in Merran Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class in Monrovia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 8.

[37] In his very informative and well-documented book, J. Gus Liebenow states: "A colonial, or dependency, situation is defined as any case in which the authoritative allocation of values for one fairly distinct society or several combined societies is performed in large measure by individuals and groups representing a second distinct society. Thus the superior group in the relationship monopolizes the use of force, establishes the primary goals for all societies concerned." See Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. XVII–XVIII.

[38] Liebenow affirms that the church has borne, and continues to bear, the major educational burden in Liberia *(Liberia,* p. 10). Newspapers and presses were also established by the church.

[39] Ibid., p. 15.

experience among Liberians has shown that they are generally not unhappy about such distinction. Americans own a lot of property in Liberia and the economic, social and political climate reminds one very much of the United States.

Now, in the earlier days, the prestigious professions among the upper strata of Americo-Liberians were teaching and the ministry. Today, these two vocations have been replaced by politics and the law which, indeed, are interrelated professions. Until recent times, the University of Liberia, founded in 1862, has had a curriculum overloaded in favour of politics and the law. Almost every facet of life depends on the political game.

> Prominence in a non-political structure is a reward for excellent performance in the political arena... Anyone who attempts to gain a position of influence in society without first gaining political sanction is regarded with suspicion.[40]

So the *politician,* in the widest sense of the term, holds sway. The implications are clear: dishonesty will prevail over honesty; the genuinely concerned citizen voicing his opinion on ways of ameliorating the nation's destiny, will be ridiculed or tortured by the unscrupulous, influential personalities; the poor and downtrodden will have no say against the destructive elements dominating them from the top of the social ladder. In fact, the indigenes of Liberia have remained poor, under-privileged and uneducated. A 1956 census showed that 70 per cent of Liberians over the age of 5 could not read or write English,[41] and there are about 1 1/2 million people in the country.

In such a socio-historico-cultural situation, literature can hardly prosper. The development of a literary tradition demands a strong foundation of national commitment and cultural consciousness, deep-rooted literacy, as well as will-power and freedom among the people. All of these elements have been missing in Liberia. Now, an Americo-Liberian scholar and writer, A. Doris Banks Henries, has rightly affirmed the importance of the settler community in Liberian literature:

> The greatest impact on Liberian literature resulted from the return to Africa of those who had been carried to America and their descendants who had been freed from slavery.[42]

In the nineteenth century settler society religious poetry was all-important. Religious poems and hymns prevailed and among the best known poets was Hilary Teague. Patriotic verses were written by individuals such as Beverly Wilson, and the greatest orator of this time was Edward Wilmot Blyden who preached the notion of "Africa for Africans".[43] Needless to say, that nineteenth-century literature was insignificant. It was

[40] Ibid., p. 85.
[41] Fraenkel, op. cit., pp. 45–47.
[42] *Liberian Writing* ed. A. Doris Banks Henries (Tübingen: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1970), p. 13.
[43] Blyden has been discussed by Robert July earlier in this chapter. It is significant that even with his zealous orations about a free Africa, this West-Indian transplant believed that the returning slaves came to improve the primitive natives. For him, the civilizing influence of America remained essential.

MAGYAR TUDOMÁNYOS AKADÉMIA KÖNYVTÁRA

relentlessly sanctimonious and showed nothing but contempt for the native Africans. These were described in no equivocal terms by Hilary Teague (d. 1853):

> Their Gods of wood and stone they trust,
> To give success in fight;
> The warrior and the stupid priest
> To murder here unite.

When Liberia proclaimed her independence in 1847, Teague composed her national anthem. Although a later poet such as Beverly R. Wilson could celebrate, for the benefit of American blacks, the enticing charms of

> Thy lost yet lovely home
> That fondly waits to welcome thee,

the history of the country until World War II was dominated by constant antagonism between the "civilized" coastal settlers and the "savage" inland tribes. To quote Teague's hymn again:

> We were by those beset around,
> Who craved to drink our blood,
> Whose malice, hatred knew no bound,
> Whose hearts of love were void.

Literary production in the early twentieth century was a little more in quantity and a trifle better in quality. Religious and patriotic writing remained dominant. Garretson W. Gibson, Milton Nassau and Edward Barclay are among those whose poems are quoted in Banks Henries' *Liberian Writing*. The poems are not memorable in any particular way; indeed, the last poet mentioned above, Barclay, president of Liberia from 1930 to 1943, is much more significant as a ruthless ruler who brutally repressed protest among the ethnic groups of the interior. Much of the patriotic verse refers to the period when Britain and France seized parts of the country and added them to Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Ivory Coast. There again, the writing lacks emotional force and artistic quality.

The first full-fledged Liberian novel appeared in 1932. Entitled *Love in Ebony: A West African Romance,* it was written by Charles Cooper (b. 1896), under the pseudonym of Varfelli Karlee. The foreword to the novel, written by Vernon Bartlett, is rather revealing:

> The gentleman who writes under the name of Varfelli Karlee has not written a political novel, although he has all the necessary qualifications for doing so, for he has held very important posts both in Liberia and abroad. He gives us a charming and simple love story of the "uncivilized" tribes of the interior ("uncivilized", to distinguish them from the "civilized" Americo-Liberians who live along the coast).[44]

[44] See Varfelli Karlee, *Love in Ebony* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1970), p. 8.

The foreword reveals the superiority complex of a certain sector of society, in this case, the Americo-Liberian. Cooper himself was a prominent member of that group: graduate of Liberia College, under-secretary of state, consul-general in the United Kingdom. His story relates the idyllic love between an educated Vai girl and a young Mande trader who manage to overcome the libidinous scheming of a Vai prince, and ultimately consummate their love.

The writing is very mediocre, the descriptions flat, the action boring, character delineation hardly exists. Rather than develop the love between Farmata and the trader Momolu, or explore in depth the potentialities of the triangle of the lovers and the intruding Prince Piu, the author parades an endless number of faceless characters which add nothing to the flow of the story. The novel's interest lies in its description of the complex elements of the indigenous society made up of various ethnic groups. However, while giving us some insight into the traditions of the Liberian indigenes, Karlee hardly conceals his bias against them. They are "a child-like people." Their language "carries with it, even in the simplest speech, the primitive suggestion of a song." Farmata suffers from "the ready emotionalism of her race," a state that is changed by her Western education. The "barbaric music of the drums" fills the village air and the *savages'* naiveté shows in everything they do.[45]

Love in Ebony did not help to arouse interest in literature, nor did it create a literary tradition. Its appearance was probably made easy by the fact that Cooper was living in Britain. Liberian literature remained stagnant and barren until a slender collection of poetry, *Echoes from the Valley* was issued in Cape Mount in 1947. There were three contributors to the volume. One of them, Harmon Carey Thomas, has hardly written anything since, while the other two, Roland Tombekai Dempster (1910–1965), and Bai Tamia Moore (b. 1916)—both of partly Vai origine—have become Liberia's major post-war writers.

Roland Dempster, poet laureate of Liberia, and president and founder of the Association of Liberian Writers, taught World Literature at the university while producing his poetry. His only work of prose, described by him as "a satirical treatise on moral philosophy," and entitled *The Mystic Reformation of Gondolia,* was privately published in 1953. According to the author, the treatise is "intended to correct some of the evils which are common to many parts of the world, especially Africa."[46] It traces the life-history of Blama, a disowned son of the nation of Gondolia, who, after years of being rebuffed, succeeds in raising his people from the depths of depravity and backwardness to the zenith of morality and modernism. The quality of the prose is rather poor, and perhaps its most important aspect is that it is, as Dempster says in his preface, "a Liberian attempt at authorship," a rarity indeed.

Dempster's other volumes are devoted to poetry.[47] As their very titles suggest, the

[45] Ibid., pp. 14, 35, 135.

[46] Roland Tombekai Dempster, *The Mystic Reformation of Gondolia* (Monrovia: privately published, 1953), p. 5.

[47] *To Monrovia Old and New* (1958); *Anniversary Ode to Dr. William V. S. Tubman, National Standard Bearer, True Whig Party, On the Occasion of his 63rd Birthday* (1959); *A song out of Midnight* (1960); *Tubman: Reflections from the Poet's Pen and Other Poems* (1963). All these works were published privately in Monrovia.

poet is particularly interested in singing the praise of William Tubman, his country's president. Overall, he exhibits astounding stylistic ineptitude. The rhymes are artificially constructed. Overt obsequiousness and overflowing gratitude towards the national leader, who is a sort of demigod, pervade the lines. The party, the presidency, national construction and development, moral awakening, are the general themes and they are all centred upon the unique person of Tubman, "our hero, priest and seer," "a great redeemer."[48] A good number of the works of Dempster are occasional poems and the haste in which they were written clearly shows in the finished product.

Dempster also writes frequently about Africa:

> Wake up, Africa, the van
> Is moving to let slumber end today,
> And darkness and serfdom be past;
> Lift up your banner, quick and fast,
> And let the lifeless Past entomb Delay
> To seize from sinking alien rule your land.[49]

Such lines reveal the poet's capabilities which, unfortunately, have mostly been overshadowed, if not destroyed by his sycophancy and overconcern for his party and president. Even when he writes about Africa, his vision is often clouded by the party manifesto and Tubmanian charisma. Dempster's avowed ambition was "to become one of Africa's foremost poets."[50] However, "since he never freed himself from sycophancy, he never managed to be any more than an ineffective and slightly disreputable laureate."[51]

Fifteen years after the publication of *Echoes from the Valley,* the third of its contributors, Bai T. Moore, issued a collection of poems written in English, in Vai and in Gola, Moore's two native languages.[52] The volume is divided into three parts: African Scene, American Scene and Various Scenes. The poet's ingenious use of African traditions prompted Dempster to describe him as "one of West Africa's outstanding jungle poets." While such a description is debatable and possibly ill-contrived, it is noteworthy that Moore's syntax is simple and meaningful. He uses free verse and his poems are full of high-powered imagery. His themes are taken from the essence of man's existence: love, friendship, adherence to tradition, growing up in a world torn apart by slavery and racism, life, death. Simplicity does not mean triteness. Crisp images flashing across the mind; short, concentrated lines, seemingly light-hearted but pregnant with profound implications; these are the characteristics of Moore's best poems. For example, "Night Life":

[48] *Anniversary Ode,* p. 1.
[49] *To Monrovia, Old and New,* p. 13.
[50] *A Song out of Midnight,* p. 1.
[51] O. R. Dathorne, *African Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976), p. 167.
[52] Bai T. Moore, *Ebony Dust* (Monrovia: Ducor Publishing House, 1962).

a draught of beer
a nip of gin
a soft red light
in a cozy nook
a cute fast chick
with a heap of jibes
a razzing jazz
for a dime or two
an empty purse
and an awful spell[53]

Moore's prose is not nearly as successful as his poetry. His first novel, which did not appear until 1968, is the confession of a young Vai man who killed the girl he loved.[54] The novelist examines and analyses the influence of witchcraft, jealousy and greed on a young man's mind. He shows that he is well versed in Liberian culture but his stylistic approach lacks depth; his prose is mediocre and the overall impression one has after reading the novel, is that it is the work of a moonlight story-teller attempting to master the complex world of a full-fledged novelist. The plot is loosely knit together and the ending is so abrupt that it appears that the publisher, or the writer himself, has left out a conclusion.

As a widely travelled civil servant, Moore has little time for writing, and it took him another eight years before he produced his second novel, which underscores once again the author's understanding of his country's culture.[55] It is the story of a greedy revenue agent who stupidly gives tax money to a money doubler. The latter takes the cash and runs. The novel is very humorous and entertaining but it hardly constitutes what the discerning reader would consider as a major work. In it, Moore has deftly reproduced the pidgin English of the common man and that, it would appear, is his greatest contribution.[56]

Another writer of Moore's generation is A. Doris Banks Henries (b. 1915)[57] who has been her country's Director of Higher Education and Textbook Research since 1959. A member of a very influential Americo-Liberian family, she has edited a book on Liberian writing, has written some short stories using the folklore of Liberia and, most importantly, has specialized in children's literature. She is president of the Society of Liberian Authors. Like Dempster, she has based a good part of her works upon the life of President Tubman, although she does not stoop to gross sycophancy. Doris Banks Henries also writes poetry and the best-known of her poems is "Pageant of Modern Africa", in which she traces the history of African nations' fight for liberation. The poem ends with a strident cry for freedom in Southern Africa:

[53] Ibid., p. 82.
[54] Moore, *Murder in the Cassava Patch* (Monrovia: Ducor, 1968).
[55] Moore, *The Money Doubler* (Lagos: Unicom Books Ltd., 1976).
[56] A Liberian intellectual who recently replied to our inquiry on Liberian writers, mentioned that the better-educated Liberians do not regard Moore as "a serious writer." He further stated that the writer is "tragic when he tries to put words to paper."
[57] Artiste Doris Banks Henries was educated in the U.S.; she was principal of Fuller Norman School in Grenville, South Carolina, USA, from 1934 to 1938.

How long will the slaughter last! Dear God;
The last ditch stand must finally give way,
And Africa shall bask in the light of day.
Thus shall the end be![58]

Examples of such topically valid poetry of artistic merit are few and far between in her work. This is probably due to the fact that she has been first and foremost an administrator and an educationist.

The literary art does not seem to be widely practised in present-day Liberia. As Doris Banks Henries is the first to admit, "It is true that there is a paucity of writers in Liberia. However," she goes on, "a few of us continue to write."[59] Nevertheless, there are signs that the efforts of the elder generation are likely to come to fruition at last. Among those who "continue to write" or rather, who have started writing can be listed a number of names such as Alice Johnson, Elaine A. Wolo, Toimu Reeves, Christian Cassell, Joseph Guanu, Bill Frank, George Benjamin and Wilton Sankawulo.[60]

Sankawulo (b. 1937) is currently Special Assistant to the Minister of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism. His stories have appeared in *African Arts* (1971 and 1973) and *Pan-African Journal*. His only significant work to date is a collection of folk tales from Liberia and other West African countries.[61] Useful morals are drawn from the tales and the text is best suited to readers at the secondary school level. According to Robert H. Brown, Sankawulo is "perhaps the most talented among those... who are now making attempts at writing. He has a mastery of Liberian idiom and standard English."[62] Although this mastery is exemplified in some of his stories, he has not yet written enough to give one an idea of his ability: his first full-length novel, *The Rain and the Night* did not come out until 1979.

Robert H. Brown, who has studied in the United States, is a lecturer in English at the University of Monrovia, and himself a writer of some note. An extract from a collection of short stories in progress, entitled "The Senator's Suit," appeared in a recent issue of *African Arts*. The extract, based upon the writer's experiences in America, shows the adroitness with which he manipulates the English language, his ability to paint in words a realistic evocation of a scene, and a taut style in which not a word is wasted. However, one will need to read the complete work to be able to give a meaningful and a valid judgment on Brown! It, too, was supposed to reach print in the late seventies, under the title *After Long Silence*.

Until recent times, English-language theatre has not been represented on the Li-

[58] In *Présence Africaine*, No. 57 (1966), 336.

[59] Letter, dated November 11, 1977, includes a list of "wellknown writers." An interesting point made by Ms. Banks Henries concerns the publishing of works: "Perhaps you have not come across many works because some books are published in the USA." Thus, the problem of publication is common to Liberia and many other African countries; the difference is that books published by foreign houses are readily available in the latter while Liberian works, it would appear, are more difficult to come by in the home country.

[60] This list was mailed to us by Ms. Banks Henries to whom we hereby express our immense gratitude. Unfortunately, we have no further information on the writers.

[61] W. Sankawulo, *The Marriage of Wisdom and Other Tales from Liberia* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1974).

[62] Personal letter. We are grateful to Professor Brown for the information he gave us about both himself and Kona Khasu.

berian literary scene. As late as 1970, Doris Banks Henries asserted: "Unfortunately, no dramas of a high standard have yet been added to Liberian literature."[63] That situation is being altered by a versatile, talented young actor-playwright named Kona Khasu (b. 1942). After acting on stage and television in America and Liberia, Khasu has created a group called *Blamadon* which, he hopes, will form the nucleus of a national theatre in Liberia. "Blamadon" is the Gola word for "Come let us tell a tale": indeed, it is the objective of the budding playwright to use the native Liberian cultural tradition as a basis for producing plays that will help in his nation's development. In a recent interview with *Liberia* magazine, Khasu stated:

> Ultimately, I think a theatre program in an African context, and I suppose in any developing country, is to provide a catalyst for national building or national consciousness, in that in a country such as Liberia, and most African countries, you have a multi-ethnic situation, where there are several and various groups of culture in a larger and smaller context. And you need to mold those various cultures together into one solid culture so that they can have one goal, one aspiration and one way of achieving it.[64]

Khasu emphasizes the need to base the new national theatre on the Liberian traditional concept of the performing arts, on what is happening in the village, not on the Western theatrical tradition. This is a significant step in the right direction and it is with great pleasure that we anticipate the publication of the collection of Khasu's plays.

Kona Khasu is not only an actor-playwright; he is also a poet. In *The Seeds of Time* (1971), privately printed in Monrovia, he appears as a genuine revolutionary mind, in contrast to the cringing attitudes and hero-worshipping postures of some other Liberian poets. His hero is Lumumba, not Tubman:

> O Lumumba
> hear your brother shout your name
> you little light
> threatened by this great sun
> born of lowly parents
> born to bring us light
> to give us our right

Denouncing the country's backwardness and poverty, and other ills sometimes regarded as development and wealth, the poet condemns political leaders, men of deceit and deviousness:

> they say they had an election here
> tell us that tubman was returned
> they tell us we are rich for this
> rich son, you are rich

[63] *Liberian Writing*, p. 41.

[64] Carlos Martin, "Blamadon: The Bud of Liberian Theatre," *Liberia: Political, Economic and Social Monthly*, 23–24 (1976), 28–32.

they say all will be well and prosperous
for another four years
tubman will spend 1,000,000 dollars a year
on his health
and that will make us the healthiest nation on earth

This poem, entitled "Their words—Deception", is marked by anger and sad laughter at a callous, cynical leadership which is totally unconcerned with the plight of the masses: the flag-bearer for a hybrid élite, it is the quintessence of a "progressive" Africa and the symbol of her imminent decadence. In "Mr. Broad Street," Khasu offers a profile of the middle-class African, lackey of the white master and imitator of anything Western. This is somewhat commonplace; but the writer has added a touch of the grotesque which arouses pity.

If gloom appears to be the trademark of Khasu's poetry, it is because he views his race and nation with an objectivity lacking in some other poets. The gloom is not permanent for out of the thick clouds of disaster, sadness and darkness, will rise the dawn of a new day. "Night," affirms the poet, "always disappears into day."

Some of that dawn will become reality through the continued efforts of writers such as Khąsu, Robert H. Brown and Wilton Sankawulo. In an article discussing the role of the black writer, an eminent critic from Sierra Leone stated that the writer "must be brave and sacrificial".[65] The paucity of Liberian writing to date can be ascribed to lack of bravery and of the spirit of sacrifice. Other reasons are: Liberians are afraid to use their society as a literary subject for fear of imprisonment; there is no incentive for intellectuals; the country is not on the literary map of Africa, with the result that publishers often reject manuscripts by Liberian authors. Fortunately for both Liberia and Africa, the situation is gradually changing for the better. The writer worthy of the name and interested in establishing an authentic literary tradition for his nation, cannot afford to be cowardly or blind to reality. The present crop of writers has all the necessary qualities and that augurs well for the future. A seeming obstacle to the development of literature is that it has largely retained its élitist roots: even those writers who do not have an Americo-Liberian background belong to the privileged group of individuals who not only can read and write English, but are actually in government employ. Many of them have also been educated in the United States. The high rate of illiteracy makes matters worse. With the eradication of illiteracy and élitism, and the establishment of a strong national cultural consciousness a better atmosphere for literary creativity will develop and a greater dissemination of written works among the masses.

[65] Davidson Nicol, "The Soft Pink Palms," *Présence Africaine*, 8/10 (June–November 1956), 116.

GHANA AND NIGERIA

The classic schemata of development for African national literatures call for a three-stage sequence from assimilation to revolt to autonomy, but little scholarly attention has heretofore been paid to the first period of hesitant imitation of colonial models. Though we may apply segmented models for convenience' sake, literary history is continuous. As Africans have discovered with some bitterness since the early sixties, patterns of colonial organization tend to persist. On these grounds alone, literature in the Gold Coast and in Nigeria prior to 1960 is worthy of interest. It foreshadowed later themes in West African literature and was the backdrop against which the first successful literary works were conceived.

The roots of Ghanaian literature[66] stretch back as far as 1909 when *The Seductive Coast; Poems Lyrical and Descriptive from West Africa* appeared. There are some grounds for suspicion that the author, O. Dazi Ako, was actually an Englishman by the name of J. M. Stuart-Young, but there is no doubt about the origin of *Ethiopia Unbound,* (1911, repr. 1969), which was brought out two years later by the Gold Coast politician Joseph E. Casely-Hayford (1866–1930). The fourth son of Joseph de Graft-Hayford, a prosperous tradesman and an active member of the Fanti Confederation, he had been educated at the Cape Coast Wesleyan Boys' School, at Fourah Bay College and at Cambridge. Together with his contemporary John Mensah Sarbah, he was one of those young Fanti lawyers, "whose mastery of the complexity of British law combined with a respect for traditional African institutions to enable them to contest British presence in their land on constitutional ground."[67] As a prolific journalist and the author of several treatises on local politics and economics, he was a prominent representative of the nationalistic trend that had started in Sierra Leone and was spreading, in the early years of the twentieth century, along the coast as far east as Lagos, where it was exemplified by Herbert Macaulay (1864–1946). Through Casely-Hayford, this generation formed a link between the didactic and polemical use of English that had prevailed with Horton and Blyden, and the imaginative writing that was just beginning to emerge in the European language.

Although *Ethiopia Unbound,* with its awkward subtitle, "Studies in Race Emancipation," is perhaps best seen as an early monument of racial and national emancipation, this gallimaufry of prose narrative, allegory and didacticism is nonetheless a work of

[66] Margaret D. Patten, *Ghanaian Imaginative Writing in English (1950–1969): An Annotated Bibliography* (Legon, Ghana: Department of Literary Studies University of Ghana, 1971), p. v. Pre-independence English writing in the Gold Coast received some early attention in V. N. Vavilov, "Literatura Gany", in *Literatura Stran Afriki,* ed. F. M. Breskina *et al.,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pp. 75–90, and "Literatury Gany i Sierra-Leone" in *Sovremennye Literatury Afriki: Severnaja i Zapadnaja Afrika,* ed. Irina D. Nikiforova *et al.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), pp. 278–284. See also P.A.V. Ansah, "Black Awareness in African Poetry in English", *Legon Journal of the Humanities,* 1 (1974), 35–53, and Tayo P. Olafioye, "Public Poetry of West Africa, A Survey", *Ufahamu,* 6,1 (1975), 74–95. For an attempt at an integrated account of the various literatures of this country, see Albert Gérard, "Aux sources de la littérature ghanéenne", in C. Faïk-Nzuji Madiya (ed.) *Mélanges de culture et de linguistique africaines* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983), pp. 259–300.

[67] Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (London: Faber, 1968), p. 329.

fiction whose characters act within a distinct social milieu. Kwamankra, its protagonist, believes in a black God, feels that Christ was born of an Ethiopian woman, and argues for the revival of national language, customs and institutions. He is pitted against the colonial system and European racism both in the narrative action, such as it is, and in lengthy didactic discussions. By the end of the book, Kwamankra has visited the underground, attended the 1905 Pan-African Congress, where he propounds the ideas of Edward Blyden, and the nations of the world have gathered in congress on Mount Atlas. O. R. Dathorne considers Casely-Hayford to be a writer of "irreconcilable cultural loyalties,"[68] but the fact remains that he was, in however modest a fashion, the first writer in the Gold Coast to promote African values in English prose narrative.

Considerable progress in the mastery of Western literary techniques was soon to be evidenced when a comedy entitled *The Blinkards* was staged in Cape Coast in 1915.[69] Its author, William Esuman-Gwira (or Kobina) Sekyi (1892–1956) was himself a disciple of Casely-Hayford; he had studied philosophy in London, and his encounter with racism during his stay in England put an end to his youthful idealism about Western culture. He became a proponent of African values and was active in the Aborigines Rights Protection Society. On the other hand, he was also strongly critical of the members of what he called the "Anglo-Fanti" bourgeoisie; it was to them that he applied the word "blinkards" because of their inability to perceive African reality except through the distorting glasses of their anglomania. In this satirical drawing-room comedy, where he makes adroit use of Fanti as well as of several varieties of local English, Sekyi, whom his friends dubbed "the Bernard Shaw of West Africa," introduces characters and situations that were to be intensively exploited in African drama after World War II: the figure of Tsiba, the cocoa-grower, represents a social class which was to have great impact upon the Gold Coast during the first half of the century; and in the semi-literate Mrs. Brofusem, whose exertions aim at aping British manners which she is unable to master, it is possible to see foreshadowed some of the characters in later Ghanaian light comedy or in Onitsha novelettes.

During the thirties a few slight works of poetry in English came out, *Song of Kings*, by J. B. Y. Borquaye, and *An Ode to Africa*, by E. H. Appah. In 1943 a play by F. K. Fiawoo (1861–1969), *The Fifth Landing Stage* was published in London, but it was, significantly, a translation from the Ewe. Until World War II in fact, the real impetus and bulk of writing in the Gold Coast was in the vernacular languages and was bound up with Christian tradition, in particular with the gospel and catechetic needs of the Basel Mission.

Early Ghanaian written literature thereby parallels missionary literature in other parts of Africa; founded upon a proselytizing press tradition and imbued with Christian ideology, these paraliteratures were largely limited to the writing of textbooks and to

[68] O. R. Dathorne, *The Black Mind: A History of Black Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1974), p. 148. See also L. H. Osu-Appiah, *Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford: The Man of Vision and Faith* (Legon: University Bookshop, 1975), and Nnabuenyi Ugonna, "Casely Hayford: The Fictive Dimension of African Personality," *Ufahamu*, 7,2 (1977), 159–71.

[69] Until it was printed in London in 1974, the play was only known through an anonymous account published in *West Africa*, 28 April 1917. See Anthony Graham-White, *The Drama of Black Africa* (New York: French, 1974), pp. 83–85.

translation into the vernacular of hymns, of moral classics like *Pilgrim's Progress*, and of the *Bible*. According to George Awoonor-Williams, there was an "essential Christian bias which did not enable these early practitioners of the art of writing to go into their own societies for material that could have informed their creative talents."[70] Although Christianity itself was a fusion of priestly doctrine and European pagan practice, very few local customs were allowed to enter the ideology of churches in Africa while they were in European hands. No complete account of missionary translation policy exists and to compile it for the whole of Africa would be a daunting task, given the number of languages involved. But the following principles were generally applied wherever missionaries served as a major instrument of colonial education, as in Ghana: distortion of indigenous reality to fit the narrative and ideological patterns of biblical and other Christian formulaic tales; the use of translated hymns, psalms and creeds in religious services which, despite puritanism, could not help containing elements of literary art and exercising some aesthetic attraction; the composition of pedagogical and polemic texts, all others being excluded because they were too frivolous, if not immoral, or were simply beyond the capabilities of the missionary personnel and their pupils.

In the Gold Coast, this phase of development lasted until those with creative talent escaped at last the Christian tradition. English education grew slowly, but by World War II a potential audience for a new literature had accumulated in urban centres. A "low-brow" paraliterature formed which reflected the Christian taste for simplistic moralism, but which shifted emphasis into the secular realm. Virtue and vice still warred. Authors dealt with the same petty failings against which the Church railed. By the middle forties a full-blown adventure and romance pulp literature was flourishing in the section of the population which had become literate and in which the nationalist movement was also spreading. As of 1964, Awoonor goes on to say, "books like *A Basket of Flowers, Beyond Pardon* and *Sorrows of Satan* are still popular, especially in girls' schools, where they are read with relish and tears".

Most prolific in this category of writers was J. Benibengor Blay (b. 1915), a clerk and free-lance journalist who entered politics in 1952 and became Minister of Art and Culture in 1965. His first volume of poetry, entitled *Immortal Deeds* (1940), was published in England, as were *Memoirs of the War* (1946) and *King of the Human Frame*, a "tale in verse" (1947). Meanwhile, other works, bearing titles like *Emelia's Promise and Fulfilment* (1944), *Be Content with Your Lot* (1947) or *Parted Lovers* (1948), were produced and distributed in the Gold Coast. In 1953, Blay founded the Benibengor Book Agency in Aboso for the printing and marketing of his own works. He anticipated with exceptional shrewdness the popular type of fiction which was to become so hugely successful in Nigeria in the form of Onitsha chapbooks, before it returned to Ghana with Asare Konadu and a few others.[71]

The resemblance between Blay's urban romances and the Onitsha stories which

[70] George Awoonor-Williams, "Modern African Literature," *Eastern Horizon*, III,8 (Hong Kong 1964), 5–10.

[71] See Ime Ikiddeh, "Popular Fiction in Ghana: An Introductory Study," *Okyeame*, IV,2 (1969), 93–103. repr. in *Perspectives on African Literature*, ed. Christopher Heywood (London: Heinemann Educational, 1971), pp. 106–116.

began to circulate a decade later in Nigeria is striking and the reasons for their development are essentially the same. Chinua Achebe attributed the Onitsha chapbooks to an "emerging Igbo capitalism"[72] and the concomitant growth of a class of literate traders, merchants and functionaries. In the Gold Coast, these two conditions materialized slightly earlier. Because of the sudden emergence of a literate middle class, there arose a potential audience of comparatively well-off book-buyers who desired African reading matter in English. This occurred first in the Gold Coast rather than elsewhere in the British West African colonies because of the intensive economic development of that country during the first half of the century. The agricultural and cultural basis of the country was completely disrupted by the introduction of cocoa as a profit crop. For a brief moment, before production of cocoa was integrated into the colonialist marketing mechanism, relative affluence reached even the peasant family farmer. Financial prosperity fostered the growth of local educational institutions like the Methodist school at Mfantsipim or the government college founded in 1927 at Achimota. During the period in question, the Gold Coast pioneered English-language African literature. Nigeria, which had been the most prosperous area under British influence almost until World War I, lagged behind despite the size of her population.

Nor were Blay's novelettes of the forties the only manifestation of this incipient Ghanaian imaginative literature. In 1943, a Twi writer who had already published a short play in his own language in 1941, Joseph Boakye Danquah (1895–1965), issued a dramatic work in English, *The Third Woman,* which was printed by the United Society for Christian Literature, and which is more significant as an example of unwieldy eclecticism than for any intrinsic reasons. The inevitable syncretism between European and African values was an aesthetic dilemma that African writers did not begin to resolve satisfactorily for another two decades. Danquah himself was obliged to append lengthy notes explaining his intention—which was to fuse the Christian myth of Eden with that ubiquitous hero of African folktales, Ananse the Spider. In terms of genre and literary technique, the playwright was doubtless inspired by the allegorical dramas of the English tradition. Danquah's iambic pentameter is usually correct, if flat. At the same time, his insistence upon his African sources is manifest in setting and in dramatis personae. Ananse is the central divinity of the drama and the earthly characters are the king, councillors and other inhabitants of an imaginary Akan village, Tekyiman. Danquah's desire to embrace European as well as African culture is evident in his choice of the names of his characters: Kwaku Dudente is a high priest, whose name is the Akan form for Will Durant, the American historian; similarly, another priest, Yao Wellese, is named after H. G. Wells: such personages symbolize the scientific optimism exuded at the play's conclusion. As a play, *The Third Woman* is devoid of interest, but as one indication of the growing West African tendency to exploit native sources while demonstrating a mastery of the European tradition, it represents a telling moment in Ghana's literary history. It is worth adding that both Benibengor Blay—who belonged to the same ethnic group as Kwame Nkrumah, the Nzema—and Danquah went on to political careers: as

[72] Emmanuel Obiechina, *An African Popular Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), p. x.

a prominent member of the opposition, Danquah died in prison early in 1965, the year when Blay reached ministerial rank.

The year 1943 was also marked by the appearance of the very first West African novel to be conceived as art rather than as popular entertainment or ideological allegory: *Eighteenpence* by E. R. Obeng (1868–1951). Not until 1954 was such an ambitious work to be produced in Nigeria: *People of the City* by Cyprian Ekwensi, whose earlier piece of prose fiction, *When Love Whispers* (1948), is more a precursor of the Onitsha chapbooks than an example of "serious" fiction. A picaresque story which appealed to the African taste for disputation, *Eighteenpence* contains hints of an anti-colonialist attitude though somewhat less directly than *Ethiopia Unbound* did more than thirty years earlier. Obeng allowed himself ample opportunity to document Ghanaian customs and to make veiled criticisms of European administrators as he took his characters through one complex legal tangle after another. Akrofi, the main character, survives a series of trials and in the end scores success as a farmer by using Western agricultural methods, a prefiguration of the theme of technological modernization, but without reference to the conflicts that modernization breeds, later a key topic in African literature in European languages. *Eighteenpence* is about palaver, certainly an African enough theme, but it is not without literary shortcomings, a lack of focus in plotting and incongruities of language. Its oblique criticisms of corporal punishment in the schools and of the District Commissioner system nonetheless sound a new note in Ghanaian literature. In Konaduwa, Obeng sketched out the first strong female character in African fiction.

Yet it was principally toward the medium of poetry that the literary-minded, university-trained intelligentsia turned in Ghana. In 1946, the United Society for Christian Literature in London printed a collection of poems entitled *Wayward Lines from Africa* by Michael Francis Dei-Anang (1909–1978), who had been educated at Mfantsipim, Achimota, and the University of London. The early poetry of this near-contemporary of Senghor does seem to carry faint echoes of the ideology of negritude, but displays none of the Senegalese poet's rhetorical elegance and optimism. "Whither Bound, O Africa?" expresses an intellectual's perplexity while contemplating the tribal tradition from which the poet himself was alienated by a Christian upbringing and European education, but towards which he was drawn. Dei-Anang set the standard for future West African poetry in two ways: first, in his anguished expression of the conflict between Western materialism and the spirituality usually ascribed to traditional African societies; second, in his efforts at an original style. How innovative Dei-Anang actually was can readily be determined by measuring his flexible diction, which escaped the thudding cadences of the hymnal models of his youth, against the sermonizing of Sierra Leonean versifier Crispin George's *Precious Gems Unearthed by an African* (1952), the Victorian pieties of J. Benibengor Blay's *Ghana Sings* (1956), or the histrionics of Gladys Casely-Hayford (1904–1950), daughter of the afore-mentioned Joseph E. Casely-Hayford, whose less stilted poems in her *Krio Take Um so* (1948) were written in the dialect of Sierra Leone, where she spent most of her unduly short life.

Dei-Anang was strongly influenced by textbook Western romanticism. Senghor had read Hugo, Vigny and Baudelaire, but ended up sounding like Paul Claudel. The Ghanaian poet modelled his exhortations and lamentations on nineteenth-century

Christian and Victorian examples. His dramatic works are, not surprisingly, didactic, as might be expected of a poet who was unreservedly devoted to Kwame Nkrumah's nationalism, rose fast and high in the hierarchy of newly independent Ghana and became, for a spell, the unofficial poet laureate. His *Cocoa Comes to Mampong* (1949) dramatizes the introduction of cocoa from Fernando Po to the Gold Coast, in the late nineteenth century, while *Okomfo Anonye's Golden Stool* (1959) is an indirect plea for national unity against tribal fragmentation.

Though a few years his junior, Raphael Ernest Grail Armattoe (1913–1953) never lived to see Ghanaian independence in 1957 and it is unlikely he would have become the poet laureate of any régime. He is by far the most modern of the Gold Coast poets, because of his European sense of existential despair. It would be interesting to compare him with the Malagasy Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo in terms of their active, creative assimilation of European culture and their alienation from their homelands; or again with the Angolan Bessa Victor, who was as deeply involved in the metropolitan culture and had a similar poetic grace. The most European of the pioneer poets, Armattoe studied in German, French, and English universities and spoke Italian as well. As a medical doctor, he was interested in the use of African herbs in medicine and returned to the Gold Coast with political ambitions. On coming home in 1950, he found a Ghana coming into existence which he could not accept (one is reminded of Tchicaya U Tam'si's return to the Congo in 1960). Bitter rivalry had erupted between J. B. Danquah's United Gold Coast Convention, which aimed to replace traditional chiefs on the Legislative Council with the new élite, and Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party, which claimed to be the voice of the common man. The inevitable degree of demagoguery in the 1951 elections and, after the C.C.P.'s victory, Nkrumah's preparations to establish a one-party state, drove Armattoe to despair. It is impossible to know now how seriously he took his own project of unifying the Ewe of Ghana and Togo in a separate state. But we know from his writing that among others in the burgeoning class of would-be political leaders he found only ignorance, vanity, intrigue, corruption and unlimited self-seeking.

In his writings, it is seldom quite clear whether Armattoe is being haughty, irreverent, insolent or merely banal—and the last is often the case. At any rate, he is a precursor of the mood of self-criticism and moral indignation which became characteristic of African writing in English during the first decade of independence. Both in *Between the Forest and the Sea* (1952) and in *Deep Down the Black Man's Mind* (1954), there is an impressive range of echoes and allusions running from Léon Damas to William Blake, from Langston Hughes to T. S. Eliot. Only Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo have surpassed his protean inventiveness, though others have been better poets.

Armattoe's disillusion anticipates the literary tone of writing in Ghana after the fall of Nkrumah, when it became possible again to voice disenchantment, and in Nigeria preceding and following the Civil War. His reaction to the politically ambitious second generation, which had prospered with the cocoa boom and had obtained missionary or European education, was one of depression. His experience in Europe did not leave him enamoured of the civilization of those whom he so elegantly affected to study. And in

Africa he was relegated to impotence. Sudden death from pneumonia on a private visit to Germany put an end to his tribulations.

One additional factor favoured the growth of imaginative literature and the formation of a group of younger writers in the years immediately preceding Ghana's independence. Especially after Nkrumah was re-appointed Prime Minister in 1954, the government promoted radio broadcasts of literary works. A number of the vernacular and English-language authors whose works were disseminated over the air were anthologized by Henry Swanzy in 1958 under the title *Voices of Ghana: Literary Contributions to the Ghana Broadcasting System, 1955–1957.*

Many contributions had first been composed in vernacular languages and were merely adapted into English (like Fiawoo's 1943 play *The Fifth Landing Stage*). Andrew Amankwo Opoku (b. 1912) had previously published a play in Akwapem Twi, *Odehuro* (1953), in celebration of the Yam Festival; a later collection of his short stories was entitled *Mo Ahenewa* (1961). Samuel Kofi Otoo, was to produce a few novellas in Fanti during the fifties and sixties. Yet another Fanti contributor, Kobena Gyate Akwa (1911–1967), writing in English under the pseudonym Joseph Ghartey, turned out two plays and a selection of poems in the course of the next decade. The Ewe Israel Kafu Hoh (b. 1912) later wrote his school play *Prodigal Brothers* (1967) in English.

But the anthology was chiefly important because it introduced a number of younger English-language poets and story writers: Albert Kayper-Mensah (1923–1980), Efua T. Sutherland (b. 1924), Kwesi Brew (b. 1928) and Frank Kobina Parkes (b. 1932). Ulli Beier has claimed that *Voices of Ghana* demonstrates the educated élite's contempt for African culture. Admittedly, many of the stories selected for broadcasting were openly didactic. While describing the lives of cocoa growers, shepherds or fishermen, the authors urged the use of modern technology, much as Obeng had emphasized Akrofi's success as a farmer using Western methods in *Eighteenpence*. Another trait latent in that early work and renewed by the *Voice of Ghana* authors was the criticism of certain tribal institutions like the bride-price. But they also exposed the corruption of civil servants, for by that time there had come into being an African class of bureaucrats who brought on themselves an opprobrium of their own.

In response to Beier it must be remarked that the paradox observed earlier holds true in these radio pieces: westernized Ghanaians, even in the pre-independence period, do not stray too far from the ideal synthesis Senghor proposed, though their level of language may not be so elaborate according to Western rhetorical standards. Frank Parkes' poetry, often close to diatribe, is nonetheless a defence of African personality and pride in the face of Western materialism. Efua Sutherland introduced vernacular rhythms and cadences into English. These were the representatives of the younger generation, born between the two world wars; they embodied the hope that the Gold Coast, now proudly renamed Ghana, would complement her political and economic leadership with a similar achievement in the literary field.

For by the time the anglophone contributions to *Voices of Ghana* were composed, broadcast and printed, not only had Sierra Leone failed to produce any creative writing of her own but the giant next door, Nigeria, could only boast one poet in English, Dennis Osadebay (b. 1911), who belonged to the generation of Armattoe and Dei-Anang, and

had managed to reach print with one collection of poetry tamely entitled *Africa Sings* (1952). A number of poems in the volume had been published in English, West African and Indian journals; some were later included in Olumbe Bassir's *Anthology of West African Verse* (1957) and did gain some renown even though—as Adrian A. Roscoe was to put it—"the inferiority syndrome, that most devastating result of colonialism, is here in all its glory."[73]

A few years later, when Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier edited their own anthology, *Modern Poetry from Africa* (1963), they quoted a brief excerpt from Osadebay's poetry as sufficient "to make any Négritude poet see red."[74] Yet, as Kofi Awoonor (formerly George Awoonor-Williams) indicated, despite its embarrassing moments,[75] Osadebay's hortatory poetry voices a good deal of pointed criticism of colonialism and European racism. Because of their rather naive Christian faith and spontaneous affirmations of Africanism, it is now too easy to ridicule pioneer poets like Osadebay. They did not receive the thorough-going linguistic training in the metropolitan idiom their French-language counterparts did. Yet they call for a synthesis between the two worlds of Africa and Europe much in the spirit of negritude championed by Senghor.

It would be interesting (though perhaps idle) to speculate on the reason for the dearth and comparative mediocrity of anglophone imaginative writing in colonial Nigeria, the country whence Samuel Crowther had originated and to which he had returned; which had brought forth Herbert Macaulay and Henry Carr, worthy contemporaries of Casely-Hayford; the northern, Muslim part of which had a century-old tradition of poetry in Arabic and in Hausa; and where a contemporary of Osadebay, D. O. Fagunwa (1903–1963), had produced the first masterpieces of Yoruba prose fiction before 1950. The fact remains that the specificity of Ghanaian literature, and to a lesser extent of all of West African literature in English, owes much to the Gold Coast period and its precocious development. Both the comparatively rapid rise of that literature and its thematic concern with the many aspects of modernization and national pride can be, moreover, traced back to the early growth of a literate class educated largely in the Gold Coast itself, whether the imaginative works in question were paraliterary, ideological, or "serious" in intent. Those who emerged from that class had to confront first the contradictions of colonialism and then independence, as writers and in many cases as politicians as well.

In so doing, they had momentarily outpaced literary progress in the remainder of West Africa, where the crisis of modernization was somewhat slightly slower in coming. After independence Nigeria assumed literary and cultural leadership as was to be expected of a country of her size and resources. But the main themes of West African literature had been sketched out and, at rare moments, realized in the works of mid-century Gold Coast writers.

[73] Adrian A. Roscoe, *Mother is Gold. A Study in West African Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 16. For a more recent appraisal, see A. L. McLeod, "Colonial Canticles: The Poetry of Dennis Chukude Osadebay", *World Literature Written in English*, 16 (1977), 25–37.

[74] *Modern Poetry from Africa*, ed. Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 21.

[75] Kofi Awoonor, *The Breast of the Earth* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Doubleday, 1975), p. 190.

3. CREATIVE WRITING IN FRENCH: EMERGENCE AND DIFFUSION

The very first "book" of imaginative writing ever to have been published in French by a black African was a 28-page story for juvenile readers, *Les Trois volontés de Malic,* which was written by a Senegalese school-teacher, Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, and was printed in Paris in 1920. Birago Diop once told the editor of the present volume that the publication of this humble pamphlet had caused a tremendous stir among adolescent school boys in Senegal in the years following World War I: not only did it provide incontrovertible evidence that it was not beyond the capabilities of a genuine African to gain sufficient mastery over the difficult and exacting French language to write a literary work in it: it also showed that it was possible for an African author to have his work printed in Paris, with the aura of prestige that this implied, even if it was only in the Larousse collection of "les livres roses pour la jeunesse".

By 1920, there had been some poetry published in Liberia, and Ghana had already produced one novel and one play in English, not to mention the tremendous amount of didactic, polemical and scientific writing that had been produced in the English language. The reason why French appeared later on the African literary scene is probably to be found in the intrinsic difficulty of a language which is governed by very strict rules, and in the fastidiousness of publishers' readers, who would presumably be satisfied with nothing less than perfect grammar.

There was also some reason why this novelty should have seen the day in Senegal. As early as the seventeenth century, the French had been the strongest European nation in this part of the coast, spreading their influence from the Fort of Saint-Louis and eclipsing the Portuguese and the Dutch. After half-hearted attempts at turning the area into a colony of settlement, such vestigial remnants of humanitarian equalitarianism as were left over from the days of the revolution after the fall of the Napoleonic empire gradually led to the French concept of assimilation as a colonial policy that would be both beneficent to the local populations and profitable to the interests of France. Actually, as Michael Crowder cogently observed "until recent years Senegal was the only territory with an educational system in any way compatible with a policy of assimilation."[76] Consequently, Senegal played a pivotal part in the emergence of creative

[76] Michael Crowder, *Senegal. A Study of French Assimilation Policy*, rev. ed. (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 7.

literature in French: the first novelists and short-story writers were Senegalese; French drama was created on the island of Gorée, off Dakar; the first African poet to attract truly worldwide attention, Léopold Senghor, was to become president of the Republic of Senegal; he was also largely responsible for the elaboration of the negritude concept which proved decisive for the emancipation of Black Africa in many respects, not all of them purely literary.

But although Senegal thus came to occupy a privileged position in francophone African literature, the centralism characteristic of the French system of direct administration was conducive to an entirely different sort of development. On the one hand, while the percentage of children of school age that actually attended school still varied, in 1947 from 12.4 in Senegal down to 1.3 in Guinea, all the children who did attend school benefited by the same, comparatively high-quality education as that given in the mother country. Senegal, therefore, did not long enjoy her literary monopoly: the Senegalese writers were soon joined by representatives of other West African countries such as Dahomey, where school attendance was 10 per cent, Guinea and the Ivory Coast.

Nor did this early literary activity remain confined to West Africa as it did for English. The first book that was published in English by an African from the vast British territories of East and Central Africa was Jomo Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938). By then, however, even faraway Madagascar had produced at least one poet of far more than mediocre talent. Madagascar was of course a special case: long before it was conquered for France by General Galliéni, the island had been introduced to the Roman script by Christian missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, and it had produced a not inconsiderable amount of writing in the Malagasy language."[77] Francophone poetry and prose thus were grafted on to an already vigorous tradition of writing.

Different again, but equally peculiar was the case of Cameroon, which did not fall into the French sphere of influence until World War I, at the end of which the greater part of the country was assigned to France as a League of Nations mandate. Previously, Cameroon had been a German colony, where Christianity was introduced mainly by German-speaking Swiss representatives of the Basler Missionsgesellschaft. This historical discontinuity accounts not only for the fact that Cameroon appeared comparatively late on the francophone literary scene in Africa, but also for the existence of a small amount of indigenous writing, creative and otherwise, in German and in some vernacular languages.

Thus, towards the end of the first half of the twentieth century, as British, French and Belgian colonial rules were beginning to disintegrate, French literary composition was spreading southward from its original centre in West Africa. French Equatorial Africa, which included Gabon, the Moyen-Congo (now the People's Republic of the Congo) and Oubangui-Chari (now the Central African Republic), began to produce a few writers of their own. But the most significant development in Central Africa was undoubtedly the awakening of the Belgian Congo (now Zaïre), which it must be remembered, is the largest country in the world to have French as its official language.

[77] See Gérard, *African-Language Literature*, chap. IV.

WEST AFRICAN PROSE FICTION

There are two important notions about francophone writing in Africa,[78] which are as widespread as they are mistaken, and which therefore ought to be vigorously and finally eradicated: one is that it began with the poetry of Senghor, and the other is that the African novel in French was inaugurated during the 1950s by Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, Sembène Ousmane and a half dozen of deservedly well-known practitioners of prose fiction. In actual fact, the trend began immediately after World War I with *Les Trois volontés de Malic* (1920) by Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne (1886–1976), *Le Réprouvé* (1925) by Massyla Diop (1885–1932), *Force-Bonté* (1926) by Bakary Diallo (1892–1978), *L'Esclave* (1929) by Félix Couchoro (1900–68), *Doguicimi* (1938) by Paul Hazoumé (1890–1980), *Karim* (1935) and *Mirages de Paris* (1937) by Ousmane Socé (1911–1973), followed during the late forties by the first works of Abdoulaye Sadji (1910–1961). These writers and their works cover a span of a quarter-century extending from the end of World War I to the end of World War II and to the last days of the colonial system. As was to be expected, they originate mostly in Senegal, the only exceptions being Paul Hazoumé, a school teacher from Dahomey (now Benin), and Félix Couchoro who, though likewise born in Dahomey, was chiefly active in neighbouring Togo, where the majority of his many *romans-feuilletons* were printed serially in local journals. By the time Obeng published the second novel in English to have been produced in West Africa, the French language could boast a fairly sizeable amount of prose fiction, the greater part of which had been printed in Paris, although a few works had seen print in Dakar (Sadji) or in Wydah and Lomé (Couchoro).

While almost all of those works have deservedly been consigned to the oblivion to which precursors are liable, they are of historical importance not only because they represent the humble beginnings of a trend that was to reach impressive maturity in the 1950s, but also because they testify to the evolution of an *état d'esprit*, or more accurately, *état des esprits* in colonial Africa. From considerable enthusiasm for the benefits of colonial development these writers come to an acute consciousness of the problems attendant upon the confrontation of two cultures.

The very earliest novels, as one might expect,[79] are the most obvious products of the colonial enterprise whose ideals are here transcribed by the acknowledged and

[78] On African literature in French, see Lilyan Kesteloot, *Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française: Naissance d'une littérature* (Brussels: Institut de Sociologie, 1963; 3rd ed. 1975); Edouard Eliet, *Panorama de la littérature négro-africaine (1921–1962)* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965); *Actes du Colloque sur la littérature africaine d'expression française, Dakar, 26–29 mars 1963* (Dakar: Université, 1965); Robert Pageard, *Littérature négro-africaine: Le mouvement littéraire contemporain dans l'Afrique noire d'expression française* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1966); A. C. Brench, *The Novelist's Inheritance in French Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Jacques Chevrier, *Littérature nègre: Afrique, Antilles, Madagascar* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1974); Robert Cornevin, *Littératures d'Afrique noire de langue française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976); Dorothy S. Blair, *African Literature in French* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976).

[79] On this first generation, see Fredric Michelman, "The Beginnings of French-African Fiction," *Research in African Literatures*, 2 (1971), 5–17. See also Mbelolo ya Mpiku, *Le Roman sénégalais de langue française: La période de formation (1920–1952)* (Liège: unpubl. diss., 1969).

grateful beneficiaries. *Les Trois volontés de Malic* is, as befits the school-teacher author, a children's tale. Nevertheless, it has much in common with *Force-Bonté* by Diagne's countryman, Bakary Diallo. The assimilationist orientation depends upon a faith in European civilization in general and French culture in particular. Diagne's hero is a Wolof boy of noble parentage, who has to fight his way against the will and prejudices of his family: he manages to be sent to the French, instead of the Koranic, school; he then wrenches from his parents permission to leave the village in order to obtain higher schooling in town; finally, against the opposition of his parents, who want him to become a Koranic scholar, he enters a vocational school and becomes a prosperous blacksmith. This favourable outcome of his "three wishes" is of course intended to vindicate his oft-repeated assertion that

> Ce n'est plus le moment de parler d'origine et de caste. Les hommes ne se distinguent plus que par le travail, par l'intelligence et par leurs vertus. Nous sommes gouvernés par la France, nous appartenons à ce pays où tous les hommes naissent égaux.[80]

Les Trois volontés de Malic is little more than an edifying school pamphlet. In its concentration on modern education and on the usefulness of manual work, it makes no attempt at reflecting the less appetizing aspects of the colonial system. But it is a very decent piece of prose fiction, especially when we consider that the writer was using a foreign language and an alien genre. It is carefully constructed, and there is every reason to believe that it faithfully reproduces the conflicts arising out of the Western impact upon Moslem societies. Quite naturally, Malic's main opponent is his mother, who is afraid of seeing him leave the village community, who fears that he may lose the integrity of his faith, and who knows that his embracing a blacksmith's trade will deprive him of his aristocratic status in traditional Wolof society; she represents the higher forms of the traditional outlook, yet Malic is not alone in his struggle against misoneism. Both his grandfather and the village headman are great admirers of the French, because they have known the tyranny and the constant warring of the tribal past, for which they have nothing but contempt. Significantly, some of the basic patterns of the novel were to reappear at a considerably higher level of artistic achievement in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambigüe*.

But while the story aims at the glorification of Western education and civilization, at the promotion of the humble ideals proposed by the French elementary school system, and especially at the diffusion of a work ethic that was exceedingly profitable to the colonial powers, it is important to remember that Diagne's Western-type education did not cause him to despise the traditional lore of the Wolof. Although in the novel a *griot* is made to impersonate the more backward forces in native society, between 1917 and 1933 Diagne himself, a school-teacher in Saint-Louis, published several articles of genuine ethnological interest.

If the prominent Larousse publishing firm decided to issue Diagne's novel, it did so because their intended audience was presumably composed of French juvenile readers

[80] Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, *Les Trois volontés de Malic* (Paris: Larousse, 1920), p. 27.

intent on African exoticism, and of African school-boys likely to be attracted to reading matter dealing with native problems and written by a fellow African. But during those post-war years, the black man and his culture were very much present in cultivated minds in the Western world, and especially in Paris. Jazz was spreading from America, cubist painters and sculptors had been for two decades seeking inspiration from African masks; in 1921, one of the more fashionable younger writers, Blaise Cendrars, published his *Anthologie nègre,* a collection of African tales and René Maran's *Batouala* was graced with the coveted Goncourt prize. Jahn later described Cendrars' anthology as the worst of its kind,[81] and René Maran was not at all an African, but a black West Indian civil servant who, as Léon Damas once put it, denounced colonial abuses "like a Frenchman", not like a black man.[82] The French audience, however, were not concerned with such minutiae and the vogue in which blacks in general were held must be held accountable, at least in part, for the publication in Paris of the next West African novel, Bakary Diallo's *Force-Bonté,* in 1926.

Like Diagne's hero, Diallo's autobiographical protagonist is bent on escaping the constraints of the traditional village world and the customs of the Muslim family of Fulani (Peul) pastoralists to which he belongs. His first contact with Western civilization is purely accidental: an imaginative adolescent given to day-dreaming, he happens to lose the herd of sheep which he is supposed to tend; this unfortunate occurrence puts him to such shame that he leaves his family and his village and runs away to Saint-Louis. His first job in the city as a garbageman somewhat dampens the enthusiasm of the young man who soon quits to join the army, which will make him, as a friend testifies, both an "enfant du gouvernement" and the equal of the commander! He enlists with the notorious *tirailleurs sénégalais,* where he is taught how to read and write. After fighting in Morocco in 1911, he is sent to the Marne in 1914, where he is seriously wounded. He spends the rest of the war in various hospitals. After the war, Diallo made the acquaintance of a minor French author, Lucie Cousturier, who had written several books designed to promote better understanding of the African and it was she who encouraged him to record his autobiography. A rather nondescript piece of writing, *Force-Bonté* appears at first sight as an unreserved encomium of the French administration. The title is meant to suggest the strength of France in establishing peace among the African tribes, in destroying the German threat to Western culture, and the kindness of the French in allowing the Africans to share in the greatness of their civilization.

This panegyric to colonialism makes the contemporary reader uneasy, but Diallo's primary theme is the fundamental unity of all men. Because France promotes this unity by its very existence, the Moroccans, for one, ought to be grateful for the intervention of the French army: "La France, habituée à une conduite irréprochable... vient là remplir son devoir envers l'humanité."[83] Still, despite the "force-bonté" of France,

[81] Jahn, *Geschichte,* p. 80.

[82] Quoted in Blair, op. cit., p. 20.

[83] Bakary Diallo, *Force-Bonté* (Paris: Rieder, 1962), p. 92; cf. p. 93: "Le pouvoir de la France est assez grand pour abriter contre tout mal tous les peuples de l'Afrique. Elle a un cœur noble et un esprit arbitre. C'est à elle que le bien a confié la mission capitale de la bonne entente humaine." There has been some doubt whether Diallo wrote *Force-Bonté* himself or merely told his story to someone else. This claim, and the (to my mind) convincing arguments for Diallo's authorship are discussed by Michelman, pp. 11–12. The ardent pro-colonialism is perhaps the most telling evidence for Diallo's authorship.

reality intrudes. Diallo seems to have given more than received: after service on the German front and thirteen operations, he ends up waiting to see if he can become a citizen, as had been promised to those who joined the army; as a porter at a Monte Carlo hotel, he is reduced to begging subsistence from his erstwhile "bienfaitrices". The book also contains many intimations that racial relationships were not quite as idyllic in Africa as they were claimed to be in France, where the greater part of the story takes place.

While *Force-Bonté* was coming off the presses, a Dakar journal with a rather ambitious title, *La Revue africaine artistique et littéraire,* was publishing serially what seems to have been the first African novel in French by a professional writer. Its author, Massyla Diop, elder half-brother to Birago Diop, had some experience as founder and editor of *Le Sénégal moderne* before he became editor of the newly-founded *Revue* in 1925. As only one issue of this seems to have survived, there is no complete version of Diop's novel, which was entitled *Le Réprouvé—Roman d'une Sénégalaise.* Printed locally, *Le Réprouvé* was obviously intended for local readers, both French and African. The one surviving chapter[84] reveals genuine familiarity with the colonial administration. The heroine's father is "commis principal" in the administration of Native Affairs; he is a second-generation clerk, his own father having "rendu d'éclatants services au Gouvernement Français" as interpreter and guide. Although familiarity does not breed contempt, neither does it produce the sycophantic effusions of Diagne and especially Diallo. But it is clear that Massyla Diop's experience as a journalist enabled him to handle the French language with such skill that he can use subdued irony in a way which suggests that the complete novel would have been significantly more independent in spirit than were those of Diagne and Diallo. Far from concentrating on the blessings of Western civilization, the surviving chapter indicates that the novel was devoted at least in part to the disintegrating influence of modern urban life upon traditional society, especially as manifested in the disquieting growth of prostitution. An inordinately luckless author, Massyla Diop wrote several other works which never reached print, and the manuscripts of which are now irretrievably lost. This is much to be deplored, for he had obviously more talent and insight than Diagne, and his description of urban life in Senegal initiated a major trend in Senegalese fiction, a trend which was later to be illustrated in the novels of Abdoulaye Sadji and Ousmane Socé.

Meanwhile, however, two interesting developments were being initiated in Dahomey. Whereas France had exerted practically monopolistic influence over the Senegalese coast, there had been a long tradition of European competition over the Guinea coast, especially in such slave-trading centers as Porto Novo and Wydah, the interior being controlled by the powerful kingdom of Abomey. Dahomey was declared an area of French influence at the Berlin Conference, but there was considerable resistance from King Behanzin, and the country was not conquered and finally turned into a colony until 1894. In the present context, two aspects of Dahomey's historical evolution are of peculiar significance. One is that throughout the nineteenth century Dahomey "seemed

[84] *Revue Africaine Artistique et Littéraire,* No. 6 (July 1925), 335–340. See Robert Cornevin, "*Le Reprouvé* de Massyla Diop, premier roman africain de langue française doit être retrouvé," *Culture Française,* 18, 3 (1969), 28–30.

to be succeeding better than most of the coastal states in absorbing commercial and cultural influences from Europe without radically transforming her traditional institutions and cosmology."[85] The other is that, throughout the colonial period, Dahomeans showed unparalleled ability in assimilating Western learning, so much so that the country came to be known as the Latin Quarter of West Africa: in the thirties, Dahomeans played a prominent part in the creation of French drama at the William-Ponty school; they were also active in the foundation of the francophone novel.

In fact the African historical novel in French first emerged in Dahomey when Paul Hazoumé (1890–1980), a school-teacher trained at the William-Ponty school in Senegal, published *Doguicimi*, a novel of more than 500 pages that appeared in Paris in 1938. The book reflected its author's over-riding interest in the history, customs and beliefs of his people,[86] but its most original feature was that it firmly rejected the notion that Africa lay in darkness before the European arrived. The story, in spite of its historical foundations, rests on a rather improbable intrigue: the beautiful but virtuous heroine Doguicimi resists the blandishments and threats of a royal suitor and accepts incarceration in order to remain faithful to her exiled and unappreciative husband, who eventually gets killed in the tribal wars between the Fon kingdom of Abomey and its enemies the Mahi.

Hazoumé resuscitated a glorious, albeit bellicose and sanguinary, epoch of the kingdom of Dahomey—the levée of king Guézo is fully as elaborate as that of Louis XIV. There is one extraordinary scene where the Europeans on a mission to persuade the king to end war and human sacrifice are served on platters the heads of several young girls whose grace they had been admiring only minutes before! The whole story takes place before the French conquest, which is adumbrated, expected and indeed desired by Doguicimi in the hope that the French will be able to put an end to her people's cruelty while preserving their better qualities:

> Zojagués! [Français]—Doguicimi les voyait en pensée—si jamais le Destin vous fait maîtres de ce Danhomê, comme je le souhaite de tout cœur, que ce soit pour le plus grand bien de ce peuple. S'il n'a pas des richesses matérielles à présenter, il possède, malgré son apparence de barbarie et de dénuement intellectuel, des merveilles de l'âme et de l'esprit que ses ancêtres ont accumulées en lui à travers les âges: la compréhension, le désir de progresser, le respect de l'autorité et de la discipline, le souci du bien-être de la société, l'esprit de famille, le courage, la dignité personnelle, la loyauté en amitié, une grande honnêteté, le sens de la justice et un profond sentiment religieux.[87]

Although the author's didactic (historical and ethnographical) interests obtrude all too frequently in this bulky, carefully written novel, whose central plot, such as it is, is designed to celebrate African womanhood as Sol T. Plaatje's English novel *Mhudi* had done some ten years before in South Africa, the greater part of the book consists in

[85] John D. Hargreaves, *West Africa: The Former French States* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 90.

[86] Hazoumé's scientific concern with such matters is manifest in *Le Pacte du sang au Dahomey*, which was published by the Institut d'Ethnologie de Paris in 1937.

[87] Paul Hazoumé, *Doguicimi* (Paris: Larose, 1938), p. 397. As this excerpt indicates, Hazoumé is prolix.

extremely detailed descriptions of Dahomean life in pre-colonial days, while the last sections take the form of a prophetic warning to the French colonizers. The writer does nothing to tone down the cruelty of Dahomean kings who seem to have been inordinately bloodthirsty. He mostly identifies with the French viewpoint: the historical French characters in the story are invariably sincere, peace-loving, dedicated and courteous people, whereas the English contenders for the conquest of the country are hypocritical, greedy villains. Nevertheless, the last chapters contain some cogent criticism of French colonial rule. Hazoumé voices strong protest against the forced labour system which so bitterly antagonized the populations in French colonies; and he is very outspoken against the French habit of considering the colonial territories as a legitimate outlet for their surplus production of alcoholic beverages. Besides this anti-colonialist stance, Hazoumé had another feature in common with the African intellectuals whom he must have met in Paris: he strongly emphasized the deep religious sense which permeates traditional African cultures and which was to become central to Senghor's definition of negritude.

The comparatively high degree of literacy achieved in Dahomey between the wars accounts for the existence of a fairly large lower middle-class readership in French: their literary tastes were catered to by Félix Couchoro, who taught in Catholic schools until 1924, when he embarked upon a business and writing career. According to his own testimony, the mere fact of seeing in a bookshop a novel written by a French civil servant of his acquaintance—Jean-Francis Bœuf's *La Soudanaise et son amant* (1924)—sparked off the writing urge in his mind. The result was his first novel, *L'Esclave,* which was serialized in a local newspaper, *La Dépêche Africaine,* before being printed in Paris in 1929. Although Couchoro's Preface asserts the dignity of African life as Hazoumé was to do some ten years later, the story itself does this by implication rather than by contrast since it contains no white characters. Paradoxically, the novel seems to uphold the time-honored caste prejudice and the institution of slavery, which had been characteristic of pre-colonial Dahomey. The "slave" of the title can never be anything but a vile slave, who seduces (or is seduced by) his sister-in-law and murders his (adopted) brother. The legitimate son and heir returns from the city, evicts the slave uncle who had taken over the property, and reestablishes traditional order. This is a closed world and will remain so: "Qui veut partir avec nous?" asks a city friend come for a wedding (the slave and his sister-in-law-mistress having died). "Non! personne encore, nous aimons notre brousse, et nous y restons."[88]

How far this rejection of the city and the corresponding attachment to traditional life in the bush is a mere literary device, is difficult to ascertain. It is a fact, however, that Couchoro's many later novels were chiefly concerned with the life and manners of the coastal bourgeoisie which also constituted his readership. Although his next two books, *Amour de fétícheuse* (1941) and *Drame d'amour à Anecho* (1950) appeared in Dahomey, at a private printing-shop established by Mme P. d'Almeida in Wydah, Couchoro

[88] Félix Couchoro, *L'Esclave* (Paris: Editions de "La Dépêche Africaine," 1929), p. 302. This novel was republished (minus its preface and ending) in *Togo Presse* in 1962. On the writer, see Paul Verdier, "Quelques aspects d'un romancier togolais: Félix Couchoro," in *Négritude africaine, négritude caraïbe* (Paris: Centre d'Études francophones, 1973), pp. 79–82.

himself left Dahomey in 1941 for the neighbouring colony of Togo, where he spent the rest of his life, except for a few years of political exile in Ghana (1952–1959). *Drame d'amour à Anecho* has therefore a Togolese setting, being a story of thwarted love between a Catholic youth and a Protestant girl. The writing is correct, although somewhat stilted; there is little attempt at psychological analysis. The main interest of the novel is sociological and resides in the picture of religious antagonism among the christianized middle class of Togo. After independence, Couchoro contributed a great many serials to *Togo Presse*, a daily paper founded in 1962, which provided him with a new, larger audience, chiefly made up of the older members of the educated nationalist élite and the rising class of junior clerks active in business and government. Couchoro's success promoted him to the role of a practical philosopher giving advice—in his eighteen serial novels—on almost anything, from cooking to politics and including, of course, how to deal with women. His last story to be published in book form, *L'Héritage, cette peste* (1963), is a complicated tale about the consequences of the secret clause in the testament of a wealthy Togolese landowner.

Couchoro's novels deserve a special place in the history of emergent West African literature in French. As popular entertainment with strong emphasis on the love theme, they can be compared with the sentimental novellas published in Ghana during the same period by J. Benibengor Blay. But because of their careful delineation of the social setting, they afford the reader valuable insights into the life and manners of an African bourgeoisie comprising not only well-to-do merchants and plantation owners, but also ambitious clerks and politicos with great expectations. Presumably, this was also its audience, and Couchoro's stories may be taken to present with a reasonable degree of accuracy some of the preoccupations, attitudes and values of this rising middle class.

While the Dahomean novels bear witness to a positive appreciation of African life and history, they show little evidence of genuine in-depth analysis of the societal problems involved. Hence the facile optimism which they manifest: Couchoro like Diallo believes in the fundamental unity of all men, who are all subject to the same passions. For Couchoro, who sees the Africans in isolation, as for Hazoumé, who lauds the French while stressing African achievements, problems are caused by individuals like the bastard, adulterous and eventually murderous, slave in Couchoro's novel; they can be set to rights by another individual like the legitimate son. The persecution of Doguicimi by the king's brother and the cruelty of the official executioner are presented as individual ills which can, at least to a certain extent, be surmounted by other individuals, the king's clemency, Doguicimi's virtue and heroism. The works of a younger generation, of Ousmane Socé and Abdoulaye Sadji, tell a different story.[89] Where the problems in previous works had been largely individual, in these novels they become resolutely and insolubly social. The individual is trapped by forces beyond his control on "cette terre de souffrance, de lamentations et de larmes, où l'homme subit la vie au lieu de la dominer."[90] The contrasts of earlier works—city–country, present–past, white–black,

[89] See Mbelolo ya Mpiku, op. cit., and Eberhard Müller-Bochat, "Les débuts du roman de mœurs Sénégalais" in *Neo-African Literature and Culture, Essays in Memory of Janheinz Jahn*, ed. B. Lindfors and U. Schild (Wiesbaden: Heymann, 1976), pp. 86–94.

[90] Abdoulaye Sadji, *Nini, mulâtresse du Sénégal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965), p. 187.

individual ambition and achievements vs. traditionally prescribed hierarchy and customs —have become antagonisms. For the first time the destructiveness of modern life is not only apprehended but felt with intensity.

Like Léopold Senghor and Birago Diop, Ousmane Socé and Abdoulaye Sadji were born during the decade that preceded the outbreak of the World War I. Both came from Rufisque and attended Koranic schools before graduating from the famous Ecole Normale William-Ponty. But whereas Sadji entered the teaching profession and never left his native country, Ousmane Socé, like Senghor and Birago Diop, was one of the first Africans sent to French universities for further study. Since Africans were not allowed to study medicine, he became a veterinary surgeon like Birago Diop. Although Socé's novels appeared some ten years before Sadji began to publish his, they may be said to represent a more advanced stage in intellectual awareness and in the mastery of novelistic techniques. But both occupy an intermediary position in the history of the Senegalese novel of manners which had made a beginning with Massyla Diop and was to culminate in the work of Sembène Ousmane. Both were fundamentally preoccupied with culture contact and the variety of consequences it entailed: psychological, ethical, social and intellectual. And although Socé professed to adhere to Senghor's ideal of cultural syncretism, in the imaginative vision of the novel neither writer has any glamorous prospects to offer to his African characters, whether male as in Socé's *Karim* and *Mirages de Paris,* or female as in Sadji's *Nini* and *Maïmouna.*

Karim is a young Wolof of noble descent who works as a junior clerk in a Saint-Louis firm. His uncomfortable position astride traditional society and the claims of the new world is mainly illustrated through his love experiences. He is swayed by the old impulses of a shame-culture, where work is despised, where honour and rank are supposed to be evidenced by reckless, ostentatious spending. He has not assimilated the Western values of work and money. Instead of trying—as the author obviously would have him do—to improve his status in life by hard study and sedulous work, he spends his meagre earnings in courting a variety of attractive girls in the expensive traditional manner, offering them lavish feasts, the profit of which goes to the greedy *griots,* whose business is to sing his praises and those of his ancestors. This feverish activity makes him unable to work properly and leads to his dismissal. Socé then takes his protagonist from the old town of Saint-Louis to the modern city of Dakar, where the pattern is repeated.

"Le grand mal, source de ses ennuis, venait de ce qu'il voulait vivre, au 20e siècle, comme les samba-linguères d'autrefois."[91] Karim is eventually stranded in a bush village where he falls ill. It is only after many trials that the young man grasps the causes of his failure and gives up his doomed attempt to lead the prestigious but obsolete life of the old Wolof aristocracy. He modifies his dreams of glory and mode of life, returns to

[91] Ousmane Socé, *Karim, roman sénégalais,* 3rd edition (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1948), p. 34. Similarly, the hero of Socé's story "Tanor, le dernier Samba-Linguère," who becomes bankrupt instead of wealthy, ruminates on this incompatibility: "la réussite dans les affaires ne pouvait être le fait d'un homme de sa mentalité et de ses sentiments. Pour y parvenir il fallait être "caïman"—Ma génération, poursuivait-il, avec ses idées vieilles de mille ans est inapte à la lutte et à l'organisation commerciales" *Contes et légendes d'Afrique noire* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1962), p. 31. But Tanor will put his son through school to take his "revenge". "Car si les hommes de ce pays se révélaient définitivement inaptes à la mener, il n'y avait pas de salut pour eux."

the more traditional Saint-Louis, puts off Western dress and dons a boubou for his marriage to a local girl. Success in the city requires new values which many like Karim are neither prepared nor able to adopt.

Karim was a highly ambitious undertaking. Obviously, Socé intended to represent the various modes of Senegalese life at the time: the semi-traditional society of Saint-Louis, the thoroughly europeanized urban life in Dakar, the primitive subsistence economy of the peasants in the bush. He wanted to analyse the complex interplay of antagonistic drives in the mind of a Senegalese *évolué:* the old ethic of shame and honour, the new ethic of work and moneyed wealth. At some points, it seems that the writer sought a way out of his hero's dilemmas in a return to the Islamic ideal of honesty, frugality and learning. The subject-matter of the novel thus deals with three levels in Karim's experience: the amorous, the professional and the religious. Admittedly, Socé's achievement does not measure up to such vast ambitions. Nevertheless, the book is of exceptional historical importance. It is the first novel in French to evince a clear consciousness of the modern African's uneasy stance and moral confusion as he remains organically attached to ancestral mores while being irresistibly attracted to the Western way of life. Socé's outlook reflects the more moderate and serene aspect of the various attitudes adopted by Negro intellectuals in Paris. It is based on the notion that all civilizations are of a hybrid nature, and that a new, hybrid culture is shaping itself in Africa. Socé was the first to provide a fairly detailed imaginative interpretation of this process.

In *Mirages de Paris,* Socé turned to another, more distinctly racial and therefore more overtly dramatic aspect of the culture clash. It is the tragic story of a love affair between a Senegalese student, Fara, and a Parisian girl, Jacqueline. This was the first novel in French dealing with the impact of Europe upon an African student, a situation which had been used from a different angle, in Amharic, by Heruy Wäldä Sellasié a few years earlier.[92] While most anglophone African "been-to" novels were to be chiefly concerned, like Heruy's, with what happens when the black student returns home, Socé's story set a pattern that was to recur in much fiction in French. It focuses on the hero's European experience and analyses the antagonistic forces which make him their plaything. On the plane of human relationships, Jacqueline and Fara love each other; but on a more socialized level, the girl's father, even though he is a good man, who thinks of himself as devoid of racial prejudice, cannot bring himself to give an affirmative answer to the everlasting question of the lowbrow white: How would you like your daughter to marry a Negro? The result is tragedy; Jacqueline leaves her family to live with Fara in steadily worsening destitution; she becomes pregnant and dies in childbirth. The reconciliation of white father and black husband over the grave of the young woman brings only temporary relief. For Jacqueline—and this is the meaning of the title—was not only the beloved woman: she was also the symbol of Paris, the city itself being the emblem—for so many Africans under the spell of French assimilation—of Western life and culture: its enticing beauty, the glorious monuments of its grandiose history, its

[92] On Heruy's Amharic novel *The New World* (Addis Abeba, 1932–1933), see Gérard, *Four African Literatures,* pp. 292–293.

democratic freedoms, its ideals of brotherliness, equality and common humanity. Jacqueline's death merely consummates the destruction of a mirage that had already been darkened and blurred by the hard experience of the young people. Cruelly awakened to the harsh realities of Paris, unable to seek solace and rehabilitation in his own society, which he has outgrown, Fara commits suicide. Henceforth, the Paris myth was to figure prominently in the francophone African novel, as it does indeed throughout the French-speaking world and beyond.

The problems of social and ethical adjustment which the culture change process entails were also central to the novels of Abdoulaye Sadji, which should be regarded as an organic development of a line which had been initiated in French by Socé although those problems had preoccupied the vernacular writers of Southern Africa for many decades. Sadji did not have the benefit of a university education and spent all his life in Senegal as a teacher and as a school inspector: this accounts for his stilted style and for the clumsy framework of his plots. On the other hand, he had a more intimate and extensive knowledge of contemporary Senegalese life and society than did the African intellectuals in Paris.

Like Massyla Diop, Sadji had some journalistic experience before he embarked on imaginative writing: he had already contributed several articles to the local periodical *Paris–Dakar* when his first story, *Tounka,* was printed in the same journal in September–October 1946. Like Hazoumé before him, Sadji was first interested in the traditions of his own people: *Tounka* is based on a legend reported by Senegalese *griots*; it describes the arrival of an "unknown people", who are in fact the Lebou, from the hinterland desert to the coastline of Senegal. But the writer soon gave up this antiquarian inspiration and turned to critical analysis of contemporary society with *Nini, mulâtresse du Sénégal* which first appeared serially in the newly founded *Présence Africaine* in 1947–48. Whereas *Tounka* was printed in book form in Dakar (1952) before a considerably revised version was published in Paris (1965), *Nini* was reprinted in a special issue of *Présence Africaine* devoted to "Trois écrivains noirs" (1955), and did not reach book form until 1965.

Nini is a "signare", one of the bourgeois mulatto girls whose beauty inspired some of Senghor's poems; but Sadji's heroine is not the emblem of a successful hybrid culture: like the mulatto society of Saint-Louis to which she belongs, she has no identity of her own. She is for ever tossed to and fro between the white society to which every mulatto aspires and the black community to which she is inevitably drawn. Sadji makes his perspective clear:

> Nini est l'éternel portrait moral de la Mulâtresse... C'est le portrait de l'être physiquement et moralement hybride qui cherche toujours à s'élever au-dessus de la condition qui lui est faite, c'est-à-dire au-dessus d'une humanité qu'il considère comme inférieure mais à laquelle un destin le lie inexorablement.

With her blond hair and very light skin, Nini occupies the summit of Saint-Louisian mulatto society, so much so that she cannot even think of herself as mulatto, goes to the beach to get a tan, pretends not to understand Wolof, uses quantities of powder

to look even more European (the mechanisms of these attitudes were analysed some years later by Frantz Fanon in *Peaux noires, Masques blancs*). Her great hope is to marry her current French lover, her great despair is the marriage proposal she receives from an African: "Pourquoi le sort l'a-t-elle désignée, elle, Nini, à ce supplice?" But however light-skinned, no mulatto girl is treated as an equal by any European:

> Elles sont victimes, sans le savoir, de traitements humiliants de la part des européens auxquels elles s'accrochent. Ceux-ci les considèrent en effet, la plupart du temps, comme des créatures amusantes, fort divertissantes et n'appartenant en propre à aucun milieu,—nègre ou européen—, à travers lequel on peut et doit les respecter.[93]

The pride induced by her light skin colour makes Nini a prey to the racial prejudice of colonial society; she feels but contempt for the black man, however literate and distinguished he may be; her sole purpose in life is to marry a white man and so, perhaps, become integrated in European society. Although her grandmother enlists the help of a marabout for this purpose, Nini merely becomes the mistress of a young French employee, who abandons her without a qualm when he has to return to France. Finding life intolerable in Saint-Louis, she heads for France where the success she dreams of will no doubt prove elusive and illusory. The book is filled with shrewd observations about the mixed standards of the mulatto bourgeoisie, their touchy, ill-advised pride, their ritual adherence to spurious criteria of Western-inspired gentility, and their uneasy stance between white society and the blacks who, alone in the book, are presented as worthy human beings.

Whereas the action of *Nini* takes place in Saint-Louis, *Maïmouna,*—which was published in Paris in 1958, although part of it had appeared as a 32-page booklet in Dakar in 1952—centres on a black girl who despises her mother's vegetable stall at the local village market, goes to Dakar, "ville dangereuse, ville de perdition", to live with her married sister, falls into the hands of the eternal (and here Christian) seducer, for whom she rejects a solid but uninspiring Muslim, returns home where she gives birth to a child who dies immediately, contracts smallpox, and loses her beauty. She ends as she began, selling vegetables in the village market. The narrow life of the village reclaims Maïmouna who nevertheless finds there virtues to which she had been blind before adventure and distress opened her eyes:

> Son existence passée s'en allait. Il lui semblait maintenant que ce passé n'avait jamais été qu'un rêve. Avec la fuite des jours, la vraie vie, la vie réelle sans tendresse ni leurre, Maïmouna commençait à la découvrir, à l'aimer du même amour que sa brave mère.[94]

In the all too obviously moralizing way characteristic of Sadji, the book points to the dangers which city life holds in store for a naïve black girl cut off from the strict morality and the wise advice of her elders. Village life is here presented as a model of

[93] Sadji, *Nini*, pp. 11, 55, 41.
[94] Sadji, *Maïmouna*, pp. 189, 25.

wisdom and serenity in contrast to the general immorality of urban society, in the same way as black life was idealized in contrast with half-caste manners in *Nini.*

Modou-Fatim, printed in Dakar in 1960, is a long short story rather than a full-scale novel. It is Sadji's best work with respect to style, plot organization and the coherence of character development. Here the theme of city life is seen from the view-point of the migrant worker. Modou Fatim is one of the many Senegalese peasants who try to eke out their meagre resources by working in Dakar during the dry season; like many similar heroes in vernacular South African fiction, he is caught in the perplexing maze of the white man's laws and regulations, and as his wife has remained in the village, sexual frustration leads him to betray her and even to seduce the younger wife of one of his friends.

Taken chronologically these early African novels in French exhibit a growing pessimism with reference to what European values and life can contribute to Africa. The consciousness of inevitable conflict grows more acute with each decade. The dream of assimilation of *Force-Bonté* becomes the defeat of *Mirages de Paris* and *Nini.* No affirmation of African values counters this defeat. Hazoumé resurrects the Dahomean past, only to emphasize the positive aspects of the French (partly because the English are the only other Europeans in the novel), the bellicosity of his ancestors. Exceptions are *L'Esclave* from which Europeans are absent, and the folk tales which tell of a timeless past.

The question which must be raised is of course why these early works of prose fiction are only the beginnings of a tradition. The reason is partly that neither the assimilationist attitude of the early works nor the fatalistic pessimism of the later ones was likely to appeal to those concerned with building an independent African future; on the other hand, an African setting largely untouched by colonialism *(L'Esclave)* is equally irrelevant to such concerns. We are far from the virulent satire and the deadlock portrayed by later militants. Even the Frenchman who abandons Nini is not condemned, promises notwithstanding. We are as far from condemnation of colonialism as from condemning colonials. Racism is touched on briefly here and there but is not a major concern. The conflicts seem to result more from two different conceptions of life than from the relationship of exploiter to exploited, which dominates later fiction.

One problem is that if the writer wished to deal with contemporary life (as the poets did not), he was all but forced to deal with changes wrought by the colonial presence. The negritude poets, encouraged in their aestheticism by surrealism, escaped from the colonial reality into a mystical Africa which obviated any necessity of a realistic presentation. The early African writer of prose fiction had no such solution. His model was the nineteenth-century (European) novel firmly anchored in the study of contemporary society. But we have seen the ambivalence with which these writers, especially the later ones, regarded that society.

In this light the folk tales and legends—as exemplified not only in *Tounka,* but also in the *Contes et légendes d'Afrique noire* which Socé appended to the third edition of *Karim* (1948) before an enlarged version was printed independently in 1962, and in the animal fable of *Leuk-le-Lièvre* as retold in French by Sadji in collaboration with Senghor (1961)—are especially significant. Because they affirm a timeless Africa, these works

cannot and need not solve the problem of defining and depicting the present in such a way as to evoke the future. In this sense the folk tales and legends may be considered the prose counterpart of negritude poetry. The absence of an African vision in the early West African novel is compounded by the lack of a personal voice. The tone is generally didactic and highly moralistic, perhaps another legacy of the folk tales whose function is precisely to teach. In any event, the teaching and preaching, the explanations and descriptions slacken the pace of the novel and diminish its drama.

Unlike the poet who may, and in the event did, forge a striking, and strikingly African, language and vision, the prose writer is more constrained if not altogether hampered by the realistic mode and contemporary scene. The personal voice is weak. The prose models and examples, European and African, needed to be assimilated and emulated. Eventually they were, in the sharp satire of Oyono, the elegiac lyricism of Laye, the militancy of Sembène Ousmane, which, however different from one another, yet illustrate, and magnificently, a positive relationship between community and individual, between borrowed genre and personal voice, between the present and the future. Their precursors groped in that direction, unable to liberate self or society. In this dilemma lie both the interest of these works and their limitations.

BERNARD MOURALIS

WILLIAM-PONTY DRAMA

Both Socé and Sadji had been trained at the federal Ecole Normale William-Ponty, which was intended to cater for the higher educational needs of French West Africa. Socé was among the first to be selected to attend a French university. But while he was devoting his leisure to the writing of *Karim,* thus creating the first Senegalese novel worthy of the name, another exciting development was taking place at the Ecole Normale: the emergence of modern drama in French.

The drama created between 1930 and 1950 at the Ecole Normale William-Ponty raises two kinds of questions for historians and critics concerned with the study of African Francophone literature. It provides first of all a very significant example of the relationship which could develop within the context of French colonization between an educational institution and creative writing. It also represents on the other hand a very deliberate attempt by the colonizer to promote a literature produced by Africans.

What was later to become the "native drama" of William-Ponty was born in the early 1930s at the upper primary school at Bingerville, in the Ivory Coast, and simultaneously, it seems, at the Ecole Normale William-Ponty, which at that time was still located at Gorée (Senegal). We shall not dwell on the question as to which of these two establishments was the first to organize performances of plays given by students. There is some evidence that at this time the director of William-Ponty, M. Durand, had already organized theatrical activities, but we lack precise information on this subject and in particular we do not know what type of play was generally chosen.

But thanks to the personal accounts given by former pupils such as Amon d'Aby[95] or Bernard Dadié as well as by the man who was then director of the establishment, Charles Béart,[96] we are much better informed about what was happening at the same time at the upper primary school at Bingerville and about the circumstances in which Béart was prompted to integrate the theatre into school activities.

The facts are known. One day in November 1932, a group of pupils improvised a scene characteristic of colonial life: the arrival in the village of a "garde-cercle" announcing the visit of the "commandant." Béart was much impressed by their skill and invited the students to organize a session for the following Saturday. It was a success. From then on, Wednesday and Saturday evenings were to be regularly devoted to theatrical activities and an open-air theatre was constructed. The subjects of the plays performed in this way were chosen by the pupils and taken from the daily life of village or town. We may note that Béart did not particularly encourage the pupils to perform a classical French repertoire. He preferred to see them start instead with a skeleton scenario on which they could improvise freely. From 1933 onwards, performances were given before a European audience, notably in 1934, at the time of the Abidjan exhibition. The first play produced at the Bingerville school seems to have been *Les Villes* by Bernard Dadié, performed in 1933.

In 1935, Charles Béart was appointed to the staff of the Ecole Normale William-Ponty, where he taught for two years. The school recruited its students by means of competitive examinations carried out throughout the federation of French West Africa among pupils who had completed the primary school curriculum. It trained primary school teachers and administrative clerks, and prepared students for a certain number of professional schools, notably the school for medicine at Dakar. It thus constituted the highest level of the educational system set up by the colonizer.

When Béart arrived, there already existed at William-Ponty a theatrical tradition in which the Dahomean students had performed *La Dernière entrevue de Béhanzin et Bayol*. This dramatic rendering of the last interview between the king of Dahomey and the French envoy shortly before the colonial conquest has been attributed to Martins Gutenberg (1911–1983), who was later to publish some poetry under the pseudonym

[95] Amon d'Aby, *La Côte d'Ivoire dans la cité africaine* (Paris: Larose, 1951), p. 155. On William-Ponty drama, see especially Bakary Traoré, *Le Théâtre négro-africain et ses fonctions sociales* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1958); Robert Cornevin, *Le Théâtre en Afrique noire et à Madagascar* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1970), pp. 52–54; Bernard Mouralis, "L'Ecole William-Ponty et la politique culturelle," in *Actes du Colloque sur le théâtre négro-africain, Abidjan, Ecole des Lettres, 15–29 avril 1970* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), pp. 31–36; Bakary Traoré, "Le théâtre africain de l'Ecole William-Ponty," ibid., pp. 37–44; and Garry Warner, "Education coloniale et genèse du théâtre néo-africain d'expression française," *Présence Africaine*, 97 (1976), 93–116. But the most informative historical survey so far is still Gérard D. Tangu, *Les Débuts du théâtre négro-africain d'expression française en A.O.F.* (Liège: unpubl. diss., 1970).

[96] Charles Béart (1895–1964) was in turn director of the E. P. S. at Bingerville (1931–1935), teacher at the Ecole William-Ponty (1935–1937), head of the teaching service for Senegal and Mauritania (1937–1939), then director of the Ecole William-Ponty from 1939 to 1945. Useful information about the origins of West African drama in French can be found in many of his writings, especially: "Le théâtre indigène et la culture franco-africaine," *L'Education Africaine*, Special issue 1936–1937 (1937), 1–14; *Jeux et jouets de l'ouest africain* (Dakar: I.F.A.N., 1955); "A propos du théâtre africain," *Traits d'Union*, 15 (1957), 103–104; *Recherche des éléments d'une sociologie des peuples africains à partir de leurs jeux* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1961); and "Les origines du théâtre dans le monde: position actuelle du théâtre africain," *Comptes Rendus Mensuels de l'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer*, 22 (1962), 146–163.

Agbossahessou. It is written in French, larded with African proverbs in translation and interspersed with dances and vernacular songs in the African manner. This was followed in 1934 by another Dahomean play, *Le Mariage de Sika,* an ethnographical comedy deriding diviners and witch-doctors and such uncivilized customs as the bride-price. Both plays achieved great success. The theatrical performances took place at the time of the school "festival of native art," for which long and careful preparations were made. Strictly speaking Béart is not therefore the originator of the Ponty theatre, which existed before he arrived. But his role was none the less to be an essential one. He was able in particular to take advantage of the conditions he found on his arrival, and he directed his efforts towards developing the Ponty theatre and above all towards drawing a large audience from European and administrative circles.

On February, 1935, a performance took place for the first time, not at Gorée as had hitherto been the case, but at Dakar in the hall of the Chamber of Commerce. Choruses appeared on the stage; a Sudanese play and a new Dahomean play of historical inspiration, *L'Election d'un roi au Dahomey,* were performed. From a strictly theatrical point of view, this was an ambitious attempt. The play comprised three acts and nineteen speaking parts but the students coped perfectly well with the performance as a whole and the audience thus discovered that there existed in Senegal a genuine company of actors who had developed beyond the amateur stage. The programme also included a four-act comedy, *Le Triomphe du griot,* composed and staged by a group of students from present-day Mali.

The following year, the school scored an even more notable success, and the Governor-General of French West Africa made a point of attending personally the performance given on February 13, 1936. The Guineans presented a historical drama: *L' Entrevue du capitaine Peroz et de Samory*; the Dahomeans performed *Le Retour aux fétiches,* a social drama relating the misfortunes of a Porto-Novo family which had abandoned its traditional gods. In addition, three Dahomean choruses completed the programme, which also included *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi,* a historical play presented by Ivory Coast students, one of whom was none other than Bernard Dadié (b. 1916); traditional chants had an important place in this drama set in the eighteenth century, and it exhibited uncommon reverence for the ancestral past. Where other plays underscored the tyranny and injustice of tribal potentates and dealt ironically with traditional practices and beliefs, Dadié and his friends had their characters behave with great wisdom and dignity.

In 1937, five new plays were performed with equal success: *Un Mariage chez les Mandégnis* by the Guineans, *Trois scènes sérères* by the Senegalese, *La Ruse de Diégué* by the Sudanese, *Les Prétendants rivaux* by the Ivory Coast students, and especially *Sokamé,* another Dahomean production based on the following old legend: in order to end the drought in the country, a virgin called Sokamé is to be sacrificed to the water-snake; she calls on her lover to rescue her; this he does in spite of his fear, and kills the water-snake; the king orders him to be put to death for committing this sacrilege; but the rains now begin to fall and the king grants his pardon to the lovers. The authors had significantly altered the ending of the original story, in which the young man is duly killed and the drought persists as a collective punishment for his crime. Whereas the

purpose of the legend is to inculcate respect for the superior power of the gods, the aim of the play is to bring out the cruel futility of ancient beliefs. Likewise, several plays dealing with love and marriage make fun of parental greed in setting the bride-price.[97]

In the same year, the Ponty company finally achieved recognition by going on tour on the occasion of the Paris International Exhibition, and giving two performances (August 12 and 17, 1937) at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. The programme comprised two plays which had already been performed in Dakar: *Sokamé* and *Les Prétendants rivaux*. The Parisian press was full of praise for these performances, comparing the former play to Racine's *Iphigénie* and the latter to the best comedies of Molière,[98] and stressing what it called the profoundly innovative nature of the African theatre which it had just discovered.

In 1939, the Ecole William-Ponty was transferred to Sébikotane, a small place between Rufisque and Thiès. Charles Béart, to whom the post of head of the teaching service for Senegal and Mauritania had been entrusted in the meantime (1937–1939), was then appointed director of William-Ponty, a post which he was to hold until 1945. Theatrical activities continued to occupy an important place in the life of the school and various performances confirmed the reputation of the "Pontins" in the field of the theatre. The departure of Béart in 1945 does not seem to have had any noticeable effect on the theatrical activities of William-Ponty. The Ecole Normale for girls at Rufisque introduced drama into its own curriculum, and in 1948, during the celebration of the centenary of the abolition of slavery, the students of the two institutions presented a play in honour of Victor Schoelcher. There are some indications that new approaches and new themes were introduced. Perhaps under the indirect influence of Senghor, whose ideas were discussed in the Dakar press, the African past was presented—in such plays as Assane Seck's *Bigolo* (1939)—with lyrical reverence, and the theme of the generation gap between educated youths and traditionalist parents was treated with genuine seriousness.

The late forties saw the last performances at the William-Ponty theatre. The political changes, which were a direct consequence of the part played by Africa in the war, led to the establishment of the French Union but they were also accompanied by changes in the area of education. Immediately after the war, the principle of a curriculum specifically designed for the native inhabitants was abandoned. A system identical with

[97] Denise Moran, "Les élèves d'une école normale africaine donnent à Dakar un spectacle d'art indigène," l'*Education Africaine*, special issue 1936–37 (1937), 59–60; Cornevin quotes a substantial extract from this article on pp. 60–61 of his *Théâtre*....See also Denise Moran, "Le théâtre indigène en A.O.F.," *Revue Bleue*, 75 (1937), 573–576, and Richard Bonneau, "Une pièce de théâtre de l'école William-Ponty: *Un Mariage chez les Mandégnis*," *Annales de l'Université du Bénin* (Lomé), 2,2 (1975), 161–165. Most of the Ponty plays were printed in *Education Africaine (Bulletin de l'Enseignement de l'A.O.F.)* during the thirties: *Un Mariage au Dahomey*, 23 (1934), No. 85, 73–89; *L'Élection d'un roi au Dahomey*, 24 (1935), No, 89, 181–188; *Le Triomphe du griot*, 24 (1935), No. 90–91, 188–193. In 1937, the bulky special issue contained: *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi*, 29–40. (This was later reprinted in *l'Avant-scène*, No. 343 [1965], 37–43); *Entrevue de Samory et du Capitaine Péroz—1887*, 41–46; *Retour aux fétiches délaissés*, 47–55; *La Ruse de Diégué*, 69–80 (reprinted in *Présence Africaine*, No. 5 [1948], 796–809); *Sokamé*, 82–93. (reprinted in *Présence Africaine*, No. 5 [1948], 627–641); *Trois scènes Sérères*, 97–103; *Un Mariage chez les Mandégnis*, 105–110 (reprinted in *Présence Africaine*, No. 4 [1948], 642–646); *Les Prétendants rivaux*, 111–115.

[98] See notably Bernard Maupoil, "Le théâtre dahoméen: les auteurs-acteurs de l'école William-Ponty," *Outre-Mer*, 9,4 (1937), 302–310, and Alexandre Adandé, "Réponse à Bernard Maupoil," ibid., 318–321 (The text of this article has been reproduced in its entirety by Cornevin, pp. 64–66).

the one applied in France was then set up comprising the same courses and the same examinations, especially the baccalaureate examination, which until then had been to all intents and purposes barred to Africans. William-Ponty thus became a secondary school whose essential function was to prepare candidates for the baccalaureate—*"une boîte à bachot,"* as Béart was to say, deploring this situation. There was no longer any time to devote to theatrical activities and to research in the social environment which would supply new material. More research is needed now before it becomes possible to map out the decline and fall of William-Ponty drama which had practically disappeared by 1950.

We must now describe in some detail the conditions under which the theatrical activities at William-Ponty took place and the spirit with which the students and their teachers were imbued at the time.

When the first theatrical performances took place at the beginning of the 1930s, there already existed in Africa a theatre of a European type. The missions had long used the stage as a means of religious propaganda. They had presented moral and didactic plays performed in French by Africans. Furthermore, in the urban centres, the African élite—grouped into "clubs" or "amicales"—gladly performed the usual repertoire of boulevard plays which were still popular with audiences in France itself.

Béart wanted to break with a theatrical practice in which there was little opportunity for Africans to take the initiative. He wanted his students to turn instead to their own culture in order to draw from it elements capable of producing drama of a new, and, in his view, truly African kind.

The theatrical work carried out by the students was organized in three main phases. First, the students were invited to collect information on the social environment from which they came. In *Le Théâtre négro-africain et ses fonctions sociales,* Bakary Traoré has recalled how, during their holidays, the students had to carry out investigations into their home backgrounds and bring back short monographs concerning the chief aspects of traditional life.[99] On the basis of this preliminary research, the students then prepared together the scenario of a play based on legends, traditions or facts known to them; this could be more or less developed, ranging from a simple outline to a completely written theatrical text. Finally, in a third stage, they proceeded with the production and technical organization of the performance.

The ethnographical research carried out by the students was an important phase in their work; but, according to Béart, its central purpose was to collect material which could be used later. The main thing remained always the drama itself, that is to say the preparation of the scenario and the production of the play. On this score, all personal accounts are in agreement: the William-Ponty drama cannot be considered as drama of folklore or ethnography. To those who objected that it was not always faithful to the facts of tradition or history, Béart used to reply that what must count first and foremost was the internal coherence of a play and not its systematic fidelity to external data.

What degree of latitude was allowed to the students by the staff of the school has

[99] Traoré, op. cit., pp. 48–50, quotes some examples of the questionnaires which the students were to use as the starting-point of their investigations.

always been a controversial question. Some have spoken of a "guided" theatre *(théâtre orienté)* and even of "censorship". The personal accounts we possess at present, notably those given by Ponty's former students, do not provide any decisive information on this point, but in general the students seem to have been able to work as much as they wished. Moreover, the differences observed between the plays from various colonies suggest a fairly liberal climate of work.

The theatrical experiment at William-Ponty was based on a definite aesthetic. From its inception, the clearly stated intention of Béart and his team was to achieve truly creative theatre and consequently to carry out at Ponty activities completely different from those which could be found in the performances organized by missions, clubs and *amicales*. This was an ambitious programme. In general terms, it was a matter of setting up in Africa a new, yet truly African theatre, that is, a form of stage performance corresponding to the cultural situation of Africa in the 1930s. In Béart's mind, this new theatre could be neither a European repertoire played by Africans trained in the techniques of dramatic art nor a folkloric activity presenting on stage the life of the traditional societies. This new theatre, produced on the initiative of the Africans themselves, was to show instead what was happening at the time in African society by depicting the forms and consequences of the encounter between Western and negro-African cultures.

From this initial position a certain number of definite consequences were to follow. First of all the choice of French as the language of the plays was not to be regarded either as homage to the colonizer's culture or as betrayal of black African culture, but simply as the most effective means of expressing a process of cultural innovation, or acculturation:

> Nos élèves qui, à l'ordinaire, pensent en français, et en français seulement, ont dû retourner à la langue mère, l'étudier comme jamais sans doute ils n'avaient fait, se pénétrer du sens de ses mots et de ses proverbes, et chercher l'équivalent français, l'image française qui rendra d'aussi près que possible l'image mandingue, agni ou nago. C'est une excellente leçon de français, mais, et plus, c'est une des rares occasions où la pensée française a pu se mêler intimement à la pensée indigène.[100]

Nor was William-Ponty drama to reject the influence of French literature, on condition of course that this influence should remain subordinate to the authors' own purposes and should not be reduced to mere imitation. For Béart, this influence was on the whole largely positive; indeed, the student's knowledge of French literature, he claimed,

> a joué exactement le rôle qu'a joué celle de la littérature grecque et latine lors de la création du théâtre européen moderne. Elle a fourni un levain et quelquefois des moules. J'ai toujours craint un Rodrigue-Soundjata ou une Bineta-Andromaque; cela ne s'est jamais produit.[101]

[100] Béart, "Le théâtre indigène et la culture franco-africaine," p. 12.
[101] Béart, "Les origines du théâtre dans le monde...," p. 156.

Béart's view was perhaps somewhat too optimistic, for in a number of plays produced at Ponty and afterwards, notably those dealing with historical subjects, there is admittedly a dramatic grandiloquence and a taste for antithesis which remind us often of Corneille's tragedies.

In other respects, William-Ponty drama made several important innovations in the African conception of dramatic performance. It is first and foremost a drama in which the text plays an increasingly important part. Certainly, bodily expression is not absent but it only appears alternately with the spoken parts, to represent for example a festival, with songs and dances. Undeniably, William-Ponty drama has emphasized content and has shown a predilection for the performance of historical dramas or social satires evoking notably the new classes which have emerged after colonization. Mime, marionnettes, music, the use of audio-visual material on the stage have not been employed for their own sakes; taken as a whole, the William-Ponty theatre has remained faithful, in the matter of dialogue, of characters or scenery, to a "realistic" conception of the dramatic art. William-Ponty drama thus broke with traditional African modes of dramatic expression. When these were used on the stage, it was only in a subordinate function, to underline the accuracy with which some truly African scene is recreated. The performances at Ponty were never based solely on the device of a story-teller talking to his audience, nor on such "acting" as can take place in a religious ceremony. It is especially noteworthy that the William-Ponty theatre never used traditional masks.[102]

What is more, the William-Ponty theatre adopted the Italian stage and the resulting separation of actors and audience. Contrary to what happens in traditional dramatic performances, the latter no longer took any part in the play and were reduced to the role of passive spectators. Likewise William-Ponty initiated a process of professionalization in the African theatre: the actors became specialists in performance, who could henceforth derive some financial benefit from the shows they produced. As a result of this, modern African theatre has tended to address a particular social group: expatriate Europeans, and "educated" Africans occupying a privileged place in colonial society.

Any overall picture of the theatrical achievement of the École William-Ponty must take two main factors into account.

The experiment carried out by Charles Béart over nearly twenty years took place within the institutional framework of the educational system established by the colonizer. One should not infer from this however, that the theatrical productions of William-Ponty were merely a propaganda activity intended to extol the merits of colonization. All our records concerning the actual conditions in which these activities were carried out reveals an open and liberal pedagogical climate.

Béart called on his students to realize fully the changes which were affecting Africa at both social and cultural levels and he asked them at the same time to acquire a deeper

[102] On this question, see Traoré, *Le Théâtre négro-africain*... p. 84. It is of some interest to quote Cheikh Anta Diop's opinion to the effect that "Le théâtre folklorique de l'Ecole William-Ponty ne saurait, en aucun cas, être considéré comme un théâtre africain authentique, quand on songe aux conditions spéciales qui l'ont engendré; il pourrait tout au plus constituer une source de documentation pour un théâtre africain futur. Dans le domaine du théâtre aussi, l'expression indigène devra, peu à peu, prendre le pas sur l'expression européenne" (*Nations Nègres et culture*, Paris: Editions africaines, 1954), p. 343.

knowledge of their own culture in order to be able to work out one day an effective and harmonious synthesis of the African and European elements. This could hardly be branded as a strictly colonialistic purpose. The history of French education in West Africa shows that there was genuine concern—limited, perhaps, to educational authorities—about the gap that was developing between the emergent educated élite and the mass of the population, upon whose beliefs and customs many Ponty students and graduates tended to look down with some contempt. From a purely pedagogical point of view, official encouragement to Ponty drama must be seen as a sincere, well-meant attempt to bridge this gap. But Béart and his superiors did not take sufficient account of the fact that their small group of students did constitute a privileged élite within colonial society: even though the cultural synthesis they advocated could conceivably have had a meaning for this élite, it could hardly have had any for the illiterate mass of the colonized people. The very success of the William-Ponty theatrical experiment was thus masking a serious problem.

Besides this, the African culture towards which the students were invited to turn their attention and which they were to represent was not necessarily the one which they had experienced in their villages or their ethnic groups. This culture remained in part an abstract principle, a general image, insofar as efforts were made to go beyond individual particularities in order to promote a culture characteristic of each of the territories of the federation: that is to say, a Senegalese, Ivorian, Sudanese, Guinean, Dahomean, etc. culture.

This process thus became part of a global strategy defined by the colonizer who called on the Africans of the various territories to become aware of their cultural identity and their common membership of the same political federation. On the ideological level, the William-Ponty theatre can be defined as a compromise—necessarily impermanent—between a desire *to relate explicitly* to African culture and a distrust of anything that, at whatever distance, might correspond to a *cultural demand.* That is why we may conclude, as does Bakary Traoré, that the William-Ponty theatre had in general as its essential function that of *entertainment,* although it did allow the latent expression of cultural nationalism. On the other hand, while it was later severely criticized by African intellectuals because of its antiquarian interest in past events and figures, mostly presented in a spirit of denigration, and because of the failure of its authors to achieve realistic character delineation, William-Ponty drama had the enormous merit of laying the foundations of a genuine stage tradition on African soil. Further, the school was responsible for the rearing of young dramatists from all parts of French West Africa, and these—many of them school teachers—in their turn introduced this new dramatic genre wherever they were working.

In 1938, a few graduates from William-Ponty founded the Théâtre Indigène de la Côte d'Ivoire, which was dissolved for lack of funds in 1946, but its activities were taken over in 1953 by the Cercle Culturel et Folklorique de la Côte d'Ivoire,[103] and in 1959 a national

[103] See on this *Le Théâtre populaire en République de Côte d'Ivoire,* by F. Amon d'Aby *et al.* (Abidjan: Cercle Culturel et Folklorique de Côte d'Ivoire, 1966). This anthology contains: F. J. Amon d'Aby, *Kwao Adjoba,* pp. 13–32. (1st ed., Paris: Paragraphes littéraires, 1956); *La Couronne aux enchères,* pp. 34–46. (1st ed., Paris: Paragraphes littéraires, 1958); *Entraves,* pp. 47–66; *La sorcière,* pp. 67–86; Bernard Dadié, *Min Adjao,* pp. 91–110; *Situation difficile,* pp. 111–116; *Serment d'amour,* pp. 117–124; Germain Coffi Gadeau, *Kondé Yao,* pp. 129–141; *Mon mari* pp. 144–154; and *Yaou N'Da,* pp. 155–168.

drama school was created in the Ivory Coast. The most important promoters of the movement were François-Joseph Amon d'Aby (b. 1913) and Germain Coffi Gadeau (b. 1913), both of whom had contributed to the Ivory Coast plays performed at the William-Ponty school. Few of Amon d'Aby's numerous plays have been published. Besides their general moralizing purpose, they were also intended to satirize obsolete customs and superstitions likely to hamper the westernization of Africa. This trend became especially prominent in his plays of the fifties, such as *Kwao Adjoba* (1953) which brings out the inhumanity in the condition of women in tribal society, or *Entraves* (1955) where the writer denounces the parasitism which inevitably results from the persistence of clan solidarity in the new context of a money economy.

A different outlook was given expression in the plays of Coffi Gadeau, whose *Konde Yao* (1939) was a chronicle play reminiscent of Dadié's *Assémien Déhylé* and other similar Ponty plays. But he soon gave free rein to his satirical talent in *Nos femmes* (1940), a largely autobiographical comedy bringing out the loosening of traditional morality in the new African towns and the frightening growth of prostitution. After providing a more balanced view in *Mon Mari* (1942), Gadeau wrote *Les Recrutés de M. Maurice* (1942), which forms a landmark in the history of African literature in French, because it is the first imaginative work of overt political protest. It is a harsh critique of the forced labour system, which had been widely used and widely resented in French Africa. It ranked as a major theme in much African writing of the late fifties, but Gadeau was the first to provide an outspoken dramatic indictment of forced labour. The play was suppressed by the censor. Perhaps in order to ingratiate himself with the French authorities, Gadeau then wrote *Les Anciens combattants* (1943), where he glorified the black veterans who had fought in the service of France. As to *Les Recrutés de M. Maurice*, permission was given for its stage performance in 1943 under a new title, *Le Chant du retour*, and perhaps after deletion of the more offensive passages.

The case of the Ivory Coast was exceptional, for although Ponty alumni did their best to promote theatrical activities throughout West Africa, they were usually content with rehearsing over and over again the old repertory of the 1930s, and little new truly dramatic talent emerged before the days of independence. Nevertheless, in 1953 a new official effort was made to instil fresh life into West African stage drama. A network of cultural centres was constituted, with its journal, *Traits d'Union* edited by Ponty alumnus Lompolo Koné. *Traits d'Union* devoted considerable attention to theatrical experiments and printed a substantial number of plays from the various territories.[104] In 1955, the French High Commissioner Bernard Cornut-Gentille launched a series of annual dramatic competitions. The "loi-cadre" of 1956, which dismantled the federal organization of French West Africa by making it possible for each separate colony to have a constitution of its own, deprived such undertakings of their financial resources. Nevertheless, in the course of those three or four years, the cultural centres had fostered a genuine reawakening of theatrical activity: they formed a link between Ponty drama and post-colonial West African drama. Many of

[104] In 1955, the following plays were printed in *Traits d'Union:* Ousmane Goudian, *Il était autrefois*, No. 6, pp. 66–68; Lamine Diakhate, *Sarzan*, No. 7, pp. 48–65; Moctar Fofana, *L'Appel du fétiche*, No. 9, pp. 84–96; Abdou Anta Ka, *La Fille des dieux*, No. 10, pp. 53–67; Pedro Santos Anoumou, *Fâsi*, No. 11, pp. 68–96; Massate N'Diaye, *Les Débuts du règne*, No. 11, pp. 107–28.

the performances were historical plays often focusing on the internecine quarrels of African tribes and chieftains at the time of the European conquest. Others were comedies of manners dealing with problems of marriage and family life. They were rather crude, and the pageantry was more attractive than the text to the mostly illiterate audiences for which they were performed. A few of them, however, exhibit a modicum of originality. Whereas the tribal leaders of old and their rivalries were still presented in an unfavourable light, the influence of negritude made itself felt in the poetic use of traditional legends as in *La Fille des dieux* (1955) by Abdou Anta Ka (b. 1931) from Senegal, who declared emphatically that Ponty drama was outmoded and childish. Nor was he alone in urging the need for exploiting African myths and for greater complexity in psychological analysis, but school teachers reared in African training colleges were ill-equipped for this. In *L'Appel du fétiche* (1955), Moctar Fofana from Upper Volta simply acknowledged his realization that Africa could not yet do away with her ancestral beliefs, however superstitious they might be. The best of the available plays of the period was *Sarzan* by Lamine Diakhaté (b. 1928) from Senegal, a Ponty graduate who had studied linguistics in Paris; *Sarzan* was a clever dramatic adaptation of a tale by Birago Diop, depicting some of the problems of acculturation.

Although the literary value of these plays can hardly be said to have been of the highest, this dramatic activity maintained a continuity between Ponty theatre and developments that were to take place in independent Africa, for many of the political leaders and high officials in the new states were themselves graduates from the William-Ponty school and became keen promoters of the theatre. Few of the new plays produced in the sixties have reached print; they do not seem to have achieved a much higher level of artistic excellence. Such scant information as is available suggests that they differ from pre-independence drama in two important respects. First, in the treatment of historical subject-matter, they entail a full-scale revision of the judgments expressed in earlier drama, extolling African leaders of the past and exhibiting unbridled anti-colonialism. More important perhaps, already in 1953, as Robert Cornevin mentions in his informative account of *Le Théâtre en Afrique noire et à Madagascar*, Senegalese playwrights produced plays in Wolof; in 1965 N. S. Hopkins reported the production of a number of Bambara plays in Mali.[105] These may well hold the promise of interesting developments in those vernacular languages which had hardly been used at all for literary purposes in French Africa.

As an adaptation of one of Birago Diop's tales, Diakhaté's *Sarzan* signalled the convergence of the indigenous Ponty tradition as perpetuated by the Cercles Culturels with the new developments that were taking place in Paris.

The first incentive came from *Présence Africaine*, where several of the old plays were reprinted in 1948. But in their endeavour to promote African drama the editors discovered only a few new authors. One was Amadou Cissé Dia (b. 1915) from Senegal, a physician trained at the medical school in Dakar. His *La Mort du Damel* (1947) deals with an episode in Faidherbe's conquest of Senegal in 1863. It is considerably better than the Ponty plays with similar subject matter because the writer delineates the background of tribal strife which did so much to facilitate European penetration, and because he clearly brings out the values at work in the minds of the protagonists: tribal patriotism, the sense of honour, personal ambition and family loyalty.

Another playwright discovered by *Présence Africaine* was Anatole Coyssi (1915–1954),

[105] N. S. Hopkins, "Le théâtre moderne au Mali," *Présence Africaine*, No. 53 (1965), 162–193.

a Dahomean school-teacher, whose semi-historical play, *La Honte plus meurtrière que le couteau* (1948) purports both to describe the court of the old kings of Dahomey, and to demonstrate the moral thesis that shame is as effective a weapon as armed fighting. In the same year, Coyssi's compatriot Paul Fabo (1906–1973) published *Ombrages* in Brussels. Fabo, who was born in Guadeloupe, had long been living in Europe and his play is a curious freak in the history of African drama: it is a sort of late nineteenth-century drawing-room drama dealing with a love affair in a wealthy chateau-owning bourgeois family; it is probably the only African play set in an entirely European setting.

The most popular development of Ponty drama in Paris was effected by Keita Fodeba (1921–1969) from Guinea, whose first plays—*Etrange destin, Minuit, Chansons du Dioliba*—appeared in *Présence Africaine*. They were in the tradition of the William-Ponty school where Fodeba had obtained his teacher's certificate. Their exotic character made them highly successful in Europe when the author founded his own company, Le Théâtre Africain, in 1950. But the Paris audience was understandably more attracted to the songs and dances than to the dramatic elements in Fodeba's plays and in those of the Ponty school which Fodeba revived on the French stage. Soon, the Théâtre Africain abandoned all pretence at genuine dramatic activity and became *Les Ballets Africains*, which in turn were renamed *Les Ballets Guinéens* when Guinea proclaimed her independence in 1958. With this, however, the theatre as a literary form comes temporarily to an end: it is impossible to compare the Guinean shows with the Yoruba opera to which Europe was to be introduced by Duro Ladipo more than a decade later. The various kinds of inspiration that the William-Ponty tradition had given birth to were running out; with very few exceptions, African drama in French was not to be reborn until almost a dozen years after independence.

(Translated from the French by Elliott Forsyth)

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With its strong base in Senegal, West African creative writing was one of the two main streams that led to the constitution of an impressive body of French literature during the decade preceding the period of African independence. The other, which did not develop locally but in Paris, started to grow somewhat later in the wake of the negritude concept elaborated during the thirties, and of the increasing strength of the anti-colonialist thrust. While this second stream also had a powerful Senegalese foundation and was undoubtedly far more important than the local one in literary quality, political involvement, in-depth analysis and sheer bulk, it would be grossly unfair not to note that Franco-African writing also had its roots—which in some cases began just as tiny rootlets—in other parts of France's African empire. This was due, of course, to the policy of cultural assimilation uniformly applied in all territories administered by the French, a policy which began imperatively with a highly efficient training in the French language for all such native children as appeared likely to prove useful in the colonial administration.

For reasons which are not yet always clear, however, this policy was not equally successful everywhere. As far as West Africa is concerned, whereas the historical motives that underlay Senegalese superiority are easily perceived, and whereas it is understandable that the poorer and more neglected colonies of the Sahel desert area such as Upper Volta or Niger

should have had at first little to contribute to the new literature, the comparative backwardness of the Ivory Coast in this particular respect is not easily accounted for in the present state of scientific research. Likewise, if the colonies of the A.E.F. (French Equatorial Africa) —the Moyen-Congo (now the People's Republic of the Congo), Oubangui-Chari (now the Central African Republic), Tchad and Gabon—contributed nothing to the early growth of French writing, this may be due partly to the late arrival of colonization, partly to the difficulty of establishing an efficient administration and school system in the equatorial forest, but also partly to some as yet undefined peculiarities in the response of local cultures to the experience of colonialism.

Two cases, however, are of quite special interest: Madagascar and Cameroon, each in its own way, were to bring a distinctive, high-quality contribution to French writing, in spite of the peculiarities of a political and literary history on which it will be necessary to provide some information. [Ed.]

CLIVE WAKE

MADAGASCAR

The contradictory factors of isolation from Europe and Africa, and contact with them, have played a crucial role in the history of Madagascar in all spheres. The people themselves have their origins in migration on the one hand from Africa and on the other from Malaysia and Polynesia. In the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries, the inhabitants of the high plateau of Imerina, under the leadership of King Andrianampoinimerina (1745–1810), began a process of unification of the island which was in the event only completely achieved by French annexation in the 1890s. Contact with France and England had begun much earlier in the century, with the accession to the throne of Radama I, Andrianampoinimerina's son (1792–1828), fascinated by Europe and things European. Thereafter, trade, a succession of French and English favourites at the Hova court and especially the establishment of missionary activity—mainly Protestant at first—reinforced European influence which, in spite of a period of reaction against it during the reign of Queen Ranavalona I (1828–1861), moved inexorably, as we look at it in retrospect, towards the inevitable colonial takeover. Virtually the whole of the nineteenth century and what we have so far seen of the twentieth century is typified by the intimate contact between the rich and very individual culture of Madagascar and the offerings of Europe. The French themselves never really saw Madagascar as part of Africa, and this geographical and cultural isolation from the black continent has remained even after independence; Madagascar is invariably associated with Africa, yet always described as a separate entity: one mostly talks about "Africa and Madagascar".— There has been, for example, amongst others the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache*,[106] and various anthologies of "African and Malagasy" writing or poetry.

[106] O.C.A.M. was the new name given in 1965 to the Union Africaine et Malgache (U.A.M.) which had been founded in 1960. It became O.C.A.M.M. when Mauritius joined the group in 1970 and again O.C.A.M. after the withdrawal of Madagascar in 1975.

This history of contact and isolation creates the uniqueness of Madagascar within the context of African history and literature, and is the source both of its qualities and many of its problems.

The nineteenth-century history of the island was of course dominated by the response of the Malagasy leaders and leading class, and population as a whole to the political, economic, religious and cultural imperialism of Europe.[107] Imperialism itself, however had its contradictory aspects: French attempts at seizing control were supported by the Catholic missionaries; Protestant missionaries of various nationalities acted in effect to the benefit of British interests. The more learned segments of Malagasy society were cognizant of the Arabic alphabet and had produced a quite considerable amount of *ajami* writing in the course of the previous centuries. But in 1823 king Radama I decided to adopt the Roman script instead and ordered a transcription system to be created for the local language, using the phonetic values of the various letters sometimes as in French, sometimes as in English. In spite of this delicate balancing act, English religious, pedagogical and cultural influence became preponderant and led to the emergence of an important vernacular literature written in the Roman script. By the time of the French conquest by General Galliéni in 1895, Madagascar had produced an impressive body of written literature, creative and otherwise, and could boast an uncommonly abundant and lively press.[108]

The French were never able to suppress this vernacular writing. But as Galliéni soon made French compulsory as the medium of instruction in all schools, knowledge of the language grew at a fast pace among the younger generation, and a literature in French started growing side by side with vernacular art.

While Senghor's generation was preparing the way in Paris for the flowering of African literature in post-war Africa, an equally intense, but essentially very different literary environment was being created in the Malagasy capital of Antananarivo, in the very claustrophobic atmosphere of a remote, almost forgotten island colony. Indeed, it all began in Madagascar a trifle earlier than it did in Paris.

The focus of the intellectual life of the island's capital was the literary journals in which a host of now mostly forgotten writers had their poems, stories and articles published, and which, through their book reviews and critical articles, acted as filters for literary ideas and as indicators of the favourite literary models—the latter being mostly the nineteenth-century French Romantics and Symbolists, and their early twentieth-century descendants and imitators. It was, to a large extent, a world of increasingly outmoded aesthetic aims—outmoded in the sense that French poets of the day were moving away from the models preferred by the Malagasy writers in the direction of Surrealism and were meditating on the problems of poetic language and style which have

[107] On the history of the island, see Hubert Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar*, 4th ed. (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1972); it will be useful to balance this against the Marxist account of Pierre Boiteau, *Madagascar: Contribution à l'histoire de la nation malgache* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1958).

[108] For evidence of this, see Jean-Claude Poitelon, Germaine-Razafintsalama and Rasoahanta Randrianarivelo, *Périodiques malgaches de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1970). On writing in the Malagasy language, see the relevant chapters in Albert S. Gérard, *African Language Literatures* (pp. 75–91) and *Essais d'histoire littéraire africaine*, pp. 117–122.

given us the French poetry we are reading at the moment. In other words, to a large extent, intellectual isolation combined with a desire to emulate the poets of France tended to make Antananarivo of the twenties and the thirties a lively but sterile literary hothouse. Only Rabéarivelo managed ultimately to escape into a more creative poetic world.

There have been—and continue to be—a number of these journals, mostly ephemeral, but two are of particular importance, because of their association with Rabéarivelo and their significant contribution to the intellectual life of Madagascar. The first of these was *18° Latitude Sud,* which was edited by the French poet Pierre Camo (1877–1974), at the time a civil servant in Madagascar. It appeared in two series 1923–1924 (12 numbers) and 1926–1927 (10 numbers). Camo published a number of Rabéarivelo's poems and it is clear from his own reviews of the poet's first volumes how much the latter owed to the Frenchman's encouragement and influence. The second review was called *Capricorne* and edited jointly by Rabéarivelo and R. J. Allain, a Malagasy poet of mixed descent whose work is little known beyond the journal's pages (which is a pity). *Capricorne* had an even shorter life than its predecessor, running to six numbers from October 1930 to March 1931, but it is particularly valuable to the literary historian not only because it is representative of the poets of the day and gives us an insight into Rabéarivelo's thinking, chiefly through his articles and reviews, but also because of the space it devotes to the illustration and discussion of traditional Malagasy poetry, particularly the celebrated *hain-teny*. The merging of the French influence and the traditional poetry was to result in Rabéarivelo's own finest poetry—the merging and reconciliation, in this one poet, of the two opposites of isolation and contact.

There is one further journal whose influence has been considerable over the years—*La Revue de Madagascar,* an official publication created in 1933, which not only published creative work by Malagasy writers, but provided a significant forum for the discussion of literary and cultural issues, including important articles on the controversial subject of the *hain-teny*.[109] These are short poems, often in the form of a dialogue between a man and a woman on love matters. They make use of traditional proverbs and of metaphors presented in the form of proverbs. Arguments about definition tend to be concerned with the extent to which they are based on traditional proverbs or deal with the theme of love. An illustration from Rabéarivelo's *Vieilles chansons des pays d'Imerina* will perhaps convey an impression of some of the *hain-teny*'s essential characteristics:

[109] One of the first to call outside attention to the interest of the *hain-teny* was the French writer Jean Paulhan (1884–1968), who later exerted considerable influence on French literary life as editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. He spent part of his adventurous youth as a gold-digger in Madagascar and contributed an essay on this Malagasy poetic genre to the *Journal Asiatique* (January-February 1912), 133–162, before publishing his book *Les Hain-teny merinas, poésies populaires malgaches* (Paris: Geuthner, 1913). This was reprinted a quarter century later as *Les Hain-tenys* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), but Paulhan's interpretation was contradicted by Malagasy poet Flavien Ranaivo in his article "Les *hain-teny*," *Revue de Madagascar*, No. 7 (1949), 55–81. The fascination of Rabéarivelo, Madagascar's best francophone poet, with this type of oral art is illustrated in the essays which he published in 1924 in *18° Latitude Sud* under the titles "Vieux poèmes malgaches anonymes" and "Poèmes et vieilles chansons d'Emyrne." He was equally interested in his many contemporaries who had chosen to write in the Malagasy language: these he discussed in the same journal under the title "Poèmes malgaches modernes," which covers two essays printed in 1923 and 1924.

L'épouse est comme une feuille d'herbe: elle est sur pied mais facilement se flétrit. L'époux est comme une touffe d'algue qui pousse confinée sous l'eau et facilement se casse.
— Combien, jeune homme, avez-vous d'amantes?
— Moi, ma parente, je n'ai guère d'amantes, car elles ne sont que sept mes amantes: la première est l'amante qui me taille les ongles: la deuxième est l'amante qui remplace dehors celle qui est chez nous dans la maison; la troisième est l'amante qui la remplace dans les cas pressés; la quatrième est l'amante qui me suit longuement des yeux quand je pars: la cinquième est l'amante qui vient à ma rencontre quand je rentre: la sixième est l'amante qui sustente ma vie à l'égal du riz: la septième est l'amante qui ne mêle pas sa crasse avec celle de la foule et qui, quand bien même il lui arrive de s'y confondre, sait toujours se distinguer.

Hain-teny were frequently improvised, and this practice continued up to fairly recent times. They are transcribed (or written, by modern poets) either as prose poems or free verse poems. The complexity and hermetic quality of the *hain-teny* make it a natural source of argument, but whatever the issues raised in the definition debate, the simple fact for the creative writer, and the poet in particular, is that it has a very distinctive and definite form and its imagery and symbolism, along with its sentence structure, are immensely evocative. It was the merging of this traditional poetry and the European influences which has attracted poets as the means to create an authentic modern Malagasy poetry in French. There are few poets who do not use it.

A further point which needs stressing is that for the most part Malagasy writers,—with the notable exception of J. Rabémananjara,—have been published in Madagascar. Antananarivo was blessed from the start of the colonial phase with a number of indigenous private presses (for one of which Rabéarivelo worked as a proof-reader), as well as a very active official press. Though the volume of publications bears no comparison, in other respects the situation was not unlike that of Onitsha in Nigeria. The effect of this for Madagascar was both negative and positive. It meant that, except in the unique cases of Rabéarivelo and Ranaivo, Malagasy writers did not and do not become known outside Madagascar (Rabéarivelo, Ranaivo and Rabémananjara are the only poets whose work is ever included in anthologies outside Madagascar, whereas many minor African poets whose work is published in Europe do find their way into anthologies); on the positive side, it means, however, that the local intellectual and artistic life is a lively, if inward-turning one.

Whatever the reason—perhaps it has something to do with the isolation of island life—there is something immensely sad about much modern Malagasy poetry, preoccupied as it is with the themes of nature and death, and a deep sense of nostalgia. Although these elements are not always obvious in the traditional *hain-teny*, their presence has also been noted in traditional literature by both French and Malagasy commentators. For instance, Prosper Rajaobelina writes: "Nostalgie, insatisfaction: voilà donc cet aspect de l'âme malgache que nous avons tâché de faire entrevoir. De tout ceci ressort une conception de l'existence triste et sans enthousiasme."[110] And L. Michel

[110] P. Rajaobelina, "La nostalgie dans la poésie malgache," *Revue de Madagascar*, (January/April 1948), 73.

writes: "La poésie Merina est empreinte d'une tristesse indicible et d'une mélancolie infinie."[111]

It was against this somewhat provincial, yet highly lively background that the earliest Malagasy works of creative writing appeared in French between the two World Wars. The first of them to be printed in Paris was—most untypically—a novel: *La Sœur inconnue* (Paris: Figuière, 1932), by an author about whom nothing whatever is known, except his name: Edouard Bezoro. Published a few years after the Senegalese Bakary Diallo's *Force Bonté* (1926), Edouard Bezoro's novel is written in the same vein of praise for the colonizer, except that whereas Diallo's novel is set mainly in France, Bezoro's is concerned with Madagascar itself—the Madagascar of the 1890s. Its central events take place not simply against the background of General Galliéni's defeat of the Hova state and the exile of the last Merina queen, Ranavalona III (1883–1897), but are resolved by the collapse of the traditional authority. The novel's author is anxious to praise the French for abolishing the custom of slavery which had been practised by the Hova. The hero, a young slave named Ralay, is one of a small band of soldiers sent to watch for the arrival of the French army from the vantage-point of the Mont d'Angavo. The others all die of yellow fever, leaving Ralay to continue his watch alone—except that in the meantime the French have approached Antananarivo from another side and the Hova have surrendered. Meanwhile, a young slave girl called Mavo has been taken away from Antananarivo by her elderly owner Rainikoto, who knows that the French will abolish slavery and thus thwart him of his plans to make her marry him. They set off in the direction of the Mont d'Angavo; on the way, Rainikoto tries to rape Mavo, who stabs and kills him in the struggle. She is found by Ralay, and after living for a while in bliss and innocence likened to that of Eden (indicating the Christian influences at work) they marry and Mavo becomes pregnant. Meanwhile, the French have abolished slavery, and an aged mother, Raivo, sets out in search of her lost son and daughter, sold many years previously by their owner and father. The end now becomes obvious. Raivo eventually finds Ralay and Mavo at the Mont d'Angavo, and the fact that they are brother and sister is revealed. Their child is born dead. The moral crisis and the risk of further tragedy are short-circuited by Raivo's analysis of the situation: "Dieu sait que tu es innocent ainsi que ta sœur, mais les plus grands coupables sont ces maudits, ces misérables seigneurs et hâtons-nous de rentrer pour remercier ceux qui nous ont libérés ainsi par leur loi humanitaire" (p. 181). The novel ends with Ralay seeking out the General in Antananarivo, to thank him: "je suis un ancien esclave," he tells him, "je viens de retrouver, après 17 ans de séparation ma mère et ma sœur, grâce à votre loi humanitaire, c'est donc pour remercier la France, la France libératrice que j'ai demandé à être reçu par vous" (p. 183). In the final sentence of the novel, the author pays homage to General Galliéni and his achievements on behalf of France and humanity.

Although one is bound to stress the book's message, since it so obviously has one, in doing so one runs the risk of misrepresenting the qualities it undoubtedly possesses. The message is in fact scarcely alluded to until the end, when it does become laboured;

[111] L. Michel, "Essai sur la littérature malgache," *Revue de Madagascar*, (3rd trimester, 1956), 54.

but essentially the narrative conveys the story of its protagonists in direct and simple terms, without digression or elaborate description, making it a vivid and at times a moving, tale. According to some reports, Bezoro merely provided a French adaptation of a vernacular play bearing the same title *(Anabavy tsi-fantatra)* which had been staged in 1930 by one of the most popular Malagasy playwrights, Alexis Rakotobe. On the other hand, the sycophantic tone of the message has suggested that the novel might be apocryphal, but the final chapters are so badly written that they could hardly be the work of a native speaker of French.

Whereas the novel was the main genre practised in West Africa, in Madagascar Bezoro's novel remained an isolated case, even though a considerable amount of prose fiction was written in the Malagasy language between the wars. The contribution of Madagascar to the growth of French writing was most remarkable in the field of poetry.

The earliest francophone poet of Madagascar was Ary Robin (1892–1971); (pseud. of Michel-Francis Robinary), who founded in 1915, *L'Eclair de l'Emyrne,* the first newspaper in French designed for the native population. A bellicose pamphleteer and polemicist, he gave up the greater part of his energy for a long time to journalism and the many controversies on which he embarked. His only collection of poems, *Les Fleurs défuntes* (1927; new enlarged edition 1958) expresses the sorrowful mood characteristic of Malagasy poetry in the neo-classical prosody which colonial pupils imbibed at school from the French Romantics and Parnassiens in their textbooks. After 1940, Robinary, whose attachment to French culture had earned him the enmity of nationalist circles, gave up journalism and devoted most of his time to the study of Malagasy history and traditional lore and to the writing of *Sous le signe de Rasaizay* (1956), a historical novel set in the mid-nineteenth century; this work, which received a prize offered by the French administration, was followed after independence by *Au seuil de la terre promise* (1965), which, in spite of a rather inconsistent plot, is of considerable interest because of Robinary's reminiscences and his vignettes of intellectual life in Madagascar during the first quarter of the century.

By the time the first edition of Robinary's *Les Fleurs défuntes* came out, however, another, younger poet had begun to make a name for himself. This was Jean-Joseph Rabéarivelo (1901–1937),[112] who now appears to have been, long before Senghor, the first major poet in the French colonial empire. Rabéarivelo's poetry was inspired and generated by his sense of isolation both as a black man in a colonial world who would never see the France he dreamed of visiting, and as an individual who felt himself to be an outsider, even in his own community. On the one hand, he typified, to a heightened degree, the isolation of the black man in a white man's world expressed by Senghor in these words: "Je t'écris dans la solitude de ma résidence surveillée—et chère—de ma peau noire."[113] On the other hand, he withdrew deeper and deeper into the romantic isolation

[112] Robert Boudry, *Jean-Joseph Rabéarivelo et la mort* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1958); *J. J. Rabéarivelo*, ed. P. Valette (Paris: Nathan, 1967); Clive Wake, "J.-J. Rabéarivelo: A Poet before *Négritude*", in *The Critical Evaluation of African Literature*, ed. Edgar Wright (London: Heinemann Educational, 1973), pp. 149–172; Albert Gérard, *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar-Abidjan, Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977), pp. 77–95.

[113] L. S. Senghor, "Lettre à un Prisonnier," *Hosties Noires* (1948).

of the poet's private world. Both Senghor and Rabéarivelo write from their position as black men in a world dominated by white culture, a culture which both of them love and respect, but whereas Senghor projects his personal dilemma onto the image of the committed writer, Rabéarivelo retains and exploits the individualistic stance of the Western writer. Unlike Senghor, who creates a poetic vision which seeks to reconcile reality with his ideals, the social and the personal levels of his experience, Rabéarivelo creates quite another world in his poetry, an imaginary world into which he can escape and where he hopes to find order. It is a world without people, on the whole, and constructed essentially from the materials offered to his imagination by the Malagasy countryside—the imagery of landscape, animals and birds, the sky, day and night, plants and trees is central.

The quality of his imaginative perception, allied to the drive of his despair, which forced it to take shape in language, is an essential aspect of Rabéarivelo's success as a poet; but it went necessarily hand in hand with the discovery of the right language and style in which to express it. Rabéarivelo's early poetry (*La Coupe de Cendres,* 1924; *Sylves,* 1927; *Volumes,* 1928) contains many of the themes of his later poetry, but the form and language are those of the French poets of the nineteenth century and the minor—if fashionable—French poets of his own day. These were not, as one might have expected, the *avant-garde* Surrealists, but now largely forgotten minor poets such as Derème, Vérane, Ormoy, Chabaneix and Fagus, whom he called in the fourth issue of *Capricorne* (1931) "les poètes les plus délicieux et les plus parfaits de leur génération..., la succession de Moréas et de Toulet"; in other words, the inheritors of the by-then outmoded Symbolists. Curiously enough it is in this early poetry that Rabéarivelo seems closest to the poets of negritude, not so much in style as in his explicit statement of the tension between his acquired French culture and his native Malagasy culture. Like Senghor—but nearly ten years earlier than he—Rabéarivelo expresses what amounts virtually to a preference for the borrowed culture, while lamenting the decline and the increasing inaccessibility of his Malagasy culture. He experiences what he refers to, in one of the poems of *Sylves,* as the "exil au sol natal." Less effectively than Senghor at this stage, he laments his inability to reconcile the two cultures:

> Qui donc me donnera de pouvoir fiancer
> l'esprit de mes aïeux à ma langue adoptive,
> et mon cœur naturel, calme et fier, au penser
> pervers et sombre de l'Europe maladive.
>
> (*Volumes,* p. xxxiv)

Three years later, Haitian poet Léon Laleau (1892–1979) was to bewail, in *Musique nègre* (1931)

> ... ce désespoir à nul autre égal
> D'apprivoiser, avec des mots de France,
> Ce cœur qui m'est venu du Sénégal.

Rabéarivelo's early poetry is fairly obvious; there is little depth of feeling in it, and what feeling there is is mainly rhetorical. Neither the texture of the poetry nor its themes

are particularly subtle or complex. The poet uses a borrowed literary language and style to express an experience of which he is not yet himself deeply conscious. However, between the publication of *Volumes* in 1928 and *Presque-songes* in 1934, Rabéarivelo's poetic sensibility underwent a profound transformation, and with it the quality and style of his poetry: he abandoned the conventional metres, fixed-form poems and borrowed language of his early poetry, substituting for them a masterly use of free verse and a totally new approach to imagery. Most significant of all, he was, suddenly (or so it seems), in possession of a subtle, rich and vital personal poetic world, coherent and sure of itself: the explicitly stated tensions of his cultural exile gave way to the more complex insights of the poet's intuitive perception of himself and of his place in the world.

Two main factors help explain this transformation. One was the Malagasy writer's greater awareness of the latest tendencies in contemporary French poetry. It seems likely, for instance, that Pierre Camo encouraged him to bring his poetry more into line with that of the Surrealists, which was characterised by the use of free verse and a new attitude to the image. And it is almost certain that, around 1930, Rabéarivelo discovered the poetry of Jules Supervielle, not himself a Surrealist but nevertheless representative of the new trends in French poetry. To some extent the attraction for the Malagasy poet may have been Supervielle's own colonial origins, but at a more significant level, it represented a marriage of similar minds which sparked off Rabéarivelo's realization of what he really wanted to do in his poetry.

The foreign influence was not, however, the only one. For at about the same time, Rabéarivelo came to realize the value for his own poetic creation of the translations he had been making for some years from the indigenous *hain-teny*. Versions of his translations had been published in the late twenties in *18° Latitude Sud* and later in *Capricorne*. Before he died, Rabéarivelo collected his translations together, and Robert Boudry supervised their posthumous publication under the title *Vieilles chansons des pays d'Imerina* (1939). But the influence of the *hain-teny* is obvious in many poems of *Presque-songes* and *Traduit de la nuit*, where he uses such techniques typical of the genre as direct address, parallel action and antithesis, dialogue and rhetorical interrogation. This influence goes deeper, however, than technical practice and is closely associated with the poet's attainment of maturity as an artist. A distinctive feature of the traditional *hain-teny* is an air of remoteness, almost of detachment, which has the effect of apparently depriving the poems of all emotive force. This characteristic seems to have been carried over by Rabéarivelo into his own mature poetry, where the deeply subjective and emotive themes acquire an extraordinary air of detachment, as if to purify them: it really expresses the poet's feelings directly, but does so with a control which saves them from falling into romantic self-pity and sentimentality. This detachment derives in some measure at least from the great use of metaphor and symbol, which helps to objectify the poet's emotion, and it is this practice which Rabéarivelo, has carried over into his own poetry.

Poetry, the poem and the poet are the obsessive themes of Rabéarivelo's mature poetry. The love theme is hardly present at all, and it is interesting to observe that, although he was considerably influenced by the *hain-teny*, essentially love poems, he did not adopt their main theme. Most of his poetry deals with the poet's quest for the poem

in its secret place. His descent into the self, back into the womb of the night, is essentially a quest for the real, or ideal self, which is the poem, the created object. The bird is the main image here. It hides in the heart of the forest, in the heart of the tree or of the night, and the poet penetrates this world in search of the bird. He lays traps for it and hopes to bring it back with him. But it is always an "oiseau immatériel". Rabéarivelo is concerned with the poetic experience and the man out to trap the bird is equivalent to the poet in quest of the poem. But there is, in the image of the trapped bird, a hint of the sadness of the creative act. As the bird seeks to elude its hunter, the poem eludes the poet, so it must be taken by violence and brought back to the world of reality which is unworthy of it. More often than not, it is impossible to bring it back; the poem cannot survive in the light of day. Like the German Romantics, the Malagasy writer knew that the poem written on the page, held up to the vulgar gaze, is nothing as compared to the experience which produced it, for it is a secret, intimate experience which cannot stand up to scrutiny.

This is of course the fundamental contradiction of any artist's predicament, and perhaps one of the sources of the elegiac mood characteristic of most Malagasy poetry. But the extraneous influences which had done so much to help Rabéarivelo gain mastery over his chosen medium, were also partly responsible for his undoing. His constantly proclaimed love for France, her language and her literature was apt to take weird ritualistic forms. His wide reading in romantic and post-romantic poetry had somehow driven him to the notion that poetic genius was inevitably associated with various forms of abnormality, such as reckless profligacy and chronic indebtedness, almost permanent debauchery, including homosexuality, ill-health, preferably tuberculosis, and suicidal proclivities. With pathetic conscientiousness, he was thus striving to ape the most futilely morbid aspects in the lives of Balzac, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and other, minor, if even more wildly aberrant, writers. This ill-advised imitation of alien models was uneasily coupled with considerable pride in the literary achievements, oral and written, of Malagasy culture, even though, as a ruined member of the once aristocratic caste and as a westernized intellectual, he felt some contempt for the illiterate masses. As a native, Rabéarivelo was also rejected by the local French society of petty traders and administrators. In his bulky diaries, which have not yet been edited in their entirety he described his tragic predicament as that of a Latin mind under a black skin, but also as that of a proud Malagasy eager to shed the Western disguise imposed upon him. His habit of wearing the traditional robe, the *lamba* over his Western-style clothes illustrated this duality.

This schizophrenic allegiance and twofold rebellion imbue Rabéarivelo's mature poetry in *Presque-songes* and *Traduit de la nuit*. Aware of his uncommon gifts, yet confined to his underprivileged status, he found the best of his inspiration in an all-pervading, tragic sense of estrangement, which seeks adequate utterance in images of exile and death, rootlessness and sterility. He was, therefore, an individualist in a way the poets of Senghor's generation were not. His experience of colonialism produced a reaction of turning inward, since the poet could not break out of his prison in any other way. Senghor's generation were aware of themselves as the spokesmen of all black men, and their poetry was therefore outward turning. The evolution of Senghor's poetry was

to be totally different from Rabéarivelo's. The early Senghor was inclined towards introspection, driven to it by his initial sense of exile and loneliness in Paris, but very soon he turned outwards as his sense of responsibility towards other men increased. His poetry is self-centred, but he wants it this way, because he has chosen to be the ambassador of his people, who must keep their gaze turned on him. Rabéarivelo's early poetry shows signs of an objective concern with the cultural tensions created by colonialism, but he found it impossible within the narrow confines of his prison world to see beyond his own predicament and, in his mature poetry, had to create a freedom within himself. This could only exacerbate his manyfold inner tensions. By the time he committed suicide in 1937, he had provided what is still the most striking and original French expression of the nostalgia and despair characteristic of Malagasy lyricism. Long before the doctrine of negritude sought, by conscious practice, to create a specifically African poetry, Rabéarivelo had, unconsciously, welded together trends in modern French poetry and the traditional Malagasy *hain-teny* to produce a poetry of striking originality.

With Rabéarivelo's death, and even earlier (as *Traduit de la nuit* had been printed in Tunis) publication in book form of creative works in Madagascar was suspended until the end of World War II. It was then resumed thanks to a new generation of poets who made themselves known with such collections of verse as *Tananarive* (1946) by Elie-Charles Abraham (b. 1919), *Illusoire ambiance* (1947) by E. Randriamarozaka (b. 1919), *Souffles de printemps* (1947) by Raymond Abraham, or *Une Gerbe oubliée* (1948) by Paul Razafimahazo (b. 1907). In addition a few vernacular writers also tried their hand in French: Régis Rajemisa-Raolison (b. 1913), who had been associated with Jacques Rabémananjara in launching the *Revue des Jeunes de Madagascar* in 1935, began his literary career with *Les Fleurs de l'Ile Rouge* (1948) before he wrote his short stories and plays in Malagasy. And Fidélis-Justin Rabetsimandranto (b. 1907) already enjoyed some reputation as a vernacular poet, novelist and playwright before he produced *La Nymphe dorée* (1958), a rendering in classical French verse of an old Malagasy legend of love and deception.

The pervasive influence of nineteenth-century French poetry gives the francophone literature of Madagascar an outdated and somewhat parochial look, in spite of the fact that most of the poets exhibit the influence of the traditional *hain-teny* as a common denominator. Two exceptions must be mentioned, however. One is Jacques Rabémananjara (b. 1913), who was closely connected with the negritude movement so that his works were published in Paris and should be discussed in a different context. The other is Flavien Ranaivo (b. 1913),[114] whose three volumes of verse, all published in Antananarivo—*L'Ombre et le vent* (1947), *Mes chansons de toujours* (1955) and *Le Retour au bercail* (1962)—followed to some extent the example set in the best of Rabéarivelo's poetry. While some of the elder writer's mature poems have the classical form of the *hain-teny*, they are mostly a subtle blending of the European and Malagasy traditions resulting in very individual poetry which always has the poet's own feelings at its centre. Ranaivo has made himself the poet of the *hain-teny* in French and, although he too blends the European and Malagasy traditions, the latter is always most in evidence, so that the

[114] For further information on this writer see *Flavien Ranaivo*, ed. J. Valette (Paris: Nathan, 1968).

Ronsardian quality of his love poems is quite clearly dominated by the dialogue, the maxim and the rich metaphor of the *hain-teny*. Ranaivo's poetry has a formal perfection and a lyrical quality which are entirely admirable, but it lacks the personal, emotional dimension which not only binds Rabéarivelo's poems, but also gives them their greater appeal. Ranaivo's poems are variations on a form, but Rabéarivelo's poetry creates a vision of human experience.

Madagascar has probably had very little influence on the poetry of the African continent. The preoccupations of her greatest poet were irrelevant to a committed generation. Yet in their successful exploitation of traditional forms, Malagasy poets were indirectly making a very practical contribution to the realization of the ideals of negritude.

GEORGE JOSEPH

CAMEROON

Cameroon did not come under French rule until some twenty years after the annexation of Madagascar to the French empire; the first Cameroonian literary work in French, however, which was published locally in 1930, was by no means the earliest example of Cameroonian writing in a European language: it was part of a first period which actually began in 1908 with the appearance of the German translation of the Reverend Josef Ekolo's *Wie ein Schwarzer das Land des Weissen ansieht*, the Duala original of which was never published, and ended in 1954 with the publication of Eza Boto's *Ville Cruelle* and with the beginnings of a new school of lyric poetry inspired by the French Jesuit priest Henri de Julliot. The literary developments of this period occurred against the backdrop of the peculiar historical circumstances of Cameroon.[115]

In spite of its population of little more than 5,000,000, Cameroon is a very large country with considerable diversity in its ethnic and religious composition and with a complex colonial history. In the North, Adamawa came under the domination of Muslim Fulani in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and this led to the emergence of an *ajami*-type literature.[116] In the West, the predominant ethnic group is the Bamileke, with an important subdivision, the Bamum. Only the populations of the South and the East speak Bantu languages; they are divided into a large number of comparatively small tribes, the Duala, the Ewondo, the Bulu and many others, belonging to the Fang group, which is also widely represented in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Congo-Brazzaville.

German traders were active along the coast from the 1860s. Gustave Nachtigal entered into treaties with local chieftains in the 1880s. By 1895, the whole of Cameroon had come, at least nominally, under German administration. During World War I, the

[115] For an account of the country's history by a local scholar, see Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963).

[116] Rupert East, *Stories of Old Adamawa* (Lagos, 1935); Pierre Lacroix, *Poésie peuple de l'Adamawa* (Paris: Julliard, 1965).

Germans lost their colony, which was divided between France and Britain under a League of Nations mandate. Because of Cameroon's special status, this political change did not affect the continuity of her cultural evolution as fundamentally as might have been expected if it had become a French colony. Not only did the French educational authorities pursue a policy of intellectual assimilation of the élites similar in many ways to that of the German government, but in spite of the growth of French, especially Catholic, activity, Protestant missions retained their educational prerogatives and were the main instrument for the promotion of creative writing, which, whether under German or French control, took three main forms.

To begin with, it is important to note that the Germans felt genuine respect for the disciplined and well-organized Muslim communities of the North; they were reluctant to allow Christian missionaries to penetrate the Fulani emirates of Adamawa, which enjoyed an appreciable measure of local autonomy, as did the Hausa states in Northern Nigeria, and even the Fulani areas of Senegal; one of the consequences of this policy was that traditional *ajami* writing continued to prosper.

Yet it was among the Bamum, at the juncture of Adamawa and the Bamileke territory, that an arresting phenomenon arose at the turn of the century: the creation of an African alphabet and of a secret language by Sultan Njoya (1865–1933). Through Hausa traders and contacts of a more bellicose nature with the Fulani emirates of Adamawa, the Bamum knew of the existence of writing and of manuscripts in the Arabic script. When the first Germans reached their capital, Fumban, in 1899, Njoya saw that the Europeans too used writing, although of a different kind. He realized the advantages inherent in this manner of communicating over long distances, but at the same time he shrewdly perceived that using his own language would ensure greater secrecy in his correspondence with his delegates to the German authorities. During the first five years of the century, he ordered some of his councillors to create an ideographic script, which went through many successive changes until, by 1918, the hundreds of original signs had been greatly simplified and reduced in number to give them phonetic significance. The script, which was taught to dignitaries and their children, was chiefly used for conveying messages and for the recording of accounts and archives. It was also employed, under Njoya's personal supervision, for the writing of a 548-page manuscript on the *History and Customs of the Bamum*.

But Njoya was jealous of some of the neighbouring potentates who had a secret language, understood by the ruling class and completely esoteric to the common people; this is not an uncommon occurrence in Black Africa, where secret languages are often the last vestige of the language once spoken by conquerors who, in the course of generations, have adopted the language of the vanquished for day-to-day usage. Njoya decided to fabricate his own secret language. In 1912, he learned from Frau Rein-Wuhrmann, a missionary of the Basel mission, a number of German, French and English words to which he ascribed entirely arbitrary meanings, mixing them with Bamum words, also distorted from their normal sense, in order to create his personal vocabulary.

By 1918, a considerable part of the *History and Customs of the Bamum* had been translated into this language by a large number of copyists.[117]

Nor did Njoya's inordinate inventiveness stop there. For after successfully resisting the inroads of Muslim Fulani, the Bamum found themselves under strong pressure to adopt Christianity. Njoya had powerful objections to this, rooted in his unwillingness to abandon polygamy. In order to evade the rival demands of Islam and Christianity, he founded a religion of his own, which, he claimed in the hope of satisfying everyone, was a reconciliation of both. The tenets of this new religion were recorded in the Bamum language and script, and they show that while Christian elements were largely overshadowed by Islamic influence, liberal quotations from the Koran and the Bible were superadded to powerful reminiscences from the Bamum's original animistic faith.

Both the *ajami* tradition of Adamawa and the Bamum writings of Sultan Njoya developed through purely autochthonous initiative. Writing deriving directly from European contacts made a start among the coastal populations in the vicinity of Duala. Christianity and literacy had been introduced there in the 1840s by the London Baptist Mission from its base on the island of Fernando Po; Alfred Saker had reduced the local language to writing, composed a grammar and a dictionary, and translated both the *New Testament* (1862) and the *Old Testament* (1872). With the German conquest in 1885, Duala, temporarily renamed Kamerunstadt, became the capital of the country. At the same time, the Bremen Conference of missionary societies sent the Baptists to the Congo; they were replaced in Cameroon by the Basel Mission, which received considerable support from the German authorities and developed rapidly both in the South and in Bamileke country. It was their policy to promote the Duala language to the status of a lingua franca throughout southern Cameroon. Although they launched a monthly journal, *Mulée Ngéa,* in 1903, they were not as successful in developing vernacular creative writing as their L.M.S. colleagues had been in Xhosaland, or as the French Protestant missionaries were during the pre-war years in Lesotho. Only the Duala original of the Reverend Josef Ekolo's *Wie ein Schwarzer das Land der Weissen ansieht* is known to have been written, but it never appeared in print except in German translation (1908). It is an account of the author's travels in Europe.

Many other missionary societies, both Protestant and Catholic, arrived in Cameroon at the turn of the century. But they are not known to have exerted any influence on the emergence of a written Cameroonian literature, except for the American Presbyterian Mission, which extended its action from Gabon to Bulu country at the end of the nineteenth century. They were so efficient, Catholic historian Engelbert Mveng admits, that Presbyterianism came to be considered the native religion of the Bulu. As the Germans in Cameroon were vanquished prior to the entry of the United States into the war, the American missionaries were able to pursue their activities unhampered. They installed a printing press in 1914, and a teacher training college was founded in 1922.

[117] For full information on this unusual phenomenon, see I. Dugast and M. D. Jeffreys, *L'Ecriture des Bamoum, sa naissance, son évolution, sa valeur phonétique, son utilisation* (IFAN-Cameroun, 1950), H. Martin's French version of Njoya's *Histoire et coutumes des Bamoum* (IFAN-Cameroun, 1952), and the three volumes of Alfred Schmitt, *Die Bamum-Schrift* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963).

Little is known about any literary activities that may have been going on, but it would seem that they followed the usual pattern associated with Protestant teaching, although on a considerably smaller scale than in southern Africa. Jahn's *Bibliography* mentions two pieces of narrative fiction in Bulu: Jean L. Njemba Medu's *Nnanga kôn* (The white ghost, 1939) won an award in the International African Institute competition for 1932; after World War II, Ondua Engutu (b. 1929), a school-teacher who had graduated from the Presbyterian training college, published *Bulu bon be Afri Kara* (The journey of the children of Afri Kara, 1954).[118] Both books were presumably intended as reading-matter for schools, and were issued by the Presbyterian press in Elat, whose Bulu version of the *Pilgrim's Progress* went through its third edition in 1959.

Even in the days of German colonization, however, this attention of the Protestant missionaries to the promotion of vernacular languages was not entirely in line with the official concept of cultural assimilation. As early as the 1880s, it was Governor von Soden's view that although Duala should become the recognized lingua franca in the colony, yet the more gifted pupils should receive tuition in the German language. The first *Regierungsschule* was founded in 1887, and pressure was exerted on the missionaries in order that German should become the medium of instruction in their own schools. As far as is known, this third trend produced only one Cameroonian writer: Dualla Misipo (b. 1901), who graduated from the *Regierungsschule* in Duala in 1913 and was then sent to Germany for higher education; after completing his medical studies in the late twenties, he wrote an autobiographical narrative in German, *Der Junge aus Duala* (ca. 1930), the purpose of which was to give German readers more accurate knowledge of African reality than could be obtained through the writings of European travellers and scientists.

In contrast to contemporary Senegalese works written in French such as *Force-Bonté, Der Junge aus Duala* is ahead of its time. The story of the author's impressions of Germany, where he is pursuing his studies, prefigures the more realist and politically committed Cameroonian novels written in French after 1954. As a voice of the white European's heretofore silent black underling, Misipo discusses South African apartheid and racial discrimination in the United States, Germany and Cameroon. He confirms these somewhat abstract discussions with instances of racial prejudice he has personally encountered because of his love affair with the German girl whom he wishes to marry. A deep love and respect for traditional Africa also runs through the novel as is witnessed in the considerable space devoted to oral narratives and songs as well as in the loving portrait of the author's grandmother, who is a staunch and dignified traditionalist. One is, therefore, hardly surprised when near the end of the book Misipo asserts the inevitability of African independence.

There are many kinds of scenes which reappear in later French Cameroonian novels—scenes taking place in European colonial church, school and police station. The grand-

[118] The historical legend related in Engutu's book is discussed in Pierre Alexandre, "Proto-histoire du groupe Beti-Bulu-Fang: Essai de synthèse provisoire," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 5 (1965), 503–560, especially pp. 542 *sqq*, and in Brian Weinstein, *Gabon: Nation-Building on the Ogooué* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), pp. 131 *sqq*. See also Gérard, *African Language Literatures*, pp. 281–6.

mother's scorn of the author's germanized parents is an early criticism of the black bourgeoisie. And on the lighter side, Misipo's evocations of boyhood pranks at the market or in the post office rose garden present aspects of life which will recur in the shenanigans of Mongo Beti's characters.

Aesthetically speaking, *Der Junge aus Duala* reflects some of the important issues involved in expressing an African vision in a European language. The novel's structure is more sophisticated than its linear French successors; Misipo artfully uses various framing devices and free associations to shift back and forth between his life as a student in Germany and his boyhood in Africa. A picture of his parents which he contemplates in Germany touches off a flood of childhood memories. An evening social gathering or an intimate picnic with his girl-friend Marianne frames renditions of traditional African narratives and lyrics.

Yet the Western ear is troubled by the lack of integration between the subtly structured narrative and authorial commentary, which at times sounds like a formal lecture on politics. Misipo's criticism of apartheid near the beginning of the novel is one such example. The twentieth-century reader expects such commentary to be blended into the narrative in accordance with the novelist's convention of showing by implication rather than imparting information directly, or in the interest of maintaining the illusion of an autonomous world of fiction. Straight commentary seems more appropriate to other genres such as the essay or the public lecture. But generic purity is not one of the concerns of the African oral tradition, the didactic orientation of which also accounts for the liberty the author feels to step temporarily out of his story and lecture the audience directly.

Misipo later became an assistant to Leo Frobenius, but he left Germany for France in 1931 because of growing Nazi influence. By that time, he had composed a German version of an old Cameroonian epic tale which refers to events between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries; it was later published as *Korrongo: Das Lied der Waganna* (1961). Here as in *Der Junge aus Duala,* Misipo shows the talent of an able writer combining deep scholarly knowledge of African traditions with a lively story-telling art. The work is actually a cycle of narratives, each relating one of the four destructions of Faraka, the traditional capital of the Waganna. The narratives are framed in the setting of a fallen world where heroes are no longer and the *korrongo* or oral poet is reduced to singing banal songs in European bars. Only the very old remember the past and sing of it by the fire at night. After World War II, Dualla Misipo stayed in France, but contributed to several German journals, expressing his misgivings about the negritude concept, especially in the definition provided in Janheinz Jahn's *Muntu.*

In a way the establishment of a League of Nations mandate held by France over the greater part of Cameroon represented a setback for the country's literary prospects. French educational authorities desisted from the German initiative of sending students to Europe for higher education, and French Catholic missionaries showed little inclination to favour the growth of vernacular writing. The only piece of creative writing published in French between the wars was *Fables de Douala* (1930), a collection of fables in Duala with French versions, by Isaac Moumé Etia (1889–1939). Nevertheless, the

peculiar status of French Cameroon as a mandate territory and the example of the American missionaries with their tradition of local printing should probably be held responsible for the special situation of Cameroonian literature in the French empire and for the developments that took place after World War II, at the end of the colonial period, when a few volumes of poetry and prose fiction in French were published in Yaoundé, thus paving the way for the exceptional growth of local book-printing after independence.

Tante Bella by Joseph Owono (b. 1921) was the first novel to be published in Cameroon. Finished in 1954, it was printed at Yaoundé in 1959 as a sequel to a study entitled *Le Problème du mariage dotal au Cameroun français* (1953). In both works the author, who later became a career diplomat, protests against the brutal and exploitative treatment of women in traditional Cameroonian society where they seem to be little more than chattel whose value is determined by the dowry they can bring. In the novel most of Tante Bella's life from the time she is six until her death in squalid poverty is dominated by the husbands who buy her. The one period of respite provided by her marriage to a German captain, G. V. von Hinkelschaft, ends when the officer must return to Europe at the start of World War I. Afterwards she is sold again to live out her miserable life in a kind of bondage. Only after her death does von Hinkelschaft's newly discovered will reveal their marriage and bequeath a fortune to Bella. While this turn of events cannot help the poor woman, it does assure the liberation of her daughter who has in the meantime also been sold against her wishes.

Technically less interesting than *Der Junge aus Duala*, Owono's novel is divided into two parts. The first is a series of discussions about the condition of women in African society. Like certain sections of Misipo's novel, this part often reads more like a treatise on the problems under discussion than a piece of fiction. The second part is the story of Tante Bella herself. Its relatively straightforward structure brings it closer to the African oral tradition than Misipo's work. Like the traditional African story-teller, Owono is careful not to lose his audience through complications of plot; aside from beginning towards the end of Tante Bella's life and then going back to the beginning, he presents the novel as a linear narrative told by Bella's nephew who is also a character in the story, but not necessarily Owono himself. Yet despite its straightforward presentation and the overly didactic tone of its first part, *Tante Bella* is a moving story. The narrator's portrayal of his close relationship with his enslaved aunt is very touching, and scenes such as Bella's forced confession to crimes she did not commit (she must avoid the anger of the men) leave an indelible impression.[119]

Marie-Claire Matip (b. 1938) characterizes her *Ngonda* as a novel, but is seems more like a series of autobiographical sketches arranged in chronological order than a thoroughly worked-out narrative. Written in 1954–55 and published in 1956, it is only 47 pages long. The author tells of important events in her life (her birth, her first day at school, or the day when her mother put a key around her neck) in an artfully naïve style which recalls the voice of a fireside story-teller. Here, in contrast to Owono's searching

[119] See Kabongo Nkanza, "Joseph Owono et les bêtes polygames," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 46 (1977), 70–77.

criticism of the condition of women, all is calm and docile. Toward the end of the novel the narrator states that although she would rather marry a man she loves, not all customs are to be rejected automatically.

Early Cameroonian poetry reflects the strong assimilationist orientation of the French colonial educational system. According to Patrice Kayo, the Frenchman Léon Salasc's "Chants du Logone", published in the review *Togo-Cameroun* in 1934, launched a fashion of tropical romanticism and marked the beginning of the ballads, sonnets and odes which appeared in the journals of the period.[120] The one poet who stands out is Louis-Marie Pouka M'Bague (b. 1910). After studying at a Catholic seminary until 1931, he entered the colonial administration as a junior clerk and interpreter, and started writing for local newspapers. During the war he became a profuse versifier; after his activity had earned him the title of "Officier d'Académie du Cameroun" in 1953, he started publishing segments of his poetic output at his own cost: *Les Rêveries tumultueuses* (1954) and *L'Innombrable symphonie* (1959). Although his style echoes Ronsard, Hugo, Verlaine, Virgil and Horace, and his work is devoted mostly to themes of sentiment and circumstance, there are also expressions of strong nationalist feelings. As far back as 1947 Pouka calls out for independence in "Au Cameroun ma patrie":

> Du Wouri au Tchad, un même souffle anime
> tous tes enfants qui veulent la Liberté.

But he nevertheless is friendly to France, who is seen as a partner:

> La France, qui nous aide à franchir l'étape
> Restera notre amie dans les temps lointains.

As the years progress, however, the tone sharpens. In 1952 he writes:

> Ils partiront et Dieu
> maudira leur pas
> et les tombes leurs semences
> vomiront les cendres
> de tous nos morts
> pour les présents d'adieu.

When Cameroon became an independent federal republic in 1961, Pouka M'Bague issued a twelve-page praise poem entitled *A Son Excellence Ahmadou Ahidjo,* in which he described himself as "poète national". But three years later, he published two slender brochures of a dozen pages each: while *Fusées 1964* was printed in Yaoundé, in the collection that he had inaugurated with *L'Innombrable symphonie* and which was significantly entitled "Le Parnasse camerounais," a short play in honour of a rebel leader,

[120] Patrice Kayo, "Brève histoire de la poésie camerounaise," *Présence Africaine,* No. 93 (1975), 200–207. See also *Littérature camerounaise* by Basile-Juléat Fouda *et al.* (Cannes: Imprimerie Aegitna, 1961; repr. Nendeln: Kraus, 1971).

Nouvelle entrevue d'outre-tombe ou réhabilitation de Ruben Um Nyobe was printed in Tangiers.

With the possible exception of Pouka's poetry, much of which remains unpublished, early Cameroonian literature produced no literary corpus worthy of serious critical attention but only a few isolated achievements which do not add up to a national literature. Only the appearance of Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono and of a new generation of poets in the late fifties first held out the promise of a francophone Cameroonian literature endowed with a national personality of its own.

MUKALA KADIMA-NZUJI

THE BELGIAN TERRITORIES

It is an interesting though little-known fact that the very first book-length monograph on the history of European-language writing in an African country was Joseph Marie Jadot's *Les Ecrivains africains du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi: une histoire, un bilan, des problèmes* (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1959). Though Jadot and his friend Gaston-Denys Périer had done what little they could for the promotion of *belles lettres* in the Belgian colony, there was, at the time, not much to write about, and in its paternalistic way Jadot's pioneering book had to make the best of a bad job, for creative writing in French appeared at a very late date in Belgian-controlled Africa: Congo (now Zaïre) and the two League of Nations mandate territories entrusted to Belgium after the defeat of Germany in World War I, Rwanda and Burundi.

Three historical factors account for this late appearance of any literary activity in French.[121]

The first was the tardiness of Belgian authorities in setting up their administration, due itself to the fact that from the Berlin treaty of 1885 to the formal annexation of the Congo by the Belgian government in 1908, Léopold II, King of the Belgians, was sole master of this "immense territoire, barré dans son centre par la prodigieuse opacité de la forêt tropicale et gangrené dans toutes ses parties par la traite des Noirs."[122] The task of his agents in his personal empire, the "Etat Indépendant du Congo," was simply to set up the minimum administrative machinery required for the economic exploitation of the country. To facilitate such exploitation with maximum efficiency, a number of concessionary companies were created—Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (1887), Comité Spécial du Katanga (1900), Compagnie des Chemins de fer du Congo supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains (1902)—which were able to make huge profits through the ruthless use of forced labour and, if the need arose, the displacement

[121] For a full historical account see Dr. Kadima-Nzuji's *La Littérature zaïroise de langue française* (Paris: Karthala, 1983). All relevant bibliographical information will be found in his *Bibliographie littéraire de la République du Zaïre, 1931–1972* (Lubumbashi: Centre d'Etude des Littératures Romanes d'Inspiration Africaine, 1973). For a brief survey, see Ngandu Nkashama, "La littérature au Zaïre avant 1960." *Zaïre-Afrique*, No. 68 (1972), 477–497 [Ed.]

[122] Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *Histoire de l'Afrique noire*, (Paris: Hatier, 1972), p. 456.

of entire populations. Public opinion both in Belgium and abroad was faced with so much evidence of abuse and extortion that increasing pressure was brought to bear on the Belgian monarch to relinquish his personal hold on the territory. This did not occur until his death in 1908.[123] As to Rwanda and Burundi, these tiny Lake kingdoms had been part of German East Africa since the Heligoland agreement (1890) and they did not come under Belgian rule until local German troops were defeated in 1916: there was no proper colonial administration there until the League of Nations mandate came into operation in 1926.

The second retarding factor was connected with the educational system introduced by the Belgians once the Congo had become a colony. Although Protestant missionaries had been setting up schools along the Lower Congo river from the late 1870s onwards, which led to the emergence of a written literature in the Kongo language,[124] in the main Belgian authorities favoured the Roman Catholic church. Until the eve of World War II, the school system remained substantially in the hands of Catholic missionaries. Geared as it was to the economic and administrative needs of the colonizer as well as to the demands of religious instruction, it was limited to elementary literacy and vocational training. And it was given only in the local languages: Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kiswahili in the Congo, Kinyarwanda and Kirundi in Ruanda-Urundi. Until World War II, the educational system in Belgian Africa could be characterized as follows[125]: its purpose was primarily pragmatic and utilitarian; it was designed to supply cheap but competent labour for low-grade jobs but the training of black pupils for responsible posts was not seen as part of its function. It was administered by Catholic and, in some cases, Protestant missionary societies; government schools were introduced at a very late stage and never represented more than a small part of the educational system; large business firms had their own schools which admitted black workers' children as pupils; the staff of these schools also consisted of Catholic missionaries. Finally, as the medium of instruction was the local language, some knowledge of French could be acquired only by those whose jobs brought them into contact with Europeans, although a reform introduced in 1938 provided for the teaching of French to those who were to go on to secondary education. In fact, until the last decade of the colonial period, the only way for a Congolese to gain access to a modicum of higher education was to prepare for the priesthood, which enabled him to enroll in a theological seminary.

The rationale for this educational system established by the Belgians in their colonies was of course to be found in the third retarding factor: the spirit of Belgian colonial policy itself. This was described as follows by the anonymous author of an official report issued in 1953:

> En matière sociale comme en matière politique, la Belgique s'est de tout temps soigneusement gardée d'importer dans ses territoires africains, des systèmes préfa-

[123] On all this, see notably Roger Anstey, *King Leopold's Legacy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[124] Mbelolo ya Mpiku, "Introduction à la littérature Kikongo," *Research in African Literatures*, 3, 2 (1972), 117–161.

[125] H. Baumann and D. Westermann, *Les Peuples et les civilisations de l'Afrique*, followed by *Les Langues et l'éducation* (Paris: Payot, 1967), p. 517.

briqués, de grandes théories rigides. La colonisation ne peut être le résultat de spéculations élégantes, spectaculaires et gratuites: c'est l'homme qu'elle vise d'abord, l'homme primitif, déroutant, complexe. Son efficacité dépend de son réalisme autant que de sa souplesse. Les systèmes raidissent toujours dangereusement. C'est pour cette raison que la Belgique dans sa politique coloniale a accordé une place très large à l'empirisme. Elle s'en remet pour chaque problème particulier, aux solutions de bon sens.[126]

As a matter of fact, the empiricism described in the report was nothing but the absence of a coherent policy. Belgian policy oscillated half-way between British indirect rule and French direct administration. The result was, as the French historian Robert Cornevin put it, that the colonial administration's policy was "toujours et partout plus étroitement subordonnée à des fins économiques, les indigènes représentant avant tout un réservoir de main-d'œuvre pour les entreprises minières, agricoles ou industrielles."[127] Admittedly, this was an essential feature of any colonial system, but while the provision of cheap labour was a purpose of colonial education throughout Africa, Belgian policy was calculated to prevent the emergence of an intellectual élite: for all its condescending paternalism, it acted as a hindrance to the social advancement and intellectual development of the Congolese people.

Contrary to what happened in the African colonies of France, Britain and Portugal, no creative writing was produced in any European language in the Belgian territories until the end of World War II. In this context, mention must be made of a collection of Luba fables entitled *L'Eléphant qui marche sur des œufs* which was published in 1931, as a book for juvenile readers, by L'Eglantine publishing house in Brussels. It was attributed to one Badibanga, whose personality was described in picturesque detail by Gaston-Denys Périer in the introduction:

Originaire de Luluabourg, ancien élève des "monpères," Badibanga exerce la profession de tailleur. Pour son métier, il s'aide d'une machine à coudre Singer, à manivelle. Il vend des œufs, coupe les cheveux et répare les vélos. Dernièrement il s'est mis en tête d'écrire au crayon les fables de sa tribu. Sauf parfois un mot impropre ou mal placé dans une phrase ainsi devenue obscure, rien n'a été changé ni au français, ni au style de ces pages sans littérature...

This little book appeared then as the very first example of a collection of African lore produced in French by an African. Such an impressive achievement, anticipating by nearly two decades Birago Diop's *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba,* was duly rewarded: as Jadot records,

le volume aimablement illustré par le peintre Djilatendo, reçut de l' Académie française une médaille de vermeil à l'effigie de Mazarin, décernée à notre fabuliste à la demande de Georges Goyau.[128]

[126] *L'Action sociale au Congo belge et au Ruanda-Urundi* (Bruxelles: Centre d'Information et de Documentation du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, n.d. [1953]), p. 13.

[127] Robert Cornevin, *L'Afrique noire de 1919 à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), p. 74.

[128] J. M. Jadot, *Les Ecrivains africains du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi* (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1959), p. 22.

Unfortunately, extensive enquiries have failed to confirm the very existence of this writer in Luluabourg of the late twenties. Yet, such an unusual phenomenon could not have failed to attract attention, provoke admiration and remain in the long memories of this predominantly oral society. There is every reason to believe that *L'Eléphant qui marche sur des œufs* was a hoax, concocted in all likelihood by either Jadot or Périer, or more probably both; once the silver-gilt medal had been awarded to the ghostly Congolese, it was impossible to disclose the truth without exposing Georges Goyau, and his fellow "Immortals" of the French Academy to ridicule.[129]

Three events presided over the late awakening of francophone literature in Belgian Africa in the years following the end of the war: the launching of an official monthly, *La Voix du Congolais*, the foundation of a publishing house known as "La Bibliothèque de l'Etoile," and the cultural activities of the "Union Africaine des Arts et des Lettres" (U.A.A.L.).

As the war was coming to an end, the colonial administration was faced with a peculiar situation characterized by the growing shortage of younger men among its European staff on the one hand, and, on the other, the claims of its native staff, the literate clerks, and, more generally, the *évolué* class, who were clamouring for improvements in their admittedly low social status. Launched in January 1945, *La Voix du Congolais* was intended to serve as a mouthpiece for the black élite of *évolués*.[130] Despite its official character and the paternalistic control to which it was subjected, *La Voix du Congolais* was bound to devote much attention to the problems raised by the inevitable transformation of the structure of colonial society; in this way, it could contribute to improving communications and understanding between whites and blacks. It consistently denounced the abusive behaviour of those who were still displaying outdated racialist attitudes publicly. By opening its columns to cultural and political discussions, it offered the Congolese élite an opportunity for gaining awareness of their own identity as well as of their membership of a social group whose growing cohesion made the survival of the colonial order increasingly precarious.

Within a short time, the activities of *La Voix du Congolais* in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) were complemented by those of the "Union Africaine des Arts et des Lettres," founded in Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in December 1946.[131] U.A.A.L. and its magazine *Jeune Afrique* with its exacting standards had a threefold purpose in view: to stimulate the cultural life of those vast territories in Central Africa by organizing high-level artistic and literary events which would enable European residents to maintain cultural ties with Europe; to preserve surviving relics of an oral literature that was threatened with extinction, and to strive for better understanding of African art by

[129] Personal communication from Professor Albert Gérard.

[130] The journal has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years. See for example: Joseph Lisobe, "L'analyse de contenu de *La Voix du Congolais*, 1945–1959," *Cahiers Congolais de la Recherche et du Développement*, 15, 3 (1970), 46–70; Ngandu Nkashama, "*La Voix du Congolais* et la prise de conscience des évolués," *Lectures Africaines*, I, 1 (1972–1973), 4–23; and especially Eloko a Nongo Otstudiema, *Les Structurés inconscientes de "La Voix du Congolais"* (Brussels: Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Africaines, 1975).

[131] Albert Maurice, "L'Union Africaine des Arts et des Lettres," *La Revue Coloniale Belge*, No. 117, (1950), 593–594.

means of recordings and exhibitions; to publicize the activities of writers and artists in the Congo, irrespective of race, creed and opinion, and to serve as a link with artistic and intellectual circles throughout the continent. During the fourteen years of its existence (1946–60) *Jeune Afrique*, which was known far beyond the boundaries of the Belgian Congo, applied itself to the task of publishing (with French translations) oral works, songs, tales, legends, maxims, proverbs, etc. The names of important traditional authorities such as Mwami Mutara III of Ruanda (1913–59), and Chief Antoine Munongo (b. ca. 1905), with his *Chants historiques des Bayeké*,[132] remain associated with this seminal work.

The "Bibliothèque de l'Etoile" had been founded in 1943 by a Jesuit priest, Father Jean Coméliau, who was attached to the Lever Company plantations in Leverville. It did not become a centre of cultural life and of literary creativity until 1948, when it was reorganized and launched several educational series: *Lumière et vie* contained religious and spiritual pamphlets: *Eveil* aimed at rousing the intellectual curiosity of young people of school age; *Etoile* was designed for adult reading; *Beaux Métiers* contained booklets of vocational instruction. In 1951–1952, the "Bibliothèque de L'Etoile" started its *Elite* series, which was entirely in French, aiming at an audience whose educational level enabled them to read the language fluently. It was in this series that Dieudonné Mutombo (b. 1928) at the time a medical assistant, published his only novel, *Victoire de l'amour* (1954), the first piece of imaginative writing of any significance by a Congolese author to have been printed locally. In compliance with the unifying ideology of the *évolué* social group to which the novelist belongs, the story recounts how young lovers of different tribes and creeds, living in a city, manage after many vicissitudes to overcome the obstacles put in the way of their love by outdated beliefs and traditions.

Books of all kinds were issued by the "Bibliothèque de l'Etoile" under a variety of names and on all sorts of topics, such as school or family life, etiquette and good manners, underwater exploration, etc. Several of the authors bore Congolese names such as Louis Mobiala, who authored three embarrassingly naïve and pathetic stories: *Je ne haïrai pas* (1953), *Une Nuit tragique* (1954) and *Ce n'était pas vous* (1958), or Nicolas Mukweti, who wrote a book on courtesy. Close investigation into the identity of these writers suggests that Mobiala was simply a pen-name used by another Jesuit priest, Father Albert Leysbeth, editor of the "Bibliothèque de l'Etoile" from 1950 to 1966, who also resorted to less exotic pseudonyms such as Félix Miller. Mukweti was likewise a pen-name, used by Father Roelandt, one of the faithful collaborators of the firm.

Inevitably, the "Bibliothèque de l'Etoile" publications reflected the colonial ideology, or rather, the ideology which the Catholic missionaries wanted to impose upon their readers. At the same time, however, they filled (albeit somewhat belatedly) a gap in the educational system—the absence of suitable books for reading at home—which had been highlighted a quarter-century earlier, at the general missionary conference held in Le Zoute (Belgium) in 1926. Moreover, the "Bibliothèque" constantly strove to keep up with the intellectual, cultural and social development of the élite for whom it was mainly intended: by launching a new journal in 1960, *Documents pour l'action*—which became

[132] Published in *Problèmes Sociaux Congolais*, No. 77 (1967), 35–140.

Congo-Afrique in 1966 and *Zaïre-Afrique* in 1972—it provided the élite of the newly independent republic with useful documentation, summaries of books and articles about Congolese problems, original studies and imaginative works. During the critical early sixties, the "Bibliothèque de l'Etoile" was a major organ of intellectual and ideological confrontation, but it did not play more than a very minor role in the development of imaginative writing. After independence, its only publication in this genre was *Le Mystère de l'enfant disparu* (1962) by Timothée Malembe (b. 1935). Curiously, whereas Mutombo had produced a "progressive" novel, set in an urban setting, and advocating Western-type individualism in marriage matters, Malembe turned for inspiration to the past. His is, or purports to be, a historical novel recounting the adventures of a young man in the olden days on the eve of the white man's coming. That the book was a belated product of the colonial era is apparent in the fact that it ends with an enthusiastic description of the first missionary's triumphant arrival in the hero's village!

The first French-language writers in Belgian Africa were mostly associated with the three cultural centres described above; they were almost of necessity recruited from the ranks of those who had studied for the priesthood. The most important and representative were Alexis Kagame, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, Paul Lomami-Tshibamba and Joseph Saverio Naigiziki.

During the years preceding independence in Rwanda the publications of Alexis Kagame (1912–1982) who had been ordained priest in 1941, included several articles and books written in Kinyarwanda and in French on the poetry and the traditional institutions of the kingdom.[133] He had written in French scholarly works: *La Poésie dynastique du Rwanda* (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1951) and his Ph. D. dissertation at the Gregorian University in Rome, *La Philosophie Bantu-rwandaise de l'Etre* (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1956).[134] But he had also authored two long poems, which he had composed and published in his mother-tongue before translating them into French: *La Divine pastorale* and *La Naissance de l'univers*.[135] These were the first two "vigils" of a vast epic poem purporting to relate the history of the universe since its creation and more specifically of the coming of Christianity to Rwanda. Whereas Kagame's earlier work had been devoted to the description and analysis of the cultural heritage of the Rwanda people so as to define and assert their traditional values, somewhat in the spirit of Senghor and of Placide Tempels,[136] his purpose in this epic was to demonstrate that the new religion did not inevitably bring the destruction of those values, but opened new prospects for them. As Zaïrian critic

[133] Apart from Jadot's brief bibliographical notice, op. cit., pp. 80–81, see Gilles-Marius Dion, "Répertoire bibliographique de Monsieur l'Abbé Alexis Kagame, (1938–1967)," *L'Informateur de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda*, 2, 2 (1968), 26–32.

[134] This work has acquired exceptional importance as one of the main sources used by Janheinz Jahn for his influential discussion of black culture, *Muntu* (Düsseldorf: Diederich, 1958).

[135] Alexis Kagame, *La Divine pastorale* (Brussels: Editions du Marais, 1952) and *La Naissance de l'univers: Deuxième veillée de "la divine pastorale"* (Ibid., 1955). The former work had an introduction by J. M. Jadot.

[136] Placide Tempels was a Belgian missionary whose *Bantoe-filosofie* was first issued in Dutch (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1946). It was translated into French by A. Rubbens as *La Philosophie bantoue* (Paris: Editions Africaines, 1949) and soon became available in German (Heidelberg: Rothe, 1956) and in English (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959).

Paul Mushiete was to put it, the work testified to the author's twofold loyalty: his determination "d'être près des siens, en respectant leur envolée mystique, et le devoir du chrétien de porter toutes les aspirations à la règle de l'enseignement divin."[137]

Antoine-Roger Bolamba (b. 1913), erstwhile editor of *La Voix du Congolais,* was an alumnus of the "Frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne." Apart from his work as a journalist, he has not been a very prolific writer. His *Premiers essais* (Elisabethville: Essor du Congo, 1947) was a collection of poems which had already appeared in *La Voix du Congolais.* In his essay *Les Problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire* (Ibid., 1949), he discussed the black woman's future position in a changing Africa from a sociological point of view, striving to preserve Christian ideas on the subject. Bolamba's only intrinsically important contribution to the early growth of Congolese literature in French was *Esanzo: Chants pour mon pays* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), which was graced with a preface by Léopold Sédar Senghor.[138] Unlike his first collection with its clumsy imitation of the late nineteenth-century French poets whom he had read as part of the school curriculum, *Esanzo* is a highly original achievement which bears witness to the Congolese poet's commitment to the central themes and ideas of the negritude school, while reasserting his own identity as a Congolese and a Mongo. As a journalist Bolamba exercised a good deal of influence in the capital until independence because of his deep insight into colonial problems, especially when he was not trying to please his Belgian protectors: but political preoccupations seem to have stifled his imaginative gifts and he gave up creative writing after *Esanzo.*

Paul Lomami-Tshibamba (1914–1985) was born in Brazzaville in the then French Moyen-Congo but moved to the Belgian Congo as a child. He studied for the priesthood but had to give up when he was afflicted with deafness. For a while he worked as editor on a magazine issued by the "Pères de Scheut," *La Croix du Congo,* before entering the service of several important companies and finally of the colonial government. He first attracted public attention in 1945 with a controversial article entitled "Quelle sera notre place dans le monde de demain?",[139] in which he raised sensitive questions regarding the status of the *évolués* and the freedom of the press in the Belgian colonies. During the years when he was a frequent contributor to *La Voix du Congolais* he wrote his only piece of imaginative fiction before independence, *Ngando le crocodile* (Brussels: Deny, 1948), which won him a prize in a literary competition organized on the occasion of the Brussels Colonial Exhibition of that year. Dorothy Blair has observed that "because [this] novel has no political overtones, it has tended to be neglected by Black as well as White readers caught up in the enthusiasm for the doctrine of Negritude. It deserves more attention, not only for its ethnological interest as a link with the traditional Africa

[137] Paul Mushiete, *La Littérature française africaine* (Leverville: Bibliothèque de l'Etoile, 1957), p. 38.

[138] A not very successful English translation has been made available recently, keeping the original French title (Quebec: Naaman, 1977). For a detailed discussion, see Albert Gérard, "Antoine-Roger Bolamba ou la révolution subreptice," *La Revue Nouvelle* (Brussels), 44, 10 (1966), 286–298, reprinted in his *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977), pp. 97–114. In this essay, Gérard demonstrated how wrong Senghor had been in his ambiguous preface, where the father of negritude had written: "Il faut féliciter le poète d'être resté Nègre et Bantou. Bien mieux de n'avoir pas d'idées."

[139] *La Voix du Congolais,* No. 2, (March–April 1945).

which is rapidly disappearing but also for the inherent poetic qualities of the writing."[140] While the writer's narrative skill is far from flawless, *Ngando* is a most captivating story because Lomami-Tshibamba succeeded in what he had set out to do, namely to illustrate the Bantu conception of the universe, the Africans' attitude to events and beings, their imaginative manner of accounting for the causes of natural phenomena and for the actions of natural forces.

Lomami-Tshibamba's connections with the capital of the French Congo give him a unique position in the history of French-language literature throughout Black Africa. For when the Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, Bernard Cornut-Gentille, launched the magazine *Liaison*[141] in July 1950 to serve as a link between the *centres culturels* that had been established in the four colonies of the federation (Moyen-Congo, Gabon, Oubangui-Chari, Tchad), Lomami-Tshibamba was called upon to become the editor of the journal, which remained in existence until 1959. In this capacity, he made special efforts to promote theatrical activities.[142] But although his efforts met with little success, he himself represents one of the very few literary links between French and Belgian territories.

In 1949, the Brussels Colonial Exhibition literary competition prize was awarded for the second and last time. It went to *Escapade ruandaise* (Brussels: Deny, 1950) by another writer from Rwanda, Joseph Saverio Naigiziki (b. 1915).[143] In fact, this picaresque novel, which was published with a preface by J. M. Jadot—whose friend Périer had written the introduction to *Ngando*—was only the first part of a much longer autobiographical narrative, later published in two volumes under the title *Mes transes à trente ans: Histoire vécue mêlée de roman* (Astrida: Groupe scolaire des Frères de la Charité, 1955). In Naigiziki's own words, the narrator-hero of this intricate story,

> supposé instruit et bon enfant, mais tapageur et jouisseur, trompé d'abord, puis trahi par son étourderie, cynique et touchant tour à tour, en proie au remords et hanté par le souvenir de sa prime jeunesse, jette à pleins mots, comme l'on jette au dehors la pourriture d'une plaie, les déchirements de son cœur et quémande, en des prières larmoyantes, avec une pleine confiance qui lui vaut des miracles, la douce paix de Dieu.[144]

This seemed to be a fairly straightforward portrayal of the author, who had studied for the priesthood, but due partly to his unruly spirit, had not proved acceptable to the church authorities. The book describes the adventurous career of this much-travelled man who, after teaching in a mission school, left his country and attempted to make his

[140] Dorothy S. Blair, *African Literature in French* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), p. 69.

[141] See Robert Chemain, "La revue *Liaison*," *Notre Librairie*, No. 38 (1977), 15–21, reprinted in Roger Chemain and Arlette Chemain-Degrange, *Panorama critique de la littérature congolaise contemporaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1979), pp. 25–34.

[142] See Robert Cornevin, *Le Théâtre en Afrique noire et à Madagascar* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1970), p. 183, and *Littératures d'Afrique noire de langue française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), p. 107.

[143] See Emma Maquet, "Saverio Naigiziki, ein Schriftsteller aus Rwanda", *Neues Afrika*, 6 (1964), 59–62.

[144] *Escapade ruandaise*, p. 7.

way in business abroad, in Tanganyika and Uganda, where he started writing his semi-fictional memoirs.

After *Escapade ruandaise,* Naigiziki tried his hand at drama with a three-act play, *L'Optimiste* (Astrida: Groupe scolaire des Frères de la Charité, 1954), which was published with a preface by Emma Maquet. This is one of the very first plays in French to deal with a perennial problem of modern Africa: the conflict that arises when two young people belonging to different tribes fall in love and wish to marry. At the time, this theme, which was to become so commonplace, had serious, almost dangerous implications in Rwanda, for while the hero was (like the author) a Hutu, the girl belonged to the Tutsi aristocracy whose power was then firmly entrenched. According to Jahn,[145] the play had only one private performance because, for that reason, it was not acceptable to King Mutara III, who was otherwise interested in promoting his country's artistic life: it was only in August 1954 that the play was performed publicly, following a request of the Belgian administration on the occasion of the visit of a United Nations delegation.

Naigiziki seems to have given up creative writing after 1955. But it is important to emphasize that, at a time—the fifties—when Africa's francophone literature was growing fast under the powerful impulse provided by anticolonialism and the negritude ideology, this writer lost in the aloofness of a small Lake kingdom in the centre of the continent, was one of the very few who tried to offer a realistic portrayal of an average literate African's experience during the last decade of the colonial era. Unlike those of Kagame, Lomami-Tshibamba and Bolamba, his creative works represent a complete break with the oral tradition: they are not inspired by any attempt at revaluating ancient mores, customs and values. In his humble depiction of contemporary reality, Naigiziki anticipates trends that only became popular after independence; and his handling of the intertribal marriage theme likewise anticipated one of the major motifs in later francophone drama.

On the whole, however, the literary production of Belgian Africa is chiefly remarkable for its paucity, largely due to the factors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, Burundi had to wait until independence and the late sixties for its very first francophone writer to appear: this was Michel Kayoya with two slight autobiographical volumes, *Sur les traces de mon père* and *Entre deux mondes,* both printed without date by the Editions des Presses Lavigerie in Bujumbura.

With the exception of a few poems in Bolamba's *Esanzo* the most striking feature of early writing in the Congo and Rwanda is its gentle submissiveness at a time when Jean Malonga in the neighbouring French Congo, a member of the Grand Conseil de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française, and representative for the Moyen-Congo in the National Assembly in Paris, was publishing his virulent anticolonial novel *Cœur d'Aryenne.* Literary conformism in the Belgian colonies may largely be accounted for, no doubt, by the fact that the only outlet for writers was through the agency and the paternalistic help of the Belgian authorities, who financed the local press and organized the literary competitions.

It is equally noteworthy that writers from Belgian Africa, with the exception of

[145] Janheinz Jahn, *Who's Who in African Literature* (Tübingen: Erdmann, 1972), p. 248.

Naigiziki, sought their material chiefly in traditional beliefs and oral lore. In this sense they might be said to have ploughed the same furrow as the negritude school in French Africa. But as the negritude concept did not gain worldwide currency until the Paris Conference of Black Writers and Artists (1956), it is much more likely that these Congolese writers' attachement to their African heritage was encouraged by their Belgian teachers, the Catholic missionaries, who showed greater respect for African culture and did far more to rescue its literary lore from oblivion, than did their opposite numbers in French Africa.

(Translated from the French by Bongasu Tanla-Kishani)

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Until the middle of the twentieth century, West Africa could boast only a very limited amount of creative writing in European languages, with a clear predominance of French over English. The really important developments were taking place outside Africa, as the negritude concept, which was to provide the conceptual foundation for Africa's intense struggle towards recognition and independence, was being evolved in Paris. But there was an obvious continuity between literary developments in West Africa and such diaspora writing as had been produced in the eighteenth century.

A different sort of continuity characterized the emergence of South African literature. For the unending vicissitudes of that wealthy, unhappy country began in the seventeenth century, when Dutch explorers and traders noticed that conditions made the area eminently suitable for European settlement, which the Guinea coast most emphatically was not. After the Dutch pastoralists and agriculturists had decimated, expelled or enslaved the original inhabitants, Bushmen and Hottentots, throughout the eighteenth century, they finally established contact and conflict with other cattle-raising peoples, the Bantu-speaking blacks. Almost simultaneously, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Napoleonic wars provided the British with a welcome pretext to occupy the Cape area under the guise of protecting their vital interests in connection with the route to India. Thus another ethnic group was introduced, and yet another source of conflict, as the Boers were compelled either to resist or to escape the superior power of the British. Minority rule became a constant feature of South African politics, as the white minority ruled over the black majority and the British minority ruled over the Boer majority.

It is probably superfluous to point out that this type of situation breeds resentment. Once the Union of South Africa was constituted as part of the British Empire in 1911, the Dutch settlers, having lost all hope of political independence, slowly and slyly embarked upon a process of undermining and overcoming British economic and political power while maintaining the black population in their subordinate position and oppressed condition. The central movement of South African history after the British victory at the end of the nineteenth century has been what is called "the rise of Afrikanerdom," which reached its climax with Dr. Malan's victory in 1948 and the proclamation of the Republic of South Africa in 1961.

The same type of reaction was bound to occur at a different level: just as the

Afrikaners had been bent on subverting and arrogating political and economic power from the British section of the population, so the blacks, being exploited in more and more intolerable conditions which crystallized into the rigidity of the *apartheid* system, were bound to become conscious of their abused dignity and to start fighting for majority rule. This process, which may be said to have started with the foundation of the African National Congress at the time of the constitution of the Union, is still in progress.

It was necessary to provide in brief this bird's eye view of South African history[1] because such historical conditions go a long way to account for the literary situation of the country.

The first thing to note is that an element of continuity is provided by indigenous white writing in two languages (Dutch, superseded in time by its local dialect, Afrikaans, and English) and by two kinds of metropolitan works: travellers' reports and so-called "colonial" poetry and fiction. This raises intriguing problems in classification: when did English writing from or about South Africa turn into South African writing in English? Is Thomas Pringle really the founder of South African poetry in English, as he is often held to be? After all, he was born in Scotland, he did not spend more than half a dozen years in Africa and by this token should be regarded as a mere "colonial" writer!

Another point is the enormous diversity of the written art in South Africa. Indeed, if the French Huguenots who arrived after Louis XIV's ill-advised revocation of the Edict of Nantes had not become absorbed into the Dutch-speaking farmer communities, there might have been a strain of South African literature in French. As things are, white writing by real South Africans, men and women born and bred and living in South Africa, did not begin until the last two decades of the nineteenth century, with Olive Schreiner in English and S. J. du Toit in Afrikaans. Paradoxically, creative writing had been started toward the middle of the century by black natives, in the "Kaffir" language, i.e. Xhosa, which had been reduced to writing by white missionaries. Although African-language writing falls outside the scope of the present volume, it is useful to point out that the R.S.A. can boast at present a truly considerable output of creative literature in seven different Bantu languages.[2] But educated blacks soon realized that it was in their interest to master the language of their white rulers. Indeed, the first piece of prose fiction published on South African soil by a native of the country was Tiyo Soga's Xhosa translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1687). Between the world wars of the twentieth century, a beginning was made with English literature by those who are locally and officially known as non-whites, and who include not only blacks but also a number of half-castes designated as coloureds. To round off, it is also worth mentioning that there is in existence a by no means negligible corpus of creative writing in Afrikaans by coloured writers.

Such profusion and diversity may safely be described as confusing. Nevertheless, it could and should be regarded as a source of intellectual wealth and legitimate national

[1] For an excellent, detailed, yet manageable account of South Africa's history, see *The Oxford History of South Africa*, 2 vols. ed. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969 and 1971).

[2] See Albert Gérard, *Four African Literatures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) and *African-Language Literatures: An Introduction to the Literary History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington—London: Three Continents Press–Longman, 1981).

pride. But the third point to be made is that the institutionalized segregation that poisons community relations in South Africa as it does in many polyethnic, multilingual states, is conspicuous even in the apparently harmless field of literary studies. Of course, each community has its own attitude towards its own literature. For example, one of the laudable results of embattled Afrikaner nationalism has been the stupendous amount of scholarly attention that has been devoted to the study of Afrikaans literature.[3] Deliberate lowering of educational standards for blacks has meant that few black "intellectuals" are equipped to study their own literatures, whether in African or in European languages, at a high scientific level, critical or historical: those that are usually live in exile and are cut off from local developments and the local environment.[4] As to the British section of the population, since its authors and critics were for a long time content to think of themselves as members of the mighty Commonwealth and contributors to the prestigious mainstream of Eng. lit. rather than as South Africans, there is as yet no serious systematic historical account of Anglophone South African writing.[5]

[3] The vast majority of those works are of course in Afrikaans; several have gone through many editions, and it often happens that the first printing carries no date. The most widely known are: Rob Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van die Aanvang tot Hede* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, n.d.), whose second edition was dated 1961; an early version was available in Dutch as *Schets van de Ontwikkelingsgang der Zuid-Afrikaansche Letterkunde* (Diest, Belgium: 1946); Antonissen was also responsible for the article "Afrikaans Literature", in *Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century*, vol. I ed. W.B. Fleishman (New York: Ungar, 1967). Other histories are: G. Dekker, *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* ([Cape Town]: Nasou, n.d.) which went through a 7th, revised, edition in 1963; *Inleiding tot die Afrikaanse Letterkunde* ed. E. Lindenberg (Cape Town, Pretoria: Academica, 1977) and J.C. Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, I (Cape Town, Pretoria: Academica 1978). For a brief account in Dutch, see R. H. Pheiffer, "Zuidafrikaanse Literatuur" in *Moderne Encyclopedie der Wereldliteratuur* (Ghent: Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1977). Other general, though less systematically historical, survey-like works are: Rob Antonissen, *Kern en Tooi: Kroniek van die Afrikaanse lettere, 1951–1960* ([Cape Town]: Nasou, 1962) and *Spitsberaad*, ([Cape Town]: Nasou, 1966) and also *Perspektief en Profiel* ed. P. J. Nienaber (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, 1969). See also F.I.J. van Rensburg, *Die Smal Baan* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1971). On specific genres, see Rialette Wiehahn, *Die Afrikaanse Poëziekritiek* (Cape Town, Pretoria: Academica, 1965); L.W.B. Binge, *Ontwikkeling van die Afrikaanse toneel 1832 tot 1950* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1969) and J.C. Kannemeyer, *Opstelle oor die Afrikaanse Drama* (Cape Town: Academica, 1970). Translations of individual Afrikaans works will be mentioned in the course of this chapter. While Afrikaans poetry in translation is represented in *The Penguin Book of South African Verse* ed. Jack Cope and Uys Krige (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), a fairly general view of the field is available in *Afrikaans Poetry with English Translations*, ed. Grové and C.J.D. Harvey (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[4] While a number of South African black scholars have concerned themselves, both at home and in exile, with Bantu-language literature (most notably C.L.S. Nyembezi with Zulu, Archibald C. Jordan with Xhosa and Daniel P. Kunene with Sotho), the most important among those that have written about South African literature in European languages, i.e. mainly English, are Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image* (London: Faber, 1962; 2nd rev. ed. 1974) and Lewis Nkosi, *Home and Exile* (London: Longmans, 1965) and *The Transplanted Heart* (Benin City: Ethiope, 1975). Both have contributed profusely to a variety of journals. It is also necessary to mention Cosmo Pieterse, an exile from Namibia: although he is best known as a poet and as editor of anthologies of drama and poetry, he also edited, together with Donald Munro, *Protest and Conflict in African Literature* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1969).

[5] The earliest survey was Manfred Nathan, *South African Literature* (Cape Town: Juta, 1925), which was of remarkable mediocrity. Parts of the field were covered by G.M. Miller and Howard Sergeant, *A Critical Survey of South African Poetry in English* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1957) and by Vladimír Klíma, *South African Prose Writing in English* (Prague: Academica, 1971). In the main, however, discussions of anglophone South African literature are thoroughly unsystematic and widely scattered in collections of more or less miscellaneous

In such circumstances, it is not surprising that there should be no comparative survey of South African literature, on a multilingual, polyethnic basis.[6] This merely confirms, if such confirmation were needed, that the R.S.A., although technically independent, is still a colonial country, in the sense that power is vested in the hands of a racially defined minority. The same is true, of course, of the country that was first known as Southern Rhodesia. Yet, unless a monstrous blood-bath is coming, historical and economic circumstances have fated these countries to remain just that: multiracial, multilingual, polyethnic societies. It is a matter of pride that this chapter will contain the first integrated account ever, dealing simultaneously with English and Afrikaans literature, written by whites and by non-whites, at any rate until the late 1940s.

essays such as *Aspects of South African Literature* ed. Christopher Heywood (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976). *English-Speaking South Africa Today: Proceedings of the National Conference, July, 1974* ed. André de Villiers (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1976), or *The South African Novel in English: Essays in Criticism and Society* ed. Kenneth Parker (London: Macmillan, 1978). It also happens that one or two essays are devoted to South Africa in collections concerned with Commonwealth or African writing in general. An early example was A.L. MacLeod, *The Commonwealth Pen: An Introduction to the Literature of the British Commonwealth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961). See also *Literatures of the World in English* ed. Bruce King (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); *Commonwealth Literature and the Modern World* ed. Hena Maes Jelinek (Brussels: Didier, 1975); *A Celebration of Black and African Writing* ed. Bruce King and Kolawole Ogungbesan (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1975); William H. New, *Among Worlds: An Introduction to Modern Commonwealth and South African Fiction* (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcepic, 1975); or *Papers on African Literature* ed. Christopher Heywood (Sheffield: Department of English, 1976). Recent basic tools are *A Pilot Bibliography of South African English Literature from the beginnings until 1971* D.R. Beeton (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1976) and G.E. Gorman, *The South African Novel in English since 1950: An Information and Resource Guide* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978).

[6] See Albert Gérard, "Towards a History of South African Literature," in Hena Maes-Jelinek (ed.), op. cit., pp. 79–88.

A. J. Coetzee, Tim Couzens and Stephen Gray

1. SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURES TO WORLD WAR II

One of the reasons why the South African subcontinent lends itself inordinately well to the comparative approach is that the area first arose above the literary horizon of the Western mind in the shape of a motif, a theme, a myth even, in several European literatures.[7] Since the Portuguese navigators' first experiences of the African coastline around 1500 up to the present time, an unbroken multilingual stream of imaginative writing based on the African experience has been running through the literary production of Europe. Indeed, the experience had reactivated classical and medieval sources for the first merchant explorers to sail over the Equator and reach the southernmost Cape of Africa, as Bartholomew Diaz did in 1487, six years before Colombus reached America, had Herodotus' myth of the insular nature of Africa to steer by and the myth of the wealthy inland kingdom of the Christian emperor, Prester John, as incentive. When Luis de Camoëns (c. 1524–1580), who himself sailed via the Cape on the Portuguese trade route to India, chose Vasco da Gama's pioneering voyage of 1497 as the theme of *The Lusiads* (1572), he had as obvious European models the epics of Homer and Virgil. In making da Gama the successor to Odysseus and Aeneas, Camoëns combined the epic stature of the adventurer challenging the unknown with the minutiae of fresh experience acquired under new skies and in unfamiliar latitudes. Thus, in Camoëns, the raw material of European experience of Africa, which is recorded in many synoptic data-books, like Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries* (1600), and in the various mercantile log-books and ships' records of the time, is given a literary shape far earlier than might be expected.

In Canto V of *The Lusiads* Camoëns records two early meetings between Christian traders and the indigenous population of Southern Africa: both of them stress the potential for harmony which, he claims, can only be marred by discourtesy and misunderstanding. When bartering beads for cattle and fresh food at St. Helena Bay, da Gama remarks that Hottentot aggression results from the threat of invasion; but, on the other hand, in an encounter at Mossel Bay, he admits to admiring the pastoralism of the tribesmen who, Camoëns notes, are adept at praise-singing in an oral epic form similar to his own. To anthropomorphize the dreaded perils of the rounding of the Cape itself,

[7] For a full discussion, see Stephen Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (Cape Town: Philip, 1979) [Ed.]

Camoëns invents the myth of the hostile, truculent Adamastor, last of the Greek Titans who tried to overthrow the classical Olympians, now in exile from Europe and guardian of the "known" world's most distant and unknown waters. In the epic Adamastor the collapsed giant, who is the continent of Africa, speaks of Christian European daring with envy and admits the desire to acquire Renaissance learning and technological skills, yet shows his intractability as he resolves to plague the explorers with threats of the cruelty and hostility of the interior.

The myth of an alien Africa[8] is common to traveller-journalists like Thomas Herbert (1606–1682) and his successors in the century and a half before the official Dutch settlement of the Cape. An English ambassador and traveller like Herbert, anxious to report back on the glamorous and shocking possibilities of the interior in the various editions of his *Some Yeares Travaile into Afrique and the greater Asia,* stresses the alien, unattractive ways of the inlanders whose behaviour patterns could only be described to the English reader in terms of contrasts: Puritan seemliness against grease and grime, a well-defined geographical area such as England against infinite territorial wanderings, musquets and shrapnel against the inevitable poisoned arrows. Despite the generally slanderous descriptions of the Bushman and Hottentot social order, the accounts of the sixteenth-century experience of the Cape of Storms (or Cape of Good Hope, as it was more optimistically to become known), seem to reflect more curiosity than colonialism, a desire to witness the exotic and bizarre in nature and in man rather than to disturb it.

The vision which Camoëns' hero is given of the interior of Africa, based on both desire and admiration, was to be found unchanged in his many successors:

> Here is Africa, still grasping after the things of this world, uncivilized, full of savagery, with its southernmost Cape, that has always been denied you until now. Look out over the whole vast continent and see how everywhere it is the home of legions of infidels.
>
> Observe, here is the great empire of Benomotapa with its naked blacks... There is abundance of gold, the metal that men most strive after, in this as yet unknown hemisphere. See how the Nile and the Zambezi both have their source in the same lake, and note how the Negroes live in huts without doors, as if they were nests, trusting to the king's justice and to the protection and good faith of their neighbours.[9]

The upside-down triangle that is Southern Africa south of the Zambezi is constantly described in these early terms. The literature, no matter in which European language, keeps echoing earlier chroniclers and common European myths about Africa.

When Jan van Riebeeck (1619–1677) landed at the Cape in April, 1652, as an official of the Dutch East India Company of Amsterdam, which then dominated the Cape sea-route, his instructions were clear: he was to build a fort which could accommodate

[8] Norman H. Mackenzie, "South African Travel Literature in the Seventeenth Century," *Archives Yearbook of South African History* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1955), Vol 2.

[9] Luis de Camoëns, *The Lusiads,* trans. William C. Atkinson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), p. 236. See John Purves, "Camoens and the Epic of Africa," *The State* (Cape Town, Nov., Dec., 1910).

about eighty white labourers who should establish a market garden and plant trees. He was to live in peace with the indigenous population, and not to harass the foreign traders using his commercial services at the victualling station. Certain administrative decisions taken by this first European settlement are important to note, because they are relevant to the historical development of imaginative literature in and about Southern Africa, and because they give a background to an understanding of the utilitarian nature of the literature at that time, and in later periods. Van Riebeeck's aim was to make the Cape provision station self-supporting, and with that in mind he requested that "free people" be sent from India and from the homeland to help with farming. Several employees of the Company were eventually also relieved of their duties to become farmers. A "free burgher" was not permitted to be in the employ of the Company. The burghers could barter with Hottentots, and a tentative Hottentot policy was devised: the Hottentots were to be treated in such a way that their respect could be won. If they persisted in "thieving" they were to be sent to Robben Island, and in cases of murder, "tribal justice" was supposed to be executed. Marriage with the indigenous population was to be avoided, and "if possible" the true Reformed Christianity was to be propagated among "this wild brutal people."

The earliest literature produced locally was in Dutch and consists of official diaries and journals, kept on orders from the East India Company. The first account to contain early reconnaissances of the new land is Van Riebeeck's *Daghregister* (Journal, 1651–1662).[10] This diary, like all other commissioned records, had to be an official document, giving an exact account of daily activities and of any voyages of exploration. But apart from being an inventory of facts, it is also the report of a lengthy and detailed encounter with an alien country and its people. It describes to some extent the day-to-day contacts with various Hottentot clans, and Van Riebeeck's association with Herry, who could speak some English and acted as an interpreter. Van Riebeeck's frustrations with the cattle-thieving Herry reveal a conflict of ideas about the nature of property. Eventually, however, Herry was exiled to Robben Island. Preliminary inland sorties by company adventurers and explorers in search of the legendary Vigiti Magna and Monomotapa also form part of the *Daghregister*.

Several other diaries were kept about desultory and unsuccessful journeys inland between 1659 and 1664, some in Latin, mostly in makeshift Dutch, but written in a spontaneous style, notably by the Dane Pieter van Meerhoff, who accompanied the first six trips in search of gold. Van Meerhoff himself married a Hottentot who was fluent in Dutch, English and Portuguese.

The first known poem written at the Cape itself was by an unknown hand, commemorating the laying of the foundation stone of the castle, in January, 1663, after Van Riebeeck's departure. It glorifies with rhetorical gusto the great earthly powers, greater than those of Alexander, Caesar and Augustus, that can establish such a fortress of Christianity at the end of the earth. After this there is Pieter de Neyn, a functionary resident at the Cape from 1672 to 1674, who wrote occasional verses to ladies; his most

[10] *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 3 vols., ed. H. B. Thom (Cape Town: Balkema, 1952–1958).

successful poem is about the novel experience of the Southern Cross, written, like so much other extra-territorial literature while sailing to the victualling station.

By 1685 a Dutch East India Company governor at the Cape, Simon van der Stel (1639–1712), had undertaken to travel up the west coast for some two hundred miles to the land of the Namaquas, prospecting for mineral wealth. The record of his journey is another well-documented journal by an unknown author, describing the luxurious entourage of the governor, the vegetation, fish and fowl, wild animals and ceremonial meetings with Hottentots, Bushmen and the Namaquas themselves (*Daghregister der Vojagie na der Amacques land onder 't Beleyd van Commandeur van der Stel gedaan beginnende 25 Augusti 1685 en eyndigende 26 January 1686*).[11]

The arrival of several refugee Huguenots at the Cape in 1688 added variety to the settlement's population of Protestant farmers. Because the use of French was officially forbidden by the Dutch administration, even in church sermons, there is little written in French by locals, and French literature exercised no direct influence on Dutch literary activity at the Cape. But the Huguenot influx contributed to the growth of the number of free burghers, the legal farmers, and led to increasing dissension between them and the officials of the company. As some of the latter were becoming farm owners and, because of their positions in government, were able to receive farming contracts more easily than the free burghers, friction between the two inevitably arose. The free burghers developed into a new kind of settlers, the first colonists, the first permanent residents with an attitude towards the land different from that of the employees of the Dutch East India Company, who were in Africa on a temporary basis.

The *Dagregister van den Landbouwer Adam Tas* (Diary of farmer Adam Tas, 1705–6) is an example of the writings of a man who had become part of the country.[12] Tas himself (1668–1722) was a wealthy inland farmer and became one of the leaders in a protest against company officials, particularly against Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel who prospered as a farmer. Tas penned down the charges against Van der Stel's abuse of privilege. His well-written diary is of importance as a social document, but not only because of its realistic sketches of people and events. The critical attitude of the writer towards his society and its exploitative administration, and his sarcastic and vehement attacks on the governor form the first protest literature in South Africa. He was eventually imprisoned for thirteen months by Van der Stel, but his protest did succeed and the company was compelled to lift constraints on the free burghers.

Unbeknown to the early administrations, however, another imported polyglot culture flourished from the early eighteenth century under the most guarded and oppressive circumstances: the Muslim literature of theatrical performance, imported from Indonesia and Malaya, and transcribed in Arabic script, which represented and recorded the primarily oral slave responses to life at the Cape. This culture has persisted until the present time in the Cape, transformed as it was into songs of liberation and historical commentary by the eventual emancipation of the slaves in 1832.

[11] *Simons van der Stel's Journal of his Expedition to Namaqualand 1685–1686*, ed. Gilbert Waterhouse (London: Longmans, 1932).

[12] *The Diary of Adam Tas (1705–6)*, ed. Leo Fouché (London: Longmans, 1914).

The administration of Rijk Tulbagh, governor of the Cape from 1751 to 1771, was characterized by attempts towards a certain limited acknowledgement of human rights, whereby free slaves were in some cases granted equal status with whites. Tulbagh's ambition was to turn the Cape into a leisured cultural haven as well, and he founded the first library in 1761. Under his encouragement a new wave of tourist writers visited the burgeoning Cape Town, amongst them the Frenchman, J.-H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1734–1814). His spirit of romanticism, balanced as it was between appraisal of "noble savagery" and a joyful celebration of natural virtue, was to a limited extent reflected in Cape Town itself, where imported French and Dutch culture traits mingled in theatrical entertainments, while a feudal kind of rudimentary political democracy briefly held sway for the benefit of European settlers.

In the eighteenth century generally Southern Africa became the paradise of discovery for many traveller-journalists who, with Camoëns as a source-book, and Dutch know-how as their sustenance, penetrated inland in order to unearth through accurate personal observation such factual reality as might underlie the myths of epic speculation. The age of reason produced the first scientific travellers, like Linnaeus' pupils, the Swedes Carl Pieter Thunberg (1743–1828) and Andreas Sparrman (1747–1820), whose encyclopedic travelogues reflect the spirit of growing burgher independence, and replace myth-making with clinical details of indigenous peoples, flora and fauna, more or less in that order, on an evaluative and descriptive basis. French romanticism produced another colourful observer in the person of François Le Vaillant (1753–1824), who viewed the Cape as a haven for the arts and individual freedom, a respite from the tyrannies of Europe. Le Vaillant's two series of *Travels,* published in Paris and London simultaneously (1790 and 1794),[13] and sold widely in translation in many European languages, enabled the reader to share vicariously in Rousseauistic observation roaming over the banks of the Orange River, that is, through the Cape into what is currently known as the Orange Free State, and on into what is now Namibia.

Among many Dutch-speaking voyagers the names of Hendrik Jacob Wikar and Sebastiaan Valentyn should be recorded. In their descriptions of peoples and customs, the language they used shows definite and radical changes from the standard home tongue in word-usage and in syntax; Wikar, for example, used the double negative so characteristic of Afrikaans today. This type of linguistic evolution bred in isolation, combined with further protest among rural colonists against the monopolistic central administration, provides evidence of further development away from Holland and Europe among settlers of Dutch origin.

Different perspectives on the African experience can be seen in comparing two travel journals written about the same journey (1803): one is by a Hollander, W.B.E. Paravicini di Cappelli[14] and the other by an affluent, and by all accounts quite "liberal", settler-

[13] F. Le Vaillant, *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa by Way of the Cape of Good Hope in the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, 1784 and 1785,* 2 vols. (London, 1790–94). See Jane Meiring, *The Truth in Masquerade: The Adventures of François le Vaillant* (Cape Town: Juta, n.d.).

[14] *W. B. E. Paravicini di Cappelli, Reize in de binnen-landen van Zuid-Africa... 1803,* ed. W. J. de Kock (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1965).

farmer, D.G. van Reenen (1754–1828).[15] While Di Capelli criticizes the farmers for seeing the Hottentot only in terms of his servitude, and for ignoring that he was the first inhabitant of the subcontinent, Van Reenen's reaction to a convert Hottentot choir of five hundred children is that they could be of more use to the community raising cattle.

Dissatisfaction about the economic situation of the settler-farmer as against that of the Dutch officials and growing internal political awareness characterized the last phase of Dutch rule, on the eve of the British takeover in 1795. Then it was that a group of "Patriots" from Stellenbosch and the far-flung district of Graaff-Reinet, who were hostile to both Dutch rule and English intervention, decided to fight for their independence. Their attempt to resist the invading British forces under General Craig was a dismal failure, and the Patriots became the target for a satirical poem which is considered the first poem in Afrikaans, as opposed to Dutch, and one with the longest title *(Song in Honour of the Swellendam and Various Other Heroes at the Bloody Action of Muizenberg on the 7th of August, 1795)*. It was written apparently by a supporter of the capitulating Dutch administration, who chose to use the language of the Patriots themselves, as a means of ridiculing their supposed backwardness.

On the whole, however, most of the writing dealing with South Africa until the end of the eighteenth century belonged to the realm of didactic prose. It was the work of travellers, journalists and scientists of many nationalities. It was couched in a variety of languages but such authors as might be regarded as inhabitants of the country used standard Dutch rather than the local idiom which was later to become known as Afrikaans. Besides its topical unity, this large international, multilingual corpus shows evidence of a definable evolution, for each of the traveller-writers redefines his forebears. Thus Le Vaillant, in an attempt to discredit the lurid accounts of the German Peter Kolb (1675–1726)[16] uses empirical anthropological evidence to show that the societies of Bushmen, Hottentots and the first "Kaffirs" are by no means anarchic and heathenish; Sparrman[17] and Thunberg[18] convert the epic imagery of desert and hell into pictures of fruitful and promising abundance, and after two and a half centuries of ambitious quest the accumulation of knowledge is complete.

Furthermore, the international visitors to Southern Africa, from Camoëns to Le Vaillant, inspired a specifically English product: a London-based anonymous pamphleteering activity centering on fictional traveller-boasters like the mythical Baron Munchausen, whose mockery of travellers' tales of strange wonders and marvellous oddities is in line with Othello's own. The pragmatic satirists of Augustan England, in discrediting the whole sequence from Camoëns to Le Vaillant, opened the way for a century of material colonization that was to be exclusively British, and which, while taking remote control of all of Southern Africa from the Cape to the Tropic of Capricorn, would gradually but systematically convert the open internationalism of letters

[15] *Die Joernaal van Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, 1803*, W. Blommaert and J. A. Wiid. With an English translation (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1937).

[16] Peter Kolb, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope; or, A Particular Account of the Several Nations of the Hottentots...* Trans. M. Medley (London: Innys, 1731).

[17] A. Sparrman, *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*, 1772–1776, 2 vols. (London, 1785).

[18] C. P. Thunberg, *Travels in Europe, Africa and Asia ... between... 1770 and 1779*, 3rd ed., 4 vols. (London, 1795–1796).

before 1800 into the nationalistic monolingualism of a literature which was to be a mere appendage of British literature of the nineteenth century, co-existent with a strangely intolerable aberration of Dutch.

With the first British occupation of the Cape in 1795, a precaution taken by British naval power to keep Napoleon's fleet well off the Southern African coastline on the route to the Indian Ocean, and with the second occupation of a decade later, there opened for the Cape a century of British political control of the major part of the subcontinent. During the one hundred years from 1795 up to the Jameson Raid (1895) which precipitated the Second Anglo-Boer War, the colonial writers in English were subject to a rigid pattern: for local affairs they turned to a proliferating English-language newspaper network on the spot; in all other matters they deferred to London as the yardstick of their literary and aesthetic values. The Cape and Natal, the two British colonies of the nineteenth century, produced a surprisingly enormous literature which mailboats carried back and forth to the centres of British publishing: although the first printing press was imported in 1800, neither colony developed a printing and publishing industry beyond that which catered for the press and basic publications such as government proclamations. For the English-language colonial writer of the time, London was the cultural Mecca, his aim and his standard.

As the interest in exotica of earlier centuries passed into first-hand, eye-witness accounts, Southern Africa provided the insular literature of Britain with ever-increasing amounts of material. The business of matter-of-fact reporting about the interior coincides with British exploration of it through a succession of inland expeditions. Frontier-busters like Lady Anne Barnard (1750–1828), whose trip to the interior was recorded in 1789,[19] gave way to various semi-official, sponsored travellers like Andrew Smith (1797–1872) for the Association for the Exploration of Central South Africa,[20] or John Campbell (1766–1840) for the London Missionary Society.[21] By mid-century a missionary like David Livingstone (1813–1873), perhaps the most noteworthy and sympathetic traveller-reporter, could start from the mission station of Kuruman on the northern Cape border, and cross the formidable barrier of the wasteland and grassland of the Kalahari desert, last bastion of the Bushmen and Hottentots, in what is today Bostwana. Livingstone's sensational discoveries, like his being the first white man to set eyes on Lake Ngami and on the so-called Victoria Falls on the Zambezi, turned the problem of penetrating Africa from mirage into fact. Riddles derived from Herodotus about the interior regions, crammed with anthropophagi and *lusus naturae*, were solved by the onward-going missionary impulse.[22]

An early Protestant missionary, Johannes van der Kemp (1747–1811) of the London Missionary Society, later to figure as a leading character in Sarah Gertrude Millin's

[19] *Anne Barnard, South Africa a Century ago*, ed. W. H. Wilkins (London: Smith Elder, 1901).
[20] *The Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith*, ed. P. R. Kirby 2 vols. (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1939–1940).
[21] John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, 1813* (London, 1815) and *Travels in South Africa... being a Narrative of a Second Journey [1820]*, 2 vols. (London: Westley, 1822).
[22] David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: Murray, 1857) and *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries* (London: Murray, 1865).

The Burning Man (1952), has been given much of the credit for the conversion to Christianity of one of the earliest black African converts on the eastern frontier of the Cape. This convert, Ntsikana, who died in about 1821, was to become a significant symbol for the later christianized, educated black élite, for he composed four hymns in Xhosa and came to impersonate the black man's break with the "heathen past."[23] Gradually white missionaries began to exert some influence on African society, at first on the eastern frontier bordering on what is today known as the Transkei, later to the north, in the northern Cape and across the Orange River. They introduced writing, printing, and literacy. They made small inroads on the pre-literate culture of Africans. Although, wittingly or unwittingly, they sowed the seeds of the destruction of the rich oral heritage of the traditional societies on the entire subcontinent, they supplied the prerequisites for the emergence of written literatures in African languages. And while these fall outside the scope of the present study, it must be emphasized that no account of Southern African literature can claim to be complete unless it also takes into account the literary achievement in the Bantu languages of South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana and the successor states of the former Central African Federation, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi.

In the English language, however, while Livingstone's books remain documents of crucial value, the best-read and most revelatory account of the dawning heyday of the explorer, setting a pattern of fan-shaped expansion from the secure area of British influence at the Cape up the continent into Angola and East Africa, the expanding frontier produced the missionary researcher's companion figure, the big game hunter, who was often also a trader. Always a closed fraternity of individuals, the hunters told their tales of British pluck and endeavour in action. Their avidly read accounts of rough adventure, often pretending to be naive and unliterary works, vied with missionary reports in popularity, and the sacred and profane complemented one another. The hunters' records, invariably full of nonstop action sequences and accounts of spartan hardship in the field, conform to a stereotype: trophy hunting is justified on a scale which approximates to extermination on the grounds that male virility has to be proved and that nature is infinitely bountiful. The whole of the "fabled creation," as a forerunner like Captain W. Cornwallis Harris (1807–1848)[24] calls it, is an unravished paradise, ready to fall into the pot. The hunters, with their belief in an infinite and unsullied horizon, sowed the seeds of an ethic of expansionism which stresses the superiority and right of arms, and which eschews any concerns for the adversary whom, with an unconscious recognition of their rights, they named "natives".

Out of their lone treks through one of the greatest happy hunting grounds ever provided for Western firearms, there emerged a modification of the hunter's record: Victorian adventure fiction, written usually especially for "boys". Throughout the nineteenth century, boys' adventure fiction poured out of the Cape; decade after decade the terrain described may vary, but the essence of the form does not. There is no essential

[23] On Ntsikana and modern Xhosa literature in general, see Archibald C. Jordan, *Towards an African Literature. The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) and Gérard, *Four African Literatures*, chap. I.

[24] See W. C. Harris, *The Wild Spots of Southern Africa* (London: Murray, 1839).

artistic distinction in type to be made with regard to this particular genre, as it rises and endures with the notion of British supremacy over both the animal kingdom and everyone non-British, not only in Africa, but in all of the colonized world.

One of the earliest examples is E. A. Kendall's *The English Boy at the Cape: An Anglo-African Story* (1835), which features the entire colony, an area almost the size of Western Europe, as the roving ground of the British adolescent intent on becoming a man. For this type of adventure fiction where the boy hero is ritualistically initiated into the realities of life, many a British writer after Kendall found South Africa a convenient setting: Captain Marryat (1792–1848), in *The Mission, or Scenes of Africa* (1845), R. M. Ballantyne (1825–1894), H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925),[25] John Buchan (1875–1940) and such lesser luminaries as Mrs. Harriet Ward in the 1850s and Parker Gillmore in the 1880s. The form was flexible enough to accommodate reportage and anecdote, moral instruction mixed with entertainment. After the vast success of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), the line continues unbroken, even to the present time with authors like Stuart Cloete (1897–1975) and Wilbur Smith (b. 1933), in whose work the concept of a mysterious inland still prevails, quite unjustifiably. Adventure fiction of this kind functions like romance: it assumes a frontier across which experience will somehow be different, and across that imaginary barrier there is a testing ground which encourages chivalric fortitude and the endurance of self-testing. Although the cargo of factual information decreases in the genre as the news-media fill in with more and more basic information, the formula remains the same: the adventure hero returns "home" to Britain, mature, wiser, proven. It is a literature of xenophobia, particularly in its more virulently pro-Empire examples; it uses Southern Africa as an experiential playground, and then returns triumphantly to London; it is not a literature about belonging to Southern Africa.

It is only with the advent of a settled population of English speakers in Southern Africa that one can trace the beginnings of a literature that is more South African than British. The break is a delicate and difficult one to define, because it is never radical. The writer who is commonly credited with being the first South African English writer of standing is Thomas Pringle (1789–1834),[26] who arrived on the Eastern Cape frontier in 1820, as part of the first major influx of British immigrants into the new colony. Pringle was a scrupulous journalist, and founded a literary review called *The South African Journal* in 1824. But he came from a background of editing *Blackwood's Magazine* in Edinburgh so that his poems and articles remained frankly derivative from British models, particularly from the ballad style of Sir Walter Scott and the dejected meditations of romantic poets.

Although he stayed less than ten years in Africa, he was the first colonial writer to take seriously the process of cross-culturation with his environment and its indigenous art forms. His attempts at mimicry of Xhosa and Pondo songs in English indicated an appreciation of black cultural values, but the effect of this on his verse was often merely

[25] See Morton Cohen, *Rider Haggard: His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1960).

[26] Thomas Pringle, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa*; new edition (London: Moxon, 1835) and *Poetical Works* (London: Moxon, 1839). See John R. Doyle, *Thomas Pringle* (New York: Twayne, 1972).

decorative. Pringle identified cultural dilemmas within South Africa which his successors were slow to solve, and which have not entirely been resolved today. After him the decision to write for a local readership—a prerequisite for a national literature,—was postponed in favour of writing for London. It goes without saying that, although Southern African white English writers have consistently published in the metropolitan capital, their lack of support for an indigenous book industry was a severe handicap to the growth of significant writing.

After Pringle English culture in South Africa gained local audiences only in the realms of day-to-day journalism and popular theatre.[27] After *The South African Journal* was banned by an authoritarian decree for being critical of the governor's disinclination to respect local political rights, a precedent was set for the English journalists' more or less perpetual running battle against the state for the freedom of expression. There was never a year in which one or another literary review that did not actively campaign for support of the growing empire did not tempt official intervention. Often derivative, but usually wholesomely polemical and humorous (Sam Sly's *African Journal* of the 1840s is the classic example), these short-lived but lively reviews nurtured the scattered beginnings of a popular kind of poetry and fiction which remains downgraded in the eyes of South African critics who hold London as their standard to this day.

For the Dutch burghers, already settled inland for well over a century, but now subjects of a new regime, the words of Sir John Cradock, governor of the Cape from 1811, gave a political leitmotiv to the century: his intention was "to assimilate the institutions of this country to those of England." Although anglicization would become a factor only after 1820, the continuing British occupation would lead to increasing protest and eventually to a form of national unity among the Dutch- and patois-speaking white population.

Already in the last few years of the eighteenth century, the growing divergence between the developing *lingua franca* and standard Dutch, and the fact that ordinary people across a wide social spectrum were using the patois as their daily means of communication, became important to newspapers such as *De Verzamelaar* in Cape Town, founded by the Frenchman Charles Etienne Boniface (1787–1853) and the Portuguese J. Suasso de Lima (1791–1858), both writers seeking direct contact with the populace. They and others like L. H. Meurant (1811–1893) used various literary forms, such as the satirical play and farce, the dialogue, rhymes and letters—all written in "Hottentot-Afrikaans," "farmer-Afrikaans" or "Cape Afrikaans"—to satirize various social and historical anomalies. Meurant himself was a magistrate on the frontier at Cradock in the Eastern Cape, and he supported a separatist movement on the part of the Dutch burghers in the local newspaper, *The Cradock News*, in the form of polemics like the *Zamenspraak tusschen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twijfelaar over het onderwerp van Afscheiding tusschen de Oostelijke en Westelijke Provincie* (A dialogue between Klass Waarzegger and Jan Twijfelaar on the subject of separation between the eastern and

[27] A. M. I. Robinson, *None Daring to Make us Afraid: A Study of English Periodical Literature in the Cape from its Beginnings in 1824 to 1835* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1962).

western provinces, 1800). Although such works may not have had much political impact, they did have a propagandist effect with regard to the language he used, leading to various debates in the press in "Afrikaans."

An early attempt to adapt vaudeville theatre routines to the indigenous languages was a sketch by Andrew Geddes Bain (1796–1864), entitled *Kaatje Kekkelbek*, which in 1839 and thereafter achieved legendary popularity. The language of Bain's ribald Hottentot heroine derives from the frontier market-place of Grahamstown, and features a hotch-potch of Dutch, Afrikaans, English and even Xhosa expressions that is a model of possibilities for demotic language in Southern Africa. Subtitled *Life among the Hottentots*, Bain's sketch parodies the English folk-song of the maiden in distress by grafting skilful political jibes onto a genuine appeal for the plight of the Hottentot, beset with missionaries, judges and lethal alcohol. Kaatje's steadfast protest, in language expressive of real problems, betrays a creolization of language that was not followed through in official South African culture.

In the background of Kaatje's tirade is an event which has subsequently gained a central position in the growing mythology of the rise of Afrikaans: the so-called Great Trek inland by the Boers fleeing the British-administered Cape area. To the rural Boers the emancipation of slaves represented a breakdown of the pastoral economy, and the trek away from the British represented a bid for independence from colonial domination. By the end of the 1830s and 40s this migration had culminated in the establishment of the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

The diary of the voortrekker Louis Trichardt (1783–1838),[28] was written during the period 1836 to 1838. Originally the purpose of the diary was modest enough: to relate information to other voortrekkers—"to tell my nation which Kafir captains are good or bad"—and to keep stock of his belongings. But it became a book about a marathon trek across the central Drakensberg, ruled by Moshesh, founder of the Basotho nation, and on to the east coast harbour of Lourenço Marques (now Maputo in Mozambique), with nine waggons and many cattle. It was an epic of endurance and suffering which ended in the death of its pioneering leader; it was also a story of the people, of their brave struggles with nature and one another.

The diary of Erasmus Smit (1778–1863), a record of the trekkers' journeyings from 1836 to 1839, reveals a more cultured man; suspicious and difficult, he was not really accepted by the voortrekkers themselves, least of all by their leader, Sarel Cilliers, despite the fact that he was the unofficial parson on the trek (the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape was reluctant to give these dissidents an ordained minister). But this diary is valuable as a sourcebook of major events, such as the killing of Piet Retief during the trekkers' application for a grant of land from the Zulu empire under Dingaan in Natal, and their defence of their laager of waggons during the offensive of the Matebele forces of Mzilikazi's empire at the Battle of Vegkop in 1836.

Sarel Cilliers himself (1801–1871) became the hero of the Battle of Blood River in 1838, at which the Boer-Zulu confrontation resulted in a catastrophic Zulu defeat as

[28] Gustav S. Preller, *Dagboek van Louis Trichardt, 1836–1838* (Bloemfontein, 1917; rev. ed. Cape Town, 1938).

Western firearms met assegai and shield in a crucial contest that led to the eventual breaking of the central and eastern Southern African black tribes and to their dispossession. Cilliers was a Puritan, a fanatical believer in the Old Testament and in the parallel between the Exodus of the children of Israel and that of the Afrikaner from the Cape to the promised land. His diary, written in 1870 in broken Afrikaans-Dutch and in biblical style, is a testimony of much of the heroic glamour and invincible courage of the Boer pioneers.

As most of the Boer republicans were illiterate, it was left to their élite to create an appropriate literature: intelligent and critical social documents were penned by the president of the South African Republic (i.e. the Transvaal), T. F. Burgers (1834–1881), for example. In the 1870s the president of the Orange Free State, F. W. Reitz (1843–1934), settled on Afrikaans primarily as a means of reaching his people, rather than because of any interest he may have had in its development from Dutch; he was skilful at translating and adapting poets like Robert Burns, William Cowper and Sir Walter Scott into the vernacular.[29]

Back in the Cape political developments had led to the passing of the Cape Ordinance Amendment Act, 1872, giving the colony the right to form responsible government. To a certain extent this attainment of self-government fulfilled the free burghers' dream, but with an ironic difference: although the white Afrikaans-speaking population accounted for almost three quarters of the total white population of the Cape, only one third of the representatives came from their ranks. This factor, together with the steady process of anglicization, the annexation of diamond-fields from Free State territory, and the British policy towards the two independent republics, was bound to create a growing national consciousness among Afrikaners throughout the subcontinent. Indeed, the discovery of diamonds ultimately proved to be an event of enormous significance for the later course of the various streams in South African literature. By 1871 Kimberley had a total population of at least 50,000 and had become the first industrial town in South Africa. Mercantile capital began to give way to mining capital, urban life began to rival rural life and to change it irrevocably. The railways, previously next to non-existent, snaked inland for hundreds of miles. For the Boers the impact of British imperialism became inevitable and immediate. The further discovery of gold on the Rand in 1886 was eventually to lead to a conflict between Boer agriculture and mining capital in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) and, together with the shortage of land caused by the limitation on Boer expansion in the 1890s, it resulted in the proletarianization of many Afrikaners after the war.

These social changes are very much in evidence in the works of Olive Schreiner (1855–1920), the first South African-born writer to achieve international stature.[30] She

[29] C. J. Burger, "F. W. Reitz: Eerste Afrikaanse digter en sy verband met die Genootskap," *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 15 (1975), 72–83.

[30] In this capacity, Olive Schreiner has attracted considerable scholarly attention. See notably: S. C. Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life of Olive Schreiner* (London: Fischer, 1924); Vera Buchanan-Gould, *Not without Honour: The Life and Writings of Olive Schreiner* (London: Hutchinson, 1948); E. Verster, *Olivia Emilie Albertina Schreiner: A Bibliography* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Libraries, 1949); A. C. Partridge, "Olive Schreiner: The Literary Aspect," *South African PEN Yearbook* (Johannesburg, 1955); D. L. Hobman,

was the daughter of a missionary, and native to the Cape. For her the pole of experience was that same inland which the hunters and missionaries had imagined to be the earth's end. For that very reason, an implicit theme in her first novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) is that missionaries and hunters are deceivers: she took her inspiration and example mostly from American, not British authors. Ralph Waldo Emerson showed her that literature could be bred out of local soil, and from him she developed a notion that no colonial writer need conform to the literary hegemony of any power structure outside his/her immediate experience. Her savage caricature of the imperial interloper, in the shape of Bonaparte Blenkins, is evidence of this.

Schreiner's novel, probably the first to emerge from any British colony with distinction and with telling artistic validity, is, in effect, a rich and mocking elegy of the period dating from 1800 to the exploitation of the diamond fields, the traumatic event of which she had first-hand experience. Her African farm itself is a remote and isolated agrarian society, feudal in relation to its servant class, fundamental in its religious orthodoxies. It resists British invasion, and it nurtures its own brand of first-generation colonial-born youngsters, striving for roots in the beginnings of a modern world. In the final pages of the novel the community faces the coming of the railway tracks, no less.

One of Schreiner's major themes in the novel is the woman's right to liberation in individual terms, a theme which is related to her overall theme that colonial dependence is a form of moral and literary slavery.[31] Whereas Pringle returned "home" to become secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, Schreiner fought for emancipation of the spirit in a colonial backwater. In order to confront its mundanity and its conformist values, she dealt with "problems" that were rare even in the vastly comprehensive Victorian novels of her contemporaries George Eliot and Thomas Hardy: love without marriage, marriage without love, illegitimacy and abortion. Her heroine's fight for her right to self-determination, even though it demands the sacrifice of her young and hopeful life to the oppressive conditions of the times, adumbrates the central theme of post-Schreiner fiction in white South Africa, the liberal realism of the novelists wrestling with the rule of power. Given the urgency of Schreiner's mission to create a South African literature in English, it is a comment on the strength of her commitment that she turned from fiction to pamphleteering and polemical lecturing in order to define further the status of the colonial-born white.

Olive Schreiner: Her Friends and Times (London: Watts, 1955); Marion V. Friedmann, *Olive Schreiner: A Study in Latent Meanings* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1955); *Until the Heart Changes: A Garland for Olive Schreiner*, ed. Zelda Friedlander (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1967); Ursula Laredo, "Olive Schreiner," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 8 (1969), 107–124, repr. in Parker, *The South African Novel in English*, (1978), pp. 27–45; R. Davis, *Olive Schreiner, 1920–1971: A Bibliography* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1972); Ridley Beeton, *Olive Schreiner: A Short Guide to her Writings* (Cape Town: Timmins, 1974); R. Beeton, "In Search of Olive Schreiner in Texas", *Texas Quarterly*, 17,3 (1974), 105–154; Emily Toth, "The Independent Women and 'Free' Love," *Massachusetts Review*, 16 (1975), 647–664; Joyce Berkman, "The Nurturant Fantasies of Olive Schreiner," *Frontiers: Journal of Women Studies*, 2, 3 (1977), 8–17; and Ruth First and Ann Scott, *Olive Schreiner: A Biography* (London: Deutsch, 1980).

[31] Of special interest in this respect are Christopher Heywood's essays: "Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm:* Prototype of Lawrence's Early Novels," *English Languages Notes*, 14 (1976), 44–50, and "Olive Schreiner's Influence on George Moore and D. H. Lawrence," in his *Aspects of South African Literature*, pp. 42–53.

The gold-rush and the discovery of diamonds profoundly affected the black population, whom they certainly failed to enrich. The status of the blacks had already been infamously lower than that of the whites, and Kimberley began a process of enormous consequence to black society and ultimately black literature, for the mines chose to become almost wholly dependent on cheap black life and labour. Patterns of culture were hence irrevocably established. A complete revolution, conducted with extreme violence, was imposed on African society, as the mine-owners chose to exclude the blacks from all but the meanest employment. Mine compounds and a migrant labour system ensured minimal continuity and hence minimal permanent culture and literature. Separated "locations" for blacks also set the pattern for future cultural expression and themes within that expression. The pattern of life in separated townships is the well-known preoccupation of far later writers, from Ezekiel Mphahlele (b. 1919) to Mongane Wally Serote (b. 1944).

Literary response by blacks to the new revolution was understandably slow and, in this period, confined to a small élite. For the vast majority of the new proletariat work was too hard for rarefied pursuits, such as creative writing; even had there been much literacy, the attractions of such things as liquor were far stronger. Literary response was confined, therefore, to that small band of mission-educated blacks who, because of their education, could acquire relatively privileged jobs as interpreters, teachers and clergymen in the new urban areas. The significant literary event in black writing of the period was surely the emergence of the first black newspapers, particularly *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Native opinion, founded 1884). It was edited by a Xhosa journalist, John Tengo Jabavu (1859–1921) and is still in existence today. But a decade later *Izwi Labantu* (Voice of the people, founded 1897) was to challenge Jabavu's domination of black journalism. For many years black newspapers were to remain the major outlets for black writers using mostly vernacular languages.

The significance of the process of change from pre-literacy to literacy, from rural to industrial, is poignantly recalled by Sol T. Plaatje (1876–1932), who lived through its crucial phases, in his preface to his collection, *Sechuana Proverbs* (1916). Describing the effects of an early Setswana newspaper on a rural community, he wrote:

> During the first week of each month the native peasants in Bechuanaland, and elsewhere, used to look forward to its arrival as eagerly as the white up-country farmers now await the arrival of the daily papers. How little did the writer dream, when frequently called upon as a boy to read the news to groups of men sewing karosses under the shady trees outside the cattle fold, that journalism would afterwards mean his bread and cheese.

The end of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings among the élite, often in imitation of whites, of debating societies, literary groups and "improvement" societies. The "talk"—on such subjects as "Reading", "Civilization and its advantages to the African Races" and "The History of the Bechuanas" (actual topics)—became a new medium. More often than not the talk was *read*. It was at such a talk in 1895 that Patrick Lenkoane, an interpreter in Kimberley, locally known for his humour, ironically stated the tragic position of the blacks when he said that "the natives of this country have

caught hold of civilization by the tail, and not by the head, and it is therefore dangerous to them." He left unstated that no other part of the body had been offered them. By the turn of the century, however, there were about 230,000 literate blacks in Southern Africa outside Natal. It was perhaps just enough for a real beginning.

A parallel movement towards literacy, which would detach Afrikaans from its bondage to Dutch, was set in motion when the Hollander, Dr. A. Pannevis, opened a debate in the columns of *Die Zuid-Afrikaan* on the matter of the Bible being translated into Afrikaans for use by the Coloured population, who could not read the Dutch Bible. Pannevis wrote to the British Bible Society, stating that "in the course of years, partly by the neglect of the mother tongue, a dialect has been formed, idiomatically quite different from the Holland-Dutch." To his request that this translation be sponsored, they replied: "We are by no means inclined to perpetuate jargons by printing Scriptures in them."

But the matter did not end there. By 1875, a group of enthusiasts had decided that the translation remained a priority if Afrikaans were to become the written language of the people. This group of eight, under the dynamic leadership of the Rev. S. J. du Toit (1847–1911), calling themselves Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Association of True Afrikaners) proclaimed their determination "to stand for our language, our nation, our country", and they initiated the publishing of their own newspaper and an Afrikaans dictionary. It is interesting to note that they made a point of mentioning the fact that they were all Christians. Their creed, and the fact that they were seriously concerned about the languages of the masses, together with the words of their "national anthem", made this group more than a society to propagate a language: they were initiating a national movement.

The purpose of their newspaper, *Die Patriot*, was not only to spread the knowledge of "Afrikaans history" and of Afrikaans grammar, and to broadcast relevant news; it was also to publish poems by readers. It would therefore be a political and cultural mouthpiece for the as yet unformed nation, and also an outlet for creative efforts in Afrikaans. The importance of this paper can be seen in the fact that after the British annexation of the Transvaal—an event which precipitated the First Anglo-Boer war (1886) by which the Transvaal maintained its independance,—it was instrumental in the formation of the Afrikanerbond in the Cape, a powerful organization aiming to unify all whites who accepted South Africa as their only homeland.

The Genootskap and its newspaper were also responsible for producing the first books in Afrikaans once they had acquired their own printing press: these included a grammar, a history, a novel, a reading book for children, and eventually an anthology of poems from the *Patriot*. In spite of tremendous opposition from the English press, the supporters of Dutch, the Dutch church and the education authorities—all of whom considered Afrikaans a "kitchen" language with no future,—the *Patriot* became increasingly popular. Because of official hostility, the men of the Genootskap eventually were driven into holding secret meetings.

The popularity of this movement among white Afrikaans-speakers was most convincingly demonstrated by the fact that writers were beginning to use the language for

novels, poems and plays. Du Toit himself wrote the first significant poem in Afrikaans about the relationship between colonizer and native, "Hoe die Hollanders die Kaap ingeneem het" (How the Hollanders took the Cape). The narrator of the poem is a Griqua, who relates in elementary language and metaphor how the Hollanders arrived out of the sea in an object resembling an enormous "water goose". He tells of the deceitful bartering by the white men, of the small piece of land they requested, as small as a cowhide, but:

Hoor nou hoe skelm die Duusvolk is:
Hul sny die vel in riempies rond,
En net so lank as die riem is,
Sê hulle toen dis hulle grond!
Hul meet al in die rond.[32]

The story does not end there, for the Dutchmen bring for barter an enormous bar of copper, which the Griquas pull from the sea, front-end facing them. While they are hauling, the Dutch fire this cannon from the other end. Which, the poem explains, is why the Griquas live far inland. Another poet of this time, M. H. Neser (1874–1932), wrote "Klaaglied van die laaste Boesman" (Lament of the last Bushman), whose speaker is once more the wronged native, itemizing the evils the cruel white man has inflicted on him. But here the stances of the two poems differ: where Du Toit's Griqua is straightforward and quite naive, Neser's Bushman is proud and bitter; where the Griqua finds the whole episode a joke, the Bushman protests.

The most successful poems of the time are those anonymous pieces which provide a social image of the Afrikaner farmer in his robust, rough, almost Brueghel-like wedding feasts so admired by Schreiner, in the surprisingly bizarre relationships between lovers and between husband and wife.

However, poets who would later become key Afrikaans writers, like Eugène N. Marais (1871–1936), were writing in English. Marais' patriotic verses celebrating the Boer victory over the British at the Battle of Majuba during the First Anglo-Boer War were indeed in English, and he even satirized anglicization in an English poem called "Anglified Africanders."[33] Nevertheless, in defending the right to maintain Dutch as an official language, such writers could obliquely protest against the dominance of English. In this regard newspapers such as *De Zuid-Afrikaan* and *Het Zuid-Afrikaansch Tijdschrift* supported the Bond, with its motto of "Africa for the Afrikaners": in 1882, the Cape parliament promoted Dutch to the rank of official second language. This move, which was necessarily to prove of decisive importance for the future of Afrikaans and of its literature, was part of a conciliatory trend designed to culminate in a federation of South African states under the British flag, an ideal which was upheld by both the Afrikanerbond and Cecil Rhodes. Up in Transvaal, where the gold was, there was also less harmony. President Krüger did not hide his antipathy to the *uitlanders* (the British

[32] Hear how sly the Dutchmen are: they cut the hide into strips, and they say their land is just as long as this strip is. They measure it all around.

[33] F. Rossouw, *Eugène Nielsen Marais: Bibliografie* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1958). See also a special issue of *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 12 (1972).

foreigners), who profited most by the underground wealth; Rhodes, at the time Prime Minister in the Cape, organized the notorious Jameson raid (1895) allegedly in order to bring relief to the persecuted *uitlanders* in the Transvaal republic. The expedition ended in disaster, Rhodes had to resign, but the stage was set for a showdown between Boer and British.

It was during those troubled years that du Toit published the first full-scale novel in Afrikaans, *Die Koningin van Sheba of Salomo syn oue goudfelde in Sambesia* (The Queen of Sheba, or Solomon's old goldfield in Zambezia, 1896). Written in the tradition of earlier surveys of the interior, it is a supposed report by the author as an active participant of a journey into Matebeleland to the ruins of Zimbabwe. At the grave of the last Queen of Sheba, the travellers discover antique scripts, and from them the story of Sheba's mining link with Africa is told. The novel tapped the same myth of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that Haggard had romanticized in *King Solomon's Mines*, and likewise asserted that the ancient ruins of interior African kingdoms are anything but African in origin.

The reaction of untrained readers to this novel was significant of an inability—which still exists among some fundamentalist Afrikaners today—to exercise a willing suspension of disbelief. They insisted on knowing whether this was fact or fiction (i.e. lies), and whether a Christian should take notice of lies. Du Toit's answer, like Bunyan's before him, was that his novel was neither history nor a lie, and if the intention of an author was to clarify certain matters by using fiction, that was legitimate. After all, he replied, "The Bible is full of fictitious stories." The main question to be asked about such a story was whether it succeeds in its aim. The writer claimed that his purpose was to revive by the use of old manuscripts and through his own observations of these relics, the time of Solomon himself and his legendary gold-mines, "so that the desire to read, an interest in, and even a historical knowledge of the old times, can be stimulated among readers."

This same mystical never-never land of promise over the border in Rhodesia was the harshly realistic terrain of Olive Schreiner's second novel, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897).[34] Commonly taken to be an attack on the effects of Rhodes' policy of bypassing the Transvaal on the way north, this skilfully aimed novel brought to a head all the issues which characterize the schism of the last years of the nineteenth century, the same factors which culminate in the holocaust of the war three years later. That Schreiner knew quite well that her century was poised on the edge of outright aggression which would destroy the bucolic order is shown in a story entitled, appropriately, *Eighteen-Ninety-Nine*, which depicts the coming of mechanized war to the promised land.

Trooper Peter Halket itself is compounded out of eye-witness accounts that Schreiner assembled from mercenaries and colonial soldiers returning to Kimberley, the wounded and repatriated veterans of the little-publicized campaign of conquest of black territories in Mashonaland and Matebeleland. Her portrait of the fictional trooper,—

[34] Stephen Gray, "Schreiner's Trooper at the Hanging Tree," *English in Africa* 2, 2 (1975), 23–37.

country lad raised on the teaching of a gentle, homely Jesus and the virtues of the English countryside,—brought out to confront another pastoral culture across the barrel of a machine-gun, is an identical picture of the colonial conqueror. The mood of the novel is meditative and psychological, probing as it does the human feelings of a not-inhumane pawn in a dehumanizing military game. Schreiner uses a somewhat etherealized Christ himself as a sounding board for her representative of imperial expansionism, and with forceful ironies builds up a powerful protest against the business of crushing the tribes (she shows that whether they are the black tribes of Rhodesia, or the Afrikaner tribes of Central South Africa, the issues are the same). Using her trooper as a façade, she is able to expose the unspeakable, which she shows is to him unassimilable: mass hangings, the atrocities of razing villages and massacring men, women and children, and the humbling of the scattered into labour units. The scorched-earth policy, the burning of local food supplies and the dispersal of well-integrated and self-sustaining communities is shown to be the run-of-the-mill method of colonial conquest. The literature of Britain itself was silent on such issues.

As to the second Anglo-Boer war, its main literary consequence was to revive South Africa as a popular theme for the Western imagination. In the present context, it is necessary at least to evoke the vast literature of reportage which was generated in the English language: it could not but be of genuine importance for the literature of South Africa proper since local writers of English were still and for a long time to look up to London for models and appraisal. Many of those works produced by citizens of the United Kingdom were written essentially to give background, and the cachet of experience, to the realities behind the daily news. Correspondents of the leading London newspapers featured extensively, often in heroic roles, during the war itself, as if the interminable struggle that pitted the flower of imperial arms against a handful of independent-minded Boer guerillas were no more than a media-attraction featuring Kitchener of Khartoum fame, Lord Roberts, and so on, as star performers before the readers of the tabloids. This war was also the first to reach Europe on newsreel films. The reporter-as-adventurer gained formidable credibility, notably in the persons of Winston Churchill and Edgar Wallace, the first modern-day journalists to bring back the news, and bring it back alive.

This "Boer" War was such a testing-ground for young honour on the British side that there is hardly a British adventure writer who did not weigh in with his version of the struggle[35]: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), creator of Sherlock Holmes, duly wrote his *The Great Boer War* (1900), and A. E. W. Mason (1865–1948), G. A. Henty (1832–1902) and many others used the war as endlessly colourful and exciting material. Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement in 1908, derived part of his bush-tracking zeal from the same war. For Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) the war was a watershed experience, too, for, as temporary editor of the pro-British newspaper, *The Friend,* published in the capital of the conquered Orange Free State, he took his personification of the British foot soldier, Tommy Atkins, through yet another holocaust

[35] See Daniel J. Weinstock, "The Two Boer Wars and the Jameson Raid: A Checklist of Novels in English," *Research in African Literatures,* 3, 1 (1972), 60–67.

of dubious joviality. Yet Kipling's short stories about the struggle, like "A Sahib's War" (1901) and "The Captive" (1902), reflect somewhat sombrely on the raw savagery of battle stripped of its heroic justifications. Both works foreshadow the pessimism and disillusion of his own and many other British writers' fiction of the period that would take on a permanent tone of doubt over the disintegration of aristocratic virtue in post-World War I fiction.

The conflict itself inspired very little immediate literary activity beyond that disseminated by the internal press and its related publications in the fields of biography and autobiography. So extensively absorbing did the war prove, nevertheless, that it created a vogue which is unprecedented in British literary history: that of publishing as hot news items the memoirs of the leading characters of the "other" side. Instant English translations were issued of works like *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger* (from the Dutch, 1902),[36] and accounts of campaigns from the enemy side. In the same year the charismatic Burgher general, Ben Viljoen (1868–1917), published his exposure of the true ignominy of the defeat of the Boer democratic spirit in his *Reminiscences* (1902), written directly in English as an appeal for clemency and an assertion of the loser's dignity.[37] The journals in English from the defeated side, often written as field diaries fleshed out during years in concentration camps, constitute a literature of engagement that was read not only by the pro-Boer liberal public of the time, but also by the general reader, as evidence of the regrettable tragedy of war. That the war itself should ultimately have been fought out in the London newspapers and literary reviews, rather than in the South African press, is an irony which indicates the awesome power of British control over all of South Africa's communication networks.

In the first decade of the twentieth century there appeared only one work of fiction in English which gained extensive popularity, and which may be said to encapsulate an outsider's view of the period. First printed in 1910, it had gone into eighteen printings by 1913. It is *The Dop Doctor* by Richard Dehan (pseudonym of Clothilde Graves, 1863–1932), which presents the siege and relief of Mafeking as a heroic justification of British imperial strategy and the vindication of a belief in the righteousness and superiority of the British cause. *The Dop Doctor* contains the pro-Jingo argument of the type which offers the stereotypical portrait of the Boer as backward and despicably primitive, and the black man as a shadow figure behind the civilizing foreground, an appendage of an argument over what to do with his labour.

It is not until 1928 that the news events crystallized, however, into a work of sufficient dignity and cohesion to withstand the changeable appetites of the newspaper reader. When Deneys Reitz (1882–1944) first published his *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War* the détente between Britain and her subject provinces in Southern Africa was sufficiently established for the work to symbolize humanitarian feelings about the tragic, but by now lost, events. The son of F. W. Reitz, the poetaster former president and State Secretary to President Kruger in the Transvaal during the war, and the great-grandson of a Boer who numbered Thomas Pringle and Sir Walter Scott among

[36] *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger*, 2 vols. (London: Unwin, 1902).
[37] Ben Viljoen, *My Reminiscences of the Anglo-Boer War* (London: Hood, 1902).

his intimate friends, Deneys Reitz himself symbolized the underlying union between the two white groups of Southern Africa which the war had supposedly temporarily split asunder. He returned to South Africa from exile to translate his own field journals from homespun Dutch into workable African English (which his editors at Faber and Faber saw fit to sub-edit into standard gentleman's English), thereby making a gesture of reconciliation between the two sides. *Commando* remains a classic of that struggle, reflecting as it does a certain lost glory and a sense of the doomladen fall of the independent-minded Boer patriot in the face of a conquered, but unifying, South Africa.

Reitz's work and life illustrate not only the complexity of the white man's predicament in South Africa, but also the close intertwining of metropolitan and African writing as branches of the single tree of English literature, at a time when the concept of Commonwealth literature had not yet been evolved, let alone of a specific South African literature with its own national identity.[38] Nevertheless, the war did produce two English-language novelists whose work is underestimated within Southern Africa today, precisely because it was produced for internal consumption: they are Douglas Blackburn (1857–1928)[39] and Perceval Gibbon (1867–1926), both British journalists who spent more than the few war years in South Africa, and whose entire output relates to the traumatic Southern African climate of affairs before and after the war. Blackburn stands in a line of independent English journalists, the stoic and resolute embodiments of the freedom of the press, for in the years between the Jameson Raid and the outbreak of the war he was editor-proprietor of no fewer than four critical weekly tabloids in succession, each of which had to wage a battle against press controls in the increasingly self-defensive Transvaal under Kruger. Blackburn himself, as a working man's spokesman, was pro-Boer in his sympathies, and corresponded for the British press from behind the Boer lines, much as his heroine, Olive Schreiner, was wont to do, even as a detainee of the occupying British forces.

Out of this unique British experience behind the scenes Blackburn wrote a trilogy of novels—*Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp* (1899), *A Burgher Quixote* (1903) and *I Came and Saw* (1908)—which began as a local satire of Boer gullibility and susceptibility to graft and nepotism in the old republic, but which developed into one of the most agonized statements of human perplexity and degradation. Using a young burgher, Sarel Erasmus, as his mouthpiece throughout the series, Blackburn found his satirical sketches broadening into picaresque naturalism, a style which could include a full panorama of the war and its human toll. As experiments in the English language, these works are more potent than any others of the period, for Blackburn chose to write in a regional idiom, adapting Afrikaans cadence into English in a way which would be echoed by other writers like Pauline Smith, Herman Charles Bosman and Alan Paton in the decades to come. Perceval Gibbon in his major work of the period, *Margaret Harding* (1911), likewise synthesized Afrikaans with English in a way that bridges the gap between Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* and the twentieth century.

[38] On this point, see Albert Gérard, "On the Definition of English Literature," *Southern Review* (Adelaide), 11, 3 (1978), 219–225.

[39] Stephen Gray, "Douglas Blackburn: Unknown Writer, Unknown Work." *UNISA English Studies*, 14, 2/3 (1976), 44–51.

Later in the decade, however, the accent in English fiction of South African inspiration shifted from the Boer-British confrontation to what would become the central conflict of all succeeding South African literature in English by white writers: the so-called colour problem. Blackburn is at the fulcrum, for in the same year that his Boer War trilogy concluded with Sarel Erasmus's hilarious visit to London (1908), he also published a novel called *Leaven: A Black and White Story*. It is again a work written from inside, but this time it is an attempt to write from inside the black African experience of the British empire. The content of *Leaven* is derived more from Blackburn's ability to parody his forebears than from any successful identification with the black man: the book's central reference point is not the reality of the predicament of a black starved out of his home territory into becoming a labour unit on the Witwatersrand gold mines, but previous works which hold up the nineteenth-century idea of the black man as a noble and amenable savage. The hero of *Leaven* is specifically a parodic figure: his name is Bulalie (the killer), which it is no coincidence to remark is also one of the patronymics of Haggard's hero, Umslopagaas, the all-purpose, obedient, deferential Zulu hero, a projection of the white man's desires, and the other half of his Prospero-like magical powers. In Blackburn's eyes, in the devastation of the post-war period, Haggard's Zulu turns into a manipulated victim; his trusty spear is discarded in favour of the more painful heroism of personal survival, his encounters with the missionary element are turned into incidents of anguished exploitation and, unlike Umslopagaas, Bulalie meets his end, ironically and brutally, at the hands of uncaring white bureaucracy. Although in *Leaven* Blackburn appears to flirt with segregationist ideas popular at the time, his own anthropological interests, as reflected in his articles for the London *New Age*, show him to be a consistent socialist, one who came in turn to admire black socialism as he had admired Boer socialism before, and one in whose work the systematic exposure of the cruel ironies of victimization under capitalist domination is moving and abundantly powerful.

The prevailing notion of what fiction of the post-war period should be, however, was not Blackburn's. Whereas he had chosen to "write local" in the face of Britain, Britain herself elected to nominate the long-lasting adventure novel, which is officially celebrated in South Africa to this day, as its finest statement in literature. John Buchan's *Prester John* (1910) is the single work best remembered from this period, and in contrast to Blackburn's realism, Buchan (1875–1940) is a writer of the fantasy of unconscious wish-fulfilment. To Buchan in *Prester John* the entire Boer War was merely a shadowy event which precipitated his own mission to Southern Africa as one of Lord Milner's reconstructionists, the "young men" of the "kindergarten" who were charged with post-war recovery programmes and the building of an entrenched infrastructure designed to lead, with the union of the four provinces in 1910, to one South African network of trade, industry, education and communications. In *Prester John* the Boers play an ignominious part: they are relegated to a role in the wings, while centre stage is occupied by the British juggernaut. Typically of the genre, the juggernaut here is a teenage drop-out who blossoms in Africa, the perpetual wonderland which offers the unemployed British subject a field day in the easy acquisition of experience and money. Buchan's Davie Crawfurd leaves Scotland with a few pounds, and returns before his

twenty-first birthday a millionaire. Despite the fact that Blackburn had already somewhat brutally parodied this type of adventure hero in *Richard Hartley, Prospector* (1906), —a novel which features an under-educated youth out from England whose natural talents fail to develop and who is led into disaster and oblivion in the hell-holes of the Rand,—Buchan presses on with a reassertion of the myth of the superiority of the British boy.

But Buchan's background in *Prester John* is a new one. His key theme throughout the novel is the fear of renewed "native" uprising, which is personified in the form of his black hero, Rev. John Laputa, a character far more impressive than the genre had demanded till then. In the strangely true imaginative world of the adventure romance, Laputa emerges larger than fiction: a character built from white apprehensions into unconsciously heroic stature. Although Buchan is never able to comment upon the implications of what his novel actually says and does, *Prester John* remains a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that the British felt the necessity to crush such fearsome phantoms. Laputa's own empire-building tendencies, which in Buchan's eyes derive from the Prester John of the sixteenth century through a secret line of African resistance and cohesion to his own time, are matched by the greater power of Edwardian unification programmes. The equation is a simple one: Pax Britannica survives on war, war against other nascent empires ensures greater peace—for the foreseeable future. Laputa is utterly destroyed, together with all of African resistance. (The fantasy is not particularly specific with regard to where or how such resistance might have grown, though much of the background derives from the prevailing fear of the spread of Ethiopianism, separatist black churches which were widely regarded as religious cloaks for revolution; this fear was also a reflex action against the rise of the black élite and its possible competitive threat). And the roads and railways can push further inland like an enclosing net.

Under the cover of that British net, the Union of South Africa was brought into being. At first, for its white English writers, Union was a baffling and inhibiting experience. Before Union the lines of communication were well established: writers either visited South Africa (like Anthony Trollope in 1877 or like Mark Twain in 1896) or, like Olive Schreiner, they were born there; but all deferred to London or New York as their publishing centres. After Union the sense of a new identity for the writer in South Africa was slow to develop. By 1910 a split occurred which had deadening results in the shaping of this literary history, for as black writers grew under the British flag into being African writers, the white writers did not take the equivalent step in belonging to the subcontinent—they tended to remain British writers, even if they had not experienced, or even been to, the British Isles. It is a fact that whereas black writers in English in Southern Africa are commonly classified as African, white writers generally are pigeon-holed as English writers who happen to reflect African experience. For the white writer, Union did not immediately produce a literature that was more South African than anything else, essentially African in quality and concerns. This identity crisis is the sole cause of a cessation of significant activity after 1910, a vacuum that developed in white South African writing in English. One of its effects was the failure to react to World War I,

which remained a distant affair, supposedly unrelated to the nascence of a truly African white South African English voice in literature.

After the Anglo-Boer War Johannesburg came to replace Kimberley as the economic heart of South Africa. The total population of Johannesburg had increased from 3,000 in 1887 to more than 100,000 by 1899, and to over 250,000 by 1914. But the black literature which Johannesburg was to inspire would also take time to develop. The majority of blacks who came to Joannesburg, to be either miners or domestic servants, were non-literate. The élite of missionary-educated intellectuals was very small: these were literate in their own languages and had no common organization by the time the Union was formed. The first overseas-trained black lawyers were "produced" after the Anglo-Boer war. After a while, a few doctors graduated. Because of the less rigorous training needed there were more teachers, clergymen, interpreters and clerks.

The year 1906 saw the last open rural resistance struggle, Zulu chief Bambata's "rebellion" in Natal. Henceforth, black political resistance would take alternative forms: among these would be industrial combinations such as the strike action of 1920. After the Anglo-Boer war the educated élite began to perceive the desirability of political groupings: democratic political action did not then seem to them a closed book—the argument was that standards of "civilization" and education should qualify a man for political and social equality, irrespective of colour. Hence such groups as the Transvaal Vigilance Association, headed by the teacher S. M. Makgatho, were formed after the turn of the century. Petitions, protest letters and political pamphlets became an early form of writing for the literate and educated. To push the interests of class and respective groups, a small proliferation of newspapers occurred after the war. In Mafeking in 1901 Silas Molema (d. 1927) began *Koranta ea Becoana* which was printed in Tswana and English and was edited by Sol Plaatje; in Natal, Zulu writer John Dube (1870–1949), launched *Ilanga Lase Natal* in 1903.[40] And there were several small beginnings in the Transvaal. Many early writers were perforce also journalists, and many would-be writers found their only outlets in writing for newspapers. The political essay, the editorial, the biography, the obituary and occasionally poems were all new forms of writing.

The educated élite became increasingly nationalist in outlook. Partly in response to Union in 1910, four lawyers, headed by Pixley Seme (c. 1880–1951), a graduate from Columbia and Oxford, helped found the South African Native National Congress in 1912. This organization started a newspaper, *Abantu Batho*, the following year. Printed in Johannesburg, it was the first really successful black Reef newspaper. It lasted until 1931, but unfortunately few copies seem to have survived: the absence of a complete picture of its effects on black social and intellectual life is a major gap in the study of the history of black South African literature. The fact that this first really consistent organ of expression of a certain class of blacks was not started until twenty-seven years after the foundation of Johannesburg indicate the difficulties in establishing a written literature. Yet it is a milestone in the literary history of the country: since Johannesburg

[40] On Zulu writing, see C. L. S. Nyembezi, *A Review of Zulu Literature* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 1961) and Gérard, *Four African Literatures*, chap. III.

was to become economically dominant, it is not surprising that writers based in this industrial city would come to dominate black literature in the fifties. Nor is it surprising that many of the black writers of the twenties and thirties were city-based.

But the black writers who held the stage during the first quarter of the century—S. E. K. Mqhayi (1875–1945), the Xhosa vernacular poet, Thomas Mofolo (1875–1948), the Sotho novelist, and Sol T. Plaatje (1877–1932), who wrote in English and Setswana, —still had rural and mission backgrounds. Plaatje is certainly the first South African black novelist in English and his work reflects the transitional phases of the country as it was turning into an industrial society.

His *Boer War Diary,* discovered only recently, but written in Mafeking between October, 1899, and March, 1900, can perhaps be counted as the first real starting-point of modern black South African literature in English.[41] Written with perceptiveness and humour, it is one of the best of the numerous Mafeking siege diaries and probably the only one that comes close to giving insight into the living conditions of the black during the siege (it is a relatively little-known and mostly forgotten fact that there were around 10,000 blacks in Mafeking during the siege by the Boer forces, compared with only about 1,200 whites).

After the war Plaatje's newspapers, the first, already mentioned, in Mafeking, the second, *Tsala ea Batho,* in Kimberley, reflect a growing national awareness, and an increasing perception of the gradual unification of the South African economy. The names reflect this growth from group to tribe to nation: *Koranta ea Becoana* means "The Bechuana Newspaper", *Tsala ea Batho* means "Friend of the People". As rural and urban problems were inextricably linked, Plaatje's book, *Native Life in South Africa* (1916), was a protest against the effects of the Natives Land Act of 1913, in which he foresaw the slum conditions of the towns (markedly noticeable in South African society and reflected in black literature from the twenties onward) as a result of rural dispossession. The same processes were happening in varying ways in Afrikaans literature after the war. Comparison of the two literatures is infinitely fruitful. Furthermore, in 1913, M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948), then a lawyer and a leader of the local Asian community, began his campaign of passive resistance against discriminatory laws for South African Indians. His autobiography also indicates the shortsightedness of examining South African literature in racial stereotypes.

But Plaatje is not just an early writer. He is not interesting merely because he comes *before* others. In some ways, he was doing things which later writers could not do. For instance, he was more genuinely in touch with oral tradition and his writing perhaps conveys more naturally the intermixture of oral and written than the self-consciously recreated efforts of later writers. When in 1916, while in London, Plaatje compiled his collection of 732 Sechuana proverbs, he wrote in his preface that it must be "borne in mind that I wrote the book in England, where there was no one versed in the language to whom I could go for advice". That he could recall that number of proverbs testifies to a closeness to oral tradition entirely lacking in the modern literate writer. This

[41] Paul J. Comaroff, *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking* (London: Macmillan, 1973).

combination of oral literature and history mingled with the tradition of Shakespeare and Scott is one of the things that make *Mhudi* so fascinating.[42] It was written between 1917 and 1920, but was not published till 1930 for black authors experienced special difficulty in finding publishers. Plaatje's translations of five of Shakespeare's plays into Tswana are still regarded as classics in that literature.

From the little boy learning to read on a mission station at Pniel, reading to non-literate kaross-makers in the 1880s, through the growing nationalism after the Anglo-Boer War (Plaatje was also a founder of the S.A.N.N.C., later to become the African National Congress), through the delegations to Great Britain in 1914 and 1919, and the sharing of a platform at Liberty Hall with Marcus Garvey, Plaatje's life reflects the changes in South African society and literature. Journalist, translator, political writer, linguist, novelist, Plaatje was by no means an isolated figure. Dube, Selope Thema, Mofolo, Mqhayi, the Jabavus, R. Peregrino and others all shared some or all of his virtues and vices, and by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century expressions of black writing had begun to increase.

While African nationalism gathered ground, especially towards 1910, Afrikaner nationalism was not destroyed by the Anglo-Boer War either. The proof of this is the founding in 1905 of the first post-war Afrikaner political party in the Transvaal, with Louis Botha as chairman. In the Orange Free State a similar party was created in 1906 under J. B. M. Hertzog. Eventually Hertzog's view that only the "Afrikaner" should rule South Africa prevailed—and by "Afrikaner" he meant those Afrikaans- and English-speaking white people who were against Imperial domination and who believed in the maxim "South Africa first." By 1914 the National Party was founded. This upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism also manifested itself in the rising of 1914 against the South African government's decision to become involved in the World War. The rebels did not regard it as their war, and to some this was an opportunity to free themselves of British rule and a definite step towards their republican ideal.

The strengthening of Afrikaner nationalism can also be seen in the continuing struggle for the acceptance of Afrikaans as an official language. The so-called "Second Movement" for Afrikaans came as a political parallel to Milner's language imperialism in the Cape, and it led to a further spate of speeches, propaganda, newspapers and organizations advocating the adoption of Afrikaans as an official language. Newspapers, such as *Land en Volk, De Volkstem, De Vriend,* organizations such as the Afrikaanse

[42] Sol. T. Plaatje, *Mhudi: An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1930); the book was honoured with a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* for 31 August 1933. Forty-five years later, it was re-issued with a new introduction by Tim Couzens (Johannesburg: Quagga Press, 1975). Meanwhile, a transcript with corrections by Plaatje himself had been discovered at Rhodes University: this version was published in Heinemann's African Writers Series in 1978. For recent scholarship, see Stephen Gray, "Plaatje's Shakespeare," *English in Africa,* 4, 1 (1977), 1–6; Tim Couzens and Stephen Gray, "Printer's and Other Devils: The Texts of Sol T. Plaatje's *Mhudi*," *Research in African Literatures,* 9 (1978), 198–215; Tim Couzens, "Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*" in *The South African Novel in English: Essays in Criticism and Society,* ed. Kenneth Parker (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 57–76; Kolawole Ogungbesan, "The Long Eye of History in *Mhudi*," *Literary Half-Yearly,* 19, 1 (1978), 139–160; Brian Willan, "Sol Plaatje, De Beers and an Old Tram Shed: Class Relations and Social Control in a South African Town, 1918–1919," *Journal of South African Studies,* 4 (1978), 195–215. [Ed.]

Taalgenootskap (1905), the Afrikaanse Taalvereniging (1906), and the Zuid-Afrikaanse Akademie (1909), and writers such as Eugène Marais and Gustave Preller (1875–1943) were the driving forces behind this new Language movement. The beginnings of Afrikaans publishing houses, such as the powerful Nasionale Pers (1915), and magazines like *De Goede Hoop* (1905), *Die Brandwag* (1910), *Die Huisgenoot* (1915), and later *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns* (1922), stimulated the use of the Afrikaans written word and furthered the old ideal of the *Patriot*.

Because the lyric poet who identifies with the mass of the people for whom he writes may respond almost immediately to dramatic events, the effect of the Anglo-Boer War was the dominating topic of the first verses of C. Louis Leipoldt (1880–1947),[43] Jan F. E. Celliers (1865–1940)[44] and Totius (J. D. du Toit, 1877–1953),[45] and to a lesser extent Eugène Marais (1871–1936),[46] as it was, but much less effectively, in the plays of Celliers and C. J. Langenhoven (1873–1932),[47] and the social drama of Harm Oost (1877–1964) about the changes after the war. In some of their best poems actual events and emotions of the time are recorded.

One of the most successful examples is Leipoldt's verse narrative, *Oom Gert Vertel* (Uncle Gert's rime, 1911).[48] Historical events in this poem are not merely background, but they are of structural importance to Oom Gert's story. Largely because of General Smuts' commando advance into the Cape Colony in September, 1901, martial law was declared there, with the result that all Cape burghers joining the Republican forces were considered rebels. Because Smuts penetrated as far as the district of Calvinia, it is quite possible that the unnamed village in the poem may have been in that vicinity, perhaps even Leipoldt's home village of Clanwilliam. It is also a well-known historical fact that the rebels captured were publicly executed in the town from which they came. Leipoldt was at the time of these trials special correspondent for the Cape Circuit Court.

The external facts of Oom Gert's narrative are: the repressive situation under martial law; the departure of two young "rebels" from the village (one of them being Oom Gert's godson) to join the burghers of Smuts; their ultimate capture and execution by hanging before Oom Gert and other rebel sympathizers. But Oom Gert's tale is also the tale of a guilt-ridden old man who allows the young to leave, perhaps because he himself is too afraid to volunteer. His is a story of loyalties divided between patriotism and the law, of pathetic self-justification, of the tragic confrontations with sudden violence and death.

Of these war poets, Celliers was the only one who wrote heroic poetry—on men like Kruger, De Wet and Jopie Fourie. Many of his poems (*Die Vlakte*, 1906; *Die Revier*, 1909, *Die Saaier*, 1918) were actually written during battle, and some were circulated

[43] S. W. R. Du Toit, *Christiaan Frederick Louis Leipoldt: Bibliografie* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1949) and *Leipoldt 100* comp. M. Scholt (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1980).

[44] M. Griessel, *Bibliografie van Jan F. E. Celliers* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1953).

[45] A. S. Du Toit, *Bibliografie van Totius (Prof. Dr J. D. du Toit)* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1950).

[46] F. Rossouw, *Eugène Nielsen Marais: Bibliografie* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1958).

[47] E. M. Malan, *Cornelis Jacob Langenhoven: Bibliografie* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1953).

[48] A. J. Coetzee, "Hoe vertel *Oom Gert vertel*?," *Standpunte*, 80 (1968), 36–42.

among the burghers. He can, in fact, be considered the only "patriotic" poet of this time, writing "combat verse" in order to exhort and comfort his growing audience.

Totius' involvement with the war was less direct (he was minister to the Boer commandos only for a short while), and his poetry is more meditative than other writers', striving to find eternal meanings in the events of the time. In *By die Monument* (1908), for example, he seeks Biblical parallels to illustrate the universality of suffering, and his best-known poem based on the clash between the Afrikaner and Britain, "Vergewe en Vergeet" (Forgive and forget), is an allegorical-symbolical vision of hope: the damaged thorn-tree will grow strong again, although the mark of its wound will remain forever.

Beside their historical commitment, works like these also contain motifs that can be traced back to the earliest writings in South Africa, such as descriptive references to the distinctive environment. The local fauna and flora is depicted in the subjective, lyrical nature poetry of Celliers and Leipoldt. The coalescence of nature poetry and war poetry in the same volume, and the preference for nature above man, as expressed in the verses of Leipoldt, can perhaps be seen as an indirect comment on human folly.

Throughout this post-war period, a large body of writers were still concerning themselves directly or indirectly with the vital quest for the recognition of their mother tongue. The poetry of the time, written without regard to acceptance of its language, was repeatedly used as proof of the versatility of Afrikaans in the critical writings of scholars like G. S. Preller (1875–1943):[49] his analysis of Marais' poem, "Winternag" (Winter night, 1950), considered the first great poem in the language, is an example. This concern for the linguistic medium naturally remains a constant theme throughout Afrikaans literature and in all literary debates among writers and critics: even in the seventies, the survival of a free literature in South Africa and the survival of Afrikaans were still a matter of anxious discussion.

As a result of the mining boom, the Boer defeat and the fast growing process of urbanization especially in Johannesburg, a large number of impoverished Afrikaners, deprived of their lands, had to seek a livelihood in the city, where they were often driven to "moral decline". This social evolution was used as a theme by a few prose writers and appears in one of Totius' longer poems. But while poetry now tended to become more reflective, personal and "aesthetic", realistic prose, being able to portray characters and situations—sometimes in a naturalistic way—showed greater commitment to social problems. In the early works of the century one finds the beginnings of a social realism that will continue into the following period.

An example is the first book of "Dutch-Afrikaans" sketches of J. Lub (1868–1926), *Eenvoudige Mense* (Simple people, 1908), which focuses on the degeneration of the character of Afrikaners in circumstances of dire poverty. Here, in *Donker Johannesburg* (Dark Johannesburg 1910), and *In en om die Goudstad* (In and around the city of gold, 1912), the author pictures Johannesburg between the Anglo-Boer War and World War I and portrays the city's poverty-stricken Afrikaner people, the older generation still

[49] W. M. Toerien, *Gustav Schoeman Preller, 1875–1943: 'n Bibliografie* (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, Department of Librarianship, 1969); see also the papers dealing with Preller as a historian, a journalist and an essay-writer in *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 15 (1975).

reading their Bibles while their children have supposedly become lazy and depraved. A sketch on the reaction to the return of President Kruger's body after his death in exile is an excuse for the observation that, if he were to see the poverty and degradation of his people now, he would die once more. The attitude of such people towards the black man in the city varies, but it is usually antagonistic, for they do not understand why he is sometimes better off than they are. The psyche of the older generation is still at war with him, and the simple ones consider him dirty: "It's a dirty thing, a fly. . . It doesn't care at all where it stays. Now it sits on a kaffir and just now on a white man. Sis! they are dirty things!" In a sketch in *Donker Johannesburg,* the narrator—a teacher with a moralistic bent—is taken on a lurid guided tour through nocturnal Johannesburg to see a hell of sin and suffering: one-night drunks in police cells, women charged with bootlegging, the Salvation Army haven for the paupers and the jobless, the shady holes of the city where illegal liquor can be bought at the black eating-houses, the opium dens where Chinese supposedly have the right to smoke because it is good for their health, the shop of Mr. Rabinovitch where stolen goods are accepted at all times, and places where white and coloured prostitutes are always available.

Often in sketches like these Afrikaners are seen as the pioneering stock who opened up the country. The writer's firm belief that they have been cheated of their just rewards and are submitted to undeserved suffering cannot be disregarded in view of their tremendous drive towards financial and political power in later years. By and large, the writers of the time represented an important group and an ideological strand in a movement to improve the material and economic lot of a people even at the expense of other groups, often seen in racialist terms. It is ironic, however, that none of these formative writers of Afrikaans, nor many of their successors, perceived the parallel fate of South African blacks.

For it was during the period that extended between the two world wars that Afrikaans literature came into its own pre-World War I writers like Leipoldt, Totius and Marais remained prominent figures in postwar literary and wider cultural life, while a new generation of prose writers, dramatists and poets made a brief, but fertile appearance before the advent of the first major Afrikaans poetry movement, the generation of the thirties, the so-called *Dertigers,* who were to raise Afrikaans literature to international standards.

The political and economic background to this development could briefly be described as follows: the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (from 1910 to 1919), General Louis Botha, attempted, but failed, to reconcile Afrikaners and British, mainly because he failed to take into account the strength of Afrikaner nationalism. After Botha's death, General J. C. Smuts became Prime Minister in 1920, leading the South African Party with a small majority and a policy of maintaining the British connection. In spite of negotiations with his main opponent, General J. B. M. Hertzog, who stood for the right to self-determination for white South Africa, the central question of the relationship between South Africa and Britain was not resolved. The surprising decision of the Nationalists and the Labour Party to close ranks against Smuts's government led to Hertzog's Pact Government of 1924. Then it was that a so-called

"Colour Bar Law" came into operation, protecting white labourers against competition from blacks and Indians, with the result that certificates of competence for skilled work were issued only to white and Coloured workers. It is highly significant that Hertzog was in favour of the economic and political integration of the Coloured with the white—a view which was supported by Afrikaans writers and intellectuals during his time and later. Although Afrikaans was recognized as one of the country's official languages in 1925, the Nationalist ideal of breaking the ties with Britain, of sovereign independence within a commonwealth of nations, of a South Africa with its own flag, did not become a reality until dominion status in terms of the Statute of Westminister was obtained in 1931.

Of the Afrikaans writers of the earlier period still producing significant work in the twenties, Leipoldt was the most prolific. The poetry of Eugène Marais, most of which was written between 1919 and 1933, was largely of a personal, often pessimistic nature, or inspired by his interest in nature myths as in his *Dwaalstories* (Wandering stories, 1927), based on Bushman folklore. Totius wrote about personal tragedies, developing towards a kind of "modernism" on a religious basis in his last phase.

Leipoldt's continuing versatility is illustrated by his prose works. He wrote on medical matters, food, wine, diet, health. He wrote historical works, travel diaries, novels in Afrikaans and in English, and his memoirs as a medical inspector of schools. Critics evaluating his contribution to literature and to culture in general have frequently concluded that he cannot be called an "Afrikaner" because of his cosmopolitanism, his individualism, his apparent predilection for English and his attempts to create an "international consciousness" amongst Afrikaners. He chose brotherly love above patriotism, held "liberal" ideas regarding colour, and signed up for World War I. He was the first Afrikaans writer to portray coloured and black people extensively in his poems and stories, and as late as 1937 (in *Bushveld Doctor*) he made statements as controversial then as they are in South Africa today: "Hereditarily, if there be anything in heredity, I am one of those who can see no specific distinctions in the human race and that recognize all mankind as belonging to one family, however diversified by colour, custom, or creed its various components may be." His poems and plays have thus been extensively studied and evaluated in terms of "international" literary norms, while his "internationalism" as a thinker has been held against him by those who favour conformity to narrow "nationalism."

Urbanization, unemployment, the post-war depression, poverty and the attempts at the industrialization of Afrikaners form the basis for the social realism of several novelists. In his short novel, *Bywoners* (Share-croppers, 1920) Jochem van Bruggen (1881–1957) describes a social class which will figure in almost all his works: the poor-white, portrayed as a simple plodder in a feudal system, usually working for a kind, affluent, paternalistic landowner, sharing the crop and for the rest living on charity and on his wits. The major themes in *Bywoners* are: the nobility of work (the writer's strongly moralistic attitude regarding work derives from his notion that "laziness" breeds poverty); the supposed preference of Afrikaners for farming, and the ousting of Afrikaners from their farms; the attraction of comparatively high salaries in the mines; the superiority of the white farm labourer to the black (yet, ironically, the black man

is described as getting more enjoyment out of life). The *bywoner,* the landowner and status-figures such as the *dominee* (minister), are portrayed as types. In Van Bruggen's *Ampie* sequence (1924–28) as in several novels of the time, the main character is a simpleton. Perhaps focusing on the village idiot was a way out for a naturalist author: such a character could act outrageously and differ from the stereotype; a victim of his surroundings, his endearing simplicity could earn him the sentimental sympathy of the reader. With Ampie, Van Bruggen also tried to illustrate the possibility of a "higher form of human existence", although the social background of such characters stood in the way of the development of their innate ability.

A more competent novelist than Van Bruggen was C. M. van den Heever (1902–1957),[50] whose *Somer* (Summer, 1935) was an attempt to re-create the Flemish author Stijn Streuvels's *De Oogst* (The crop) by transferring it to his own local environment. *Somer* can truly be said to have initiated the widening of the literary experience of the Afrikaans writer which would be realized most effectively in the work of the *Dertigers.*

The poetry of the twenties was dominated by Eugène Marais, A. G. Visser (1878–1929) and Toon van den Heever (1894–1956). Visser was a popular poet, a troubadour writer in the national and heroic tradition, beloved and often quoted by his people. The criticism of the past, which was of serious concern to Leipoldt, was also a theme in Visser's poetry, although his approach was mildly satirical. With a tongue-in-cheek attitude he wrote about the voortrekkers and their squabbles in "Lotosland", and about the Afrikaner's attachment to the Old Testament. His popularity can also be attributed to his sentimental love poems—another contribution towards the widening of the literature.

The poems of Toon van den Heever also foreshadow future developments in Afrikaans poetry. His sudden breakaway from national themes towards the personal and philosophical often resulted in a more intricate, more cryptic style than that of his predecessors. His first poems (*Gedigte,* 1919) were, however, criticized for their daring themes: mythology, eroticism, protest against God's indifference towards the plight of man, and protest against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Van den Heever's intellectualism came into conflict with the rigid religious beliefs of many Afrikaners, and he anticipated the disputes with God in the poetry of the *Dertigers.* His liberation of language from the former tendency to limit the idiom of poetry to "poetic words" is also an important development: his is a poetry of transition, leading to a shift in aesthetics and in ideology. Whereas earlier Afrikaans writers, reared in the context of the Anglo-Boer war, had chosen to voice the collective desire for self-assertion, the poetry and prose fiction of new, better educated, generations was to become increasingly sophisticated, intellectualized and individualistic.

The swift growth of the mining industry under the control of British capital had speeded the urbanization of the country, especially in such predominantly Boer areas as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and shattered the traditional culture and way of

[50] V. Kamp, *Christiaan Maurits van der Heever. Bibliografie* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1953).

life of the Afrikaner section of the white population. The white mining magnates had evolved a sort of paternalistic ideology in their attitudes towards blacks. But World War I brought considerable changes to the outlook of the black section of the population. Thousands of blacks were recruited into the British Native Labour Contingent and sent to France to release more whites for the actual fighting—to arm the blacks was deemed politically too dangerous. But exposure to non-racial societies had some effect on these men, and they returned with first-hand experience of a way of life that was different from the racial hierarchy South Africa had produced. One key event, the sinking of the troopship *Mendi* in a collision which cost the lives of over 600 of the N.L.C. forces, became a symbol of the sacrifice blacks had made for the British Empire. Many of those who fought hoped that they would be regarded and treated as loyal and equal subjects after the war. Mendi Day became a kind of national memorial day for South African blacks, celebrated at least into the fifties.

In *A Chief is a Chief by the People* (1975), a printed recording of his oral autobiography, Stimela Jason Jingoes (b. 1895) describes his war experience:

> One of our preachers had told us that we would find no colour bar in England, but we did not believe him: how could there be a country where black men were treated the same as white men? On our ship coming over there had been an Indian called Cassim who had told us the same thing. The girls at Liverpool talked to us so easily that it seemed Cassim was right.

Jingoes was one of many who returned to their home country to find a changing South Africa. The war and its aftermath stimulated the growth of secondary industry and this caused another large influx of population into the cities. Amongst the whites, the rise of secondary industry spread an economic philosophy—liberalism—the main object of which was to break the stranglehold the mining companies had over the labour supply. The twenties and thirties were to prove the heyday of white liberalism, which, in alliance with continuing missionary influence, attempted to co-opt blacks to their philosophy and cause. Many of the white–black liberal institutions were started as a result: the Gamma Sigma Club, a debating society (about 1920), the Joint Councils (1921) which were discussion bodies between whites and blacks, the Bantu Men's Social Centre (1924), and the Institute of Race Relations (1929). Black literature of the interwar years emanated largely from these institutions.

In 1921 the Chamber of Mines launched the newspaper *Umteteli wa Bantu* to counter the effect of *Abantu Batho*. By 1932 a group of liberals backed the Bantu Press (Pty.), Ltd., a company which took over most of the existing black newspapers and started the first black national newspaper, *Bantu World* (which, in 1960, became the now banned *The World*). Most of those who worked for the papers were creative writers as well. While Sol Plaatje had written this novel *Mhudi* in English, John Dube inaugurated the Zulu novel with *Insila ka Shaka* (Shaka's Body-servant, 1933), which he had written in the twenties. This attempt to put African history into its own perspective was not made available in English until 1951. Another Zulu writer, R.R.R. Dhlomo (1901–1971), published a novella in English, *An African Tragedy* (1928): a moral tale of some forty pages, it displays the black writer's increasing concern about the effects of urbanization

and contains an attack on the "evils of town life" from a Christian-liberal standpoint. After 1935, Dhlomo was to become extremely popular with a number of historical novels in Zulu, but at the turn of the decade, he was chiefly active as a journalist and contributed a number of short stories to newspapers and magazines. Twenty of these were ultimately collected in a special issue of *English in Africa* (1975), a journal issued at Rhodes University. Since much of the journalistic writing of the time was heavily abstract and moralizing, Dhlomo's stories provide about the most lively and concrete reflection of the black man's living conditions during the period.

Providing something of an alternative ideology in the twenties was the I.C.U.—the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union—started by Clements Kadalie, originally from Nyasaland. Jingoes, too, joined the movement, and part of his autobiography details the period. The Keaubona, the "I See You", was a very large, Garveyist, populist movement which for a time successfully combined rural and urban resistance to the various land and urban areas acts which regulated South African social life before and after the strikes of 1920 and 1922. Its *Worker's Herald,* published in the twenties, and edited by H. D. Tyamzashe, was more radical than *Umteteli wa Bantu.* The editor himself sometimes turned his hand to literary expression. The following poem takes the implicit position that liquor is not just a bad thing, but a political instrument used in the proletarianization of the black and in his social subordination:

Curse you, hell's Satanic Majesty,
Preventer of the Truth—you bug!
Voetsak, and never let me see
You, you hoary-headed humbug,
Vamoose, you lying, skulking cad.
Your doctrine is to me taboo;
To hell with you, you stiff—
You're mad,
You make me see red, white and blue.
You teach mankind to make the dop—
That fiery drink of different hues—
And when the bloomin' stuff is op,
They see green snakes and get the blues.
You teach Muntu the skokian,
Which lands him in the tronk.
You tell him—lying baviaan—
The stuff does not make dronk.[51]

[51] H. D. Tyamzashe, "To Satan," *The Worker's Herald,* Johannesburg (15 November, 1926). For further information about black writing in English during the first half of the century, see the essays of Tim Couzens: "The Continuity of Black Writing in English in South Africa before 1950," *English in Africa,* 2 (1974), 11–23, repr. in *English-Speaking South Africa Today: Proceedings of the National Conference, July 1974,* ed. André de Villiers (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 363–376; "Pseudonyms in Black South African Writing," *Research in African Literatures,* 6 (1975), 226–231; "Black South African Literature in English" in Hena Maes-Jelinek (ed.) op. cit., pp. 89–96; "Early South African Black Writing," in Bruce King and Kolawole Ogungbesan (eds) op. cit., pp. 1–14; "The Black Press and Black Literature in South Africa," *English Studies in Africa,* 19 (1976), 93–99; and "The Social Ethos of Black Writing in English in South Africa 1920–50," in *Aspects of South African Literature,* ed. Heywood, pp. 66–81.

For the sober white writer of English, World War I and its aftermath in Europe were little more than an incidental factor that hardly changed his living patterns. South African expeditionary forces, both black and white, might have been mowed down with the same impartiality as any others at the battle of Delville Wood, for example, but the post-1918 rearrangements of European society do not find their distinct parallel within South Africa. To the white English writers, the post-war years offered the relative security of what might be called the Smuts period, dominated by its links with Britain and upholding a firmly emulative attitude towards the cultural supremacy of English literature, education and moral values.

The small amount of white writing that was officially approved is thus the product of the colonial mentality in its most craven form. The first history of South African literature appears in 1925, and it reflects the internal attitude towards local culture very exactly: Manfred Nathan's monumental survey,[52] which cites no fewer than four hundred white authors and their works, all but ignores the other wing of this multilingual Southern African culture, black indigenous and black English literature, and summarizes Afrikaans literature as if it were merely an aberration of English after all. Nathan's overriding notion as a literary historian was that any work that was extrametropolitan in origin was necessarily inferior or impure.

Throughout the twenties the key pattern of all white English literature becomes, in fact, one of independent writers working in isolation from one another, subjected to the curious tension of having their reference points outside the country. Under such circumstances a lone phenomenon like Pauline Smith (1884–1959) could arise: the central theme of her novel *The Beadle* (1926) was precisely that deep insularity of a world without sustaining myths and internal standards of its own.[53] Another loner of the period is Frank Brownlee (1875–1951), who perfected a blend of reportage and fiction which, dealing unashamedly as it did with life over the white border, shows a concerned and engaging record of human interest transcending the merely parochial. In a novel like *Cattle Thief* (1929), for example, Brownlee could show that the English language was malleable enough to tell a non-English story with an effectiveness that could accumulate specific resonances of meaning. Brownlee's mixture of ethnology and fiction, a constant strain in imaginative writing dealing with Africa, made it possible for such an isolated writer to evince considerable documentary understanding of and genuine sympathy with, other than British characters.

A deference to Britain similar to Nathan's is however the leading characteristic of the one figure who dominates the first half of the twentieth century: the inexhaustible

[52] Manfred Nathan, *South African Literature: A General Survey* (Cape Town: Juta, 1925).

[53] It was not until after the sixties that Pauline Smith received the critical attention her work deserved with several short essays by Geoffrey Haresnape in *English Studies in Africa* 6 (1963), and with Arthur Ravenscroft, "Pauline Smith," *Review of English Literature* 4, 2 (1963), 55–67, repr. in *The South African Novel in English*, ed. K. Parker (1978), pp. 46–56. See also D. R. Beeton, "Pauline Smith and South African Literature in English," *UNISA English Studies*, 11 (1973), 35–50; Geoffrey Haresnape, "Pauline Smith's Desolation' and the Worth-while African English Literary Test," *University of Cape Town Studies in English*, 7 (1977), 99–103, and "Barriers of Race and Language: Pauline Smith's Critique of a Rural Society," *English in Africa*, 4, 1 (1977), 40–46.

and erratic Sarah Gertrude Millin (1889–1968),[54] whose output of some thirty novels from 1921 to 1962 reflects the supposedly unchanging temper of the times. Millin herself clamoured for attention overseas where, in London and New York, she was indeed enthusiastically received as the definer of and spokesman for, the "Colour Problem." Her one masterpiece, *God's Stepchildren* (1924), is perhaps the most popular and well-studied work to emerge from official South African English culture during the period, even though it deals more with the horrors than the complexities and more with the social stigmas than the moral handicaps, of miscegenation between white and so-called non-white. That Millin's work is saturated with untested and even pathological reactions to trespasses across the colour bar, and that her reactions were admired throughout the English literary world in the twenties, is an index of how widely segregationist doctrines were held and found acceptable. Today, Millin's reputation in South Africa is in eclipse, both among writers, due to her illiberal intolerance of the humane values basic to any novelist, and among the reading public whose world has indeed grown into materializing and institutionalizing the apartheid-like racialism of her most torrid fantasies.

If Millin was the ideal British Commonwealth writer of the twenties and thirties, the officially approved writer who exported local colour for world-wide consumption, that is not to say that the system within which she worked acknowledged her: she never achieved a home readership of any size, nor was she a figure of lasting influence within local literary circles. Contemporary with her, however, there grew up a varied and responsible group of authors and poets who attracted less public acceptance, and who elected to write as Africans for Africans. While Millin, the Jewess of Lithuanian descent, favoured standard English as a medium of international communication, her less celebrated contemporaries were at the same time developing a consciousness which rejected British cultural domination and undramatically worked at creating a uniquely South African indigenous literature. In other words, English literature by white writers in South Africa was imperceptibly acquiring a sense of local identity, of inherent dignity and value. What had heretofore been an African literature only by virtue of happenstance, written in the conqueror's European language, was developing in its own way to become a convincingly African literature, written by white Africans for Africans, in a form of English that was increasingly becoming more African than European. The white writers who rejected Millin and opted to be African are not included in Nathan's history, nor do they generally figure very prominently in subsequent histories that deal with South African literature today.

By the end of 1926 there had been several false starts at this drift towards becoming African. There was the *Voorslag* (Whiplash) group, centred in Durban, named after the briefly-lived literary review of that name (1926–27), which introduced the poets Roy Campbell and William Plomer, and the Afrikaans journalist, Laurens van der Post, to

[54] M. Whyte, *Bibliography of the Works of Sarah Gertrude Millin* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1953); J. L. P. Snyman, *The Works of Sarah Gertrude Millin* (Johannesburg: Central News Agency, 1955); F. Levy, *The Works of S. G. Millin 1952–1968* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1969); Martin Rubin, *Sarah Gertrude Millin: A South African Life* (Johannesburg: Donker, 1977); David Rabkin, "Race and Fiction: *God's Stepchildren* and *Turbott Wolfe*" in *The South African Novel in English*, ed. Parker (1978), pp. 77–94.

the reading public. The stock-in-trade of all three authors' early work was a calculated pro-Africanness which took the form of virulent satires on the colonialism of the time. In his early poems, Campbell (1901–1957)[55] emulated distinctly non-British poets, like Camoëns, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and invented his own brand of splenetic denunciations of provincial race hatred and parochial smugness. Plomer (1903–1973), an altogether more lyrical and politically persuasive stylist, particularly in his first novel, *Turbott Wolfe* (1925), proposed an alternative all-African unity of races and an egalitarianism that was quite heretical at the time.[56] Van der Post (b. 1906) defected from his Boer origins into the Commonwealth under the influence of the *Voorslag* offensive.

It proved something of a storm in a teacup, however, and without any lasting results, since a year later all three of the Natal satirists had gone into exile from South Africa, never to return for good. They were casualties of the very colonialism they reviled, and their efforts to give rise to an independent South African world of letters came to nothing as they assumed different careers in an international diaspora: Campbell as right-wing traditional poet and autobiographer after he had unloaded his frustration in *The Wayzgoose* (1928), a scathing satire of his native country's leading figures; Plomer as an elegant English man of letters, and Van der Post as a necromancer, purveyor of a mystical view of his African origins that has become increasingly irrelevant to the initial quest of the group.

By 1929 World War I, which had driven a Fleet Street drama critic named Stephen Black (1881–1931) back home to the land of his birth, was bearing fruit in the form of Black's unique, and now long-forgotten, satirical theatre. Black himself was fluent in devising an alternative form of entertainment to the stock banalities of imported colonial show business. Out of music hall and the song and dance routines of the popular Victorian vaudeville, always alive in both the agricultural centres and the mining camps since Victorian times, he forged a dramatic style which was entirely regional, and fully loaded with the shock of identifiable social situations. In his play *Love and the Hyphen*, first performed in 1908 and revised in 1928, he openly held the racial phobias of an establishment figure like Millin up to contempt, and satirized the colonial pecking order of cultural values. In emulation of a forebear like Andrew Geddes Bain, he made Kaatje Kekkelbek live once more as a volatile and voluble source of commentary on the farcical injustices of white society towards the Coloured and black population. It is not because

[55] V. Davis, *Bibliography of the Works of Ignatius Roy Dunachie Campbell* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1954); Heather L. Jurgens, "The Poetry of Roy Campbell," *The Lantern* (Pretoria), June 1965; Gildas Roberts, "'Great Bombs of Laughter': A Tentative Reappraisal of *The Wayzgoose*" in *Seven Studies in English*, ed. Gildas Roberts (Cape Town and London: Purnell, 1971), pp. 55–63; D.M.A.F. Middleton and Freiherr von der Valkensteen, "Roy Campbell: The Effect of His Political Ideas on His Poetry," *Zambezia* 2, 2 (1972), 55–66; Rowland Smith, *Lyric and Polemic: The Literary Personality of Roy Campbell* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's U.P., 1972); Alan Paton, "Roy Campbell" in *Aspects of South African Literature*, ed. C. Heywood (1976), 3–23; D. S. J. Parsons, "Roy Campbell: A Bibliography," *Four Decades of Poetry*, 1 (1976), 151–167; John Povey, *Roy Campbell* (Boston: Twayne, 1977); and Peter Alexander, "Roy Campbell: Towards a Reassessment," *South African Research in Progress*, 3 (1978), 18–29.

[56] J. R. Doyle, "The Poetry of William Plomer," *Sewanee Review* 75 (1967), 634–661; Michael Wade, "William Plomer, English Liberalism and the South African Novel," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 8, 1 (1973), 20–32; Alan Paton, "William Plomer, Soul of Reticence," *Theoria*, 46 (1976), 1–15; Peter Wilhelm, "The Single Dreamer: The African Poetry of William Plomer" in *Poetry South Africa* ed. W. Peter and James A. Pilley (Johannesburg: Donker, 1976), pp. 23–34.

of the improvised nature of *Love and the Hyphen* and of Black's many other plays, but because of their anti-racist bite, that they were still unpublished at the close of the 1970s.

While, then, the twenties had seen South Africa abandoned because of her prejudiced provincialism by those writers of English who were holding in their hands potentialities for a bright future; while Stephen Black had delighted in mixing classes and languages in his plays, all into one unholy, indifferenciated cultural whole, zestfully portraying the black man and the Afrikaner in their equal striving for cultural status and a place in the economy; while, in fact, years of literary dearth were in the offing for English,—Afrikaans writers were entering their first decade of structured achievement.

The worldwide depression of the early 1930s, plus a crippling drought in 1932 and 1933, weakened the government and Hertzog decided on a coalition with the Smuts opposition. The future of "the Afrikaner" was again one of Hertzog's main motives, as he declared in 1933: "If we have to go to the next election on our own power, we shall lose.... We shall be defeated, and it will be the end of Afrikanerdom." The Coalition Government of 1933 included representatives holding such opposing views that confrontation was inevitable. On the one side were the diehard imperialists, on the other republicans like D. F. Malan, who believed that the domination of the English over the Afrikaner had not yet ended. The election of 1938 gave the United Party of Smuts and Hertzog a majority, with Malan's Nationalists the major opposition. Afrikaner nationalism found renewed impetus in the symbolical "Ox-waggon Trek" of 1938, the building of the Voortrekker Monument, the founding of economic, cultural and patriotic organizations such as the Reddingsdaadbond and the Ossewa-Brandwag. The advent of World War II led Afrikaners to protest, as they had done in World War I, against South Africa's commitment to the side of the Allies: Hertzog eventually resigned from the coalition, and Smuts became Prime Minister from 1939. While his second administration was characterized by economic growth and a raising of living standards particularly among whites, Afrikaner nationalism was preparing for its final victory in 1948. Soon South Africa's racial policy would become a matter of world concern.

It is against this rise to power that the significance of the *Dertigers* should be seen. In his study of the *Dertiger* poets, D. J. Opperman pointed to the essential fact that "the Afrikaner [was to be] an opposition people no longer, but a ruling people. His aggression [was] lessening and... his inferiority complex... diminishing."[57] Although Afrikaner unity would again be divided in 1939, no further language battles had to be fought. Ultimately the ideal of full Afrikaner republican nationalism and the "problem" of race relations would be the only remaining issues. The meaning of nationalism would be the first priority in the political thought and prose of these *Dertigers*.

The most significant of the writers who came to occupy the Afrikaans literary scene during the 1930s were N. P. van Wyk Louw (1906–1970) and Uys Krige (b. 1910), who were soon joined by W. E. G. Louw (b. 1913)[58] and Elisabeth Eybers (b. 1915).[59]

[57] D. J. Opperman, *Digters van Dertig* (Cape Town: Nationale Boekhandel, 1953), p. 13.

[58] M. C. Jooste, *Bibliografie van W. E. G. Louw* (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch Department of Librarianship, 1967); T. T. Cloete, "Oor W. E. G. Louw se bundels *Naggesprek* en *Versamelde gedigte*," *Standpunte*, 112 (1974), 45–54.

[59] M. Nienaber-Luitingh, *Die vroeëre en latere poësie van Elisabeth Eybers* (Cape Town: H and R

Although their public pronouncements and their critical prose never separated from national politics, their poetry and their private lives did. They saw poetry as an aristocratic ideal, a sublime trade; the word was man's sole instrument for the attainment of higher truths, his only universal currency. These poets were professionals: literary critics, professors of literature, translators and intellectuals versed in world literature, and this period witnessed the widening of the Afrikaner's literary horizon adumbrated by C. M. van den Heever.

Van Wyk Louw summarized the *Dertigers'* ideal in his essays in *Berigte te Velde* (Field reports, 1939): "The themes of all great poetry... are also the content of this Afrikaans poetry... As Afrikaners we wish to be fully human and express this experience in our poetry." They would no longer write about local flowers and animals, the customs and history of Afrikaners—all the things discovered and depicted by previous poets:

> Poetry to us is a high and compelling task... not pleasurable play or pastime... or decoration of life, but a form of life itself without which we as humans and we as Afrikaans people could not as a people have a full human and national existence.[60]

The poetry of van Wyk Louw and, to a lesser extent, Elisabeth Eybers, goes beyond the decade of the thirties. Like Leipoldt and Marais, they are also significant figures in later periods—Van Wyk Louw being the most important post-war modernist poet in Afrikaans literature.[61] The work of both can, however, be periodized into pre- and post-war phases, while the other *Dertigers* wrote their best poetry between 1934 and 1942.

Van Wyk Louw's early poems in *Gedagtes, Lieders en Gebede van 'n Soldaat* (Thoughts, songs and prayers of a soldier) explicitly dated 1935–1937, and the tone of such individual pieces as "Miskien ook sal ons sterven" (Perhaps we too will die) contain clear indications that they were composed at the time of the Hertzog-Smuts alliance, when Malan was in the opposition: in the following stanza, the poet recalls

> dat ons nie kon gebuig word
> soos hulle geweld dit wou,
> en dat ons hoog kon lewe
> net aan ons bloed getrou

Academica, 1966); T. T. Cloete, "'n Studie oor Elisabeth Eybers se *Onderdak*," *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 9 (1969), 127–133; Rena Pretorius, "*Kruis of munt:* Skoonheid gebore uit gemis," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 12, 2 (1974), 19–29; Hilda Grobler, "Die ontwikkeling in Eybers se poësie: Die ontwikkeling van *Belydenis* en van *Portret* to *Röntgenfoto*," *Klasgids*, 13, 2 (1978), 43–54.

[60] N. P. van Wyk Louw, *Berigte te velde: Opstelle oor die nasionale letterkunde* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1939); 2nd printing (Pretoria: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1959), p. 49.

[61] *Beeld van'n digter, N. P. van Wyk Louw*, ed. P. J. Nienaber (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1966); François I. J. van Rensburg, *Sublieme ambag: Beskouings oor die werk van N. P. van Wyk Louw* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1975); H. P. van Coller, "Die nasionale element in die skeppingswerk van N. P. van Wyk Louw," *Theoria*, 47 (1976), 57–75. Part of the writer's poetry was translated into English by Coloured poet Adam Small as *Oh, Wide and Sad Land* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1975).

(that we could not be bent / as their violence wanted, / and that we could live tall / faithful only to our blood). Van Wyk Louw himself became a Nationalist in 1934, and even an admirer of National Socialism. Some of these poems, therefore, are probably his indirect reaction to Hertzog's coalition, yet his hesitation to make an explicit statement is in accordance with his belief as stated at the time in one of his essays, that the "national" and the "international" are to be preferred to the "local."[62] While his poems retain relevance to Afrikaans political history, they are written to be universal.

In his last books of poetry of this period, *Raka* (1941) and *Gestaltes en Diere* (Figures and animals, 1942), Van Wyk Louw makes a poetic search through the jungle of the human psyche for the powers which rule life. The confessional verse, of which he was the most successful exponent among the *Dertigers*, makes way for an "objective correlative" type of poetry in which a figure or an animal or a phenomenon becomes the symbol or representative of certain truths. In *Raka*, an epic reminiscent of *Beowulf*, the appearance of an ape-man, the eponymous monster, disturbs the peaceful existence of a tribe somewhere in Africa. His physical presence becomes a threat to the „cultural" actions of the natives, and their leader, the aristocratic Koki, warns his people against him. Because they do not listen to him, Koki sets out to kill Raka; but in a sequence rich in action Koki is destroyed, and the tribe degenerates into primitivism once more. This is a poem with more than one possible interpretation, such as the danger of physical domination over the spiritual, for instance; but the fact that it was written during the war may perhaps also lead one to read it as a meditation on the conquest of civilization by brute force.

That Uys Krige,[63] novelist, dramatist and poet, stands apart from the nationalism of van Wyk Louw is illustrated by his involvement as a correspondent during World War II. He is also the romantic, the wanderer, the cosmopolite, the modern troubadour, equally versatile in English and Afrikaans. Dissatisfaction with the present and a longing for faraway places are major motifs in his poetry but his rendering of his first-hand experience of war provides evidence of an acute awareness of reality. His "Lied van die Fascistiese Bomwerpers" (Song of the Fascist bombers), with its terrible religious irony, contains an implicit warning against patriotism in its extreme forms; "Die Soldaat" (The soldier), dated 1940, offers an image of the shadow of the soldier growing to cover the entire world.

The achievement of the Afrikaans writers who emerged in the thirties was mainly in the field of poetry. Even their prose is of the poetic variety, psychological and impressionistic. As the early poetry of the *Dertigers* evinced no interest in or concern for the acute racial problems of South Africa, the realistic prose of Mikro (pseudonym of C. H. Kühn, 1903–1968) stands out as an exception.[64] In his novels, especially in a trilogy consisting of *Toiings* (Tatters, 1934), *Pelgrims* (Pilgrims, 1935) and *Vreemdelinge* (Strangers, 1944), he documented various facets of the predicament of the Coloured farm labourer. The feudal relationship prevailing between white landowner and *bywoner* in

[62] N. P. Van Wyk Louw, "Gedagtes door die nasionalisme en die Kuns" (Thoughts on nationalism and Art), originally published in 1936 and reprinted in *Berigte te velde*.

[63] Z. M. Plaistowe, *Uys Krige: A Bibliography* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1958).

[64] P. T. Ferreira, *Mikro (Christoffel Hermanus Kuhn)*, (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1964).

the works of Van Bruggen a decade earlier is repeated in those of Mikro, with the difference that the lazy, clownish, drunken, roguish Coloured farm labourer has now taken the place of the *bywoner*. Ampie has become Toiings, and although the relationship between the gentle, fatherly and patronizing boss and his labourer remains the same, the colour of the character has changed, as the former white proletariat is rapidly being replaced by a black and Coloured proletariat.

Mikro's realistic novels could only exhibit one type of relationship between white and non-white: the boss-worker relationship which was prevailing in South Africa at the time and which was—and, to a large extent, still remains—the only conceivable relationship between the Afrikaner and the black or brown man. But whereas this form of realism on the one hand, and poetic evasion of racial realities on the other, were to remain fundamental features of Afrikaans literature for many years, different developments took place in English writing soon after the failure of the premature experiment of the *Voorslag* group.

In 1929, Stephen Black had founded the Johannesburg-based literary weekly *Sjambok*, where Herman Charles Bosman (1905–1951)[65] made his beginnings. The only white writer of his generation to achieve a reputation through local publication, Bosman was the true heir of Olive Schreiner and, like Pauline Smith, he explored the rural Afrikaner's character in great depth. White journalism had begun to reflect far wider concerns than could be traced in Afrikaans writing and *Sjambok* flourished as an organ of underground criticism, as a scandal-sheet that exposed malpractices, not only in the municipal sphere, but country-wide. This unofficial tradition of satire and exposure, in which one finds the halting first statements of the conscious search for a white African identity, led a harried existence: Black was frequently sued into bankruptcy, and died facing a staggering array of libel charges. Bosman continued the process with a new version of *Sjambok*, which was driven into changing its name no fewer than eight times between Black's death and the outbreak of the second World War. Bosman's and his associates' brand of scurrilous journalism always had room for what was viewed as a blending of fiction and life that gave rise to his now popular short stories. These were written in both English and Afrikaans, but did not appear in book form until the late forties, two decades and more after they were first written. Bosman's specific qualities were new ones: an enacted multilingualism, an unashamed chronicling of black and Afrikaner life as it interrelated with British life, and a breadth of vision which subtly satirized their fragile interdependence in a system larger than its parts.

R. R. R. Dhlomo also learnt much about the power of journalism and writing from working for Stephen Black on *Sjambok*, and his younger brother, H. I. E. Dhlomo (1903–1956), beginning as a teacher and journalist, became a prolific black playwright with a similarly broad sense of the whole. Herbert Dhlomo[66] is interesting as a writer,

[65] Shora Gertrude De Saxe, *Herman Charles Bosman: A Bibliography* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1971); Stephen Gray, "Bosman's Marico Allegory: A Study in Topicality," *English Studies in Africa*, 20 (1977), 79–94.

[66] N. W. Visser, "H. I. E. Dhlomo (1903–1956): The Re-emergence of an African Writer," *English in Africa*, 1, 2 (1974), 1—10.

not particularly because of the "quality" of his work, but because he epitomizes largely, and perhaps first of all, the concerns of an almost wholly urbanized man. Unlike Plaatje, whose writing owes much to oral tradition, Herbert Dhlomo seems to have acquired much of his concept of history from school and from books. In many ways his historical writing is interesting precisely in that it fails to capture the essence of rural, pre-industrial life. This was exemplified in his one published play, *The Girl who Killed to Save: Nongqause the Liberator* (1935), where he argues the position of a modern progressive African who sees the "Xhosa suicide" of 1857 as a good thing, because it smashed tribalism and paved the way for African "advancement" in the new economy and civilization.

Throughout the thirties, then, *Sjambok*, appearing under whatever title, proved a rallying point for liberal-minded writers of English, black or white. It undoubtedly benefited by the progress in literacy rates among blacks, which had reached 12.5% by 1931. This in turn provided considerable commercial stimulus for specific journals for blacks, or again for journals that deliberately ignored racial distinctions. *Bantu World* would soon achieve a circulation of several thousand, and after World War II, black literacy would reach the stage where a popular magazine like *Drum* could prove economically viable. All this intellectual ebullience clustered around the African National Congress of the time. Likewise, Coloured newspapers such as *The Sun* and the *Cape Standard*—which succeded *APO*, the voice of the African People's Organization, the first Coloured political party—provided a platform for Coloured poets and short-story writers: there it was that Peter Abrahams (b. 1919), son of a Cape Coloured mother and an Ethiopian father, made his precocious début in 1936.

Perhaps the most lively reflection of those days is a late novel by Modikwe Dikobe (b. 1913), *The Marabi Dance* (1973). It may have been written as late as the sixties, but it contains the authentic detail and atmosphere which could only be conveyed by one who was steeped in the thirties, whose young manhood was spent during that time. It describes the kind of slum conditions which came from the housing shortage and industrial pressures of Johannesburg in the thirties, and also the at times vibrant culture which nevertheless existed in Doornfontein suburb. The smashing of this culture with the "clearance" of Doornfontein prefigured the similar destruction of Sophiatown, sadly chronicled by the *Drum* writers of the fifties. *The Marabi Dance* is a unique historical and literary document.

By the time World War II broke out, however, many blacks had become disillusioned about the efficiency of their alliance with English liberals. They were increasingly attracted by the slightly more radical line of the Congress Young League. In literature this was signalled in a sarcastic poem written by H. I. E. Dhlomo in 1941:

FIRED!
(Lines on an African Intellectual being sacked
by White Liberals for his independent ideas.)
Believing life is more than economical
And physical; that there exist realms psychical;
That there will come to pass a time
When men in places high will hear and heed the golden words:

"And as ye would...", and feel no crime
In being human, fair and true; rejoice to see, like birds,
All human souls soar happily and free...

This attitude, together with hints of a more vigorous African nationalism, can be detected in Dhlomo's best-known work, a long poem entitled *Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941). Written in somewhat overblown language, it nevertheless has potentially epic quality.

There was at the time something paradoxical in Dhlomo's attack on the liberal elements in the English-speaking white population. For as *The New Sjambok*, an essentially white magazine, phased into *South African Opinion* and *Trek*, they offered opportunities for the early endeavours of an entire generation of white writers ranging from Alan Paton (b. 1903), through Jack Cope (b. 1913) and Guy Butler (b. 1918), to Doris Lessing (b. 1919) and Nadine Gordimer (b. 1923), all of whom could be described in some way or other as progressives, liberals, or even radicals, in their deep concern with the social and psychological consequences of racial inequality. As men and women of letters, they were characterized by their growing rejection of extra-South African literary values and a serious determination to turn their writing into a literature of Africa, by Africans, for Africans. Although none of them had produced a major work before World War II, they were all products of the loosely formulated magazine and review journalism of the thirties and forties. Their first major achievement was Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948): significantly, this came between the first, confidential, edition of Paton's non-white fellow-countryman, Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* (1946) and the Faber and Knopf editions of 1954 and 1955, which made this novel world famous: together, Abrahams and Paton succeeded in stirring international popular awareness of the more unpalatable realities in South African society.

2. WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE AFTER WORLD WAR II

It was another paradox that Paton's novel came out when the electoral victory of the Nationalist Party signaled the failure of the liberals to achieve political results. The "Union" of South Africa, had always formed a fragmented society. For half a century, however, the component parts of her population had lived in one country, under a single political system, forming a state, whose unified territorial and administrative institutions had created a sense of oneness and a common ideal of more fairness and equality, both among the oppressed blacks and the more clear-sighted whites. Dr. Malan's victory in 1948 was the triumph of mental backwardness and irrational prejudices, which soon became increasingly institutionalized into *apartheid,* a system of utmost cruelty and idiocy, bound to generate the conditions for its own ultimate destruction. In the field of creative writing, leaving aside (however reluctantly) the important and diversified domain of vernacular literature, three strains became clearly distinguishable even though they were bound to remain correlated in a variety of ways.

First came the voice of power, Afrikaans literature, whose identity resided not only in the linguistic medium but also and for at least two decades, in more or less full-hearted adherence to the official doctrine of apartheid. This often took the form either of escapist aestheticism or of concentration on traditional Afrikaner life, a pattern which had been set in the thirties. Gradually, however, Afrikaner writers joined the new generation of white English writers in their preoccupation with racial conditions. Ultimately, some were to become critical of official policy overtly enough to be privileged with banning and in some cases imprisonment.[67] Curiously when one recalls that *Die tale* (the language) had been regarded as the very fulcrum of the Afrikaner nation's identity, a few turned to English, presumably with the intention that their message should become more widely understood.

It is one of the major ironies of this century that by the late seventies the inhuman rigidity of *apartheid* had crystallized a kind of consensus among black, English-speaking white and Afrikaner intellectuals and artists although each of those groups was petrified in its racial identity by the maniac meticulousness and the crazy obstinacy of an administration intent at all costs to preserve the white man's unfair (and, as Sir Harry Oppenheimer was to proclaim at the turn of the decade, uneconomic) privileges. Yet, at

[67] On this point, see W. A. de Klerk, "Censorship Hits Afrikaans Writing," *Contrast,* 17 (1967), 37–46.

the beginning of the period, the development of white writing in English was still hampered by the sense of provinciality which remained for so many decades a stigma of Dominion writers everywhere until they gained more confidence in their own identity and their own experience, perhaps as a result of the resounding success of American literature. Consequently, the most important proportion of anglophone writing in the country was that produced by non-whites: they did have something to say, they had a sense of vital purpose. Although, then, there came to be a strong element of unity among white and non-white writers of English in their common protest against the iniquities of segregation as well as their use of a common language, and in spite of the complicity among men and women of imagination irrespective of their skin colour, this common hankering after more justice, this shared determination to abolish apartheid and its cynical immorality based on obsolete superstitions, the ultimate division is that between white and non-white as imposed by the country's institutions. When Peter Abrahams left South Africa as a ship's stoker in 1939, he may be said to have inaugurated a second important stream in South African literature in European languages, the stream which, along with the vernacular languages, carries the voice of the non-white majority, for he was anticipating the wave of black and Coloured writers who were later to choose freedom in exile or to undergo the home exile of living under house arrest or being jailed on the infamous Robben Island. And when he published *Mine Boy* in 1946 he was also a forerunner in his frank description of the African labourer's excruciating predicament: the sense of the African's own dignity and his claim to recognition, which had been subsumed under such phrases as negritude and the African personality in West Africa and had shyly fought their way through the harmless irony in some of Dhlomo's late work was now coming to fruition. Once the way had been cleared by Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele, this second major trend in South Africa's complex literary pattern started growing at enormous speed in the sixties. Its representatives have something in common which is shared by few white writers: whether banned, imprisoned, under house arrest or in exile, they lived (and often still live at the time of this writing) outside the official norms of present-day South African society. In those two precursors, a decade before the literary explosion in French, and more than twenty years before the phrase "black consciousness" was coined, black and coloured writers demonstrated that they had fully outgrown the colonial phase in the history of Southern Africa and that they had entered that transitional period when intellectual independence anticipates the dissolution of colonial tyranny. This is the reason why it is necessary here to part company with them, only to join them in the chapter devoted to those writers who have achieved spiritual freedom and refuse to conform to the criteria and prescriptions of white power.

From the point of view of the South African nation, this kind of reasoning is not easily acceptable. Mphahlele could write in the sixties: "I personnally cannot think of the future of my people in South Africa as something in which the white man does not feature: whether he likes it or not our destinies are inseparable."[68] He may have spoken differently in times of bitterness, for since those days triumphant Afrikanerdom has

[68] Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 66.

indulged in more repression, more censorship, more hypocrisy, more crimes than ever before. Yet is true (and increasingly so) that much is to be said against any separate consideration of English writing by whites and by non-whites in post-war South Africa. As non-white intellectuals grew in self-awareness and emphasized their claim to political recognition, white writers, and first of all those whose medium was English, carried along by an old tradition of admittedly rather ineffectual liberalism, engaged in a deeply-felt attempt to understand the plight of the non-whites, not only to "sympathize" with their sorry condition, but to empathize: to identify with those other, underprivileged sections of the South African community, to experience in their imaginative way what it must be like to be, or to be dubbed, a "non-white." But although gestures have been made towards shedding what is known as "petty" *apartheid,* the fact remains that the white writer, for all his/her goodwill and negative capability (in Keats's sense) cannot but write from the comparatively exalted status to which he is entitled, which he is constrained to accept, for the simple reason that he and his ancestors (as far as they can be traced by the red-tape men) have always been living under the protection of their white skin. Try as he/she will, the white writer in South Africa is in a position similar to that of those eighteenth-century French noblemen or nineteenth-century Russian aristocrats, who entertained and voiced libertarian or even revolutionary ideas: none of these could truly become a commoner. Whereas non-white protest writing is a genuine product of the underprivileged majority, white authors, whether they resort to Afrikaans or English or both, cannot but be members of the overprivileged class in a basically colonial society. Whereas the non-white writer knows in his bones and along his arteries what it means to be a victim of the system, white protest against the selfsame system does not derive from personal experience but usually from some abstract sense of Christian duty or Marxist solidarity, from moral indignation at the painful treatment meted out to others, and from some essentially imaginative and imaginary identification with the oppressed, from fear, too. This is probably the reason why many black critics outside South Africa refuse to admit even allegedly radical white writers to their own circle and denounce such anti-segregation writings as those of Alan Paton or Nadine Gordimer as sheer, though perhaps in the best cases unconscious, hypocrisy aimed at relieving the writers' sense of guilt while enabling them to keep enjoying the benefits inherent in the system.[69]

It has therefore appeared necessary to compound the omission of vernacular writing with a further taxonomic partition which many South Africans will find objectionable but which is rooted in the law of the land and certainly does make sense in a comparative approach of the whole of creative writing in European languages in Sub-Saharan Africa.

[69] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "Literature and Society," in *Teaching of African Literature in Schools* I, ed. Eddah Gachukia and S. Kichamu Akivaga (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978), pp. 1–29.

AFRIKAANS

Dissatisfaction among Afrikaners with the war-time Prime Minister, General J. C. Smuts, who was considered by many a traitor to Afrikanerdom because of his internationalism, was a crucial factor in determining the new political dispensation, together with growing concern about South Africa's racial problems. Against Dr. D. F. Malan's concept of Apartheid, Smuts had no acceptable race policy. Although it had already appeared as a clause in the Constitution of the Transvaal in 1858 ("The 'volk' will not allow any assimilation of Coloured and White in Church or State") Apartheid now found justification in the writings of academics and in the pronouncements of the Church on biblical and Christian grounds. If God wanted one nation he would not have created several! It is the white man's Christian duty to be the trustee of the black man and to aid his development; but they should remain separated, because integration would lead to barbarism and chaos and the loss of Western civilization in South Africa. In 1948 Malan thus came into power and the National Party has ruled South Africa ever since. Numerous laws were made to safeguard white identity by accentuating divisions between White and Black: the Mixed Marriages Act (1949), the Group Areas Act (1950), the Bantu Education Act (1953), the removal of Coloureds from the white voters' roll (1956), the Separate Universities Act (1959).

During and after World War II Afrikaans prose remained concerned with such established themes as farm life in a conservative, patriarchal society, the Boer War and the Afrikaner's role in Africa. Gradually, new topics cropped up: the relationship between black and white, the predicament of the Coloured, and a certain degree of disillusionment among Afrikaner intellectuals became acceptable.[70]

From the mid-thirties to the early fifties, the leading prose writer was Johannes van Melle (1887–1953),[71] who was born in the Netherlands and wrote in both Dutch and Afrikaans. In his short stories "Wraak" (Revenge) and "Die joiner" (The traitor) and in his noted novel *Bart Nel, de opstandeling* (Bart Nel, the rebel 1936), as in all his most significant writings, he uses either the Boer Wars or the Rebellion of 1914 as background for the tragic portrayal of the rebel, the traitor, the man who joins the English enemy against his own people: although *Bart Nel* deals with a political rebellion, it cannot be regarded as a political or historical novel; it is the story of the eternal rebel.

While the fundamental antinomy in van Melle's writings is still that of Boer v. British, the non-white appeared in the work of some of his contemporaries. The novels of G. H. Franz (1896–1956) and M.E.R. Rothmann[72] ("M.E.R.", 1875–1975) show

[70] Recent studies of contemporary Afrikaans literature include Rob Antonissen, "Facets of Contemporary Afrikaans Literature," *English Studies in Africa*, 13 (1970), 191–206; Peter Sulzer, "Kenmerke van die Afrikaner in die spieël van sy literatuur," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 13, 2 (1975), 41–50.

[71] W. F. Jonckheere, *Johannes van Melle: Realist tussen twee werelden* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1968).

[72] C. J. von Wielligh, *Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (1875–1975): 'n Bibliografie* (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch Department of Librarianship, 1975). See also Elize Botha, "Siende die onsienlike: Die betekenis van eenheidskeppende elemente in M.E.R. se bundel *Die gewers* (1950)," *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 15 (1975), 133–147.

some concern with racial relations but they do so in a deeply didactic spirit, designed as they are to propagate the orthodox paternalistic view. The main character in M.E.R.'s novel *Na vaste gange* (Towards established ways, 1944) is a white girl who marries a wealthy Indian trader; in the preface M.E.R. expresses the hope that she will succeed in creating sympathy for this erring woman. Her deed, she explains, is seen by "our people" as one of the greatest social transgressions. The heroine eventually redeems herself by setting up a rehabilitation centre for white girls; the money for this venture is part of a large inheritance from her Indian husband, who dies early in the story, thus saving the author from describing their relationship. Although respect for all racial groups is preached, inter-racial marriage is condemned "because we are maintaining a small civilization adjacent to unbounded barbarism". As to Franz's eponymous character in *Moeder Paulin* (Mother Paulin, 1946), she is the black guardian of white children on a farm. She is greatly respected for her loyalty, and poetic justice is meted out to those calling her a "kaffer". It is an indication of traditional Afrikaner attitudes at the time that when a school is built on the farm only the white children have the privilege of attending. But the feudal relationship between farmer and labourer and servant is described as good because of the "mutual respect" they are supposed to feel for each other.

Early attempts at a different approach to the racial problem are to be found in the stories of Toon van den Heever (1894–1956) and in the novels of Kootjie van den Heever (1906–1965). In the former's "Werkstaking by die kleigat" (Strike at the clay pit), the dreams of white and black playmates are set in opposition: the black child is not allowed to dream of fame because he is black and his role can only be that of a henchman. "Die Muilband" (The muzzle), also published in *Gerwe uit die erfpag van Skoppensboer* (Sheafs from the tenure of Jack of spades, 1949), is an indictment of the exploitation of the black labourer by the respected church-going farmer. Kootjie van den Heever was more concerned with the fate of the Coloured: the main purpose of his *Brakgrond* (Brackish soil, 1943) is to show that the Coloured hero is driven to crime because of the social situation apportioned to his racial group; as he says of himself, "A Coloured can find no foothold. Wherever he treads is brackish soil.... A Coloured and a dog are the same". Other writers also dealt with this problem for extremely different reasons. In *Die verbode ryk* (The forbidden kingdom, 1943), I. D. du Plessis (b. 1900)[73] made a feeble attempt to render the dilemma of the Coloured returning home from the freedom of Europe. Some of his poems also express sympathy with the oppressed, but there are inevitably more convincing accents in the early collection of S. V. Petersen (b. 1914), *Die stil kin* (The quiet child, 1948), as Petersen is himself a Coloured poet.

Works expressing diverging attitudes toward the Afrikaners as a homogeneous group are also present in the literature of the period around 1948. The right-wing, nationalist-socialist views of several political pamphleteers of the time are reflected in the novel *Erfgename* (Heirs, 1946), by J. R. L. van Bruggen (1895–1948), while the poet Totius glorifies the "Boer of Africa" as the liberator and the hope of the continent in some of the poems collected in *Skemering* (Dusk, 1948). At the opposite end of the

[73] S. M. Van Zyl, *Isak David Du Plessis: A Bibliography* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1963).

spectrum are the feelings and ideals formulated in the "intellectual" novel of Willem van den Berg (1916–1952), *Reisigers na nêrens* (Travellers to nowhere, 1946). In novels of this kind, the characters are stereotypes personifying the contradictory trends that divided Afrikaners into two groups: on one side were those in favour of the system; on the other, the unorthodox faction, opposed to nationalism and calvinistic harshness; these were taken to hold slightly revolutionary views. But basic racial attitudes remained unquestioned; the non-white majority is also represented by stereotypes: servants drink, they are irresponsible, Coloureds are impudent, etc.

Although the urbanization of the Afrikaner had been in progress since the twenties, literature still viewed the city as an evil and hostile place. The Afrikaner was still an employee, not an employer, and he remained poor, as shown by the fact that there were approximately 400,000 "poor whites" around 1945. As the war ended, the economist C. G. W. Schuman advocated a definite policy to improve their fate:

> It is ... vital that the urban Afrikaner gradually builds up his own and dignified urban culture as they used to have on the farms—only then will the developing urban Afrikaner feel at home in his own surroundings and atmosphere and find full social and spiritual satisfaction, and the underprivileged will be able to own something which is their own in the cities and they will then be proud of it.[74]

The Afrikaans writer, however, was primarily concerned with the hardships of poverty and the evil influence of the city. Even the Fagan Report of 1948, which stresses the desirability of total economic integration, and the opposite argument that the survival of the people and culture is more important than economic stability, did not seem exert any influence on literary artists.

The "New Objectivity," inspired by the German *Neue Sächlichkeit*, generated a prose style that attempted to describe situations of poverty "objectively" and became the current literary approach. Abraham H. Jonker (1905–1966) was its first exponent, but the most significant novel of the forties was written by Holmer Johanssen (pseudonym J. F. Holleman, b. 1915), who ostensibly extols the nobility of labour in *Die onterfdes* (The disinherited, 1944), a novel rich with dialogue unencumbered by authorial intrusion; as a fatherly hero moralizes and inspires his son to start his own home industry, the attitude is clearly anti-socialist and pro-capitalist; the socialist character is portrayed as a weakling; but it is announced and promised that a benevolent government will bring relief to the poverty-stricken. Even the Coloured writer S. V. Petersen in his novel *As die son ondergaan* (When the sun sets, 1945), simply proclaims the necessity for working hard as he depicts the critical situation of a protagonist who attempts to adjust to urban life. The impoverished Afrikaner in the modern city is also the background theme to Mikro's *Klaradynstraat* (1947).

The generation of the forties (usually called the *Veertigers* in Afrikaans literary

[74] C. G. W. Schuman, "Die ekonomiese ontwikkeling van die Afrikaner," in *Kultuurgeskiedenis van die Afrikaner*, vol. I, ed. C. M. van der Heever and P. De V. Pienaar (Pretoria: Nasionale Pers, 1945).

history) was dominated by the poet D. J. Opperman (b. 1914)[75] who is with N. P. van Wyk Louw and later Breyten Breytenbach, one of the most important poets in the Afrikaans language. His first book of poetry, *Heilige beeste* (Holy cattle, 1945), was characterized by a new type of imagery taken from the realities of Africa and from the Afrikaner's changing world, especially his experience of the city. City metaphors are still aggressive, indicating an unchanged attitude towards industrialization. In *Negester oor Nineve,* (Nine stars over Nineveh, 1947) the city is metaphorically likened to the whore of Revelations, and is seen as the sign of the Apocalypse. But the "Ballade van die Grysland" (Ballad of the Grey Land),[76] a sophisticated, subtle and richly allusive *tour de force* about the destruction of a poor, naive farmer in the city, is the poet's last act of poetic resistance against urbanization and industrialization. The guilt of the main character becomes a metaphysical guilt deriving from the Calvinist doctrine of original sin, a central theme in Opperman's poetry as in much of later Afrikaans literature. With Opperman, however, guilt does not lead inevitably to final destruction for there is still the hope of resurrection, another Calvinist theme. The metaphorical description of Cape Town as the "Mother City," the womb of man, intimates eventual acceptance of the city, although under the mantle of divine protection.

It is of more than purely literary significance that the first major poem published after the victory of Afrikaner Nationalism in 1948, Opperman's *Joernaal van Jorik* (Jorik's diary, 1949), was a reflection upon the history of the nationalist movement. The name of the protagonist of this epic poem is a contraction of Opperman's first names, Diederik Johannes, thus implying a conscious involvement of the poet as man of the people. And Jorik's actions are not only a metaphorical quest for the purpose of man's existence, with the Calvinist sense of guilt a constant theme, but his growing attachment to the country influences his interpretation of the past from the standpoint of the present political and economic situation. A definite and quite different historical consciousness is thus revealed: as history never ends, the past becomes part of the present. The notion that events from the past are given different ideological interpretations as generations succeed one another is illustrated by the two different versions of Afrikaner history in the poem: the accepted "official" version as told by an old woman, and the modern, unorthodox interpretation expounded by Jorik. Opperman's political and social awareness, and his belief that historical events can be a mirror for the present and the future, remain important in his later poetry. Poems such as "Gebed om die gebeente" (Prayer for the bones), from *Engel uit die Klip* (Angel out of the stone, 1950), and "Staking op die suikerplantasie" (Strike at the sugar plantation) or "Kroniek van Kriestien" (Chronicle of Christina), both from *Blom en baaierd,* (Flower and chaos, 1956)[77] are all concerned with South Africa's racial problem. In the first the prayer is the Biblical wish that one great nation should grow from the dead bones of the past:

[75] E. Maisenholl, *Diederik Johannes Opperman: 'n Bibliografie* (Cape Town: University Libraries, 1964); *D. J. Opperman — Dolosgooier van die woord,* ed. A. P. Grové (Cape Town, Johannesburg: Tafelberg, 1974).

[76] T. T. Cloete, "Astrak van 'Trekkerwee' in 'Ballade van die Grysland'," *Standpunte* 83 (1969), 13–20.

[77] On this collection, see T. T. Cloete, "Ritme en klank as veraanskoulikingsmiddele in D. J. Opperman se *Blom en Baaierd,*" *Standpunte,* 103 (1972), 27–40.

But oh, so many bones lie under the rosemary ...
Bless, Lord, all the bleached bones of our struggle;
that we as one great nation in the tough terrain
with every scrap of roofing iron and with every wheel
and, like tin foil behind clean glass, the white, the black, the brown,
may catch your sunlight, Lord, and signal each to all.[78]

And in the "Chronicle of Christina" he transposes a medieval story to Africa, just as his central character is transplanted to the arid soil of a South African missionary station. Political "sin" as opposed to religious sin, divisions based on colour against the unity of all men in God, are some of the topical matters touched in this poem. The epic "Strike at the sugar plantation" recounts the revolt of people against slavery in their own country, a typical colonial situation; although an economic solution is ultimately found to end the revolt, the political setup remains explosive:

The cane-cutter and the cook
listen to the tic-tic of the clock ...
Then, one night, the rumbling of a drum begins.

As Opperman increasingly focused his attention on the universal theme of man's predicament in the atomic age—as in *Dolosse* (1963)[79]—he became the most important living literary figure in the Afrikaans world of letters, the last representative of the past great decades of Afrikaans poetry.

Such involvement in present-day problems was not characteristic of all those who came to the fore during the forties. Although Uys Krige (b. 1910) cannot be said to romanticize the past, it is significant that he chose the war as the setting for such plays as *Alle paaie gaan na Rome* (All roads lead to Rome, 1949) and *Die sluipskutter* (The Sharpshooter, 1961). As to Opperman's contemporary, Ernst van Heerden (b. 1916),[80] he has thematically widened the poetic range of Afrikaans with his poems on sport and on the human body in conflict with the forces of nature; his preoccupation with the primordial, which he discovers in certain small animals such as the lizard or the tortoise, can perhaps be seen as a parallel to Opperman's historic consciousness as a realization that elements of the past always survive in the present. But he seldom becomes involved in socio-political matters in his poetry: he is still part of a transitional generation which

[78] "Gebed om die gebeente" translated by Guy Butler in *Afrikaans Poems with English Translations*, ed. A. P. Grové and C. J. D. Harvey (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 267. For detailed discussions of other poems, see P. P. van der Merwe, "Die simboliese in *Paddas* [Frogs] van Dirk Opperman", *Standpunte*, 86 (1969), 23–30; N. J. Snyman, "'n Polemiek rondom S. D. J. Opperman se 'Kersliedjie' [Christmas Carol]," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* 12, 4 (1974), 12–23.

[79] D. H. Steenberg, "Die skeppingsmotief in Opperman se *Dolosse*," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* 8, 1 (1970), 56–66.

[80] P. Goosen, *Ernst van Heerden: Bibliografie* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1963). See also C. F. Rudolf, "In gesprek met Ernst van Heerden," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 8, 2 (1970), 1–13.

tends to romanticize the past. His poetry is structurally and linguistically meticulous and places him among those who are primarily concerned with the "aesthetic" aspects of their craft.

The Afrikaner's ascent to total and unified political power, culminating in the fulfilment of the age-old ideal of an independent Republic in 1960, was marked in the academic field by a spate of publications justifying Apartheid on biblical and political grounds, and by treatises dealing with national unity and the future of the Afrikaners as an ethnic group. Nationalist academics were also investigating and formulating labour and economic dispensations within this policy: they emphasized the creation of labour opportunities in the Bantu "homelands" and the feasibility of integrating black labour by means of a migrant labour system.

Apartheid, with the spirit of discrimination inherent in its ideology and with its disregard for human rights, inevitably leads to physical protest and militant political opposition. The treason trial of 1958, the role of Bram Fischer, the Sharpeville attack of 1960, the Cottesloe Church Conference of 1960 and the launching of the Christian Institute illustrate the gravity of the situation. Even Afrikaner academics who supported Apartheid ideology became deeply disturbed as can be seen from the fact that the early seventies saw new-fangled ideas being very seriously discussed in speeches by esteemed representatives of the Establishment such as W. P. Esterhuyse on "Philosophy of the Revolution: Marcuse's Critique of Society and Law" (1971), C. W. H. Boshoff on "Black Theology" (1972) or J. A. van Wyk on "Renewal or Revolution: Does the Church have Anything to Say?" (1973).

The debate originated in the fifties. Its most prominent literary participant was N. P. van Wyk Louw, whose essays on literature, culture and nationalism are basic to much of modern Afrikaans thinking because of their clarity and open-mindedness. His stay in Holland as Professor of Afrikaans Literature and Culture (1950–1957) and the intellectual and aesthetic atmosphere of Europe (of which he believed the Afrikaner was a part) proved conducive to a reappraisal of his views on the role of the poet as intellectual, on the importance of a balanced intellectual attitude towards life, on the dangers of narrow nationalism, and, ultimately, on the survival of his people—a just survival being more important to him than survival alone. Hence his concern for the literature and the policies of the Afrikaner community, and his belief that the writer must be involved—though solely as writer, man of culture, intellectual—in the affairs of his country.

Some of Van Wyk Louw's work of the fifties is shaped by his thinking on power and its potential evils. The theme of his play *Germanicus* (1956) is the clash between the ruler and the humanist (writer or intellectual), the dilemma of the man of culture, the aesthete, confronted with the choice whether to rule to the supposed greater glory of his people and therefore accept the inevitable corruption by power, or to withdraw into his private mental world. That Germanicus chooses the latter like Shakespeare's Prospero, is the tragic error which leads to his destruction.[81]

[81] André P. Brink, *Orde en chaos: 'n studie oor* Germanicus *en die tragedies van Shakespeare* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1962).

Equally noteworthy was Van Wyk Louw's ceaseless insistence on the formal aspects of poetry. As an admired poet and literary theorist, his influence in this respect was all the more effectual as many of the leading Afrikaner critics of the later generation were his students in Holland, some of them writing dissertations that emphasized the Russian Formalists' approach to literary analysis and their meticulous attention to poetic style as the only truly objective method for the study of poetry. And the poetry that was written by Van Wyk Louw during his stay in Europe, especially "Klipwerk" (Stone work) in *Nuwe verse* (1954) and *Tristia* (1962), prefigured the experiments to which the new generation, the *Sestigers* were soon to proceed in verse, prose and drama.[82]

Although it is generally admitted that a kind of revolution came over Afrikaans literature during the sixties[83] thanks to the poetry of such as Peter Blum (b. 1925) and of new leaders in fiction and drama like Jan Rabie (b. 1920), Etienne Leroux (b. 1922) and Bartho Smit (b. 1924), it is significant that the influence of Europe should have been decisive in this development. Like Van Wyk Louw, many of the *Sestigers* lived for considerable periods in Europe. Their innovations in literary techniques and themes were to a large extent originally a transfer of European novelties to Africa, not in the least an "Africanization" of Afrikaans literature: it was only later that the growing political consciousness of younger Afrikaans writers was to lead to deeper involvement in politics.

A particularly pregnant aspect of Van Wyk Louw's versatility as a poet is that he was the first among the moderns to search for and make use of, some unique cultural characteristics of his people. During his stay in Europe, he recalled traditional folk verse, perhaps as a form of romantic nostalgia, but primarily in order to define specific culture traits that distinguished the Afrikaner people, and also because he felt (perhaps under the influence of the Formalists and in particular of Roman Jakobson) that this form of poetry was doomed in a modern industrialized society. His interest in this "pre-literary" poetry, in its style, structure and language, resulted in the *volksverse* (folk verse) of "Klipwerk", where language, metaphor and verse pattern are used to express the earthiness, eroticism, love and even the obscenities of those living in a rural society.

Van Wyk Louw's near contemporary Boerneef (pseudonym of I. W. van der Merwe, 1897–1967) also practised this type of verse;[84] but whereas Louw wanted it to be so close to the original that it might even pass for anonymous folk art, Boerneef personalized and modernized it. There is often a predilection for this type of verse among younger poets, although it is mostly just a facile form of escape form the realities of present-day South Africa. Actually, the use of the language of a particular group of

[82] For detailed discussion of some of van Wyk Louw's poems, see P. P. van der Merwe, "Die totstandkoming van 'n simbool: ' ontleding van 'Die Beiteltje' [The small chisel] van van Wyk Louw" *Standpunte*, 75 (1968), 34–48; Ina Gräbe, "Die rym in 'Die hond van Gor' (The hound of God)," *Standpunte*, 95 (1971), 12–25; H. J. Schutte, "De oorgangsmotief in 'Karoo-dorp: Someraand'," ibid., 29–42.

[83] André P. Brink, *Aspekte van die nuwe prosa* (Cape Town, Pretoria: Academica, 1967); W. E. Heegman, "De vernieuwing van de Afrikaanse roman," *Handelingen van de Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis*, 22 (1968), 211–221; *Die Sestigers*, ed. J. Polley (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1973). For bibliographical information, see M. N. van Erdelen, *Some Sestigers: A Bibliography* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1970).

[84] M. S. van der Walt, *Boerneef (Izak Wilhelmus van der Merwe), 1897–1967. 'n Bibliografie* (Stellenbosch: Department of Librarianship, 1968); Rina Pauw, "Enkele patroonmatighede in Boerneef se verse," *Standpunte*, 73 (1967), 27–39.

people was truly revitalized for the first time since *Kaatjie Kekkelbek* (1838) by Peter Blum in the *Kaapse sonnette* (Cape sonnets) to be found in his two collections, *Steenbok tot Poolsee* (Capricorn to Polar Sea, 1956) and *Enklaves van die Lig* (Enclaves of light, 1958). Blum's importance must be attributed to his subtle use of language and to his chosen themes, especially his insistence on the difference between Africa and Europe. But in his Cape sonnets, the language of the Cape Coloured is used to satirize and ridicule local and political events and phenomena, and these probably had direct influence on the protest poetry of the Coloured poet Adam Small (b. 1936) in *Kitaar my kruis* (Guitar my cross, 1961) and *Sê Sjibbolet* (Say Shibboleth, 1963).[85] Here the colloquial language is used to protest against discrimination and suppression, and the poems are freedom songs on the Biblical theme of "let my people go". Small's play *Kanna hy kô hystoe* (Kanna comes home, 1965) describes from Kanna's point of view the ruin of his poverty-stricken family in the city; while he is studying abroad, they await him to build a better future; and his reluctance to return home is seen as the reason for their tragedy. The play became immensely popular both because of its successful dramatic technique and its genuine involvement with the destiny of the Coloured.

The culmination of Van Wyk Louw's poetic achievement and the most esteemed volume in modern Afrikaans poetry is his *Tristia,* where language is tested to the utmost in verse of intense complexity. The writer's constant preoccupation with his art, the cosmopolitan nature of his experience, the philosophical depth of his search for Being as in "Groot Ode" (Great Ode), can hardly be summarized in a few sentences. One feels that all that is to be said about poetry and about Being has here been said. But although he immersed himself in a literary and philosophical world that is European, Van Wyk Louw's separation from his country, apart from inspiring some nostalgic poems, also gave him perspective on his relationship to his people. Out of an *odi et amo* feeling for his country he criticizes affluence and falsity among Afrikaners, and for the first time explicitly expresses in his poetry his concern with specific political events and with the corruption of power.

Tristia set the standards by which the work of the most talented Afrikaner poets of the sixties and seventies is to be judged, with the difference that they exhibit deeper commitment to Africa and her problems. Obviously, the poetry of such Coloured poets as S. V. Petersen and P. J. Philander (b. 1921) is not without pessimism and bitterness; the latter's *Vuurklip* (Fire stone, 1960), shows impressive historical awareness. But the immediate impact of political ideology is most clearly reflected in the poems of Ingrid Jonker (1933–1965) in her collection *Rook en Oker* (Smoke and ochre, 1963), where the ever protesting presence of the black child of Africa is all-pervasive: "Die kind" (The child) has an almost uncanny prophetic quality, considering the events that were to take place in Soweto in 1976. However, the most talented poets that emerged

[85] C. M. van Zyl, *Adam Small: 'n Bibliografie* (Stellenbosch: Department of Librarianship, 1975). See also André P. Brink, "I Am Smiling: Sentiment en satire by Adam Small," *Ons Erfdeel,* 19 (1976), 149–161. Of special interest in connection with Afrikaans writing by Coloured authors are: Jan Deloof, "Gaat de pijn toch de lach overheersen? De stem van de kleurling in de Zuidafrikaanse letterkunde," *Ons Erfdeel,* 16, 3 (1973), 75–89; and Peter Sulzer, *Schwarz und Braun in der Afrikaansliteratur* (Basle: Basler Afrika-Bibliographien, 1972).

in the sixties and dominated the seventies were Breyten Breytenbach (b. 1939) and Wilma Stockenström (b. 1933).

A painter as well as a poet, Breytenbach introduced himself as follows in *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (The iron cow has to sweat, 1964):

> Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to introduce you to Breyten Breytenbach
> the thin man with the green sweater; he is devout
> and holds and hammers his long-drawn head
> to fabricate a poem for you[86]

In this first poetic programme he promised never to close his eyes to reality, and never to silence his black tongue. In poems rich with metaphor, packed with revitalized Afrikaans idioms, clichés that have acquired new freshness, perhaps as a result of exile, expressing an often surrealistic vision, he sees decomposition and death as necessary to life; he sees an outside world threatening the joys of eroticism and love; he protests against his exile (although self-imposed for political reasons). Apart from the frequent use of Zen-Buddhist themes and thoughts in his love poems and his "arts of poetry," as in *Die huis van die dowe* (House of the deaf, 1967) and *Lotus* (1970), his later works speak predominantly of a man longing to return home and of political protest. In *Skryt* (1972), which is banned in South Africa, Breytenbach demonstrated that it was possible to combine formal sophistication with vehement political protest. His ability in this respect is especially conspicuous in such poems as "Brief uit die vreemde aan slagter" (Letter from abroad to a butcher) which is addressed to the then Prime Minister, Balthazar J. Vorster, or "Die lewe in die grond" (Life in the ground), where he blesses the black children "dead / of diseases, malnutrition, poverty," or "Vlerkbrand" (Fire-wing), where he shows the oppressed blacks waiting "until / the devourers rotten and glutted fall from the branches".

During his Paris exile, however, and in his nostalgia for his home country and hankering for political change, Breytenbach became painfully aware of the ultimate irony that lies in the nature of poet as an ineffectual angel, whose words are only "notches of signs and sounds on space". His need for deeds resulted in active involvement in politics. While on a clandestine visit to South Africa in 1975 he was arrested and, at the end of a sensational political trial, sentenced to nine years' imprisonment under the South African Terrorism Act. But the impact of Breytenbach's poetry, his pronouncements against Apartheid, his personality and the tragedy of his arrest and trial

[86] *And Death as White as Words: An Anthology of the Poetry of Breyten Breytenbach*, ed. and tr., A. J. Coetzee (London: Collings, 1978). See also *In Africa, even the Flies are Happy: Breyten Breytenbach, Selected Poems 1964–1972*, trans. Denis Hirson (London: Calder, 1978). Prior to this, a French translation has been made available by Georges Marie Lory as *Feu froid* (Paris: Bourgois, 1976). On the writer and his work, see especially André P. Brink, *Die Poësie van Breyten Breytenbach* (Pretoria: Human and Rousseau; Academica, 1971), "Breyten Breytenbach: Sestiger malgré lui," *Raster*, 6 (1972), 142–149, "Blomme vir Boeddha: Breyten Breytenbach," *Ons Erfdeel*, 15, 4 (1972), 51–61, and "Octavio Paz en *Die blanke gedachte*," *Standpunte*, 118 (1975), 5–11; Hans Ester, "Sekularisatie als poëzie: Breyten Breytenbach: Literatuur als reproduktie van literatuur," *Ons Erfdeel*, 20 (1977), 564–570.

had a profound influence on the Afrikaans literary world and on the political thinking of many young people. For the first time an Afrikaans writer was paying a physical price for his poetic protest.

Several of Wilma Stockenström's first poems in *Vir die bysiende leser* (For the myopic reader, 1970) reveal her satiric approach and her critical appraisal of official politics. In *Van vergetelheid en glans* (Of oblivion and lustre, 1976), a highly refined poetic technique and concentrated imagery are put in the service of growing involvement with Africa. Primitive myths connected with the continent, its prehistory, its rocky landscape, are central motifs in Wilma Stockenström's poetry; but so also are Africa's aloofness and man's attempts to communicate with this world even though he remains a stranger to it.

This intense realization of loneliness and estrangement from Africa is a significant and very recent development in the Afrikaans poets' manner of sensing the continent; and perhaps the closest one of them to come to Africa is in the style, language and vision of Wopko Jensma (b. 1930), an Afrikaner author who has chosen to write in English.

In modern Afrikaans drama,[87] two main trends can be distinguished. European influence emanating from Brecht, Genêt, Ionesco has affected the experimental stage-devices, the symbolic-allegoric performances, the insistence on the razor-sharp distinction between illusion and reality, which are characteristic of the dramatic works of Bartho Smit (b. 1924), Dolf van Niekerk (b. 1929), Chris Barnard (b. 1939) and André P. Brink (b. 1935) in his early plays.[88] The other trend, also widely spread, resides in the increasingly explicit concern with South Africa's political and social problems and their historical origins.

Older playwrights remained mainly preoccupied, as was Van Wyk Louw in his *Germanicus*, with the corrupting effect of power and factional quarrels within the group. It is significant that Opperman's *Periandros van Korinthe* (1954) and *Vergelegen* (1956), likewise written shortly after the Afrikaner had virtually assumed complete control over the country, state basically the same problem: the former illustrates the problems of a tyrant and the difficult genesis of a state, while the latter deals with the clashes between an early materialistic governor and the free burghers at the Cape.[89] Opperman's later play, *Voëlvry* (Outlawed, 1968) is yet another historical play; it centers on the persistent disputes among Afrikaners during the Great Trek.

While some of the younger dramatists such as P. G. du Plessis (b. 1934), were more concerned with the effect of the demonic or the manifestations of love in a small community, already in the early fifties the crucial question of the co-existence of different racial groups in one country and of the sacrifices it demands was the theme of *Die jaar van die vuur-os* (The year of the fire ox, 1952) by W. A. de Klerk (b. 1917). A higher

[87] F. C. L. Bosman, "Sewe beslissende jaartalle in die geskiedenis van die toneel in Suid-Afrika," *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe*, 9 (1969), 224–240 and 10 (1970), 16–26; André P. Brink, *Aspekte van die nuwe drama* (Cape Town, Pretoria: Academica, 1974).

[88] On Brink as a playwright, see L. B. Odendaal, "Dramakroniek," *Tydsdrif vir Geesteswetenkappe*, 12 (1972), 82–96.

[89] See Elsa Nolte's two essays: "*Vergelegen* en die geskiedenis: die religieuse implikasies van die drama" *Standpunte*, 88 (1970), 7–17, and "*Vergelegen* se Adam Tas en Opperman se siening van die kunstenaarskap," ibid., 93 (1971), 27–36.

degree of political commitment was to be reached as André Brink started using historical material to dramatize faith in freedom and the dilemma of violent protest vs. peaceful gradualism. The personal tragedies of those reckless enough to attempt to break colour prejudices were enacted in the plays of Pieter Fourie (b. 1940). But by the late seventies, the existence of Afrikaans political drama was still extremely precarious because of increasingly strict enforcement of censorship: playwrights were often constrained to use oblique means of conveying their message, reverting to fable or allegory, a procedure which invariably weakens the impact of a play.

Despite the importance of their contribution to the evolution of poetry and the growth of drama, the *Sestigers* were primarily those novelists who freed Afrikaans fiction from the convention of local realism by which it had been bound. They experimented with new techniques, tried and liked eroticism in fiction, and surreptitiously blasphemed and protested against the political system. To such an extent did they harass the puritanical Afrikaner establishment and the government that censorship laws were tightened and a new Publications Act passed in 1974. For the first time Afrikaans books were also being banned, and the Afrikaans writers' previously unruffled attitude towards the many bannings of English works by both blacks and whites turned to dismay and protest, culminating in a rift between writer and government which is typical of totalitarian countries.

Afrikaans fiction of the sixties and seventies can broadly be divided into three types: the work of older writers in which a relevance is sought for today's political and racial situations; the technical and thematic innovations of younger writers, eventually resulting in strongly committed realist writing; and a third tendency which can be broadly characterized as leaning to symbolism.

A few older writers such as Mikro, F. A. Venter (b. 1916)[90] and W. A. de Klerk, who published mainly in the fifties and the sixties, made deserving attempts at popularizing social problems which had hitherto remained ignored: Venter's *Swart pelgrim* (Black pilgrim, 1952), illustrates the dilemma of the black man who leaves his rural society for the big city; Mikro's *Koperkan* (Copper can, 1959) deals with the problems encountered by the cultured Coloured; de Klerk's *Die laer* (The lager, 1964) uses historical events as exempla for the modern Afrikaner. But these novels about Black and Brown in difficult situations are similar to most older fiction in that they were written by white, middle-class, reasonably affluent authors without physical experience of the humiliations other races often have to suffer in South Africa.

The first work to break away from the old prose style was *Lobola vir die lewe* (Lobola for life, 1962) by André P. Brink (b. 1935). Although primarily intended as a technical experiment in daring modernization, introducing into the Afrikaans novel such novelties as variations in point of view, the use of symbols, collage, an outsider-figure, metaphysical "Angst", existentialism and the search for identity, Brink's uninhibited treatment of sexuality and his direct comments on social matters set him apart as the

[90] L. van Oudtshoorn, *François Alwyn Venter: 'n Bibliografie* (Stellenbosch: Department of Librarianship, 1969).

first Afrikaner novelist prepared to voice open protest against South African society's wrongs. After various other experiments in fiction such as his successful *Die Ambassadeurs* (The ambassadors, 1963), came Brink's first full-fledged attempt at a straight political novel, *Kennis van die aand* (1973; English translation: *Looking on Darkness*, 1974) which was soon banned by the South African authorities. The novel tells of a Coloured actor and his love for a white girl, of his being tortured by the security police and of his conviction for the murder of the girl. It is structured in such a way that the story of the main character runs parallel to the history of the Coloured population of South Africa, so that it becomes a chronicle of the atrocities committed by White against Brown. Love and sex between White and Brown is again the theme of *'n Oomblik in die wind* (1975; English translation: *An Instant in the Wind*, 1976), which takes place in the eighteenth century, with two characters—a white woman and a slave of mixed, Malay and Malagasy, origin—who find themselves isolated in the wild hostile interior. Their relationship grows out of their reliance upon each other, but their return to Cape Town and to its white civilization destroys their love even before the brown slave is murdered.[91]

Like Brink, Jan Rabie (b. 1920) started in the wake of European modernism, bringing to Afrikaans fiction the literary niceties of expressionism, surrealism and the grotesque before involving himself totally in the South African situation. In the mid-sixties, a few years before Brink, he turned to realism with his "Bolandia" novels (1964–1977), in which the history of Brown and White and their relationships during critical historical events are recounted. The last of these novels, *Ark* (1977), culminates in the Afrikaner's search for identity, for the roots of his ancestry and the meaning of his existence in his own country.

Such topics—the problems peculiar to South African society, the definition of the Afrikaner's specific identity as a white African and increasingly outspoken protest against racist attitudes and policy—were common motifs in Afrikaans prose fiction of the seventies.[92] While differences between Africa and Europe are played out in the more important works of Elsa Joubert (b. 1922), even aesthetically minded *Sestiger* short-story writers like Hennie Aucamp (b. 1934),[93] and Abraham H. de Vries (b. 1937) referred to political matters in their later work. As skirmishes along the borders between the R.S.A. and the newly-independent black states increased in frequency and violence during the seventies, younger short-story writers such as J. C. Steyn (b. 1938), P. J. Haasbroek (b. 1943) and Welma Odendaal (b. 1952) expressed their preoccupation with military violence, the psychology of the guerrilla (or "terrorist"), and the experiences of the young man on the border. The forced enrolment of individuals and the subsequent violence were central to the first novel of John Miles (b. 1938), while those

[91] C. van Schalwyk, "Omgangstaal en dialoog in *Kennis van die Aand*," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 11, 4 (1973), 12–20; D. H. Steenberg, "Die lewensiening in die teoretiese prosa van André P. Brink," Ibid., 12, 2 (1974), 41–46; Georges Lory, "La nuit sud-africaine et l'œuvre d'André Brink," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 43 (1977), 16–20.

[92] On recent Afrikaans writing, see André P. Brink, *Voorlopige rapport, beskouings oor die Afrikaanse Literatuur van sewentig* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1976) and Jan Deloof, "Literaire dissidentie in Zuid-Afrika," *Ons Erfdeel*, 21 (1978), 47–63.

[93] E. du Toit, *Hennie Aucamp: 'n Bibliografie* (Stellenbosch: Department of Librarianship, 1975).

of Karel Schoeman (b. 1939) went so far as to imagine the possible future of South Africa under a different government.[94]

Whereas those writers were expressing the realities of South Africa in a predominantly realistic mode—admittedly with variations such as the use of symbols in Miles' work,—others chose a more consistently symbolist approach. These include Chris Barnard, Dolf van Niekerk, Bartho Smit and Etienne Leroux. Barnard started off in the realist tradition with novels about the Coloured's unhappy fate in a white-controlled society. His use of symbol and allegory in the stories in *Duiwel-in-die-bos* (Devil-in-the bush, 1968) was indicative of the increasing popularity of this technique in Afrikaans writing. His best novel, *Mahala* (1971), was composed in the French *nouveau roman* manner, where illusion and reality are often indistinguishable and conventional chronology is abandoned.[95]

While Barnard preferred to place his allegories somewhere in the African bush, the most prominent representative of this trend, and at the same time the most significant modern Afrikaans novelist, Etienne Leroux,[96] resorted to settings more representative of present-day society: the city, the shopping centre, the industrialized wine estate, the film set.

One of Leroux' fundamental theses is that modern man has lost his myths: this is why his characters are always reminded—often by a *meturgeman* or "guide of dreams" —of the importance of recognizing these myths. In the first of his Welgevonden estate novels, *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins*, (1962; English translation: *Seven days at the Silbersteins*, 1968), he makes use of Jung's concept of the individuation process to depict man's initiation into society (and, ironically, his loss of individuality). By implication, this stands for the South African's initiation into his country. Mythology and archetype are used with greater frequency in the second novel of the trilogy, *Een vir Azazel*, (1964; English translation: *One for the Devil*): in a parody of the detective story—justified by the mythological pattern underlying the genre—a herculean, stammering detective searches for a murderer, who is in fact a scapegoat, as only the sacrifice of a scapegoat can purify a society from its collective sin.

Leroux reached the peak of his creative power in *Magersfontein, o Magersfontein* (1976). In this near-historical, near-realistic novel, mythological and archetypal symbolism is united with the topically and typically South African in a weird and funny, satiric and frightening re-interpretation of the historic battle of Magersfontein (11th December, 1899) when the Boers defeated the highly organized British army; this outcome is

[94] Lina Spies, "'n Land van lig en water: Die totstandkoming van 'n wereld in Karel Schoeman se drie romans *By fakellig, Op 'n eiland* en *Na die geliefde* land," *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 11, 4 (1973), 36–48; Susan Rens, "Die reismotif in Karel Schoeman se *Op 'n eiland* met spesiale verwysing na die gesprek as opboumiddel," Ibid., 49–58.

[95] C. F. R(udolf), "In gesprek met Chris Barnard (skrywer!)", *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 8, 1 (1970), 2–12; H. J. Vermeulen, "'n Tekstuele analise van Chris Barnard se 'Pa Maak vir my 'n Vlieër Pa'," *Standpunte*, 119 (1975), 45–57.

[96] Elize Botha, T. T. Cloete and A. P. Grové, "Oor Boeke: Etienne Leroux, *Isis Isis Isis...*," *Standpunte*, 88 (1970), 35–51; J. E. Scott, *Etienne Leroux: Bibliography* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1971); F. I. J. van Rensburg, "Etienne Leroux as siklusbouer," *Standpunte*, 102 (1972), 13–26; D. H. Steenberg, "*Een vir Azazel* en die tragiese," *Klasgids*, 12 (1977), 35–56; H. F. van Coller, "Mitiese agtergronde van *Die Mugu*", *Theoria*, 49 (1977), 60–72.

symbolic of the victory of the unorthodox over the well-ordered, of the irrational over the rational, of the unconscious over the conscious. But the record of the battle is in fact a play within the play, for the story is actually about a film team making a movie about Magersfontein. Heavy rains eventually wreck the climactic battle scene—yet another symbol of the forces of the unconscious making havoc of conscious design. The recreation of the Afrikaner's history thus turns into disaster, implying that his true history has been apocalyptic and meaningless. The only indestructible symbol in the novel is the Coloured man Gert Garries whose personality fuses African and European elements so that he may appear as a prophetic type of future South African identity.

Magersfontein, o Magersfontein was Leroux' most successful novel because he managed to reconcile allegory and myth with meaningful realism. This is perhaps the reason why his message was understood better than before. But since he had played a daring and terrifying game with a part of the Afrikaner's history, and because he had ridiculed certain powerful elements in the establishment, the book was banned, suggesting that by the late seventies continued survival of Afrikaans literature in the face of growing government opposition and stricter censorship lay either in an "official", but closed, cryptic, exclusive literature for a chosen few, or in "unofficial," alternative, underground, *samizdat*-type publication. While the former was certainly undesirable, the latter had already begun.

MICHAEL WADE

ENGLISH

Of the considerable volume of creative writing produced since World War II by the English-speaking section of South Africa's white community, the novel is by far the most important,[97] not only in numbers but also in the quality of style and in the depth and complexity of the insight it provides into the fast-changing responses which a fast-changing history exacts from this minority group inside the country's ruling "European"

[97] This should not be taken to mean that activity in other genres has been negligible. Alongside the novelists who will be discussed in this chapter, the fifties saw the emergence of such younger writers as the poet Anthony Delius (b. 1916) and Guy Butler (b. 1918), poet and playwright. It was in the sixties that the plays of H. W. D. Mason (1926–1969) were performed, although most of them were printed posthumously. The same decade saw the publication of the first collections of poetry of Douglas Livingstone (b. 1932), an Englishman who had lived in Rhodesia before settling in Natal; see A. G. Nullyatt, *Douglas Livingstone: A Bibliography* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1979) and Michael Chapman, *Douglas Livingstone. A Critical Study of His Poetry* (Johannesburg: Donker, 1981). The best-known of South Africa's white playwrights is Athol Fugard (b. 1932), whose inspiration is closely linked to the unorthodox stance of his anti-segregationist contemporaries. His plays have been abundantly discussed in scholarly journals; see notably: Lewis Nkosi, *The Transplanted Heart* (Benin City: Ethiope, 1975), pp. 116–125; Robert J. Green, "Politics and Literature in Africa: The Drama of Athol Fugard," in *Aspects of South African Literature*, ed. Christopher Heywood (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976), pp. 163–173; Anna Rutherford, "Time, Space and Identity in Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*," in *Neo-African Literature and Culture*, ed. Bernth Lindfors and Ulla Schild (Wiesbaden: Heymann, 1976), pp. 267–284; Derek Cohen, "A South African Drama: Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot*," *Modern Language Studies* 7,1 (1977), 74–81; id., "Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 12,3 (1978), 78–83; Patrick O'Sheel, "Athol Fugard's 'Poor Theatre'," ibid., 67–77. [Ed.]

minority. For those novelists whose career had started between the two world wars, their whiteness had a clear, unequivocal significance. Being white meant three things, namely: being very close to, even identifiable with, whites in Europe, i.e. being "European"; not being black (together with being as remote as possible from the quality or experience of being black or a member of a black group); and being members of their own, small, self-contained group of whites at their specific conjunction of space and time. The fall of the Smuts government at the hands of D. F. Malan in 1948 was the trauma that shattered this complacent assurance to pieces. Smuts defined the white-English-South Africans' own identity for them. He linked them with their presumed Englishness while embodying their white-South-Africanness. To them, he bestrode both worlds and incarnated their own myth. His disappearance from the political scene was a shock after which nothing could apparently ever be the same again: during the first post-war decade the dominant pre-war novelists wrote themselves and their themes out of the story with definitive anti-statements, mainly in the form of historical novels. The two most representative members of this anglophone group illustrate the inherent anomalies of the wider category they represent, the English-speaking whites.

Stuart Cloete (b. 1897), white, born to a South African father and a Scottish mother in Paris, with roots in an Afrikaner Eastern Cape family which had been influential since the beginning of British rule in the early nineteenth century, had gained fame with *Turning Wheels* (1937), a novel of the Great Trek, of whiteness and variants thereof.[98] After the war he continued to write historical novels dealing with the mythically enshrined "significant" episodes in white-South-African history, and stressing the ideological goal of "white unity"—a recognition on a mythic level by the two language groups among the whites of their identity of interests.

Sarah Gertrude Millin (1889–1968),[99] white, South African born and bred, Jewish, English-speaking and writing, had been a novelist from 1919 and had gained a world-wide reputation with the publication of a novel about not-blackness which had the closest possible bearing on the meaning of whiteness: *God's Stepchildren* (1924), a story of the tragedy of racial ambiguity. After World War II, she published four novels all of which dealt with the burning unrealized preoccupation of her group, the English-speaking whites: what were they to Europe (England), what was Europe (England) to them? The first two—*King of the Bastards* (1949) and *The Burning Man* (1952)—form a natural pair of straightforward historical novels, focusing on two characters of the early years of the period of English rule that began at the Cape in 1806 and ended in 1910 with the Act of Union. Both are set in the years leading up to the Great Trek of the 1830s. The central figures of both novels test the boundaries of identity for the white group in Southern Africa. They both take black wives: Coenraad de Buys fathers a clan which settles in the Northern Transvaal; as "king of the bastards" he becomes a comic impersonation of the identity *angst* that afflicts the whole white South African group. As to the other story's protagonist, Johannes Vandekemp (Millin's version of the

[98] The book was popular enough to be translated into French some ten years later as *Le Grand trek* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1946).

[99] For bibliographical information, see F. Levy, *The Works of S. G. Millin, 1952–1968* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1969).

historical character's name, van der Kemp), he is depicted as a swashbuckling aristocratic womanizer from Rotterdam and Leyden, who in 1799 as an L.M.S. missionary contaminated by the ideas of Rousseau, Diderot and Hume had reached that part of the Xhosa country now known as Ciskei.

The importance for Millin and her immediate audience of the couplings white /not-white, and European/ nothing, is indicated by her linking the two men's fates. De Buys, a farmer, is wholly of Africa, but is affected by the same revolutionary currents as the missionary:

> The year was 1789. One might not imagine that what had happened in Paris in 1789 would have an effect in Graaff Reinet.
> And yet it had.[100]

> In January, 1793, Louis XVI of France died on the scaffold and the new world was born that for so long had lain in the womb of fate.

> Since that Stadtholder, William V of Orange, stood with the Royal Houses of Germany and England, revolutionary France declared war, not only on Spain and England, but on Holland. Next year its armies were in Holland, exultantly welcomed by the Dutch Patriots of the United Provinces, wearing their revolutionary cockades, raising the Voice of the People, proclaiming the Sovereignty of the People. In two villages in the Cape, called Graaff Reinet and Swellendam, and consisting, each, of one short street, there were also Patriots, wearing cockades, who raised the Voice of the People, proclaimed their Sovereignty, and declared their districts republics in the face of governing Dutch East India Company, the adherents of Orange.[101]

The passages operate from an extra-European point of view. Yet, the burning importance of Europe is clear. So is the non-European quality of the rhetoric and perspective. The telos of these events in both books is the terrifying, enigmatic unidentity of the Coloured group in South Africa, represented by de Buys's clan and by van der Kemp's offspring by his pathetic brown child bride. Van der Kemp's origins are wholly, quintessentially European. He embodies the European, civilized mind, moved by and vulnerable to ideas. De Buys, nearly seven feet tall, is physical. In both books, unhistorically, the two meet. De Buys, who is not given to self-deceit, rejects van der Kemp because the latter, being European, does deceive himself. De Buys accepts that his predilection for black women makes him an outcast; van der Kemp uses European ideologies (ranging from Deism to Moravian Christianity) to justify his marriage to a young coloured girl.

The centrality of this preoccupation in at least the writing mind (and one cannot ignore the link of shared emotions and beliefs between the writer and his audience, in Millin's case, at any rate, or indeed in the case of any one group powered by desire for homogeneity) is clear from the novels which Lewis Sowden (b. 1905) published during the first post-war decade: he was perhaps the first of those writers who wished to carry

[100] Sarah Gertrude Millin, *King of the Bastards* (New York: Harper, 1949), p. 36.
[101] Id., *The Burning Man* (New York: Putnam, 1952), p. 72.

the burden of their identity in a different direction. For all its literary shortcomings, his work should be distinguished from that of "false start" writers like Alan Paton and Jack Cope. An English Jew, Sowden came to South Africa as a child, and rose almost to the top to his chosen profession of journalism. He was a courageous and unconventional man whose exuberance of imagination was not matched by adequate novelistic craftsmanship.[102] In one instance, though, his combination (rare in the South African novel) of interest in the white urban working class, and in the generalized white identity *angst*, produced a statement of the problem that was franker than usual.

The Crooked Bluegum (1955) centres on a piece of waste land dividing Westdorp, a white suburb of Johannesburg, from a coloured township, Claratown, which the Claratown Township Board proposes to turn into a park. Against this background is portrayed the family of a white miner, Izak Lotter. Izak, together with his two elder sons, Jake and Abraham, is fiercely opposed to the park scheme, while his youngest son David incurs his father's wrath by marrying a girl suspected of "passing" for white, taking up a teaching post in Claratown, and actively supporting Claratown's efforts. In a final confrontation between Westdorp whites and Claratown squatters David is struck by a stone and killed, and his grieving father accepts David's wife and baby into his house.

Although Sowden has a tendency to overload his vehicle to breaking point with intricate plotting, the significance of the novel in its literary historical and more general historical contexts is considerable. Coming at the end of the first post-war decade *The Crooked Bluegum* summarizes in many ways the obsessive concern over identity provoked for the whites (and it should never be forgotten that this means not *even*, but *especially*, the English-speaking whites) by the mere existence, let alone proximity, of the coloured group. (The status of the coloureds as in a sense a buffer category only sharpens the point of ambiguity they twist in the white gut reaction.) The conciliatory direction of the argument indicates a general movement in the English novel by whites, which gathered strength towards the end of the first ten years from the war's end. It stands in direct contradiction to the final demarcations laid down by Millin in her post-war historical novels. It is also unusual in firmly disallowing its characters any appeal, let alone direct access, to the world of metropolitan ideals, especially of English liberalism. This apparent redefinition of values should perhaps be regarded as a by-product of the new predicament of the English-speaking whites, now deprived of political power. The very fact of being white, English-speaking and South African had apparently been vindicated by victory in World War II, but this vindication was suddenly contradicted, up-ended. It was not a case of the willing (ungraceful or graceful) unwilling handover of power by a ruling group in exile, *representing* an alien reality, but rather one of a false confirmation of an invalid perception of reality being negated. Sowden's book does not reflect any of these political changes in the behaviour of his characters; but the shift it brings to the ideological base of the white English novel is at least partly the result of these changes. Sowden admits the obsessions, presenting them in their most superficial and common manifestations (Jake's speech at the ratepayers' meeting, old Izak's hatred

[102] Sowden's novels include: *Tomorrow's Comet* (London: Hale, 1951), *Family Cromer* (ibid., 1952). *The Crooked Bluegum* (London: Bodley Head, 1955) and *Kop of Gold* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers, 1956).

of the coloureds and mine owners): he allows them to be reversed in certain highly individual situations under the pressure of extraordinary events. In doing so he hints at the extraordinary history of the very ordinary group he is writing about and belongs to, and at the consequent objective difficulties about their identity.

The Crooked Bluegum provides an unusually clear sense of transition from the pre-war verities of the Millin-Cloete school towards a new approach to old themes. Sowden even shares with Millin a passionate interest (in his case an affectionate one) in the white working and lower middle classes. And, like Cloete, he sees those whites as one group rather than two—though unlike Cloete he understands that this is scarcely the central issue. But his work was overshadowed by the first novel of Alan Paton (b. 1903), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948), which was hailed as *the* "major" English-white-South African novel of the period, and became a best-seller within a short time.[103] It was filmed and translated into many languages. And yet in terms of the historic development of the novel in South Africa, it was a kind of false alarm, perhaps the cul-de-sac at the end of a wrong turning inevitably taken. Possibly Paton's story of the black pastor coming out of the feudal tranquillity of the Zululand countryside to the evil city to seek his erring son said what the world felt English-white-South-Africans had to say, should be saying.

The book was certainly an attempt to establish the English-white-South-African identity. Perhaps the world's response was part of the generalized revival of meliorism which derived from the Allied victory in World War II. If so, at least this element in it was the result of confusion, because the book's meaning is now, and was at the time it appeared, deeply conservative. Paton presents a stereotype of experience firmly fixed in the folk mind since the beginnings of urbanization: the involuntary migration of the innocent from a stable, if relatively deprived, rural social framework, usually informed by a stern paternalism, to the new, inchoate focus of the city, there to betray his past, lose his innocence, means, and life itself. Paton's Zululand is a place of settled hierarchy, feudal peace; the city is turbulent, all-corrupting. The book's message of the need for Christian reconciliation falls short of the reality being described though (perhaps because) the description itself is expressed in stereotypes well established by then in the English fictional interpretation of South Africa by its white writers. The situation itself had been used much earlier by Plomer and others including William Charles Scully (1855–1943)[104] and, of course, forms a staple of both popular and élite fiction in post-colonial Africa. The corrupt black politician is another stereotype deployed

[103] On this novel, see: Sheridan Baker, "Paton's Beloved Country and the Morality of Geography." *College English*, 19 (1957), 56–61; id. (ed.) *Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country: The Novel, the Critics, the Setting* (New York: Scribner's, 1968); J. Alvarez-Pereyre, "The Social Record in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*," *Etudes Anglaises*, 25 (1972), 207–214; Samuel O. Asein, "Christian Moralism and Apartheid: Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* Reassessed," *African Quarterly*, 14, 1/2 (1974), 53–63; Edward Callan, "Alan Paton's 'Apartheid and the Archbishop': An Allegory of the Christian Way," *English Studies in Africa*, 19 (1976), 39–47; K. W. Mbeboh, "*Cry, the Beloved Country*: A Liberal Apology," *Cameroon Studies in English and French*, 1 (1976), 71–77; R. W. H. Holland, "Fiction and History: Fact and Invention in Alan Paton's Novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*," *Zambezia*, 5,2 (1977), 129–139; R. C. Sharma, "Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*: The Parable of Compassion," *Literary Half-Yearly*, 19,2 (1978), 64–82.

[104] On this writer, see Jean Marquard, "W. C. Scully: South African Pioneer," *English in Africa*, 5,2 (1978), 28–43.

consistently by white "liberal" writers not only during the post-war years, but even more after 1964, when Zambia became the nearest independent country. The Reverend Stephen Kumalo's brother John falls neatly into place as the bombastic impotent, a necessary idea to the white-English-South-African writer and his readers: it is to be found in Millin's war-time novel *The Herr Witchdoctor* (1941) and in her final statement in fiction, *The Wizard Bird* (1962), as well as in the works of the minor liberal novelist and editor, Jack Cope who, like Paton, wrote with rural Natal's white latifundia as his creative base.

This stereotype of the black innocent moving from ancestral lands (where his birthright has been usurped by whites) to the cauldron of the city (made by blacks for whites), drawn by forces he does not understand or control (generated by whites), there to be broken down in one way or another—losing his threatening potency, failing to accomplish the awaited, feared revenge—and to die or to return battered and broken to the barren lands, all this is a product of the *white* imagination, especially of the "liberal" segment of it, where guilt is a conscious ingredient: so much is perfectly clear when one turns to (non-white) Peter Abrahams' *Song of the City* (1945) and *Mine Boy* (1946), in which the stereotype, in all its seeming inevitability, is displaced at once when coupled with its opposite.

Paton's preoccupations are echoed by Jack Cope (b. 1913) in *The Fair House* (1955), a historical novel based on the events of the Zulu rebellion of 1906, in which all the ingredients of white liberal stereotyping are present—the feudal white farmers, ranging from bloodthirsty to decent, up against the deprived tribal masses, tragically misled by opportunistic, ambitious or in other ways corrupted leaders.[105] But these stereotypes are displaced by Phyllis Altman's *The Law of the Vultures* (1952), an austere novel in which the rural-urban continuum is presented against the background of soldiers, black and white, returning from World War II. The ultimate betrayal, by the officer become young business executive, of his former Zulu bearer, is reminiscent of the opening chapters of *Sense and Sensibility:* Walters' life was saved by Nkosi during the war, and he has promised to see that the black man gets a "square deal" after demobilization. But when Nkosi returns to his village, he finds his stock has been decimated. His attempts to secure the stock compensation due to ex-soldiers run up against lack of documentation, a dishonest headman and army bureaucracy. After a number of vicissitudes he reluctantly turns to Lieutenant Walters, now a rising executive in a commercial firm. The white man, embarrassed by the presence of the black and fearful lest his boss walk in on them, does not even hear Nkosi's explanation of his problem:

> Walters watched him impatiently.
>
> 'Christ,' he was thinking. 'Can't have him coming in here like this. What if the old man was to walk in and find him sitting here? Why did I give him my address? I should have written to him and left it at that.'

[105] Jack Cope's other novels include: *The Golden Oriole* (London: Heinemann, 1958), *The Road to Yserberg* (ibid., 1959), *Albino* (ibid., 1964), *The Rain-Maker* (ibid., 1971), and *The Dawn Comes Twice* (ibid., 1977). On the banning of this novel, see: C. J. D. Harvey and J. C. Kannemeyer, "Die verbod op *The Dawn Comes Twice* deur Jack Cope", *Standpunte*, 130 (1977), 24–27; Harold Rudolph, "The Dawn Has Gone—Forever", and Pieter B. Geldenhuts, "Literere Meriete en Sensuur," *Standpunte*, 132 (1977), 24–27 and 28–36.

Nkosi had smoothed the letter and was telling his story falteringly. It was so difficult to explain. Why wouldn't Lemutu sign for him?

'Yes, yes, go on,' Walters said, and as Nkosi got to the end of the story he took the letter from Pretoria and read it hastily. He had not heard a word Nkosi had said.

He studied the letter, with an effort at concentration, while Nkosi watched him anxiously.

After a few minutes he said, 'Well, it's bad luck, old chap. It's the usual story of Army red tape. This letter seems pretty final. I imagine your own Committee investigated your case pretty thoroughly. Can't see that there's anything I can do.'

He fumbled awkwardly in his pocket.

'Here's a little something to go on with.'

Nkosi stared at the ten-shilling note in Walters's hand, while his heart contracted in the bitterest pain he had ever known. So this was the end of his journey. Walters had not once thought of him as a friend, had not seen him as a man, had made the usual white man's gesture to a native. (p. 97)

The central collective recognition of these first post-war years is the subliminal one that the identity problem could only be resolved on a comparative basis. It was the end of the white-English South-African novel of middle-class life, and the uncertain beginning of reactions to the face in the mirror. The significance of the fall of Smuts, which is documented in a number of novels, was most notably illustrated in *The Lying Days* (1953), the first novel of Nadine Gordimer (b. 1923)[106]. The heroine is the daughter of a mine official; her lover works with blacks in the Native Affairs Department of Johannesburg Municipality. Their affair collapses because the corrosion of despair at work—resulting from the strains imposed by the increasingly overt repressive attitudes of the new government—spills into their love life. The story ends as the heroine waits to board ship for Europe in the hope of testing the roots of her burgeoning liberal sensibility. This is one of the earliest white-English South African literary works to put to the proof the viability of the identity expressed by white-English South-Africanness; Gordimer uses/tests the value system of the mainstream of the English novel, the ideology of European bourgeois liberalism mediated in English through fiction.[107]

The first post-war decade seemed to find its apposite conclusion in *The Trap* (1955),

[106] Two book-length monographs have so far been devoted to this important writer: Robert F. Haugh, *Nadine Gordimer* (New York: Twayne, 1974) and Michael Wade, *Nadine Gordimer* (London: Evans, 1978). For detailed bibliographical information, see Racilia Jilian Nell, *Nadine Gordimer, Novelist and Short Story Writer* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1964); for updating, see John Cooke, "Nadine Gordimer," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 36 (1979), 81–84. General essays on her work include: Ursula Laredo, "African Mosaic: The Novels of Nadine Gordimer", *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 8,1 (1973), 42–53; Kevin Magarey. "Cutting the Jewel: Facets of Art in Nadine Gordimer's Short Stories," *Southern Review* (Australia), 7 (1974), 3–28; Claude Wauthier, "Nadine Gordimer ou le refus de l'exil," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 36 (1975), 12–14; Christopher Hope, "Out of the Picture: The Novels of Nadine Gordimer," *London Magazine*, 15,1 (1975), 49–55; Alan Lomberg, "Writing into the Truth: The Romantic Realism of Nadine Gordimer," *English in Africa*, 3,1 (1976), 1–12; Kenneth Parker, "Nadine Gordimer and the Pitfalls of Liberalism" in *The South African Novel in English*, ed. Kenneth Parker (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 114–130; Michael Wade, "Nadine Gordimer and Europe-in-Africa," ibid., pp. 131–163; John Cooke, "African Landscapes: The World of Nadine Gordimer," *World Literature Today*, 52 (1978), 533–538; Elisabeth Gerver, "Women Revolutionaries in the Novels of Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing", *World Literature Written in English*, 17 (1978), 38–50.

[107] Kolawole Ogungbesan, "The Way Out of South Africa: Nadine Gordimer's *The Lying Days*," *Theoria*, 49 (1977), 45–59, repr. *Ba Shiru*, 9, 1/2 (1978), 48–62.

the first novel of Dan Jacobson (b. 1929).[108] Here, a lonely white farmer, van Schoor, detached by nature from the muddy thickets of human relations, is sucked into the vortex of corrupt action by the discovery that his coloured farm labourer has been stealing his sheep. He becomes violent from the moment he accepts the identity that his historical situation has thrust upon him: from the moment he sees himself as a white man. Jacobson was to become one of the best contemporary writers born and bred in South Africa: *The Trap* is obviously intended to show how the local climate compels even a man of good will to conform to the evil model that the society has evolved for him; it also accounts imaginatively for the writer's decision to settle in London in 1954.

Between 1956 and 1966 the power of the National Party government was transformed from a fumbling and somewhat ineffectual machine to a formidable organized system of repression. During the period non-white students were excluded by law from those white universities that had sometimes somewhat grudgingly admitted them. In the mid-fifties, the Freedom Charter resulted from a brief alliance between the white liberal and socialist left and several non-white mass organizations. In the words of Leo Kuper, "the Government responded by raids against the Congresses [i.e. the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats, the South African Coloured People's Organization and the South African Congress of Trade Unions], political bans and the mass arrest of 156 leaders on charges of treason."[109] As a result of those treason trials, the alliance was shattered. The organized underground opposition to the state was demolished in 1963 and 1964, when leading members of the South African Communist Party and the Congress Alliance were arrested at a farm outside Johannesburg, and when the African Resistance Movement, a small, mainly white, sabotage group was uncovered in 1964. The death penalty for sabotage, and indefinite detention without trial, usually in solitary confinement, were introduced. The minister of justice, B. J. Vorster, was responsible for purging and reforming the security police into a keen instrument of state terror. From 1958 H. F. Verwoerd, the ideologue of apartheid, was prime minister. In 1966 Verwoerd, who had survived a white farmer's bullet in 1960, was almost ceremonially knifed to death in the House of Assembly in Cape Town by a crazed Greek parliamentary messenger. He was succeeded as premier by his hatchet-man, Vorster. The whole period was one of steadily increasing prosperity for the whites, except for the hiccup of Sharpeville on March 21, 1960, when police fired into an unarmed and docile crowd protesting against the pass laws near Vereeniging, leaving 69 dead. The ensuing flight of capital and nervous English-whites was soon arrested and reversed.

Against this background the white-English South-African novel developed its attack on the problem of identity through the strategies of the classic tradition in the English novel. Once again the spontaneous recourse was to the metropolitan value system and its aesthetico-ideological forms of expression, though this time the crafts-

[108] See Myra Ydelman, *Dan Jacobson: A Bibliography* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1967).

[109] In *The Oxford History of South Africa*, ed. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, repr. 1975), p. 464.

manship was of a considerably higher level, the models for emulation the highest examples of their genre. Two writers dominate this period, establishing international reputations no white-English South-African writer had achieved since S. G. Millin in the 1930s: Nadine Gordimer and Dan Jacobson, whose published work during the ten years 1956–1966 defined the parameters of action for novelists of their group.

Jacobson had just become the first significant South African writer since Plomer and Campbell to change his identity voluntarily—and crucially—by exiling himself to England. His penetration of the riddle of identity during this time depended on a technique of exploiting an outsider's angle of vision, so that the culmination of self-exile follows a certain logic which is also evinced in his creative work. In *A Dance in the Sun* (1956)[110] two scarcely identified students, hitch-hiking from Johannesburg to Cape Town, are taken out of their way by a young driver who deposits them in a remote Karoo *dorp* where they must seek a place to sleep before resuming their journey. In a boarding-house they are witness to a confrontation in which accepted identities are both switched and affirmed, but what is significant is the way the situation takes charge, becoming the ascriber. Fletcher, the boarding-house keeper, is English-South-African, his wife Afrikaans; but these distinctions are de-emphasized. A dismissed farm worker, Joseph, black, a controlled, patient man, becomes dominant in the end as he claims the right to return to his rightful role of the controlling servant. Mrs. Fletcher's brother Nasie (who is also the father of Joseph's sister's child) returns to the house the same night: he smashes the irrelevant European furnishings, and reverses the Apollo–Dionysus pairing, "becoming" black-Dionysus, vacating white-Apollo for Joseph.[111] The young hitch-hikers, "liberal" and urban, exist in the space between metropolitan Europe and its bastard colonial offspring. Fletcher is white-English South-African, moving across all the terms of this identity with bewildering—and convincing—speed and lack of direction.

The Price of Diamonds (1957) again uses the outsider's perspective: two East European-born Jews, partners in business in Lyndhurst (Jacobson's name for Kimberley, the diamond town where he was born)[112] experience loss of identity in different ways by drawing too close to the rules governing the insiders' play. Gottlieb risks all by trying to dabble in illicit diamond buying, while Fink is knocked into a coma by two whites when he remonstrates with them for beating a black. But the real sign of their endangered identities is found in mutual betrayal: each conceals from the other what he knows of a packet of illicit diamonds. As in his first two novels, Jacobson deals heavily in symbolism; thus the system of laws that protects the De Beers monopoly in diamond trading is made to stand for the whole apparatus of apartheid legislation, and the transference is meant to be complete enough to constitute an allegory.

[110] For a discussion of Jacobson's first two novels, see D. R. M. Wilkinson, "A Comment on Race Relationships: Dan Jacobson's *The Trap* and *A Dance in the Sun*," *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters*, 5 (1975), 270–281. See also C. Baxter, "Political Symbolism in *A Dance in the Sun*", *English in Africa*, 5,2 (1978), 44–50.

[111] For detailed elaboration of this motif, see Michael Wade, "Apollo, Dionysus and Other Performers in Dan Jacobson's South African Circus", *World Literature Written in English*, 13 (1974), 39–82.

[112] See Dan Jacobson, "Boyhood in Kimberley" in *The Writer in Modern Africa*, ed. Per Wästberg (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968), pp. 85–91.

The Evidence of Love (1960), one of a number of novels of the period which questioned the laws against sexual relations between members of different ethnic groups, is again dependent on an obtrusive technical device. The structure is closely modelled on that of *Great Expectations*: an elderly Lyndhurst spinster, whose fortune is derived from the early days of diamond exploitation, takes an interest in two young people whose paths are unlikely to cross: a coloured boy and a white girl. She finances the boy's education in Britain, where he and the girl meet, fall in love, eventually marry and, in a somewhat gratuitous ending, return to South Africa to be sentenced to six months' imprisonment for contravening the Immorality Act. This is the first of Jacobson's novels to be set partly outside South Africa and he uses the London sections of the book to explore the possibilities of evading (instead of resolving) the conundrum of identity posed by the Southern African experience. It was an important step for Jacobson the white-English South-African novelist, though ultimately one effect of it would be virtually to remove him from the category—, to the undoubted loss of the South African novel.

The Beginners (1966), which brought Jacobson's search for a viable identity as a South-African-English writer to an end, is also his most substantial achievement in the genre. At the close of this *Bildungsroman* the Jewish hero is living in London with his English-South African (Gentile) wife, working at an institute for research into the holocaust of European Jewry. The novel takes place in Lithuania at the turn of the century, in Johannesburg of the 1940s and 50s, in Israel from soon after its establishment to the mid-50s, and in London from the late 40s to the early sixties. It evaluates a range of involvements and identities: middle-class Jewish and upper-and lower middle-class Gentile (white) life in South Africa; Zionist socialism in South Africa and Israel; left-wing political involvement in South Africa; postgraduate student poverty in London; and ultimately chooses the comfortable uncertainties of middle-class liberalism in London at the dawn of the optimistic sixties.

It was during this period that Sarah Gertude Millin, published her last two novels, which were as angry and emphatic in their rejection of European liberalism as Jacobson's acceptance of it in *The Beginners* was complete in its very tentativeness and ambivalence. But both approaches originate in the same dilemma: both emerge from a compulsive need to examine and re-examine the ground of the connection between Europe and "European" in the peculiar white-English South African sense.

The Wizard Bird (1962) is a violent and intemperate attack on English liberalism at work in Southern Africa. A liberal Rhodesian anthropologist allows his daughter to come into the mildest of social contacts with a young black nationalist who has been educated in England on a mission scholarship. Horror inevitably results. In this package Millin includes every traditional element of threat perceived by the compulsively insecure English-white group at the southern tip of Africa, so far from anywhere that might once have been "home": the "civilizing" missionary, the "educated kaffir", cannibal rites (the plucking out and eating, in a neo-Mau Mau ceremony in Kenya, of the blue eyes of a living white man); human sacrifice; black wizardry; and the ultimate, crowning disaster, sex and marriage between a black man and a white woman (who, of course, commits suicide rather than bear his child). Conjecturally, the break-up of the Central African

Federation, the events of 1960–61 in the former Belgian Congo, and the granting of independence to Kenya were the immediate irritants that released Millin's splenetic flow.

The problem with this penultimate novel is that it leaves the white-English South African identity with no basis other than negation; this position is confirmed in Millin's final work, which deals with the self-inflicted mutilation of Europe. *Goodbye Dear England* (1965) is a strange and technically ill-conceived work in which the fortunes of a professional London family are unconvincingly linked with the effects of World War I; the point she sought to make was that that war brought about the end of English-European values as they were understood by a provincial or colonial English-European—the average English-speaking white South African. Smuts and W. M. Hughes, the Australian socialist prime minister, are the unlikely joint possessors of prophetic insight into how England should have behaved at the end of the war, but did not. Millin's forty-year career as a novelist finishes with splendid appropriateness, in view of the dream of identity she pursued with such tenacity, with the words she had chosen for the title of this last novel: "Goodbye, dear England."[113]

Thus the tendency of the novels of the uneasy early sixties was to move nearer to an outright acceptance of those metropolitan liberal values which most of the novelists saw (when they started out) as their heritage in the historic relationship of Europe with their own continent. Even the techniques of stating this acceptance were unambivalently the product of the "other" continent: and these techniques were practised with quite remarkable virtuosity. The only important writer to show signs of questioning this (from a standpoint other than Millin's hysterical rejectionism) was Nadine Gordimer, whose trajectory was taking her from the personal encounter between black and white as equals (*A World of Strangers*, 1956)[114] through the obligatory explication of the impossibility of a code based on the elevation of human relations in a society which prohibits love between members of different colour groups (*Occasion for Loving*, 1963), to the traumatized reappraisal of white-English political identity after the collapse of the left in the early 1960s. This stage was reached in *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), the first novel to confront the destruction of the post-war liberal-left-black alliance, and to explore the European-metropolitan roots of that alliance (the "late bourgeois world" is Western Europe) before indicating the lie of the land ahead.[115] In the book the possibility of Africanness is opened to those whites still interested in becoming aware of their personal-historic reality: the gap separating "European" from "Europe" is relentlessly uncovered and the character of the category is presented—for the first time fully in a novel by a white-English South African.

By 1966 the repressive forces of the South African state appeared to be firmly in control. There was virtually no viable political dissent. The white left had all but disappeared; its members were exiled, jailed or banned, its organs and institutions

[113] For further discussion, see Michael Wade, "Myth, Truth and the South African Reality in the Fiction of Sarah Gertrude Millin," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1 (1974), 91–108.

[114] Robert Green, "Nadine Gordimer's *A World of Strangers*: Strains in South African Liberalism," *English Studies in Africa*, 22 (1979), 45–54.

[115] Kolawole Ogungbesan, "Nadine Gordimer's *The Late Bourgeois World:* Love in Prison," *Ariel*, 9,1 (1978), 31–49.

proscribed and dissolved. Its contacts with the black underground were drastically attenuated. The black opposition itself was leaderless and, for the time being, in disarray; and among the white generality the ruling National Party seemed on the brink of gaining the great mythical prize of South African politics since before the days of union—unity of English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites—so widespread and strong as never before was the support of the English-white populace for the government of its traditional political rivals.

It is not, however, in the nature of a regime based on mass repression to seek stability, however much its leaders may posit this as their goal (and believe in their rhetoric). In the early 1970s there were major strikes of black industrial workers in Natal and elsewhere, and for virtually the first time in South African labour history, the front stayed solid until some of the economic demands were met. Guerrilla incursions near South Africa's borders, mounted by members of the banned black mass organizations, began and increased in tempo, and conscription of whites to the South African Defence Forces became universal and infinitely more serious.

The regime found the instability it sought in the seemingly unheralded outbursts of protest by Soweto schoolchildren, first in 1976 and again a year later, against both the calculated inferiority of the education provided for them and the crowning indignity of being forced to learn what was offered through the medium of Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor. The protests developed into physical confrontation between black youths and white soldiers and police in all of South Africa's major centres, and though the blacks were unarmed before the gas grenades and guns of their oppressors, they refused to be cowed. As Nadine Gordimer was to note:

> The kind of education the children've rebelled against is evident enough; they can't spell and they can't formulate their elation and anguish. But they know why they're dying. You were right. They turn away and screw up their eyes, squeal 'Eie-na!' when they're given an injection, but they kept on walking towards the police and the guns.[116]

From the end to the beginning is how the third phase of the corpus under examination is to be understood. The first trauma to be absorbed by the literature of the English-whites was the collapse of the African Resistance Movement (because many of its members were young white "liberals" unidentified with the traditional, Congress- or Communist Party-oriented, white left). The second was the dissolution of the small, mainly white Liberal Party, which had been the only political party (as distinct from mass movement) to advocate universal franchise; many white-English members of the African Resistance Movement, an underground sabotage organization, had been members of the (anti-violence) Liberal Party.

Thus Gordimer's *The Late Bourgeois World,* inspired by the A.R.M. and its collapse, documented the end of an ideological era as well as the painful beginning of a new phase in the search for identity. The central male character, Max van der Sandt, the son of a prominent white-English politician, is a failed left-wing activist who gave evidence

[116] Nadine Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter* (London: Cape, 1979), p. 349.

against his comrades in a political trial. The book opens with his suicide: the cancellation of his tradition as a factor in South African politics. The story of his life is that of a violent struggle to achieve a valid identity through living out/enacting the ideological postures of European romanticism. His former wife, Elizabeth, also English-white, makes the break with Europe, distancing it into a tourist experience for someone whose identity, whatever it is, is not European. Her final commitment, though, acknowledges that the new identity, whatever it may be, will not be easily achieved. What ties her to the black man who comes to dinner at the end of the day that is the novel's fictional present? Not the same kind of friendships as those that flourished in the innocent days of the left, when the ideology was European and the nature of the struggle was conceived, European-style, in terms of a shared quest. Elizabeth is not-black, not-European: but Luke Fokase, the non-ideological young entrepreneur, of necessity also an underground politician, perceives her in terms which are inevitably a part of her identity and when he asks her to provide him with a bank account to channel funds from abroad to his underground organization, she points out the dangers and, at first, refuses; then she remembers she has a power of attorney to operate an account on behalf of her senile grandmother, descendant of white-European entrepreneurial pioneers who industrialized South Africa at the turn of the century:

> I was afraid Luke would somehow divine—not the actual fact, but that there was a *possibility*; that there really was something for me to conceal. And at the same time I had the feeling that he had somehow known all along, all evening, that there was a possibility, some hidden factor, that he would get me to admit to myself. Probably just the black's sense that whites, who have held the power so long, always retain somewhere, even if they have been disinherited, some forgotten resource—a family trinket coming down from generations of piled-up possessions.[117]

In the end she decides to re-enter the world of the committed in this way; and in doing so she is made by the author into an emblem of a new possible identity: not-European without denying the manipulative advantages conferred by the European heritage; African, but in these terms a second-class citizen, though linked at last with the real history of the place and thus capable of evolving to a full, distinctive identity of Africanness. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that at the end of *The Late Bourgeois World,* Gordimer delineated for the "white liberal" a new function that could undergo a qualitative transformation from role to identity.

The collapse of the "historic left" for a time almost silenced the note of protest in the English-white novel. By 1966 Jacobson was committed to living permanently outside South Africa and the three novels that followed *The Beginners* spelled out the meaning of his choice. *The Rape of Tamar* (1970) dramatizes the second book of Samuel, chapter 13; *The Wonder-Worker* (1973) is about an imagined small boy who transforms himself into the materials of the world around him: it is surreal in the style of Thomas Mann, a mixture which tries to be richly European but, in my view, fails to convince. What is

[117] Id., *The Late Bourgeois World* (London: Gollancz, 1966), p. 147. The book was banned in South Africa.

interesting is the determined turning away, the refusal to use the South African experience in a search for a satisfactory definition of the individual within the present. The book is set in Hornsey and a Swiss sanatorium. South Africa is not mentioned. There is a fierce internalization which combines with a mirror-within-mirror narrative technique to cut off the characters from the public world, the world of history. The whole enterprise is consciously European. Its historic references include the Holocaust, and most of its characters, both imagined and imagined-imagined, are refugees, the children of refugees and transients. Thus the problem of identity is heavily accentuated; the only resolution, in terms of Jacobson's career as novelist, is the resolute expulsion of South Africa.

In *The Confessions of Josef Baisz* (1977), however, Jacobson seemed to return to the theme of South Africa in an allegoric tale of the life of a police spy in an autocratic state many of whose place-names have a South African ring. The consensus of scholars and reviewers was that the book has, as it were, a South African baseline, though Jacobson denied this—in my opinion, correctly. The emphasis is on the psychological processes of a key figure in the governance even of the Western democracies, and Jacobson undercuts the myth of the man of action, the glamour of legitimized violence, by presenting the rending misery and alienation of the inner life of one whose public existence is part of this myth. Jacobson deals in stereotypes to present his most individual and fully realized character so far; the individuality, while abolishing the myth of the secret policeman, also strips away illusions that generally surround the exercise of state authority. By incorporating South African elements and semblances Jacobson provides a valid frame of reference for his readers, who are then invited to universalize through their responses. The identity of Josef Baisz is profoundly private, profoundly universal—but not South African, not not-black, not European. Thus by the late seventies Jacobson the novelist had established the credentials of his own identity, by which he chose to be known: they were those of the exile, who recognizes himself as outside the framework of any specific national or regional cultural-historical experience.

Jacobson's silence at this stage on the specifics of South Africa may be seen as part of the cunning of exile, but it stands in sharp contrast to the horrific immediacy in *The Keep* (1967) and *The Union* (1971), the first two novels of another white exile, Jillian Becker (b. 1932), who explores bourgeois white-English life in South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s. The intensity of pain and horror evoked by the exploration suggests the author's need for a kind of exorcism. Becker herself is the daughter of a prominent pro-Smuts politician. Her description of the life of the white-English bourgeoisie suggests an environment fatal to love. The novels are not political, though they deal with the lives of politicians and their families, who seem to live in a moral vacuum. The autobiographical element in these two novels is possibly a little out of control.

Becker's third novel, *The Virgins* (1976), set some unspecified time later, achieves grater objectivity as it tears into the life of wealthy Johannesburg suburbia with the same angry relish as its two predecessors. Here two girls, daughters of wealthy Jewish families, grow up in a maze-like world of petty restrictions in which "liberal" white-English housewives rise at ten, "get rid of" unsatisfactory servants, limit their children's access to everything from the telephone to maternal affection, and send them to boarding

school to enact the pain of adolescence at a convenient remove. *The Virgins* is an important treatment of an obsessional theme shared by these white novelists. As satire it is savage. The daily search for efficient reinforcement of the identity system constructed by the English whites is scrutinized in all its serious absurdity in passages like the following, where a coloured (not-white, not-black) plumber comes to repair the boiler in the home of Annie Firman, the adolescent heroine:

> Mrs Firman was worried about where the boiler man should eat. 'Why not the breakfast room?' Annie suggested. 'He's a *coloured,*' Mrs Firman said impatiently. 'He doesn't look it,' Annie said. 'That has nothing to do with it,' Mrs Firman said, on a blown-out breath of absolute exasperation. 'Emmy used to eat in the kitchen,' Annie said. Her mother ignored her. In the end it was decided that he should eat on the verandah, the far end, outside the window of the breakfast room not the dining room, at a card table, on a kitchen chair, off a tray. Mrs Firman was going out to lunch, in a hat, so Annie had hers alone in the breakfast room, and she could see the sooty white shoulder and sleeve and the hand and the hair and a quarter of the face, and the tray. He was given curry balls and rice the same as hers, and three ready-buttered slices of brown bread and a cup of coffee and jelly, but no fruit or cream, because either her mother or Susan knew exactly what was due to a man who was neither white nor black. (p. 112)

The passage is reminiscent of some of Nadine Gordimer's best satirical waiting on the same specific and general issues: in *The Lying Days* she used mirrors to stress the dependence of the white-English on external appearances for a sense of identity, in the same way as Jillian Becker makes Mrs. Firman go out to lunch "in a hat"; and the conclusion is similar, with the identity of the white-English being realized only through negative definitions, through an obsessionally meticulous regard to what they are not. In both writers this is a conscious extension of the unconscious fear that produced the morbid genetic determinism in Millin's treatment of the coloureds, and the determined if clumsy deployment of the rules and values of an alien liberalism in Sowden's *The Crooked Bluegum* to try to exorcise those fears. In a later passage in *The Virgins,* Becker indicates the nature of the trap for those perhaps unfortunate enough to become conscious of it. Annie and her friend Barbara, their schooldays over, still unsure whether they will go on to university, talk of their present reality:

> 'But Barb, what else can we become? I mean even if we get to university and you become a lawyer and I become a doctor, won't we still be just spoilt rich white women?'
> 'Whom nobody loves,' Barb said. 'Yes, as long as we stay in this country I suppose we will.'
> 'I mean, even if we work hard and try to do something about the natives and everything, or even—Barb! *even* if we went to another country, we'd never be anything else, we'd still be what we are now! Wouldn't we? Really? They'd hate us and they'd be absolutely right to hate us.'
> 'I don't think there is anything we can ever do for the natives. Not us. I've thought and thought about it, but I can't think of anything. And at least if we went and lived in another country we wouldn't have to feel ashamed just being what we are. Only of what we once were.'

But Annie did not agree. She thought there would be no escape for them, anywhere, ever. (p. 136)

The novel makes the point about the status of the writer in exile. The conclusions are profound, just, accurate: but static. They cannot successfully embrace the possibility of dynamism, of evolution, developing from the interaction between the individual and his own surroundings, the society into which he was born. The same is true of Jacobson's post-South African novels: *Josef Baisz* ends where no further self-discovery may be made, but that is because the dynamic interaction between the South Africa-made individual and the South Africa made by his perception of it has passed beyond—or been left behind by—the writer who chooses or is forced into exile.

This is the point of departure between Jacobson and Becker and their contemporary, Nadine Gordimer. The latter's towering achievement during the seventies begins from her self-definition as not-exile. In *A Guest of Honour* (1971) she is able to make an excursion from the immediacies of South Africa and successfully present the realities of contemporary Zambia without allegorizing the landscape.[118] She is able to subject to the most stringent intellectual scrutiny the central problems of identity arising out of the metropolitan–colonial continuum, the relationship between European (specifically English) liberalism and its provincial mutations, without hectoring or lecturing, or drawing fashionably pessimistic conclusions about the human condition. She is able to do all this because of her awareness of change in the interaction between inner and outer life in the same place; because she continues to seek broader, evolving possibilities of identity within the South African situation. She moves inward towards the truth of the identity riddle by abandoning the most dangerously safe-seeming categories; by accepting that white in Africa must learn to understand itself as not-black before it can become African.

In *The Conservationist* (1974)[119] Gordimer makes her most sustained attack on the whites' perceptions of themselves as rulers of South Africa. She describes the downfall of one of white South Africa's "new men": a cosmopolitan business tycoon with the ambivalent, non-English, non-Afrikaans name of Mehring, buys a farm to write off as a tax loss and indulge a hobby which destroys him. The "hobby" is really an overriding obsession about identity, a need for discovering or faking roots in the (South) African soil. His self-image conforms with the reformist pragmatism promoted by pro-government propaganda sources in the early 1970s, but his hollowness echoes the disingenuous nature of that promotion. Unusually for her, Gordimer opts for a dense and intricate symbolic system, and a complex narrative structure comprised of overlays and flashbacks. The whole is powerfully rooted in the immediacies of South African life, and the integration of symbols works beautifully. Throughout, the resilience and effortless

[118] Stephen Gray, "Landmark in Fiction," *Contrast*, 8,2 (1973), 78–83; Robert J. Wren, "Nadine Gordimer's *A Guest of Honour*", *World Literature Written in English*, 16 (1977), 55–66; Kolawole Ogungbesan, "The Liberal Expatriate and African Politics: Nadine Gordimer's *A Guest of Honour*", *Nigerian Journal of the Humanities* 1,1 (1977), 29–41.

[119] Kolawole Ogungbesan, "Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist:* A Touch of Death," *International Fiction Review*, 5 (1978), 109–115; Anniah H. H. Gowda, "The Design and Technique in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*," *Literary Half-Yearly*, 20,2 (1979), 3–10.

humanity of Mehring's black farm workers counterpoints his inability to sustain a single human relationship. His broken ties with Europe are represented by an obsession with a former mistress whom liberal political involvement led to exile; his breakdown is precipitated by a flood presaged by storm-clouds coming, prophetically, from the direction of Mozambique, and by a sexual encounter with a young woman hitch-hiker who just may be coloured. The symbolic resonance of the flood and the colour-identity confusion of the young woman (ostensibly Afrikaans working-class) obliterate the conventional confidence of the white South African assertion of control over his "African farm."

These two novels together constitute a watershed. They declare with finality on the dubious terms in the white-English South African's self-appropriated identity. They strike out the "European", suggest not-black for white, de-emphasize the "South" and point in the direction of a meaningful sense of "African" in this context. They eliminate the category to which they belong by dwelling on its internal contradictions, and try to fill the resulting vacuum by making new connections in unexpected directions.

Gordimer's last novel of the 1970s was *Burger's Daughter* (Cape, 1979), which was her response to the events of Soweto, just as *The Late Bourgeois World* sought to understand and interpret the period from Sharpeville to the African Resistance Movement trials. The heroine, Rosa Burger, is the young daughter of a white Communist leader who belongs by birth to the aristocracy of Afrikanerdom. The father, Dr. Lionel Burger, is closely modelled on the heroic Abraham (Bram) Fischer, Q.C., who died serving a life sentence for trying to create a revolution to overthrow the white capitalist state. In the book Gordimer also traces an alternative path in the English-whites' search for identity:

> As long ago as 1962 it is documented that my father was one of those, at last mainly black, at the sixth underground conference of the South African Communist Party, who achieved the final perspective, the ideological integration, the synthesis of twenty years' dialectic:... The *future* he was living for until the day he died can be achieved only by black people with the involvement of the small group of white revolutionaries who have solved the contradiction between black consciousness and class consciousness... (p. 126)

Gordimer sets herself the complex and daunting task of writing a live history of the South African left, with the (for long white-dominated) Communist Party at the centre, *in order to* justify the ways of that "small group of white revolutionaries" who sought their identity in the struggle for a free South Africa in which personal and group identities would cease to be tragically fused. At the same time she presents movingly the story of Burger's daughter Rosa, named for Rosa Luxemburg, who rebels against her heritage to seek another birthright, the bourgeois pleasures and freedoms so readily available in Europe, but returns to help heal the wounds of Soweto (she is a physiotherapist) and to undergo imprisonment without trial. The book ends there, with the suggestion that the path to the creation of a new identity is already relatively clear: it began to be adumbrated in *The Late Bourgeois World,* where the heroine withdrew from both "English-white" and "European," exploiting them both through her grandmother's

bank account, to try to rejoin the main stream of humanity, the future, symbolized both in the character of Luke and in the Americans who achieve, on the day of the novel's action, man's first walk in space. In *Burger's Daughter* it is not suggested that ideological commitment is required: indeed, Rosa's rebellion against her parents consists in rejecting the rules of ideological Marxism. But again the tendency, often frustrated, often sidetracked, is joining a (possible) historic movement towards equality and justice, through action and suffering, which involves, perhaps, the majority of mankind. Gordimer abolishes, through mastering it intellectually and imaginatively, the specific and limiting mythology of the metropolitan connection; Jacobson, who shared with her for a time the pride of place in the English South African novel by whites, resolved the issue for himself by becoming absorbed by the metropolitan culture.

It is quite possible, therefore, that Jacobson's recent work, like Roy Campbell's or William Plomer's in earlier days or like his near contemporary Doris Lessing's, no longer belongs to the literature of Southern Africa but to that of England. The artificiality of water-tight categories in such a complex and fluid context as that of the Republic of South Africa is further apparent in a trend that was resumed in the seventies. For the Afrikaners, their language *(die tale)* had always been a kind of hypostasis of their identity even though a few writers like Laurens van der Post and Uys Krige did resort to English as well. The excesses of the ruling administration and its censorship, which made an ominous start with banning Afrikaans novels and collections of poetry, prompted established writers of *die tale* to shift to English in the hope that if they were to remain ignored at home, at least they would be able to reach an audience outside. Nor were their problems very different from those of the genuine English-speaking writers: Afrikaner authors, too, have spent generations trying out various versions of a necessary connection with metropolitan Europe—usually in the form of years spent in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam. Some had undoubtedly been closer to the major experimental trends in European writing, especially in the 1920s but also later, than their English-language counterparts. Their concern over identity had been simpler and more directly expressed, though at least equally powerful and full of concern. When André Brink (b. 1935), one of Afrikanerdom's most important novelists and a leader of the group known as the "Sestigers", turned to English, this signalled a rejection of the method of solving the identity riddle by powerful assertions, and a recognition of the real complexity of the issue. Brink himself had experienced both acceptance and rejection by Afrikaner literary circles, the former for the quality of his prose, the latter because of the nature of his ideas.

Brink has written three major novels in English, and has also translated some of his earlier work. *File on a Diplomat* (1967) was first published in Afrikaans as *Die Ambassadeur* (1963); the author's own translation had first appeared in South Africa as *The Ambassador* (1964). It is an earnest and somewhat gauche description of the identity crises suffered by South Africans brought into intimate contact with European culture: a young South African diplomat in Paris, haunted by his ambassador's sexual success with an enigmatic South African émigrée cocotte, first spies on his rival, sleeps with his wife, reports him to his superiors, then gasses himself. *Looking on Darkness* (1976), translated by the author from *Kennis van die Aand* (1973), evokes a theme which has

become prominent in contemporary South African writing, and is analogous to the current revision of South African historiography that started in the 1960s: the slave experience as a central factor in the formulation of the Afrikaner and Coloured groups (the Afrikaners think they have a special relationship with the coloureds; most coloureds do not regard this as one of their central preoccupations). The story of Joseph Malan who will be hanged for killing the (white, English) woman he loved, re-enacts the insane violence and cruelty that sealed the fate of his ancestor Adam, the slave who murdered his owner to avenge the death of his pregnant wife after she had been raped by the master's son. Brink seeks to establish the commonplace horror of South African life and to link this with the part played by violence and suffering in creating a nation's identity.

An Instant in the Wind (1976; first published as *'n Oomblik in die wind,* 1975) describes the odyssey of a rebel slave, Adam Mantoor, who discovers a white Cape Dutch woman in the interior, abandoned by her Swedish scientist husband whom she has accompanied on a journey of exploration (which was also their honeymoon). Elizabeth Larsson and Adam Mantoor fall in love. The odyssey—one of the few (and of the greatest) love stories in South African fiction—is described with considerable force and skill. Mantoor helps Elizabeth return to the Cape, where (we are told in the book's scholarly opening chapter) he is flogged for escaping and then strangled. The first words Elizabeth says to Mantoor when he reveals himself to her are: "Who are you?" And the penultimate paragraph of the novel, describing Mantoor's wait for the searchers to apprehend him after he has brought Elizabeth back to "civilization," reads: "It would have been very still in him as he stood there waiting for them to ask, like her in the beginning: Who are you?" (p. 252). The book begins—as does *Looking on Darkness,* the first words of which are: "To know who I am"—and ends with the problem of identity: in the end, the oppressors' inability to comprehend the slave's individual identity will haunt them with the fearful puzzle of their own for many generations.

Rumours of Rain (1978) is the story of the new Afrikaner, the cosmopolitan tycoon, told in confessional form by himself—as if Brink was concerned to give Gordimer's Mehring in *The Conservationist* a chance to account for himself. Brink's Martin Mynhardt fails the test, and emerges a betrayer of love and friendship and of his own Afrikaner heritage as he sells his father's farm to the government for the consolidation of a Bantustan's territory; he betrays his best friend to the security police and at the same time his mistress' trust; and, ultimately, he betrays his son's belief in him. *A Dry White Season* (1979) reverses the escape of the Afrikaner in retreat from history and identity depicted in Brink's previous novel and presents an Afrikaner hero who meets historic responsibility head-on and perishes. Ben du Toit, a teacher, is asked for help by the black caretaker at his school when the latter's teenage son "disappears" during the Soweto disturbances: faced by lies and evasions from the security police, he becomes more and more involved in trying to discover how the boy met his death. The father resigns his job to pursue the matter, only to be detained and tortured in his turn, and eventually "found dead" in his cell, having allegedly hanged himself with strips torn from his blanket. Du Toit carries on with his investigations and loses his job, his wife, his mistress; his daughter spies on him for the police; in the end he is killed in an "accident". For

Brink, the Afrikaner experience appears to have become unbearable. Perhaps that is why he has turned to English for a medium.

Dusklands (1974) by J. M. Coetzee (b. 1940) is composed of two sections, apparently related only arbitrarily. The first, "The Vietnam Project", is the monologue of a man called Eugene Dawn who is working on an American propaganda project during the Vietnam War. In the end he breaks down, kidnaps his young son and stabs him when the police and his wife trace him to the motel where he is hiding. The name of his boss on the project is Coetzee. The second section is called 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee', and is presented as the translation from the Dutch of a travel diary written by an eighteenth-century Cape Dutch farmer who journeys with Hottentots and cattle into Namaqualand, where he meets up with a community of "wild" Hottentots. All his own abandon him except one, who perishes on the journey home. Afterwards he returns with a well-equipped expedition and proves his mastery by ceremoniously executing the 'rebel' Hottentots.

> How do I know that Johannes Plaatje, or even Adonis, not to speak of the Hottentot dead, was not an immense world of delight closed off to my senses? May I not have killed something of inestimable value?
>
> I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring light to what is dark. If the Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me, who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way.
>
> What did the deaths of all these people achieve?
>
> Through their deaths I, who after they had expelled me had wandered the desert like a pallid symbol, again asserted my reality. I have taken it upon myself to be the one to pull the trigger, performing this sacrifice for myself and my countrymen, who exist, and committing upon the dark folk the murders we have all wished. All are guilty, without exception. I include the Hottentots. I am a tool in the hands of history. (pp. 113–114)

This almost closing passage (distanced by the ironic finale of an 'Afterword' written by an Afrikaner historian called Coetzee) links South Africa with Vietnam: the white man in both cases recovering his identity in an alien world by killing. He must have a lust for identity, judging from the amount of killing.

Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) confirmed the writer's considerable ability and demonstrated the importance of Afrikaner readiness to experiment for the development of the South African English novel. It is the story (written in numbered paragraphs) of a virgin on a remote farm who kills her father and stepmother out of sexual jealousy. She then provokes a coloured farmhand into raping her, invites him and his mistress to sleep in the house, is eventually abandoned by them and disintegrates into complete isolation and insanity. In the final paragraph (number 266) the woman, perhaps an emblem of the white experience in Southern Africa, asks: "What have I been doing on this barbarous frontier?" The answer given by the Afrikaans novelist newly

writing in English is desolate and horrifying. The fact that the questions are at last being asked may be a good sign: but how much too late has the questioning begun? One may hope that it will prove to have been a step in the historic process leading to the disappearance of white domination and with it, such artificial categories as the "white novel," the "white novel in English"—and of the kind of thinking, of society, of regulations that makes them possible. Only then will white South Africans, whatever their language, become (South) Africans, reconciled with their true historic experience.[120]

[120] A development of an entirely different order but of considerable significance for the future of South African literature as a whole was the proliferation in the seventies of new publishing houses like Ravan, David Philip, Bateleur and Ad. Donker, which superseded the stifling provincial conventionality of such establishment firms as Howard Timmins or the Central News Agency. Living constantly under the double threat of financial collapse and political persecution, these publishers survive through sheer obstinacy often coupled with managerial disinterestedness. They brought pregnant changes to the literary scene. They issued a number of those often ephemeral yet phoenix-like little magazines which took over after the demise of Lionel Abrahams' *Purple Renoster* (1956–1972): *Ophir* (1967–1976), *Izwi* (d. 1976), *Snarl, Staffrider* (f. 1978); these were largely responsible for injecting new life into English-language writing and for revitalizing the spirit of racial co-operation. But the new publishers with their cosmopolitan outlook also gave a boost to talented, unorthodox new writers, both black and white, who were relieved for the first time of the compelling need to be published abroad if they wanted international recognition. Their output includes *Local Colour* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1975), the first, subtly experimental, novel of Stephen Gray (b. 1941), his anthology *A World of their Own: Southern African Poets of the Seventies* (Johannesburg: Donker, 1976); Guy Butler's autobiographical account, *Karoo Morning* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1977); English-writing Afrikaner Wopko Jensma's collection *I Must Show You My Clippings* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1977); a "novel in eighteen stories," *The Celibacy of Felix Greenspan* (Johannesburg: Bateleur, 1978) by Lionel Abrahams (b. 1928); Stephen Gray's first collection of poems, *Hottentot Venus and Other Poems* (Cape Town: Philip, 1979), and his second novel, *Caltrop's Desire* (ibid., 1980); not to mention the many works by "non-European" writers, who are most in need of encouragement and help. For further information see notably: Peter Randall, "'Minority' Publishing in South Africa," *African Book Publishing Record*, 1 (1975), 219–222; Michael Rice, "The National Neurosis: A Critical Study of Stephen Gray's *Local Colour*," *English in Africa*, 4,1 (1977), 55–62, and the special issue of this journal—7,2 (1980)—devoted to the little magazines of South Africa. [Ed.]

JOHN REED

3. THE EMERGENCE OF ENGLISH WRITING IN ZIMBABWE

Writing in the late seventies, on the eve of Zimbabwe's independence, the unfortunate literary historian of that part of Africa made up of Matebeleland and Mashonaland[121] is bound—especially when limited to a summary account—to lay down some crude distinctions if he is to impose order on the ill-assorted material of his field. Perhaps surprisingly, the distinction between black and white writers does not really seem to serve. I suggest that we speak of Rhodesian literature, counter-Rhodesian literature and Zimbabwean literature. Rhodesian literature is the mass of books published since the 1890s, after Lobengula, king of the Ndebele, had allowed Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa Company to search for minerals (1888). The white population increased rapidly and a large number of books were written, projecting, describing and justifying the occupation of Mashonaland and Matebeleland and later defending the life and manners, and describing the hopes of the whites there settled. The great bulk of this, being in the form of personal and historical memoirs, will not be treated here. Yet, this body of writing contains a detailed presentation of the ideology of white Rhodesia; as we shall see, it underlies and to some extent had to be incorporated into, the next category, counter-Rhodesian literature. This is the literature of protest against the society and ideology of white settlement; although a great deal of it is also in the form of personal and historical accounts, it contains some notable fiction and it is with this that we shall be chiefly concerned in this essay. It shares with Rhodesian literature as defined above, the characteristic that it is addressed outside Rhodesia and constitutes an appeal to a reading public, an opinion-forming minority in Britain and in recent times elsewhere in the English-speaking world.[122] Between Rhodesian and counter-Rhodesian

[121] This account is of course not concerned with creative writing in the main local African languages, Shona and Ndebele. For information on these, see *African Literature in Rhodesia*, ed. E. Walter Krog (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1966) and Gérard, *African-Language Literatures*, pp. 232—40. The main source of factual information concerning English writing is J. Pichanick, A. J. Chennells and L. B. Rix, *Rhodesian Literature in English, A Bibliography (1890–1974/1975)* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977).

[122] There is also an internal Rhodesian literature intended for the settler community itself. As might be expected from the size of this internal readership little is to be found in book form. We may note here two poetry journals, the quarterly *Two Tone* which brought out its Jubilee issue in June 1977 (not a gesture of defiant royalism apparently, but merely the fiftieth issue) and the annual *Rhodesian Poetry*, No. 13 (1976–1977). Both publish poems by African writers, *Two Tone* including poems in Shona and Ndebele with English translations, but it seems unlikely that these periodical collections have much circulation outside the settler community, if there.

literature, the content of the appeal is changed but the appeal itself and its audience remain constant. Since literature is characterized as much by its audience as by its writers, there is an unsuspected unity between these two trends besides the common, though always developing, social situation they mirror.

The earliest counter-Rhodesian creative writer is Arthur Shearly Cripps (1869–1952), whose stories published between 1910 and 1920,[123] expose the encroachments of settledom against traditional African life. The indictment is all the more powerful from the gentleness and calm of its positive vision. As a missionary Cripps had some knowledge of African life, and though he presents it in an idealized and improbably christianized form, the Europeans who intrude into his Eden are recognizable enough. If Cripps' literary talents were minor, they were matched by the modesty of his ambitions and though he is followed, after a gap of thirty years,[124] by the towering figure of Doris Lessing he should not be forgotten: at the heart of his small œuvre there is a sense of love for the country which for all her energy and power is hardly found at all in Doris Lessing, except perhaps as a longing for its unpeopled spaces.

Doris Lessing (b. 1919) is, of course, the greatest writer of Rhodesian origin, one of the leading British novelists of her generation. Although she was born in Iran, she spent her formative years in Rhodesia and the work by which she made her name, all published soon after she went to England, is exclusively Rhodesian in its subject matter.[125]

Few small and provincial societies have had so brilliant and harsh a mirror held up to them as white Rhodesia of the 30s and 40s in these books and there is no doubt of the importance they had in forming an opinion of white Rhodesia in the minds of educated Englishmen during the period of the Federation when Britain was constantly involved in Rhodesian affairs. These books constitute a powerful critique of white Rhodesian society. Yet the relationship between them and the Rhodesia they portray is peculiar. It seems clear that Doris Lessing could not have developed into the author of these books if she had continued to live in Rhodesia. Exile is almost the expected condition of the twentieth-century novelist. Yet in what sense can Doris Lessing be seen as an exile from Rhodesia? Her work as a whole is not preoccupied with Rhodesia, caught up in that love-hate relationship that obviously links all Joyce with the Ireland of his youth or all Lawrence with the England of his. Perhaps the tiny, shifting white society in which she grew up could never command such creative preoccupation from

[123] *Faerylands Forlorn: African Tales* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1910); *The Two of Them Together. A Tale about Africa of Today* (London and Oxford: A. R. Mowbray and Co., 1910); *The Brooding Earth: A Story of Mashonaland,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1911); *Bay-tree Country, A Story of Mashonaland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1913), *Cinderella in the South. South African Tales* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1918). See John R. Doyle, *Arthur Shearly Cripps* (Boston: Twayne, 1976).

[124] In the twenties Cripps turned to direct political argument as in *An Africa for Africans: A Plea on Behalf of Territorial Segregation Areas* (London: Longmans Green, 1927). There is a brief but touching picture of Cripps in old age on p. 40 of Samkange's *The Mourned One.*

[125] *The Grass is Singing, This was the Old Chief's Country, Martha Quest, Five Short Novels, A Proper Marriage* appeared year by year from 1950 to 1954. On the author see notably Selma R. Burkom, *Doris Lessing: A Checklist of Primary and Secondary Sources* (Troy, N. Y.: Whitston, 1973); Michael Thorpe, *Doris Lessing* (London: Longman, 1973); Paul Schlueter, *The Novels of Doris Lessing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973) and *id.* (ed.), *Doris Lessing, A Small Personal Voice* (New York: Knopf, 1974); *Doris Lessing: Critical Studies,* ed. Annis Pratt and L. S. Dembo (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

a major talent; perhaps the stark negativity which is found in much of Doris Lessing's later work, where she is not writing on African themes, may derive from those formative years rooted in this unsustaining soil. I think it is possible to read *Martha Quest* (1952) and the autobiographical novels that follow in this sense, with their picture of an adolescent girl and young woman whose mind is fashioned by books and by a culture of parental conversation which has no relation at all to her physical and social surroundings—a disjunction which obtains even at the verbal level:

> In the literature that was her tradition, the word *farm* evokes an image of something orderly, compact, cultivated; a neat farmhouse in a pattern of fields. Martha looked over a mile or so of bush to a strip of pink ploughed land; and then the bush, dark green and sombre, climbed a ridge to another patch of exposed earth, this time a clayish yellow.[126]

This might well be expected to determine in a fundamental way the vision of a verbal artist. The novels, correspondingly, are built up of quantities of observed detail, on which an acute and exasperated intelligence constantly plays. They are always inspired by a powerful, rather abstract literary ambition. Yet the writer's link and attachment to the subject matter of her work is a kind of disdain. In no one more than in the Doris Lessing of the African novels (the short stories are somewhat different) do we have a stronger sense of the artist dealing with and despising the subject matter, as if writing it out of herself in order to escape from it.

The Grass is Singing (1950) is an admirably dense and detailed image of Rhodesian society. The story of a marriage leads from the easy, empty urban life of the white city in the account of Mary before she marries Dick Turner, to the hard life of farming. The two points of contact between black and white—as farmer to labourer and as mistress to domestic servants—are brought out vividly in a plot designed as a kind of psychological thriller, tracing the reasons which lead to Mary's murder at the hands of her house-servant, the starting point for the novel. I suspect the plot was suggested by Lawrence's story "The Prussian Officer" in which a telling image of the harsh junker society which Lawrence had glimpsed in his visits to Germany is presented through the tale of the officer who bullies and strikes his servant, a peasant conscript, and is later murdered by him. In fact, the changes which Doris Lessing introduces do render the story a curiously apt symbol for Rhodesian society, but in a way which disrupts the surface realism and the psychological coherence of the novel. For although Mary strikes Moses with a sjambok this is not the reason why he kills her. He kills her because after employing him for a period as her house servant, she becomes dependent upon him and gradually, as she undergoes a breakdown, begins to treat him as a kind of *cavalière servente*. After she has repudiated him in the presence of other whites, she feels the guilt of betrayal and becomes filled with the idea that he will kill her. It is made clear in the novel that this is a delusion in her mind. Twice we read of her hallucination that Moses is there, about to attack her. The third time we switch from her hallucination to the objective narrative of the novel. Her crazy expectation turns into reality and we are back

[126] *Martha Quest*, in Doris Lessing, *Children of Violence* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1965), p. 12.

to the stone-cold sobriety of the newspaper report about the murder at the beginning of the novel. We end with Moses waiting apathetically for his arrest and execution. Yet the novel has been conducted on a level of psychological realism which provides no preparation for his action. Mary's having been trained as a girl to fear Africans, her sexual frustration, the crazy romantic fantasies into which her own unaccepted and meaningless life have driven her, make her expectation that Moses will kill her easy to accept. But Moses is shown to be drawn into this relation with her by a sort of pity. By a great flash of lightning Doris Lessing gives him a final moment of triumph: he has turned into an operatic villain, a fantasy figure, a pure spirit of revenge with all his real personal and concrete existence drained out of him. It is true that in the society Doris Lessing describes, whites live among Africans who are unknown to them except as projections of their own guilts and fears. But instead of encompassing this hallucination the novel has entered into it.

In the first four volumes of the novel sequence *Children of Violence* (1952–1965),[127] Africans are only peripheral. Sometimes for Martha, the protagonist, they have a symbolic or mythical role. There is for example "the native woman" who is cleaning the floor during her labour in the maternity hospital and places a hand on her stomach and repeats, "Let the baby come, let the baby come, let the baby come."[128] This character seems to appear entirely for Martha's benefit, with the author's full blessing. But elsewhere, as in the scene in *Martha Quest* when Martha observes the handcuffed prisoners being marched off by the police, and feels Dickens, Tolstoy, Hugo and Dostoyevsky have written in vain,[129] this function of the Africans in Rhodesian life as sentimental imagery, a kind of moral decoration, is seized upon and ruthlessly shown up. Towards the end of the sequence, the futile search for the African opposition by the small, all-white communist group to which Martha belongs, becomes a theme. For all their efforts they never make contact or discover whether there really is an African opposition at all, and the strike of 1947 which in a sense is the climax of the Rhodesian part of the sequence, comes as an unexplained mystery to all the characters, and indeed to the reader.

Children of Violence goes back to a rich tradition of autobiographical novels though, unlike most autobiographical fiction, it excludes childhood and adolescence is only briefly treated. Perhaps Sartre's *Les Chemins de la liberté* with its mixture of political and personal actions, its sense of world events sweeping into private lives, helped to shape these books. But whereas in Sartre's world, events sweep in and indeed sweep the characters away, in Doris Lessing they are, as her third title suggests, ripples from a distant storm. What is happening in the world, is not happening here, in Zambezia, in the suburbs of the world. And all the frantic political activity which fills *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958) and *Landlocked,* (1965) is shown as futile, not only by its outcome but also in the very way in which it is described. It is as if Doris Lessing's continued quarrel with her own past formed the subject matter of these novels. The long

[127] *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), *Landlocked* (1965).
[128] *A Proper Marriage*, ibid, p. 471.
[129] *Martha Quest*, ibid. p. 203.

battle between Martha and Mrs. Quest seems not so much described as fought out. Mrs. Quest is not a character in the novel, but a kind of irritation to the author. And the quarrel with Rhodesia itself is conducted in the same way. It is a matter of scoring points. The narrator never misses an opportunity to turn aside for some cutting comment. In *A Proper Marriage* (1954) Douglas returning from the war insists on going out with Martha for a meal at a thinly disguised version of Meikles Hotel in Salisbury:

> They ate one of those vast meals which must be among the worst offered to suffering humanity anywhere, the southern-African hotelier's contribution to the British tradition in food.[130]

Exasperation with her own earlier self and with her being apparently doomed to live in such a place, is the basic motive for Doris Lessing's writing. In spite of the minute account of political life and activity on the left and of the treatment of real events in Rhodesian history, such as the break up of the Labour Party, it is evident that the novels are not concerned to explore the political and social forces which shape society.

The remaining part of Doris Lessing's work which belongs to counter-Rhodesian literature is a set of short stories, published in two volumes, *The Old Chief's Country* (1951) and *Five* (1953), and republished with some additions in 1964 as *African Stories*.[131] Some of the deficiencies of the African novels come from their ambitious structure, but the short stories, where the inspiration finds its own form and length, are free from these faults. It is worth noting that in the Preface to *African Stories* Doris Lessing mentions the keenness of the pleasure she finds in writing short stories, as if novels were for her a less natural form. Most of the short stories have rural settings and many have a child or adolescent as the central character. Thus they generally draw on the period of Doris Lessing's experience that falls before the autobiographical treatment of *Martha Quest*. Perhaps the best of them, like "A Sunrise on the Velt" and "Eldorado", are those concerned mainly with adolescent experience or growing up and only (though not trivially) African in their setting. Of those that explore white society, the descriptions of the English eccentric strain, like "Old John's Place" and "Winter in July" (which perhaps reworks the same material), seem to me wearisome, while the treatment of the English-Afrikaans contrast in "The Second Hut" and "The De Wets come to Kloof Grange" is very good indeed. "The Pig" (admittedly early work) and "The Nuisance", which are about African behaviour, though in a framework of white observation, suggest that Africans have direct and violent means of settling problems which the European surreptitiously envies. The only story where black and white interaction is central is "A Home for the Highland Cattle": with its urban setting it is quite untypical, but the attempt to focus the fumbling incomprehension between fresh liberal-minded settler and African domestic on the starkly diverse values they place upon the landlady's picture of the highland cattle, works neither as comedy nor as symbolism.

Finally, "Hunger". This story stands apart from the rest of Doris Lessing's work.

[130] *A Proper Marriage*, ibid. p. 584.

[131] There is also a selection of Doris Lessing's African stories under the title *No Witchcraft for Sale* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956) with Russian introduction and notes.

Here, and nowhere else, she writes not mainly out of her own uneasy conscience at belonging to white Rhodesia (or at having belonged to it) but in a deliberate imaginative attempt to see white Rhodesia from an African point of view. To do this she cuts herself off from the resources of her usual style: she uses a simplified English not only in the dialogues but also in the narrative and even in the explanations inserted into the narrative, and she casts the whole story into the present tense as if to suggest by a grammatical device that this is not a narration at all. Doris Lessing regards the story as a failure. In the Preface to *African Stories* she gives a brief account of its genesis, from a dispute at a writers' conference in Moscow in 1952. The British delegation all agreed against the Russians that "writing had to be a product of the individual conscience or soul." The Russians wanted greater simplicity, simple judgements of right and wrong. Why, she reflects, could not she write in the manner of Dickens about Southern African society, a society as startlingly unjust as Dickens' England. "I tried," she goes on, referring to this story, "but I failed. It wasn't true. Sometimes one writes things that don't come off, and feels more affectionate towards them than towards those that worked." "Hunger" is a version of the parable of the prodigal son, the story of the African adolescent who leaves his village drawn by the unendurable hunger that he feels for all things of the white man's world—and returns, after degradation and disaster, not to his father, but to the African political leaders who offer him an alternative to this ruthless, acquisitive individualism. Like its model, it is a parable, and its message—that white society is a system of greed that sustains itself by drawing others into that greed and can be fought only by a renunciation of greed—is neither implausible nor trite. However hard the renunciation may be (we do not see Jabavu acting out his renunciation, only proclaiming it, as is the way with parables) the edge of the hunger and the depth of the revulsion are powerfully conveyed by the story. Only in "Hunger" does Doris Lessing make a clearly committed political point about Rhodesian society through the means of the story itself as distinct from authorial asides and superadded comments.

By the time Doris Lessing embarked on a career that was to make her the first and only Rhodesian author of world-wide fame, no writer had yet emerged among the black population of five to six million, whose fate was entirely in the hands of some 300,000 white settlers. In 1953, however, the authorities had set up the Southern Rhodesia African Literature Bureau with a view to encouraging authorship in the two main languages of the country. One of the first works to bear the imprint of the Bureau was *Feso* (1956), a historical novel in Shona by Solomon M. Mutswairo (b. 1924), a graduate of Fort Hare College in South Africa. This work, which is now available in English,[132] tells an old story of tribal war, defeat and exploitation, the topical significance of which fortunately eluded the Rhodesian censorship.

Not suprisingly, this counter-Rhodesian spirit, at work in different ways in the novels of Doris Lessing and in the Shona story of Mutswairo, is also conspicuous in the

[132] See S. M. Mutswairo *et al., Zimbabwe: Prose and Poetry* (Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1974), which contains *Feso* and a number of Shona poems by Mutswairo and three other black Rhodesian writers in English translation.

first two black writers who elected to use English as their medium in the mid-sixties. Unfortunately but understandably, by contrast with Doris Lessing, the work of both might in great part be considered to fall outside the category of creative writing as their determination to publicize the African's predicament is more important than, indeed completely replaces, the urge to offer a product of their individual consciences or souls.

Stanlake Samkange (b. 1922) is a professional historian who taught for many years in the United States. His novels are in the main an attempt to go back and challenge, even perhaps rewrite, the old Rhodesian literature, the apologetic history of white settlement. He does this by building material from this literature into frameworks of his own where it reveals a sense opposite to the one originally intended. This procedure seems to spring from the author's fear that the decline and fall of white Rhodesia might allow the world to forget the terms on which its establishment was originally justified. On the other hand, the device can also be seen as a way to incorporate token quantities of this Rhodesia literature in a neutralized form into a counter-literature, where it becomes available perhaps to the Zimbabwean literature to follow. The technique is most successfully applied in Samkange's first novel, *On Trial for My Country* (1966). By the device of an afterworld vision, very convincingly introduced, we witness both Rhodes and Lobengula, each being tried by his own father, and judged according to the standards of his own upbringing for his behaviour during the events which led up to the occupation. Rhodes' case, and that of the defence witnesses he calls, are drawn directly from their own statements and the books they published during and after the period; Lobengula's plea and his motivations are imaginatively reconstructed. Although the details of this framework cannot be pressed too hard, the original conception is carried through with considerable skill and the final judgements of the supernatural courts are withheld from the reader with proper artistry.

Samkange's second novel, *The Mourned One* (1975), also mingles documentary history and original fiction but without the overall sense of structure and purpose that marked *On Trial for My Country*. The main part of the novel takes the form of a feigned document and we are told with engagingly plausible detail, how it fell into Samkange's hands. It is the life story of Madyandife, or Muchemwa (the mourned one), as he has written it in the cell where he has been gaoled under sentence of death for raping a white woman. The story tells of his birth, of his chance rescue by a missionary from ritual drowing because he was a twin, and of his upbringing by the missionaries. A large part of the centre of this narrative is taken up by school life at Waddilove Mission where he lived; but embedded in this is a lengthy account of the school adventures of two other characters, Gore and Kahari. Much of this presumably draws on Samkange's own school days, inspired perhaps by the tradition of English public school fiction and no doubt heightened in the way schoolboys embellish and even invent the eccentricities of their masters. Although this episode offers a realistic picture of black and white interaction in Rhodesia of a sort not found in earlier fiction, it is totally out of place and detracts from the reader's interest in Madyandife. The latter's account of the events which led to his being charged with rape is that he got drunk and could recall nothing, though he quotes extensively from the evidence given against him in the trial. In an Epilogue, Samkange reveals that the man who wrote the autobiography he is transcrib-

ing was in fact executed. He quotes a letter from the Rev. M. J. Rusike (mentioned in the narrative as Busike), who organized a petition on behalf of the condemned man. But Rusike's letter refers not to the writer of the autobiography but to a man called Ndatshana whose background is very different since Rusike mentions his friends in Port Elizabeth who petitioned the South African Government. Thus, awkwardly enough, Samkange hints that he has attributed a fictitious biography to a real man who died a victim of Rhodesian justice. In doing this, he has weakened and dissipated the true tragedy of Ndatshana who had been recruited as a teacher from South Africa at a time, the thirties, when this society was less hysterically racialistic than Rhodesia. Another awkwardness is that the writer has ignored the privilege fiction would give to explore the relationship between Ndatshana and the woman he was accused of raping.[133]

With *The Year of the Uprising* (1978) Samkange returns to the method of *On Trial for My Country*, moving on from the story of the occupation to the story of the rebellions. Unfortunately the book lacks the framework of the earlier novel. The African side, or parts of it, is told as rather jejune historical fiction, and the European side, grotesquely, through dialogue of a highly unrealistic kind and long uninterrupted reports put into the mouth of such historical characters as Rhodes, Selons or Baden-Powell; these passages apparently draw directly on the printed sources. We may often be shocked by the complacency with which the Europeans wrote of their questionable activities. But many of the passages which Samkange uses are detailed, vivid and absorbing, and by the sheer weight of space devoted to them, they overwhelm the parts of the story told from the African point of view, so that what results is at times little more than an anthology from the various European first-hand accounts strung together with links to form a history of the rebellions.

The novels of Ndabaningi Sithole (b. 1920) are even further from the conventional European form than Samkange's. If the latter are rooted in the documentary literature of white Rhodesia, the former are rooted in the rhetoric of the political struggle against white domination. *Obed Muteso: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist* (1970) was not published as a novel, but as a personal memoir of a man Sithole met in prison. Yet parts of the book, for example the long verbatim exchanges between Muteso and the police, must be fictional reconstructions. Much of the writing suggests the elaboration of a typical figure to demonstrate the compatibility of being at once a Christian, a believer in tribal religion and an activist in African nationalist politics.

The Polygamist (1973) focusses on the transition from the old polygamous tribal life to modern ways. It treats the issue with the practical common sense of a man who is out to show that such problems can be solved, not in order to squeeze from them their tragic possibilities. What ultimately makes the polygamist abandon his monkey-skin kilt, symbol of patriarchal dignity, for a pair of khaki shorts is a bicyle offered him by his son.

Sithole's next book, *Roots of a Revolution: Scenes from Zimbabwe's Struggle* (1977), met with a blank response, perhaps because the title caused readers to expect a new work

[133] A brief account of Ndatshana in the context of sexual racialism in Rhodesia can be found in Chapter 9 of Laurence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

of political analysis by the author of *African Nationalism*. Instead, strung together in a loose story, we have a kind of rhetorical compendium of the struggle, the complete nationalist debater, the quintessence of ten thousand political speeches. The ear attuned to the style of African writing will find all of Sithole's fiction dispiriting. Yet his use of the English language reflects the way it has become moulded to the practical tasks of organizing the struggle in Rhodesia. His work is at least a record of the verbal substance of this struggle, of the way Africans grumbled and argued, the dialectic and rhetoric they used and wore threadbare. Sithole's books provide a kind of key to a particular phase of the struggle that generated this language and was shortly to come to an end.

We may mention one further counter-Rhodesian novel, Wilson Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976). In form, this is a saga novel, spanning the time between the earliest violent brushes with the settlers in Makosa's village to a gun battle in the guerrilla war fought on the same spot. The earlier history is part of the narrative of a dying man whose grandson, born on the day of his death, is the protagonist of the story. The main part of the book concerns his growing up and education, and it may be noticed that the origin of his sufferings does not lie with the whites but with the various members of his own family, to whom he is sent after his father's death. Later he becomes involved in politics, and is arrested when leaving the country to continue his studies. Eventually he escapes to the mountains and joins the guerrillas. The design is interesting enough, but the author lacks the talent of imagination to flesh out his writing; in spite of a good scene here and there most of the book is quite unrealized. Nor was any marked improvement noticeable in Katiyo's next novel, *Going to Heaven* (1979), in which the same hero finds himself no longer with the freedom fighters in the bush but escaping across the Zambezi into Zambia and thence into England: most of the novel is about his life in London.

Meanwhile, yet another contribution to what I have called anti-Rhodesian literature had appeared: *Mapondera, Soldier of Zimbabwe* (1978), a short historical novel by Solomon Mutswairo (b. 1924). It is biographical in form and recounts the life—spent struggling against the Matebele, the Portuguese and the British—of Kadungare Mapondera, from his birth in Mazoe as son of the Paramount Chief Gorejena Negomo, to his death in a Rhodesian prison while serving a seven-year sentence for murder and sedition. The central incident and climax of the book are the Mashona Rebellion of the turn of the century; but Mapondera takes no part in this, because he is absent at the time, aiding his ally Chief Makombe against the Portuguese. This oddity in the structure of the novel is not as damaging as it might sound. It is offset by the importance given to the figure of Nehanda, the Shona priestess and spirit medium, who, besides her central role in the Rebellion, is the prophetess of Mapondera's future greatness at his birth and his spiritual mentor through his early life. The real weakness of the book is its failure to reconcile either on the level of language or on the level of narrative the legendary or epic mode in which Mapondera is for the most part treated and the factual history of the period which is only perfunctorily dramatized or else left in the form of summary accounts. Clearly we are not intended to read a deliberate irony into the juxtaposition of the two modes, which would bring us a Mapondera in the line of Don Quixote, for Mutswairo makes it quite clear that his aim is to establish the heroic credentials which have been

unjustly denied, and not to dissolve a heroic vision in the cold light of commonplace. Mapondera has all the trappings of an epic hero. He is set about with visions, vaticinations and visits from spiritual beings. He is himself possessed of supernatural powers—he is on occasion able to fly about in the air like a bird—and he sometimes has the gift of prophecy. He also has that wonderful political innocence which makes heroes bearable. As a hero he is undiminished by his absence from crucial battles (this is Homeric enough) or by his ignominious end. But no epic hero can survive in a novel, just as no novel can survive having an epic hero inside it unless it can digest him down to size—and this is precisely what Mutswairo is concerned not to do. The experience of reading *Mapondera* is like that of reading a fragmentary epic poem of some grandeur in a sound if uninspired translation but embedded without typographical distinction in a matrix of intolerably prosy and tendentious notes.

The English-language literary history of Zimbabwe can hardly be understood if no attention is paid to the existence, since the mid-fifties, of a growing body of writing in Shona and Ndebele and to the question of language choice which faces the writers. In any complete account of Zimbabwean literature, Mutswairo will be a major figure as the author of *Feso* (1956), the first novel printed in Shona. A more detailed account of *Mapondera* would have to discuss its relationship to *Feso* which, although set in a remote and idealized past, contains both a priestess Nehanda and a Mapondera with a tendency to fly into the air. In all likelihood Mutswairo's switch to English from his mother-tongue, in which he continues to write poetry, is due to his long residence outside Rhodesia. It is true that almost all the writing considered in this chapter has been done in exile, but it seems unlikely that with any of the other authors exile itself has been a significant factor in the choice of English.

Before leaving this group of writers it may be worth remarking that they all write novels which mix fact with fiction. Mutswairo is the most explicit in accounting for this historical preoccupation. It is a response to the long rankling assumption of the settlers that (to quote from *Mapondera*) "they [the natives] have long since lost their origin and identity—they have no history to boast about," that "they have no history, nor past to boast about, and seemingly no philosophy of life to live by." This desire to present the past of their own people in a more favourable light, while being a valid literary motive, is not in itself guaranteed to produce very satisfying novels. Indeed, none of these writers seem to me to be novelists except through the accident that in the literary world of the English language the novel was the only form available to them. Their real concern is not with the creation of compelling fictions: Samkange, the professional academic historian, Sithole, the politician, Mutswairo, the poet of Shona cultural nationalism, all have other ends in view.

It was not until a younger generation of black writers emerged that the true novelist's imagination appeared in Zimbabwe. By the end of the seventies, it was only represented by two writers who, though obviously shaped by the experience of growing up in Rhodesia, were not producing work that could be naturally read as a protest against white Rhodesia or as part of a political struggle. The first is Charles Mungoshi (b. 1947), ten of whose short stories were published in a slim volume, *Coming of the Dry*

Season (Nairobi, 1972). Written in a style of elegant simplicity, yet with powerful, unobtrusive imagery, and mostly about children or adolescents, those stories are quiet and elegiac and the impression left by the whole volume is one of overwhelming sadness. One of the tales, "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World," is a scene of some five pages between a young man about to leave home and his father, who is trying to hold him. Mungoshi's novel, *Waiting for the Rain* (London, 1975), explored the same theme in greater detail. It describes the last visit home of a young man about to go overseas to study. The profound melancholy, the sense of being inside a world of values and relationships that have been emptied of all meaning for him, is achingly realized both in the short story and in the novel. But in fulfilling the demands of the novel Mungoshi loses some of that stylistic purity and simplicity of the short story; the family the young man is leaving is padded out with feuds and eccentric characters in a way that dissipates rather than reinforces its powerful central feeling. The novel, like Doris Lessing's "Hunger", is written throughout in the present tense. In 1980, the South African literary magazine *Staffrider* published "Some Kinds of Wounds," a deeply pessimistic short story picturing township life during the liberation war. It had the painful honesty of all Mungoshi's work but, rather surprisingly, the writing seemed less assured than in his earlier stories. He seemed to be having difficulty in finding a convincing style of dialogue for his characters, young men that in real life would presumably speak to each other in a mixture of Shona and English. Mungoshi, who had contributed a few English poems to *Rhodesian Poetry,* has also published a novel in Shona and he may find there are technical problems to be solved if he is to develop a style of realistic fiction to deal with the linguistically mixed society of urban Zimbabwe.

In a long story called "At the Head of a Stream," Dambudzo Marechera (b. 1955), the last Zimbabwean writer to have reached print before independence, made the following statement:

> It was like this: English is my second language, Shona my first. When I talked it was in the form of an interminable argument one side of which was always expressed in English and the other side always in Shona. As the same time I would be aware of myself as something indistinct but separate from both cultures. I felt gagged by this absurd contest between Shona and English.

Like Mungoshi, this Shona-speaking writer employs English with remarkable mastery, but their styles have almost nothing in common. Mungoshi uses the language with restraint, a sense of the seriousness of words, with decorum and a wariness of colloquial extravagance; his style of English seems particularly Anglo-Saxon. Marechera writes with a Celtic or New York abandon, prodigal, revelling in the timbre and fall of off-beat educated talk, letting the language carry him where it will. One of his narrators remarks: "Shouldn't I be writing within our great tradition of oral literature rather than turning out pseudo-Kafka-Dostoyevsky stories?" But the stories in the collection titled *The House of Hunger* (1979) sound now like Beckett, now like Beat poetry strung together as prose, fantastic, half-surrealistic tales through which we glimpse student life in Salisbury or Oxford. They are stuffed with literary allusion and flip references to cultural alienation.

Marechera's deep preoccupation with physical violence was also conspicuous in his first novel, *Black Sunlight* (1980) but whereas in *The House of Hunger* the violence both in the writing and in the subject matter appeared to arise out of the experience of violence, in *Black Sunlight* it seems to be celebrated for its own sake. The characters in this phantasmagoric novel endlessly discuss violence. But the violence in the action has become literary, or rather the violence of the cinema and the violence of the language is helped out with what used to be taboo words sometimes in capital letters, and sometimes whole sentences in capital letters. Marechera is obviously an uncommonly gifted writer, whose talent gained immediate recognition: *The House of Hunger* was awarded the Guardian fiction prize; *Black Sunlight* was widely and on the whole favourably reviewed in Britain and many hoped that his next book would confirm Doris Lessing's judgment after *The House of Hunger* that Marechera has the stuff and substance needed to become a great writer.

One more new novelist emerged in the year of Zimbabwe's independence: S. Nyamfukudza (b. 1951), whose novel *The Non-Believer's Journey* (1980), suggested that though he had none of Marechera's brilliance, yet he could boast most of what a sound realistic novelist requires except the ability to construct. One particular incident occurring when the bus boarded by the central character on his way to his home village is stopped and checked by soldiers, is the most telling piece of fiction about what life was like for ordinary people in Zimbabwe during the war. But the beginning of the novel is intolerably slow, there is a long sexual episode which interrupts the action and the ending is quite out of place. The novel gives the impression that it was written chapter by chapter without a clear plan in the author's mind about what was to come next. Yet with the lessons of this book behind him it seemed likely that Nyamfukudza will contribute good realistic novels depicting the ordinary life of the new country.

As the people of Zimbabwe enter into a new phase in their collective experience and consequently in their literary history as well, one may tentatively prognosticate that what has here been called the "counter-Rhodesian" trend will disappear since the need for it is passed. On the other hand, as the fullest imaginative expression of a way of life sometimes does not get written until that way of life has disappeared, there is no reason to feel sure that the "Rhodesian" trend will also vanish. But with writers like Mungoshi, Marechera and, to a lesser extent so far, Nyamfukudza, the evidence suggests that the incipient Zimbabwean literature is on its way towards a bright future.

CHAPTER IV

PORTUGUESE AFRICA TO THE 1950s[1]

In 1967, Gerald Moser published an essay in which he complained that African literature in Portuguese, which had been the first written in sub-Saharan Africa, was at the same time the last to have been discovered.[2] Although Portuguese, spoken by so many in Brazil and in Africa, not to mention Asia, can by no means be regarded as a minor language, it is true that by the mid-sixties, Moser was the only American scholar to have shown any interest in such lusophone writing as had been produced on the Black Continent. In the wake of the Conference of Black Writers and Artists (Paris, 1956), the French publisher Oswald had managed to issue an anthology edited by Angolan poet

[1] For a detailed history of Luso-African writing, see Russell G. Hamilton, *Voices from an Empire: A History of Afro-Portuguese Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975); the two volumes of Manuel Ferreira's *Literaturas africanas de expressão portuguesa* (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura Portuguesa, 1977), and Donald Burness, *Critical Perspective on Lusophone Literatures from Africa* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980). General bibliographical information can be gained from Amândio César and Mário António, *Elementos para uma bibliografia da literatura e cultura portuguesa ultramarina contemporânea* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1968); Gerald Moser, *A Tentative Portuguese-African Bibliography: Portuguese Literature in Africa and African Literature in the Portuguese Language* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Libraries, 1970), and Pierre Rivas, "Matériaux pour une bibliographie pratique des littératures de l'Afrique Lusophone," *Association pour le Développement des Etudes Portugaises et Brésiliennes: Bulletin d'Information*, 10 (n.d. [1978]), 18–31. Of the many miscellaneous essays of varying lengths published in Portugal before the revolution, most—like those gathered in Amândio César's two hefty volumes, *Parágrafos de literatura ultramarina* (Lisbon: Sociedade de Expansão Cultural, 1967) and *Novos parágrafos de literatura ultramarina* (ibid., 1971)—consist of flowery comments of slight scholarly value. The first truly substantial essay dealing with lusophone Africa as a whole was Alfredo Margarido, "Incidences socio-économiques sur la poésie noire d'expression portugaise," *Diogène*, 37 (1962), 53–80, which is also available in the English and Spanish editions of the journal: an abbreviated version appeared in Portuguese as "Panorama," *Estrada larga*, 3 (1962), 482–491. See also Virgilio de Lemos, "La vida cultural en el Africa negra de habla portuguesa," *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura*, 89 (1964), 81–95; this was issued in German as "Das kulturelle Leben Portugiesisch-Afrikas", *Afrika heute*, (1965), Sonderbeilage. Of definite historical interest are Mario de Andrade, "La poésie africaine d'expression portugaise: évolution et tendances actuelles," *Présence Africaine*, 65 (1968), 51–84, and Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira, "Unidade e diferenciação linguísticas na literatura ultramarina portuguesa," *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 86,1/3 (1968), 17–33. Several of Gerald M. Moser's essays have been conveniently gathered in *Essays in Portuguese-African Literature* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University, 1969). For a brief survey in French, see Benjamin Pinto Bull, "Regards sur la poésie africaine d'expression portugaise," *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Dakar*, 2 (1972), 79–117. A revealing contribution to reception studies is Jean-Marie Grassin, "Les littératures luso-africaines devant les encyclopédies internationales des années 1970 et leur réception en Occident," *Association pour le Développement des Etudes Portugaises et Brésiliennes: Bulletin d'Information*, 10 (n.d. [1978]), 8–17.

[2] Gerald Moser, "African Literature in Portuguese; The First Written, The Last Discovered," *African Forum*, 2,4 (1967), 78–96. This has been a constant source of complaint for specialists of the area: one of the latest among their plaintive (or indignant) anthems is Alfredo Margarido, "Les grandes absentes: les littératures africaines d'expression portugaise," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 50 (1978), 82–88.

Mário de Andrade in 1958,[3] but this had gone unnoticed and a French version did not appear until 1969,[4] even though it had been translated into German in 1962.[5] And although two novels by the major Angolan writer Castro Soromenho, who happened to be a Portuguese, had been made available in French translation in 1956 and 1962,[6] hardly any serious historical information or critical comment concerning Luso-African writing had been published in the West, except, of course, in the Portuguese language, until Margarido's pregnant essay of 1962 in *Diogenes*. In fact, until the mid-seventies serious information was far more readily available in Russian, in the Soviet Union, than in any Western country: genuine interest in Portuguese Africa's protracted struggle for independence under the Salazar regime, had favoured the publication of anthologies, translations of single works, and serious scholarly attention from the late fifties.[7] In the Western world—as any European is bound to acknowledge,—leadership in this respect as in so many others went to the United States: there, largely thanks to Gerald Moser himself, steadily increasing attention was awarded to the Portuguese literatures of Africa, a decisive turn being reached in the mid-seventies, when the University of Minnesota Press published O. R. Dathorne's ambitious survey with its valiant attempt to include lusophone writing in a general "history" of African creative writing,[8] when Russell Hamilton provided what is still the best coverage of the subject, and when an important panel on this hitherto largely neglected topic was organized at the 1978 meeting of the African Literature Association.

Much of such learned comments as were expressed throughout the sixties was concerned with the type of contemporary protest writing that had just been smothered by the Portuguese censorship. Little curiosity was awakened by the intriguing first part of Moser's statement. Yet it was true that Portuguese was the first European language to have been used by black Africans for writing purposes, as was shown in the first chapter of this book. But the beginning that had been made during the Renaissance failed to yield the fruits that might have been expected. While Luso-African writing was thus coming to an early dead end, Portugal and her empire were allowed to survive amidst general indifference as the keys to international power passed into the hands of other European nations between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. But Portugal's own benign neglect of her overseas possessions made way for more active interest as the Western powers entered a pre-colonial phase in the second decade of the nine-

[3] *Antologia da poesia negra de expressão portuguesa*, ed. Mario de Andrade and Francisco Tenreiro (Paris: Oswald, 1958).

[4] Idem, *La Poésie africaine d'expression portugaise* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1969).

[5] Idem, *Poesia negra, Schwarze Dichter portugiesischer Sprache* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962).

[6] See the French translations of *Terra morta* (Rio de Janeiro, 1949), *Camaxilo* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956), and of *Viragem* (Lisbon, 1957), *Virage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).

[7] For a detailed description of this phenomenon, see Elena Rjauzova's essay in Part IV of this book. Interest in Luso-African writing was not limited to the Soviet Union or to the Russian language: see notably Pavla Ludmilová, "A literatura africana de expressão portuguesa na Checoslováquia" *Africa*, I (1978), 27–28. and Margarita Jerdinóvskaya, "A literatura de expressão portuguesa na Ucrânia," ibid., 132–133.

[8] O. R. Dathorne, *The Black Mind: A History of African Literature* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1974); see especially pp. 339–355. It must be mentioned, however, that lusophone writing had been taken into account in several book-length surveys published in socialist countries in the early seventies, most notably in the USSR (1969), Hungary (1971) and Czechoslovakia (1972).

teenth century, leading up to full-fledged colonial imperialism at the Berlin Conference of 1885.

Portugal's initiation into modern-type colonialism was bound to have consequences in the field of literature. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, as black anglophone writers and thinkers were making their names in British West Africa, new seeds were sown in Portuguese Africa as well. As Gerald Moser has observed,

> the situation changed when the first printing presses were set up by the colonial government. The very first was established in Praia, 1842, for the Cape Verde Islands and Guinea, the second in Luanda, 1845, for Angola and the Portuguese Congo (or Cabinda). The third and fourth were delayed till 1857 when presses were brought to São Tomé Island to serve São Tomé, Príncipe and Ano Bom, and to Mozambique Island to serve Portuguese East Africa. The presses began at once to issue official *Boletins*, gazettes in whose few pages the local rhymesters were allotted space for lyric verse. Soon afterwards, a couple of books appeared, a tome of poems in Luanda, 1849, written by a native Angolan, José da Silva Maia Ferreira, and an almanac in Mozambique, 1859, the *Almanach civil-ecclesiastico-artistico-administrativo da Provincia de Moçambique*, published by José Vicente Cardoso da Gama, a judge born in Bardez, India. The Cape Verdeans were close enough to Lisbon to seek publication of their books in Portugal, rather than risk delay and loss of manuscripts by entrusting them to the single press in the islands. Only in 1915 was the first book of poetry printed in Praia, on Santiago Island: Pedro Cardoso's *Caboverdeanas*.[9]

Two peculiar features distinguished this Luso-African writing for many decades: first, the bulk of it was poetry; imaginative writing in prose, which had been practised in English and in French since the early decades of the twentieth century, did not make an appearance until the 1930s. Second, the majority of writers were of mixed blood, unlike most anglophone and francophone writers but like a number of West Indian authors; this is probably due to attitudes proper to the Portuguese in matters pertaining to race, sex and culture, and their inter-relations. It is significant that they invented the concept of a hybrid culture which they named "luso-tropicalismo" and which was different in many ways from the French concept of assimilation. In fact, the vast majority of the population of the Cape Verde archipelago are mulattos, and Luanda, the capital of Angola, has been described as a creole island.[10] Another aspect of this peculiar type of race relations is that Luso-African literatures include—in the eyes of African readers and critics themselves—a number of white Portuguese authors such as Castro Soromenho and António Jacinto in Angola, or Manuel Ferreira and Sérgio Frusoni in Cape Verde, who are seen as having completely identified with Africa and her problems.

There is much truth, then, in Gerald Moser's statement that the Portuguese-language literature of Africa was the first created. And also although Philippe van Tieghem could assert with a semblance of reason in 1968, after the francophone flowering of the 1950s and the Nigerian outburst of the 1960s, that "la littérature africaine

[9] Personal communication.
[10] See Mário António, *Luanda, "Ilha" crioula* (Lisbon: Agência geral do Ultramar, 1968).

d'expression portugaise apparaît comme l'une des moins développées,"[11] it is only fair to recall that prior to the negritude explosion, Portuguese had been the most prolific of the European languages put to imaginative use in Black Africa.

It can also boast first rank in another, more important matter. The notion of a separate but equally worthy cultural identity found its expression in the concept of negritude, which was elaborated by Césaire and Senghor in Paris during the late thirties. The word itself first appeared in print in Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939). But already in 1935 a similar sense of selfhood had received lexical blessing in an essay entitled "Caboverdianidade" and published in Brazil.[12] The connection between this concept and the notion of a wider, black identity, was discussed by several Cape Verdean authors during the fifties, when "negritude" had gained currency.[13] Meanwhile, however, a similar *prise de conscience* had begun in Angola in the late forties. It would seem that these trends arose independently of each other. It was only with the foundation of the Casa dos Estudantes do Imperio in the late fifties that young intellectuals—who might be black, white, or of mixed blood—from all parts of Portuguese Africa and even of the Portuguese empire in general were brought together, thus creating the conditions for the emergence of a sense of all-African solidarity, which itself prompted the production of a vast amount of protest writing, thus introducing a new—albeit very brief—period in the history of lusophone writing in Africa.

[11] *Dictionnaire des littératures*, ed. Philippe van Tieghem (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), Vol. 1, p. 72.

[12] Delfim de Faria, "Caboverdianidade," *Boletim da Sociedade Luso-Africana do Rio de Janeiro*, 3 (1935), 114 *sqq*.

[13] See for example Manuel Duarte, "Cabo-verdianidade e africanidade," *Vertice*, 12 No. 134 (1954), 639–644, or Gabriel Mariano, "Negritude e cabo-verdianidade," *Cabo Verde* 9, 104 (1958), 7–8. For a more general discussion, see Richard A. Preto-Rodas, *Negritude as a Theme in the Poetry of the Portuguese-Speaking World* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1970).

NORMAN ARAUJO

1. THE WEST AFRICAN AREA: CAPE VERDE, GUINEA-BISSAU, SÃO TOMÉ E PRÍNCIPE

The Cape Verdean archipelago is situated roughly 350 miles off the West African coast from Senegal and consists of ten islands and five islets; the *mestiço* population of 270,000 cultivates (irregular rainfall permitting) corn, coffee, and manioc, promotes a small fishing industry, but mostly seeks to emigrate to more prosperous lands not plagued by chronic drought. Histories of Cape Verde will inform us that the islands, volcanic in origin, are thought to have been discovered in 1460 by the Portuguese Diego Gomes and the Genovese Antonio de Noli as they were returning from an exploratory trip to the African mainland. The archipelago of 1,557 square miles was populated later by Portuguese colonists and slaves brought primarily from Guinea—with the consequent creation of a racially mixed society whose ethnic composition was to be further enriched by the islands' development as a stop-over point for maritime traffic between Europe and Brazil.

The resulting problem of a Cape Verdean identity assumes genuine importance when perceived in its cultural dimension: this importance stems from an ongoing debate, intensified now by the political considerations attendant upon the emancipation of the archipelago from Portuguese colonial rule in 1975, about the relative weight of European and African cultural factors in the evolution and mentality of the Cape Verdean population. Cape Verdean intellectuals of the first half of the century, even as they recognized the African substratum of their culture, tended generally to characterize Cape Verdean society, whatever its unique cultural features, as culturally European. Writers like Baltazar Lopes, Félix Monteiro, and Manuel Lopes, even when they were waxing nativistic in defence of a Cape Verdean cultural identity distinct from the Portuguese, were prone to minimize the cultural vestiges of Africa in Cape Verde. More recently students of the matter such as the Cape Verdean Luís Romano and the Portuguese Jorge Morais-Barbosa—not to mention the hero of the resistance movement leading to Cape Verdean independence, Amílcar Cabral—have emphasized more the African components of Cape Verdean culture. In the case of Romano and Cabral the emphasis reflects not only the imperative of political identification with the nationalist spirit of the African continent but also the deeply-felt commitment to rediscover and revalidate the African cultural "roots"—to employ a term trivialized by repeated current usage—of the Cape Verdean people, roots obscured in the process of deculturation.

The history of Cape Verdean literature[14] can thus be seen largely as the evolutionary emergence of a heightened sensitivity to the need to define the Cape Verdean culturally. In terms of this sensitivity, the literature appears to fall into three main phases: the classical (in which classical forms are adapted to the expression of a colonialist mentality), the nativistic and the African. The classical phase is traceable back to the last decade of the nineteenth century, when, on the island of São Nicolau, a seminary founded in 1866 gave stimulus to the literary and intellectual life of the archipelago. The staff of the seminary published a review called the *Almanach Luso-Africano,* whose 1894 and 1899 numbers suggest the curious dichotomy of the classical orientation in Cape Verdean literature. This orientation was marked by a certain aesthetic allegiance to the literary canons of continental Portugal, but not wholly to the exclusion of what future generations were to consider, in retrospect, the early stirrings of a more nativistic spirit. Among the contributors to the review are counted José Lopes da Silva (1872–1962) and Januário Leite (1865–1930), who will shortly be discussed as representatives of the classical mode in early Cape Verdean literature. Alongside their stately poems in standard Portuguese, however, are to be found dialogues and lamentations in Crioulo, the curious mixture of Portuguese and African tongues spoken on the islands. Moreover, one contributor to the 1894 number, Eugénio Tavares (1867–1930), represented in that publication by poetry in the classical vein, was later to distinguish himself as a remarkable poet of love in Crioulo, writing *mornas,* a unique Cape Verdean art form—as yet of unclear origin—which is at once a poem, a song, and a dance.

Of the contributors to the *Almanach Luso-Africano* mentioned above, the one who embodies most completely the classical tradition in Cape Verdean literature is José Lopes. This autodidact, the titles of whose works readily betray his classicist inclinations *Jardim das Hespérides* (1916), *Hesperitanas* (1929), *Alma Arsinária* (1952), acquired an immense erudition without ever having left the archipelago, except for a brief trip to Angola in his youth. He mastered several foreign languages, writing poems in Latin, French and English, as well as Portuguese. His achievements brought him international recognition: the French awarded him the Legion of Honour and the palms of the French Academy; the Brazilians granted him membership in the Historical and Geographical

[14] For a highly detailed account of creative writing in the Cape Verde Islands up to the early sixties, see Norman Araujo, *A Study of Cape Verdean Literature* (Boston: Boston College, 1966). Brief surveys are available in Albert Gérard, "The Literature of Cape Verde," *African Arts/Arts d'Afrique,* 1,2 (1968), 62–64 and B. Pinto Bull, "Survol de la poésie cap-verdienne", *Association pour le Développement des Etudes Portugaises et Brésiliennes. Bulletin d'Information,* No. 10, (n.d. [1978]), 66–77. For an extensive discussion of Cape Verdean literature in the context of the local culture, see Manuel Ferreira, *A aventura crioula,* 2nd ed. (Lisbon: Plátano Editora, 1973), which contains a very extensive, although not always very orderly, bibliography. Some of the more substantial discussions are: José Osório de Oliveira, "Possibilidades e significação de uma literatura cabo-verdiana," in *Enquanto é possível: Ensaios e outros escritos* (Lisbon: Universo, 1942); Manuel Lopes, "Reflexões sobre a literatura cabo-verdiana ou a literatura nos meios pequenos," in *Colóquios cabo-verdianos,* ed. Manuel Ferreira and Nuno Miranda (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1959), pp. 1–22; Gabriel Mariano, "Inquietação e serenidade. Aspectos da insularidade na poesia cabo-verdiana," *Estudos Ultramarinos,* No. 3 (1959), 55–79; Arnaldo França, "Notas sobre poesia e ficção cabo-verdiana," *Cabo Verde,* N. S. 1 (1962), No. 157; Manuel Ferreira, "As ilhas crioulas na sua poesia moderna", *Estrada larga,* 3 (1962), 448–454; Onésimo Silveira, *Consciencialização na literatura cabo-verdiana* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1963), available in French as "Prise de conscience dans la littérature du Cap-Vert," *Présence Africaine,* No. 68 (1968), 106–122; Luís Romano, "Literatura cabo-verdiana," *Ocidente,* 70 (1966), No. 335, 105–116; Óscar Lopes, "Ficção cabo-verdiana," in *Modo de ler* (Porto: Editorial Inova, 1969), pp. 135–147. [Ed.]

Institute of Bahia and the Institute of Humanities of Ceará; the Portuguese gave him the Order of Christ, the Cross of Merit of the Portuguese Red Cross, the Portuguese Order of Public Instruction (Grand Officer). Most of all, José Lopes was revered in his homeland as an intellectual giant, proof of the power and potential of the Cape Verdean intellect despite all the negative and depressing aspects of an impoverished and remote insular environment.

But when one turns from the poet's reputation to his literary production, one is necessarily disappointed at the artificial ring of so many of his verses. Not that José Lopes fails to evoke his archipelago: in *Saudades da Pátria* (Homesickness, 1952) he sings the beauties of São Nicolau, his birthplace, as he does in "Tmé Pir" (whose title refers to a vegetation-covered part of the island), a poem in the *Hesperitanas*; in "Immortalis" from the same book of poems he lauds his colleague Eugénio Tavares and extols the latter's poetic cultivation of the *morna*. But by and large José Lopes prefers to look beyond the depressing spectacle of his insular existence back into Portugal's glorious maritime history or abroad to the developments in the world outside. Thus one finds among his poems several "A Camões" (To Camoëns) praising the Portuguese epic poet of the sixteenth century, celebrated for his monumental work, *Os Lusíadas*. In Lopes' classical perspective, the Cape Verde Islands become, as they were for Camoëns, the *Jardim das Hespérides* or *Hesperitanas;* the "collective soul" of the Cape Verdean people becomes the *alma arsinária,* recalling Canto V of *Os Lusíadas* in which Camoëns refers to *Cabo Arsinário,* the name formerly given to the African promontory known today as Cap Vert. But in the work entitled *Hesperitanas* Lopes also proclaims his admiration for France with "Vive la France," supports the rebellious serfs of Russia in "Carta à Rússia," and exalts the Japanese for their heroic struggle against the Russians (although he is later to score them, in *Braits* [1945], for their savage assault against Hong Kong during World War II). Classical in his attachment to the epic vision and its mythological accoutrements, in the presumed "universality" of his poetry and the concept of the poet as the interpreter of the "collective soul" of his people, Lopes is classical too in his reverence for the language of Camoëns. He takes pride in artistic perfection, in the quest for *beleza*. In *Meu Preito* (My homage, 1957) Lopes makes his creed known:

> Meu Verso é clássico, sempre bem feito,
> Não prostituo a Língua de Camões.[15]

Januário Leite and Mário Pinto (1887–1958) are poets of Lopes' generation who share, for the most part, his themes and aesthetics. Januário Leite, a poet from the island of Santo Antão, also seems intent on avoiding too direct an involvement in the archipelago's miseries. But he assigns a more central place to the theme of love in his principal work, *Poesias* (1952). Poems like "Confissão" and "Meu Primeiro Amor" (My first love) stress the divine nature of love in a manner reminiscent of the love poetry of Camoëns. At the same time, unable to escape from the unbearable confinement of his island

[15] "My poetry is classical, always well-fashioned,/I do not prostitute the language of Camoëns." On the writer, see Henrique de Vilhena, "O poeta caboverdiano José Lopes e o seu livro *Hesperitanas,*" in *Novos escritos* (Lisbon: Rodrigues, 1939).

existence through immersion in the glories of Portuguese history or contemplation of the heroes or momentous events of other lands, Leite inclines to pessimism more than Lopes, as reflected in poems like "Resignação" and "A Morte". Aesthetically, Leite's cultivation of the classical sonnet form, though sustained without the panoply of mythological allusions which characterizes Lopes's poetry, again links him to the tradition defended by the latter. In *Ensaios Poéticos* (Poetic Essays, 1911) Mário Pinto remains faithful to the classical ideal to which Lopes and Leite pay homage, even as he varies their themes and stylistic devices. Like Lopes, his poetry is nationalistic in the colonialist sense, and epic. Like Leite he sometimes exhibits a proneness to pessimism, as in poems like "Desalento" (Discouragement) and "A Morte". But his verses are shorn of the mythology of Lopes and the stately declamations of Leite when he evokes the moonlight setting in "Ao Luar" (In the moonlight) and "O Sol e A Lua" (The sun and the moon). Moreover, Pinto's use of a six-syllable line, as in "Desalento", and the abandonment of the sonnet form often lend a more natural resonance to his poetry.

Contemporaries of José Lopes, Januário Leite and Mário Pinto, Pedro Monteiro Cardoso (ca. 1890–1942) and Eugénio Tavares are poets whose works present manifest affinities with those of their classical confrères, but these affinities co-exist with features suggestive of a new literary spirit. To some extent a product of the seminary of São Nicolau, whose course of study he did not complete, Cardoso seems at first glance to be as much a classicist as José Lopes himself. Volumes of poetry such as *Jardim das Hespérides* (1926), *Algas e Corais* (Algas and corals, 1928) *Hespéridas* (1930), and *Sonetos e Redondilhas* (Sonnets and rondels, 1934), as indicated by their titles, contain, apparently, most of the usual stuff of classical poetry. There is the common round of nationalistic pieces, heroic odes, mythological histories, praise of Camoëns, and finally a theory of poetry which apotheosizes the *belo* and lashes out against the modern, avant-garde poetic compositions written in free verse and regarded by Cardoso as decadent.

But the actual similarities, as far as classicism is concerned, are superficial. When he adheres to the classical canons, Cardoso is not so inclined as Lopes to project systematically a colonialist mentality, as is demonstrated by a poem like "Ontem e Hoje" (Yesterday and today) from *Jardim das Hespérides,* where a sharp contrast emerges between the resplendent Portugal of yester-year and the apathetic, mediocre Portugal of today. Far more important, Cardoso shifts attention away from continental Portugal and fixes it squarely on the Cape Verde Islands. In *Hespéridas,* sensitive to the chronic problem of rainfall in the archipelago, he offers the reader a poem on rain; in *Sonetos e Redondilhas,* while he alludes to Venus, Adamastor, and the *ilhas arsinárias,* he speaks affectionately of Brava and Santiago in a way which already prefigures the approach of a later nativistic poet, Jorge Barbosa. The same work includes a portrait of the *crioula* (Cape Verdean girl) and a discussion of the distinctiveness of the *morna.* Cardoso's writings in Crioulo, as typified in the volume of poetry *Rafodjos* (Innuendoes, 1928) and the review *Cadernos Luso-Caboverdeanos* (1941–42), represent a liberation from the overweening influence of classicism, revealing that the poet is capable of a more spontaneous, more original poetic technique. The very purpose of this poetry, its specific connection with the local scene, is affirmed on the cover of the *Cadernos Luso-Cabover-*

deanos, where Cardoso declares his intention to turn all of his profits, beyond those necessary for the payment of expenses, to the starving people of the archipelago, the *famintos*. Inspired by this sense of solidarity with his people, Cardoso talks, in a poem of *Folclore Caboverdeano* (1933), of the oppression of the blacks at the hands of the whites. In the *Cadernos Luso-Caboverdeanos* he treats the theme of escape, already developed by his classical contemporaries as we have noted above. But in so doing he exhibits neither the imaginative flights of Lopes nor the moonlit optimism of Pinto; rather he is haunted by the sad prospect of having to leave the islands without any certainty of being able to return.

Cardoso's literary importance is not limited, however, to the fact that he writes of insular life and in the language of the natives, Crioulo. His *Folclore Caboverdeano* is the first work in the islands to attempt general appreciation of Cape Verdean folklore, comprising an analysis of Crioulo, popular proverbs, examples of poetry in the dialect, a discussion of local customs, and a look at musical forms typical of the archipelago. A serious student of Cape Verdean culture, Cardoso is the first to suggest that Cape Verdean folklore is rich enough to merit a comprehensive scholarly investigation. Moreover, he is a polemicist who valiantly defends the use of Crioulo against those who argue that time given to the study of Crioulo would be better spent on Portuguese, as attest the articles of the *Cadernos Luso-Caboverdeanos* which refer to the controversy stirred up by his writings on Crioulo. In the final analysis Cardoso emerges as a Cape Verdean who is proud of his island heritage: the intensity of his "pro-Cape Verdean" attitude, apparent in the frankness and vigour of his stand, secures for him a place of honour in Cape Verdean letters which might well be envied by the less courageous members of the "modernist" school.

Another poet of the generation of Cardoso who appeared initially to be irremediably tainted with classicism is Eugénio Tavares.[16] In volumes of poetry such as *Amor Que Salva* (Love and salvation, 1916) and *Mal de Amor* (Lovesickness, 1916) one encounters again the mythology common to Lopes and Cardoso. When Tavares mentions country folk in *Amor Que Salva,* furthermore, the viewpoint is still classical: the poet is depicting not the suffering farmers of some of Cardoso's poems but simple innocents living in a pastoral setting and essentially governed by the virtues of love and moral honesty. In the poems of *Mal de Amor* exactly the same treatment of social themes is to be found. Unlike the classical poetry of Cardoso, therefore, that of Tavares does not present a tension between traditional stylistic refinement and spontaneous reaction to social phenomena. As for their "Cape Verdeanness," *Amor Que Salva* and *Mal de Amor* could have been written by just about anyone.

For the nativistic content of Tavares' writings in the classical mould, one must turn to what the Bravense has written in prose. The most significant of these prose works is a review called *Cartas Caboverdeanas* (Cape Verdean Letters, 1916). The different articles which compose this review contain criticism of continental Portugal's mis-

[16] On Tavares, see Gabriel Mariano, "Convergência lírica portuguesa num poeta cabo-verdiano na língua crioula do séc. XIX," in *II. Congresso da communidades de cultura portuguesa,* (Moçambique, 1967), Vol. 2, pp. 497–510.

management of the archipelago's governmental bureaucracy and an attack on the Portuguese for always harking back to their days of glory instead of looking ahead to the trials and possibilities of the future. In *Carta a D. Alexandre d'Almeida sobre a emigração para os Estados Unidos* (A Letter to Dom Alexandre d'Almeida on Cape Verdean emigration to the United States, 1918) Tavares challenges Dom Alexandre d'Almeida's contention that Cape Verdean emigration should be diverted from North America and the Cape Verdean reintegrated in the social and economic complex of the islands. Tavares' forceful response, in which he maintains that to act thus would be to reduce the Cape Verdean to the position of a slave, echoes the language of everyday life in Cape Verde, with allusions to shovels and farmlands, to contract labourers and bread. The emphasis is strictly on the harsh reality of Cape Verdean life, its slavish nature as compared with the situation in the United States. But this defence of emigration is not to be confused with the notion of permanent escape, which is typical neither of him nor of Cardoso. If the Cape Verdean must go abroad, it is only to prepare himself better —and Tavares understands this in a social as well as financial sense—to discharge his duties as a native of the islands.

Revolt against the conditions of existence on the islands is not, however, the central theme of Tavares' works. The classical poetry of *Amor Que Salva* and *Mal de Amor* already features this central theme, that of love. But only in Tavares' Crioulo poetry does it flower fully. Here, as in the classical tradition, love is a sacred force, capable of bringing salvation. Yet the tonality is no longer the same. In Tavares' *Mornas: Cantigas Crioulas* (*Mornas*: Crioulo songs, 1932) there is, despite the restrained vocabulary, an undercurrent of sensuality, and no suggestion that, as in his classical poetry, the love concerned is that between man and wife. Indeed, the continual insistence in the *mornas* on the absolute superiority of love over all other values, including God Himself, creates a totally new form of religion. According to the poem "Contam, nha crecheu" (Tell me, my beloved) heaven is in the loved one's breast, in her eyes, and finally in both lover and loved one when they are alone together.

Tavares' universe of love is not simply a poetic, stylistic device enabling him to sing more appealing *mornas* to his island public; it is, just as much as the epic poetry of Lopes or the rebellious protests of Cardoso, a way of reacting against the frustration of insular confinement. The solution for Tavares is not escape; it is not a turning away from the islands; it is rather a total absorption of his person, of his sentiments and thoughts, in the ideal of love. The poet views the limitation of the archipelago as physical, not emotional: heaven is still attainable on this earth if only the loved one will return the affections of her admirer. Certainly Tavares' poetic and prose interests are not so far-reaching as those of Cardoso. He offers no treatise on Cape Verdean folklore, and, with the exception of scattered prose pieces, does not dedicate himself systematically and actively, as does Cardoso, to a defence of the Cape Verdean, his language, his intellectual development, his moral stature, his dismal existence on the rainless islands. Tavares does make his contribution in another sense: he places his poetic stethoscope on the Cape Verdean's heart and records the results in touching verses of love. If the *morna* is, as it has been called, the soul of the Cape Verdean people, then Tavares, by his superlative

cultivation of this local genre, has revealed to us the essence of their make-up, has caught their emotive impulses when inspired by the wondrously powerful feelings of love.

In 1936 a literary revolution took place in Cape Verde with the creation of the review *Claridade* (Clarity), among whose founders some, such as Manuel Lopes (b. 1907) and Baltazar Lopes da Silva (b. 1907), distinguished themselves later as *Claridosos*. It would be simplistic to claim that the creators of *Claridade* brought forth their review with the pioneering spirit of Pedro Cardoso and Eugénio Tavares vivid in their minds. While they were subsequently to pay tribute to these precursors later, at the time of the review's inception other influences were at work more powerfully, or at least more consciously, in their minds. Among these was the appearance of *Presença*, the revolutionary Portuguese publication which had been founded in 1927 and which represented a violent reaction against the literary fashions of the day. The writers of *Presença* not only advocated a break with the sterile traditions of the Portuguese literary past but also encouraged the Cape Verdean experiment, hailing the third number of *Claridade* as the "first manifestation of an enthusiastic Portuguese spirit of modernism outside continental Portugal."[17] Thus, in the historical context, *Presença* acted not only as a positive source of orientation for the youthful literary movement in the islands but also as an enthusiastic assessor of the movement's sense of progress and direction. No wonder the *Claridosos* read it with extreme satisfaction.

At the same time, the creators of *Claridade* were sensitive to the impact of an import from Brazil, the regionalistic works of the modern school of Brazilian literature as represented by writers such as José Lins do Rego, Jorge Amado, Manuel Bandeira, and Ribeiro Couto.[18] The Cape Verdean literati discovered in these works themes suggestive of their own island life: natural forces and their destructive capacity; stark poverty and its physically and intellectually debilitating effect; religion as a curious mixture of Christian beliefs and the vestiges of an African heritage; resignation born of a sense of entrapment in the oppression of socio-economic factors beyond one's control; escape.

As fruit of a threefold inspiration, flowing from the Cape Verdeanness of Cardoso and Tavares as well as from the incentive of the *Presença* initiative and the revelations of Brazilian regionalism, the review *Claridade* assumed the form of a cultural rather than purely literary publication. Despite its sporadic appearance (*Claridade* appeared only nine times between 1936 and 1960), and its generally cultural, rather than specifically literary, content, *Claridade* had an impact far more significant than that of its predecessor, the *Almanach Luso-Africano*. It fixed attention squarely on Cape Verde; her people, her customs, her language, and her literature. And this it did in the sense of establishing the intrinsic prestige of the Cape Verdean. The review focused on the Cape Verdean as an individual distinct from his Portuguese brethren in Europe or his presumed counterparts in any of the "overseas provinces." It explained his supposed apathy as resulting

[17] See Manuel Ferreira, "Consciência literária cabo-verdiana: quatro gerações," *Estudos Ultramarinos*, No. 3 (1959), 226–248.

[18] See João Alves das Neves, *Temas luso-brasileiros* (São Paulo: Commissão de Cultura de Estado de S. Paulo, 1963), and Luís Romano, *Evocação de Portugal e presença do Brasil na literatura cabo-verdiana* (Bossoró, Brasil: Prefeitura Municipal, 1966).

not from an inherent weakness of character but from the demoralizing nature of his living conditions. It stressed his high level of europeanization, thereby countering the charge of his basically African primitivism, though it did not—and this aspect of the debate was at least in part affected by the infiltrations of a colonialist attitude imposed from without by a dictatorial regime—dispute the African origin of native customs such as the *tabanca*. It examined the Cape Verdean heritage from a linguistic point of view, exploring the development of Crioulo; but here too it tended to see Crioulo as simplified Portuguese, with only an insignificant debt to the African languages.

As for the purely literary content of *Claridade*, the emphasis was strictly on uttering a loud protest against the conditions in which the Cape Verdean lived, against the gloom and desperation of a miserable existence driving him, quite often, out of his island habitat. Together with this deepened sensitivity to the hardships of life in the islands, there came a new conception of the poet as someone allied with the common people of the islands, sharing their frustration and making it known to the world on their behalf. This world the *Claridade* poets perceived as a concrete reality, and not as the basis for idle reverie. The theme of escape became a richly ambivalent one, being sometimes the source of optimism because of the promise of freedom it offered, and sometimes the source of pessimism because of the thought that one might never be able to leave the archipelago. Poems in Crioulo concentrated on the more folkloric aspects of Cape Verdean life, and some of them even cultivated a uniquely comic mood. Less diversified than the poetry and devoid of a comic strain, the prose of *Claridade* displayed the same absorption in the Cape Verdean situation. The problem of drought, of the economic strangulation engendered by irregular rainfall, was now viewed from an even more troubling perspective, given the reflection that the return of the rain did not remove all the difficulties, nor all the causes for despair: while it could make the land live again, it could not restore to life those who had died during its absence. The prose writings of *Claridade* were thus grimly characterized by a new perception of the hollowness and desolation of many Cape Verdean lives, cruelly tried by the almost unremitting rigours of the island environment.

The label *Claridoso* is shared by four poets: Jorge Barbosa (1902–1971), Manuel Lopes, Baltazar Lopes da Silva, and Pedro Corsino Azevedo (1905–1942). Barbosa's poetry represents the archipelago's first definitive break with the classical tradition, although Barbosa himself admits that he began with verse in the classical style and was for some time loyal to its dictates. But with the publication of his *Arquipélago* in 1935, a year before the appearance of the initial number of *Claridade*, Barbosa marked a radical departure from classicism and heralded the beginning of modern Cape Verdean poetry. In this work Barbosa puts aside the references to mythology and the *ilhas arsinárias*, preferring to depict the islands realistically, as in "Panorama":

> Destroços de que continente,
> de que cataclismos,
> de que sismos,
> de que mistérios?[19]

[19] "Remnants from what continent,/from what cataclysms,/from what earthquakes,/from what mysteries?." On the writer, see Gabriel Mariano, *Uma introdução à poesia de Jorge Barbosa* (Praia: Minerva, 1964).

The rhythmic value of the poetry lies now not in the bombastic rhetoric of classical verse but in the true-to-life pulsations of free verse, as Barbosa, in poems like "Ilhas" (Islands) and "A Terra" (The land), writes of the "bárbara melodia" (barbaric melody) of the gushing waters of Santo Antão's rivers, or of the arid slopes of Cape Verde, seeming to cry out their misery. In "O Mar" (The sea) he sketches vaguely what is later to become a prominent theme of his, the idea of escape from insular confinement. *Ambiente* (Environment, 1941) and *Cadernos dum Ilhéu* (Notebooks of an islander, 1956) are wider in scope than *Arquipélago*, as Barbosa indicates a whole range of problems to be analysed: his position as a Cape Verdean poet, the matter of a poetic doctrine, the sources of poetic inspiration, and the mission of his artistic activity. In his preface to *Cadernos dum Ilhéu* Barbosa adopts a self-effacing attitude which clashes violently with the point of view of José Lopes, who had never hesitated to remind others of his oracular function as the *vate caboverdeano* (Cape Verdean poet). Barbosa pokes fun at the lack of Lusitanian nobility in his pedigree with a series of "Poemas Autobiográficos" (Autobiographical poems), in which he describes his poetry as "impetuous" and "uncultured." He addresses this poetry to the common man, to the humble Cape Verdean of whom he speaks in "Irmão" (Brother). A sort of conscience impelling him to the composition of verse is the subject of "Voz íntima" (Intimate voice). In "Seca" (Drought), a poem belonging to *Ambiente*, Barbosa manifests very clearly his deep concern with the children of the islands, as he does in "Canções de embalar" (Lullabies) of the *Cadernos*; in both instances he rebels against the conditions óf life which deprive Cape Verdean children of that normal, carefree existence typical of childhood in the more fortunate areas of the globe. He is also concerned with the way in which time takes its toll of the young in Cape Verde. In "Destino ignorado" (Unknown destiny), "Pretinha" (Little black girl), and "Moça-Velha" (Old young girl) he wonders about the premature destruction of physical beauty because of the harshness of life in the islands.

As is only natural, his constant absorption in the most pressing problems of his land produces in Barbosa a feeling of revolt. But this feeling of revolt finds only one solution: escape. The theme of escape assumes two forms in Barbosa's poetry: the first is a kind of *saudosismo*, or nostalgia for things or people absent or lost—quite different, however, from José Lopes' egocentric evocations of childhood; the second expresses a longing to travel, to visit those lands of which the poet has heard or read. "Irmão" exemplifies the nostalgic approach, as Barbosa writes of the olden days, when it was possible for Cape Verdeans to travel to America without difficulty. "Viagens" (Voyages) voices the longing to visit other lands, a longing which generates an eagerness to make contact with people and things that come from without, resulting, in turn, in a bitter tension—not between the physically possible and the physically impossible, but between the limited possibilities of the island home and the seemingly unlimited opportunities of the outside world. The tension is effectively conveyed by a contrast between the glitter of the dreamed-about universe across the seas and the prosaic patterns of the island daily round. What starts out in this poetry as the expression of a frustrated desire to travel becomes, in some instances, an obsession, as Barbosa refuses to abandon his dream of escape even when it is quite obvious to him that such an escape is impossible. The obsession is dramatically apparent in poems like "Navio" (Ship) and "Cinzeiro" (Ashtray); but the most telling

expression of this obsession comes not in these two poems from the *Cadernos* but from "Poema do Mar" (Poem of the sea) in *Ambiente*. Here Barbosa reflects on the incessant invitation to escape which the sea tenders to the Cape Verdean, while his circumstances compel him to remain. Whatever the case, the theme of escape in Barbosa is forever associated with an eventual return to the archipelago. In "Vertigem" (Dizzy spell) and "Depois da Chuva" (After the rain), both from *Ambiente*, the poet betrays his basic fascination with the simple, modest charm of the islands and his joy at the coming of rain and at the beauty of a barren land suddenly revivified by water. In the process Barbosa reveals his allegiance to Cape Verde, his fundamental Cape Verdeanness.

In contrast to Jorge Barbosa, Manuel Lopes is primarily a novelist, although he has essayed his skill in poetry and the short story. Despite this initial difference, and the fact that he has traveled more widely than Barbosa (who hardly ever left the islands) and lived for a long time in continental Portugal, Manuel Lopes presents certain similarities with the poet of *Arquipélago*. Both enjoyed a brief flirt with classicism at the beginning of their literary careers. Both deal in their works with the theme of escape. Both, above all, are immersed unquestionably in the most crucial issues of their archipelago. Manuel Lopes' classical period is involved with the *Almanach Luso-Brasileiro de Lembranças* (Luso-Brazilian almanac of memories), to which he contributed well-fashioned sonnets, sonnets so well-fashioned, indeed, that they won a prize for their author in 1937. But Manuel Lopes' dedication to classicism did not last: as early as 1932 he had found a new direction with a short descriptive work called *Paúl* (Paul, the name of a region on Santo Antão), in the first numbers of *Claridade*. With *Poemas de Quem Ficou* (Poems of one who remained, 1949) Manuel Lopes returned to poetry with a new awareness of the problems of Cape Verde.

To one who has perused the works of Jorge Barbosa, this book of poetry appears to begin at the other end. While the theme of escape is a sort of conclusion for Barbosa, it is a kind of commencement for Manuel Lopes. Poems like "Isolamento" (Isolation), "Libertação," and "Alucinação" (Hallucination) imply by their very titles the idea of flight. But Lopes is drawn to the notion of escape by the compelling force of vague inner aspirations—aspirations which in his poetry always remain undefined—toward a better human situation. His ideal differs from the concrete picture of Brazil which the poet of the *Cadernos* creates. It derives from a rather cloudy conception of what the other side of the Atlantic holds in store. In "Naufrágio" (Shipwreck) the poet even intimates that this "inner world" of his exists merely as a creation of his dreams, without the slightest grounding in fact. In spite of its openly escapist character, *Poemas de Quem Ficou* adumbrates at times the future position of Manuel Lopes. In "Partir" (Leaving) there is the fleeting suggestion that perhaps the other end of the Atlantic does not provide the real answer to the dilemma, and in "Terra" (Land) the poet suddenly abandons his visions of escape altogether and gains renewed confidence in the possibilities of his homeland.

Before probing the ramifications of such ideas in his other works, Manuel Lopes discusses the potential richness of Cape Verde as a source of cultural values in a prose publication called *Os Meios Pequenos e a Cultura* (Culture in small milieus, 1951). He sets out to demonstrate that once the confusion is eliminated between a *meio pequeno*

(small milieu) and a *meio acanhado* (provincially-minded milieu), it can be recognized that the proper measuring-stick for determining the cultural potential of any given milieu is not its size or economic development but its intellectual and artistic resources. This recognition clears the way, of course, for a justification of both the writer's art and that of his colleagues in the islands as potentially worthy, although issuing from very humble social and economic conditions. Furthermore, by its pronouncements on art, *Os meios Pequenos e a Cultura* establishes that not only are the intrinsic values of the small milieu quite conceivably valid, but so is their artistic expression as a reflection of the very circumstances in which those values are rooted. In one verbal swoop, therefore, Manuel Lopes defends the intellectual assumptions which are the spoken substructure of the *Claridade* point of view and demolishes, in the process, the aestheticism of a writer like José Lopes.

The novel *Chuva Braba* (The beating rain, 1956) illustrates some of the concepts expounded in *Os Meios Pequenos e a Cultura*, being an exemplification of the overpowering influence of the elements on the conduct of the Cape Verdean. Lopes is not concerned here with the classic struggle pitting nature against heroic man: his book is not an epic in the form of a novel. Rather, he is interested in showing how the problem of rainfall toys capriciously with the ordinary citizen of Cape Verde, with a common man such as Mané Quim. The essential dilemma posed by Quim is whether he should accompany his godfather to Brazil with the prospect of making a satisfactory living there or stay at home and face the danger of continuing drought. Quim listens to contrasting pieces of advice from the *raisonneurs* of the island of Santo Antão, and eventually, but not very firmly, decides to leave. The novel is concerned less with this eventual decision than with revealing the almost mystical love which binds Quim to the land: the overpowering sense of union with the very ground which he breaks, the feeling that when he makes things grow on his land, he is participating in an act as sacred as that of the creation of human life. The illumination of Quim's attitude is intended to restore some measure of dignity to the novel's principal character; it is also meant to explain the climax of *Chuva Braba*, which develops when the rains come and Quim now resolves to stay on the island, reacting to the instinctive call of his inescapable attachment to the land, the "força irresistível das intuições primitivas" which vibrates within him.

By indicating how the first drops of rain resolve Quim's excruciating problem, Manuel Lopes leaves no doubt as to the governing force in his novel. The real protagonist is not the bewildered young man but rather the promising rainfall, the *chuva braba* which beats down on the island in the last moments of the story, resuscitating the hopes and ambitions of the people. Although centred on the experience of Quim, *Chuva Braba* actually embraces a broader vision of Cape Verdean humanity. Manuel Lopes is absorbed in the tribulations of the island population as a whole, not simply in the predicament of the principal character. He portrays the island folk amid their daily tasks and records their reactions to the tribulations which befall them. Aside from Joquinha and the businessman João Joana, both outsiders—the former by his long absence from the islands and the latter by his purely commercial association with the inhabitants—the characters depicted are ordinary Cape Verdeans. They are possibly illiterate, like Vilão, or both illiterate and crude, like Sansão. But they all have one magnificent quality to

their credit: they are patient and unflinching in the presence of adversity. *Chuva Braba* is not a politically subversive novel: nowhere is there a hint of social activism, although Manuel Lopes does deal briefly and sparingly with the commercial exploitation practised by businessmen like João Joana. Foremost in the author's mind is a celebration of the simple, but admirable, virtues of his people, the harsh monotony of their battle for life, a seriousness crystallized in the example of Quim but capable of extension to the entire population. The structure of *Chuva Braba* is neatly symmetrical, permitting Manuel Lopes to draw particular dramatic strength from the symbolic clash of three natural forces—land, sea and rain. In the beginning it is the sea which commands, attracting Quim by its promise of escape; then rainfall restores to the land its vitality, sapped by drought; with the land revitalized, the sea can no longer compete for Quim's loyalty.

In a set of short stories, entitled *O Galo Que Cantou na Baía* (The cock that crowed in the bay, 1959), Manuel Lopes adopts the Balzacian technique of inserting references to characters which have appeared in *Chuva Braba,* or simply having them appear again. The short stories are valuable for their attention to the more folkloric elements in Cape Verdean culture, such as the *feiticeiria* (sorcery) of a character like *nhô* Baxense, but more important still for their portrayal of Eduardinho, the chief protagonist of these tales, who develops from a young aesthete enamoured of Latin quotations to a mature individual determined to serve the cause of his people, to immerse himself in the harsh realities of Cape Verde. With *O Galo Que Cantou na Baía,* Manuel Lopes' movement away from the unadulterated escapism of his early poetry becomes final. He is seen to share more fully than before the Cape Verdeanness exhibited by the likes of Barbosa.

Baltazar Lopes da Silva, a man of considerable formal schooling—possessing degrees in Law and Romance Philology—writes, like Manuel Lopes, prose and poetry. More versatile intellectually than Manuel Lopes, he is artistically less gifted, less capable of coherently translating experience into art. The first poems of Baltazar Lopes, appearing in *Claridade* under the pseudonym of Osvaldo Alcântara, neither paid homage to classical deities, like the first lyrics of Jorge Barbosa, nor suggested the frustration of insular confinement, like the verses of Manuel Lopes. Poems such as "Rapsódia", "Deslumbramento" (Fascination), and "Ignoto Deo" reflect a certain joy and optimism in the discovery of poetry. But soon this poetry takes on a somber tone, as Baltazar Lopes becomes more aware of the suffering of his fellow Cape Verdeans. In a series of poems called "Romanceiro de São Tomé" (Ballads of São Tomé) published in *Claridade* in 1958, he deals with such realist themes as the deplorable emigration to São Tomé. The poetic vision of Baltazar Lopes is not content, however, to skim the surface of Cape Verdean reality. His is a more subjective approach, an endeavour to penetrate beyond the material level and to sense the pulse of human reaction. Thus in "Canção da Minha Rua" (The song of my street, 1948) and "Nocturno" (1956)[20] he seeks to discover how the Cape Verdean mind and heart react *inwardly* to the oppression of economic factors, to illuminate the curious contrast between the dullness of the physical or objective world and the exciting richness of the subjective universe. In the former poem the magic of

[20] Jaime de Figueiredo, "Ensaio de interpretação do 'Nocturno' de Osvaldo Alcântara," *Cabo Verde,* No. 78 (1956).

music permits communication with the outside world; in the latter the failure of a romantic rendez-vous does not arrest the hopeful girl's dream of love.

Baltazar Lopes returns to a realist perspective in short stories like "Dona Mana" (1948) and "A Caderneta" (The booklet, 1949), where he depicts the ordeal of women forced for monetary reasons to take up prostitution. The author shows how society —through its judicial structure in "Dona Mana" and through its medical institutions in "A Caderneta"—misinterprets the torment of the helpless victim. Yet the exploration of the subjective sphere continues to fascinate Baltazar Lopes, as may be seen in another short story, "Muminha vai para a escola" (Muminha goes to school, 1952), and in the poem "Serenata" (1948). Autobiographical *saudosismo* adds a fresh dimension to this subjectivity in another short story, "Pedacinho" (Little piece, 1960).

The novel *Chiquinho* (1947),[21] chronologically the first Cape Verdean novel, seems to unite most of these disparate elements. It relates a story of forced emigration in which the protagonist, Chiquinho, a gifted young man who had hoped that higher education in the seminary of São Nicolau would open the way for him to a brillant career, sees his hopes dashed by the prolonged drought. The novel is significant in part because it focuses on the folkloric aspects of Cape Verdean life, noting, for example, the peculiar healing practices of the people. More noteworthy still than the depiction of these local customs—including an evocation of *feiticeiros* (sorcerers)—is the account of the gradual destruction of the protagonist's childhood world of make-believe, not only in the sense of Chiquinho's growing awareness of the economic desperation of island life but also in the sense of his slow realization that the very education which he has received in the islands sets him apart intellectually. He is regarded with suspicion and envy by those who do not share his educational attainment; moreover, that very attainment makes him socially unsuitable for the "demeaning" work in the fields. The novel is significant, also, as a statement of aesthetic principle somewhat reminiscent of that of Manuel Lopes. Chiquinho joins forces with a group attempting to set up a literary review. A spokesman for the group emphasizes the need for Cape Verdean writers to deal with local problems such as those of the coal worker in São Vicente who has been out of work for a long time, rather than the fiords of Scandinavia. But the similarity with Manuel Lopes is not complete in this respect: in the depiction of Sr. Euclides, Baltazar Lopes creates a kind of fictionalized José Lopes, thereby revealing a more tolerant spirit toward the generation of *beleza*.

Despite the rich elements which are blended in it, *Chiquinho* unfortunately suffers from a lack of care in composition. A loose amalgam of realism, evocations of childhood, and wide-ranging theories on the proper form and content of Cape Verdean literature, *Chiquinho* is an unorganized collection of various episodes instead of a *bona fide* novel in the truest sense.

[21] Manuel Ferreira, "O círculo do mar e o *terra-longismo* em *Chiquinho* de Baltasar Lopes," *Colóquio/Letras*, No. 5 (1972), 66–70. On the writer's poetry, see Donald Burness, "Baltasar Lopes and the Morna of Cape Verde" in his *Fire: Six Writers from Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1977), pp. 75–95. On the emergence of Cape Verdean prose fiction and its problems, see António Aurélio Gonçalves, "Problemas da literatura romanesca em Cabo Verde," in Baltasar Lopes *et al.*, *Antologia da ficção caboverdiana contemporânea* (Praia: Imprensa Nacional, 1960).

The fourth member of the original quartet of *Claridosos,* Pedro Corsino Azevedo, began writing poetry when already stricken with tuberculosis. He himself published nothing, and his work is known to us through Baltazar Lopes, who included some of it in the first numbers of *Claridade*. Azevedo's poetry is something quite apart from the artistic contributions of the other *Claridosos*. In substance and style it bears closest resemblance to the work of Baltazar Lopes, especially in its occasional optimism and in its cultivation of the theme of childhood. The most striking example of Azevedo's delicate art is a poem called "Terra-Longe" (Faraway land, 1946), which appears in the fourth number of *Claridade*. "Terra-Longe" crystallizes simultaneously the poet's attitude toward the outside world and his tender recollection of the sheltered days of his infancy. Though it does not speak directly of drought and famine, in the intensity of its remembrance of the affectionate bond between mother and child, it recalls the deeply nativistic sentiments of Pedro Cardoso in "Nhâ Codê" (My cadet).

The *Claridade* initiative was not limited to the literary production of the *Claridosos*. Offering cogent proof of its vitality, it extended beyond them and led to the founding of a new review called *Certeza* (Certainty) and to the creative activity of writers such as António Aurélio Gonçalves (d. 1984), Aguinaldo Fonseca (b. 1922), António Nunes (1917–1951), Sérgio Frusoni (1901–1975), and Djunga (1901–1970). The result of this extension of the *Claridade* influence was not simply a repetition of what had gone before. It was rather a progressive enrichment of Cape Verdean literature, an exploration of new areas of endeavour on the very fringes of the original movement. *Certeza* came into existence in 1944, appearing twice in that year—with a third number dying on the presses because of censorship. The review was created by *liceu* students—among them Arnaldo Franca (b. 1925), Nuno Miranda (b. 1924), Eduíno Brito (b. ca. 1922), and Guilherme Rocheteau (b. 1924)—who were sensitive to the message of Portuguese neo-realism as introduced in Cape Verde by Manuel Ferreira (b. 1917), a continental Portuguese then completing his military service in the archipelago. The *Certeza* founders were also imbued with the spirit of *Claridade,* and were later to contribute to its 1946 number: they too wanted to centre their work on the phenomena of life in the islands. But the tonality of *Certeza* was distinct from that of *Claridade,* since the writers of the new review voiced a political ambition, demanding, with all the impatience and impetuosity of youth, immediate and far-reaching changes. They saw themselves as belonging to a vast army of reformers struggling throughout the world to ameliorate the circumstances of human existence. Genuinely interested in the problems of Cape Verde, they tended to envisage these problems in more general terms as part of a worldwide complex of factors whose crucial aspect was economic. While accepting the Cape Verdean's individuality, these young writers were more bent on re-identifying him with humanity at large than on singularizing him. *Certeza*'s early demise must be attributed to the geographical dispersal of the contributors as well as to governmental opposition—the latter sparked also by *Certeza*'s suspected identification with the spirit of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, an organization established by Angolan students in Lisbon the very year of *Certeza*'s birth and rightly judged by the Portuguese authorities to be "subversive".

While *Certeza* was enjoying a brief but dramatic appearance on the Cape Verdean

literary scene, writers like António Aurélio Gonçalves (1901–1984)[22] were preparing to react to the initial impetus of *Claridade*. In short stories like "Recaída" (Relapse, 1947–1948) and novelettes like *Pródiga* (The prodigal one, 1956) and *O Enterro de nhâ Candinha Sena* (The funeral of Mrs. Candinha Sena, 1957), Gonçalves seemed to follow in the footsteps of the *Claridosos*, whether he was recounting his childhood memories or dealing with the hard facts of prostitution. But he was placing his personal stamp on the treatment of these common subjects by studying them in an original emotional climate and employing special stylistic devices. In *Pródiga*, Gonçalves examines the bond between mother and sinful daughter, but his examination is implicitly set against the backdrop of the biblical story of the prodigal son. Even as the author tells the story of Xandinha's being forgiven by her mother *nhâ* Ludovina, he carefully analyses the delicate fabric of familial relations which informs his already symbolic tale. In *O Enterro de nhâ Candinha Sena* the matter of childhood experience is approached not from Chiquinho's vantage point of an imaginary, carefree past but from the depths of the narrator's own sentimental ties with the deceased woman. This profound relationship causes the narrator to sanctify his portrayal of her and to philosophize on the implications of her cruel destiny, noting that it is the destiny of all human beings. Gonçalves is surely one of the most style-conscious of the Cape Verdean writers, and his utilization of the flashback technique and symbolism reveal a master craftsman in command of his artistic means. Early in his career, in a critical work entitled *Aspectos da ironia de Eça de Queiroz* (1937), Gonçalves suggested his acute sensitivity to the formal structure of a literary creation. But Gonçalves' preoccupation with style does not signify by any means the betrayal of the nativistic revolution in Cape Verdean letters. He demonstrates, rather, that the presentation of reality in literature need not be confused with a monotonous cataloguing of circumstances devoid of art and artifice.

The literary pronouncements of Aguinaldo Brito Fonseca are less poetically reminiscent, less philosophically tranquil than those of Gonçalves. Like Gonçalves' prose, however, Fonseca's poetry preserves on the whole a basically Cape Verdean quality, although written in Lisbon where the author, employed as an office clerk, ruminated bitterly on his frustrated ambitions. In *Linha do Horizonte* (On the horizon, 1945), and in scattered poems published in the information bulletin *Cabo Verde* and in the numbers of *Claridade*, Fonseca identifies with the role of the poet as formulated by Jorge Barbosa: the poet as the "Voice of the people", the "Cry of the people". But after careful study of Fonseca's poetry, one cannot but be disappointed. What emerges from his verse is not the cry of the people but the constantly restated theme of the poet's personal frustration, in poetic language which does not have the rhythmic vitality or resonance of Barbosa's. Fonseca personifies his destiny, which becomes a fatal force working relentlessly against him and leading him to total despair. It is to be expected that the theme of escape should suggest itself to Fonseca's poetic imagination, and such is the case in "Cenário" (Setting), "Estiagem" (Drought), and "Canção dos rapazes da ilha" (The song of the boys of the island). Yet, curiously enough, the poet derives some

[22] Manuel Ferreira, "António Aurélio Gonçalves. Esboço de retrato," preface to the second edition of *Pródiga* (Sá da Bandeira: Imbondeiro, 1962).

optimism from the expectation of rain in "Chuva", where there emerges a vague but joyous faith in the future of the archipelago.

The most remarkable aspect of Fonseca's poetry, however, is perhaps his attention to the African strain in Cape Verdean culture, as reflected in a poem like "Magia Negra" (Black magic), in which Fonseca interprets the wind sweeping through the palm trees as the voice of the martyred Negro. In this voice he discovers the vain lamentations of his grandfather and the rhythmic beat of the *batuque*, a popular dance of African origin particularly characteristic of Santiago. The African component of Fonseca's poetry is all the more worthy of appreciation, when one recalls that the whole *Claridade* movement, in its initial phase, was directed to the task of proving the existence of a European substratum in Cape Verdean social and intellectual life. In this process the genuinely African ingredient of the Cape Verdean's make-up was made light of, as much in the review's sociological studies as in its literary content—although, in all fairness to *Claridade*, it must be emphasized that writers like Baltazar Lopes and the ethnologist Félix Monteiro dared at least to entertain the possibility of African elements in Cape Verdean culture. Whatever the case, Fonseca, by his brief but incisive poetic treatment of this ingredient, restores a measure of balance to *Claridade*'s picture of the Cape Verdean.

The African element in Cape Verdean literature can also be studied in the poetry of António Nunes, who, like Aguinaldo Fonseca, was forced to seek his salvation in continental Portugal, only to find there misery and a tragic death from mental illness. Like so many other poets in the islands, Nunes began with a classical phase, publishing in 1938 a book of verse called *Devaneios* (Chimeras), with a preface by none other than the Cape Verdean champion of classicism: José Lopes. But with *Poemas de Longe* (Poems from afar, 1945), and other poems published separately, Nunes revealed an individual, authentic poetic personality grounded in nativism. To be sure, the ever-present theme of escape is to be found in poems like "Baía" (Bay) and "Terra" (Land). Its treatment, however, is entirely original: Nunes inverts the theme, making Cape Verde the destination of the flight rather than the prison from which the poet longs to escape. The inversion is exemplified in a poem like "Poema de Longe", where Nunes turns his inward eye back to the archipelago, just as Barbosa had trained his on Brazil. In the enthusiasm of his vision Nunes reviews folkloric facets of Cape Verdean life in a refreshing manner, divorcing, if only briefly, the folkloric vitality of the Cape Verdean people from the overhanging presence of negative forces such as drought and famine, poverty and isolation.

With "Ritmo de Pilão" (Pestle rhythm) Nunes renders poetically the image of Cape Verdean women at work in the preparation of corn, the staple of their diet. In so doing he succeeds not only in recording faithfully a typical Cape Verdean activity but also in conveying its African base and all of the latter's historical significance, intimating at the same time that a new type of slavery has replaced the old—the oppression of tyrannical nature.

Bate, pilão, bate
que o teu som é o mesmo
e a casa-grande perdeu-se,
o branco deu aos negros cartas de alforria
mas eles ficaram presos à terra por raízes de suor.[23]

Nevertheless, Nunes can find reasons for optimism, as in "Poema de Amanhã" (Poem of tomorrow), where the poet realizes a synthesis of his fervent hope for Cape Verde's future prosperity and his profound sensitivity to the essence of life in the archipelago, as his senses are quickened by the cutting machines, the running water, the smell of molasses, the plants sprouting in a future, prosperous Cape Verde.

The son of Italian parents settled in Cape Verde, and a proud native of São Vicente, Sérgio Frusoni (1901–1975) started writing his Crioulo poetry and dialogues in 1950 but never overcame his excessive modesty to the point of having them published. Consequently, his works remain for the most part unknown to the general public, with the exception of two small poems published in the 1960 number of *Claridade*. Like so many others, Frusoni first swore allegiance to the classical muse: his early poems in Portuguese, poems like "Ânsias" (Desires) and "A joia do Artífice" published in the *Almanach Bertrand* of 1954 and 1955 respectively, are mainly concerned with *eternas belezas*. But with his poems and dialogues in Crioulo, Frusoni shows himself to be as noteworthy an innovator in his domain as Nunes in that of African reminiscence. Beginning his unpublished set of poems on a note of humility, Frusoni asks the reader's permission to pay his debt of nostalgia and love. He ends this introduction (which recalls Barbosa's prefatory remarks) with a dedication of his body and blood to Cape Verde. The poems themselves, written in what Frusoni describes as a simple and colourless but spontaneous and direct style, deal intimately with the problems of the archipelago. In "Serviço de criada não dá tempo para nada" (Servants' work doesn't allow time for anything) Frusoni offers a penetrating glimpse into the existence of the servants of Cape Verde; in "Tudo ficou pago" (Everything's paid up) he reveals how some businessmen demand sexual payment for the housewife's rent arrears; in "Carnaval" the contrast is stressed between the transient gaiety of a feast and the permanent hardship of those who participate in it. Throughout, recalling Cardoso and Tavares, Frusoni accentuates the emotional reaction of the islander to his plight, as witness the pathos of "Carta d'Angola" (Letter from Angola), in which a wife is moved to tears by the written words of a letter from her husband in Angola, words which another must read to her because she is illiterate:

Cá tá fazê nada.
M'crê bêjá sê palavra bêje
M'crê tchôrá na papel de sê carta[24]

[23] "Beat, pestle, beat/for your sound is the same/and the master's home disappeared,/the white man gave liberty to the slaves/but they remained fastened to the land by roots of sweat." From "Ritmo de pilão," *Cabo Verde*, No. 108 (1958).

[24] "It doesn't make any difference. /I want to kiss his old words/ I want to cry on the paper of his letter."

In Frusoni's dialogues the humour is more striking than the melancholy. The mood is often one of satire, as Frusoni pokes fun at the silly acrobatics of Cape Verdean dancers, or the poor English of Cape Verdean emigrants to America who have returned to the islands, or the laziness of a character called Calcera (loafer). This comic spirit, sadly lacking in the bulk of Cape Verdean literature, even permeates Frusoni's nostalgic references to his childhood: in a poem called "Lembro-me" (I remember) he speaks of a time in his youth when São Vicente's public enemy number one was Marcos de nhô Busé, robber of couscous. Finally, whether in a humorous vein or not, Frusoni's works reject the theme of escape. In "Chamada de Mar" (Call of the sea) the poet hears a voice from the sea but it is rather like a *morna antiga* summoning him to Sotavento (the leeward islands of the archipelago). The image of the sea is again contrary to that of the escapists in "Diante de mar de Sanvicênte" (Before the waters of São Vicente). Here Frusoni pities those who did not listen to the sea and went off to foreign lands, as if the sea acted as a rightful barrier to escape.

Frusoni's most impressive feature involves less what he has to say thematically than how he says it stylistically. His greatest contribution is his extensive use of the dialect Crioulo in a brave continuation of the tradition bequeathed to him by Cardoso and Tavares. Whereas his two predecessors had been restricted in their use of the dialect, Frusoni is almost all-embracing in his, treating the sentimental, the realistic, the nostalgic, and the humorous. As Baltazar Lopes proves the linguistic worth of Crioulo by writing *O Dialecto Crioulo de Cabo Verde* (1957), so Frusoni proves the literary value of the dialect through his poems and dialogues. He illustrates in practice what none of the original *Claridosos* had even faintly suggested theoretically in their tracts on literature. In this specific context no Cape Verdean writer can match Frusoni's degree of Cape Verdeanness.

Another unpublished writer of Frusoni's generation whose impact was in a sense even more spectacular was João Cleofas Martins, better known as Djunga. The wit absent from so much of Cape Verdean literature, steeped as that literature was in melancholy, suddenly appeared in Djunga—as did, simultaneously, the politically subversive edge, otherwise unknown, with the exception of a few poems circulated clandestinely in the islands, before the revolutionary publications of the sixties and seventies. Djunga composed a work of prose fiction called *A Roupa do Pipi,*[25] about a native of São Vicente, Pipi, who was afraid of everything, so afraid that at night he would put his clothes under the bed in order not to see them and thus be frightened by them. As one proceeds with the reading of this work, the object of Djunga's satire soon becomes obvious and the key to that satire is clearly seen. Roupa do Pipi is the Portuguese people loyal to Salazar; Pipi himself is the Portuguese dictator. Djunga means to show that Salazar's incessant fear of his people leads to the ruler's ruthless suppression of opposition through the elimination of liberty and justice. A character whose name is Bom Senso (Common Sense) returns from the desert to which he was driven by Pipi and, in conversation with the Roupa do Pipi, expresses astonishment at the annihilation of

[25] *Roupa do Pipi* was broadcast locally in the form of weekly chronicles by Radio Barlavento on São Vicente from 1957 to 1960.

liberty and justice. Djunga's point is to demonstrate how "legislation" has been substituted for justice and how the inflexible regimentation of all administrative activity has only created confusion and driven away otherwise competent and efficient administrators. In this connection Djunga labels as "big children" those people in the "overseas provinces" (primarily Cape Verde, of course) who have tolerated this state of affairs, whereas the true "men" of the society have retired to the desert where they can live free of persecution.

As the theme of *A Roupa do Pipi* is elaborated, therefore, it offers a harsh if amusing criticism of the existing political regime in Portugal and a pessimistic appraisal of the long-range effects of the Salazar dictatorship on the progress of the people over whom he rules. One cannot, as in the case of Frusoni, explain the relative obscurity of the work and its author exclusively by Djunga's excessive modesty. The limited circulation of *A Roupa do Pipi* during the period of Portuguese domination was due largely to official awareness of the explosive nature of its contents. Djunga's story for "big children" is also explosive, however, in a non-political and purely literary sense. It illustrates the successful treatment of sober themes related to life on the islands within the framework of a fantastic tale involving allegorical figures.

Although Guinea-Bissau—"a progénita do infante"—was the first area on the continent to come under Portuguese influence with the arrival of Nuno Tristão in 1445, it remained for a long time "a backwater of Portugal's colonial design."[26] Economic stagnation, perpetuated by military "pacification" campaigns which lasted well into the 1930s made for cultural and political underdevelopment. The climate was not favourable to white settlement, thus preventing extensive cultural contacts. Educational progress was of the slowest: as a result of the 1950 census, it could be stated that "less than two per cent of the population is literate, and government funds for educational facilities and teachers are inadequate. The few Catholic missions have the responsibility for education of the Africans. Some districts are without schools altogether although scattered throughout the territory are some five hundred Muslim elementary (and mainly religious) schools with low standards."[27] It is therefore not surprising that there was almost no creative writing in Portuguese during the period covered by this chapter.[28]

Two salient circumstances must affect any discussion of the literary image of Guinea-Bissau until the late 1950s: the first is the fact that the small territory of 13,948 square miles—bounded by Senegal on the north, Guinea on the east and south, and the Atlantic Ocean—was part of the colonial administration of Cape Verde until 1879: the second is the sense of political and cultural fraternity between the population of the archipelago and the 520,000 inhabitants of Guinea-Bissau, a fraternity which has flourished since the time of the struggle for national independence in both lands. The first—and for more than half a century the only—book published by a native of Guinea was *Literatura dos negros. Contos, cantigas e parábolas* (1900) by Marcelino Marques

[26] James Duffy, *Portugal in Africa* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), p. 37.
[27] Ronald H. Chilcote, *Portuguese Africa* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 85.
[28] See João Tendeiro, "Aspectos marginais da Guiné Portuguesa," *Estudos Ultramarinos*, No. 3 (1959), 93–107.

de Barros (1843–1929). A Catholic priest who collected Mande and Papel folktales and songs as well as poems in Creole, Barros claimed in his preface that he was inspired to publish this primarily ethnological material by the example of the use of Portuguese folktales by the Portuguese novelist José Francisco Trinda de Coelho (1861–1908) in his rural novel *Os meus amores* (1891). In all other respects, however, literary activity in Guinea-Bissau was practised solely by Cape Verdean migrants like Fausto Duarte (1903–1953), a long-time resident of Guinea, who wrote in 1934 the first of four undistinguished novels, *Auá: Novela Negra* (Auá: A black novel). *Auá,* while sympathetically African in tone, contributes little to either the colonialist or the nativistic traditions in narrative prose, having little to recommend it thematically or stylistically. Duarte is perhaps more interesting for his remarks on the Cape Verdean *morna,* which he links with love, illusion, and melancholy in a 20-page essay published the same year as *Auá* and entitled *Da Literatura colonial e da "morna" de Cabo Verde.*[29]

It is significant of the symbiosis imposed upon Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau by historical circumstances that the first clandestine nationalist organization, the Movimento para a Independência Nacional de Guiné Portuguesa, was founded in 1954 by Guinean *and* Cape Verdean commercial and civil service employees, and that it was succeeded in 1956 by the Partido Africano de Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (P.A.I.G.C.);[30] this was headed by Amilcar Cabral (1924–1973), a Cape Verdean agronomist, who had published a few peoms and a short essay on Cape Verdean poetry in the late forties and early fifties.[31] Indeed, the literary output of Guinea-Bissau was so scant that Mário de Andrade's first anthology of black lusophone poetry (1958) included, in the section on Guinea, a poem by a Cape Verdean, Terêncio Anahory (b. 1934): a native of the island of Boa Vista, Anahory did indeed seek his livelihood in Guinea after attending the *liceu* in São Vicente; but his poetic expression remains fundamentally Cape Verdean. It was not until 1963 that the first collection of poetry—Carlos Semedo's *Poemas*—was published by a truly indigenous Guinean writer.

The Gulf of Guinea islands of São Tomé and Príncipe were first reached by the Portuguese in 1471 and later settled by a colonial miscellany of exiles, traders and involuntary converts from Judaism—to which slaves from Angola and Guinea were added in the centuries that followed. But here too there is nothing comparable in abundance and quality to the Cape Verdean literary efforts. The reason for this penury may well have been the peculiar conditions of historical evolution, in which an oppressive plantation economy and a lack of secondary schools militated against the emergence of a sense of cultural or intellectual identity, resulting in a climate inimical to literary creation. Ironically, however, the very inadequacies of these two islands, whose total area is but 372 square miles, created circumstances propitious to the growth of an African self-awareness in a population now numbering 60,000.

[29] Porto: Exposição Colonial Portuguesa, 1934. Duarte's later novels, the main interest of which lies in their attempt to picture the daily lives of the Fulani people are: *O negro sem alma* (Lisbon: Livraria Classica, 1935), *Rumo ao degredo* (Lisbon: Guimarães, 1939) and *A revolta* (Porto: Livraria Latina, 1945).

[30] Chilcote, op. cit., p. 99.

[31] Amílcar Cabral, "Apontamentos sobre a poésia cabo-verdiana," *Cabo Verde,* No. 28 (1952).

It was among a tiny local élite of mulatto landowners, clerks and traders that creative writing arose in the second half of the nineteenth century, with a teacher reared in Lisbon, Francisco Stockler (ca. 1839–1884), some of whose poems were published posthumously in R. Almada Negreiro's *História ethnográphica* (1895). Composed in the local Creole dialect, they are remarkable for the humorous wisdom and self-deprecating irony with which this bohemian poet-philosopher from the tropics envisioned the world and even his own financial difficulties.

The first São Tomé poet of Portuguese expression, Caetano da Costa Alegre (1864–1890), belonged to the same generation as Eugénio Tavares in Cape Verde. The half-caste son of a wealthy landowner, he died of tuberculosis in Lisbon where he had studied medicine. His *Versos* which appeared in 1916, tell of his bitterness and disillusionment at being spurned by white Portuguese women in the "mother country," where he went to live at the age of ten. Although there is some doubt as to whether or not Costa Alegre's lament reflects the true general attitude of Portuguese women at the time or merely the poet's personal amorous misfortunes, there is no doubt that the matter of his black skin is a motive force in his poetry. The expression of this motive force, naturally of interest to students following the evolution of African racial self-awareness, is somewhat muted, however, as it is tempered by the resigned outlook typical of Costa Alegre's generation. Lacking the bite of social protest, these poems also lack the spice of local colour, since they largely unfold against the background of the "metropolitan" atmosphere of Costa Alegre's everyday experience in Portugal, and not in São Tomé.

There are significant differences between Costa Alegre's inspiration and that of the next Santomense writer of some note, another mulatto named João Maria de Fonseca Viana de Almeida (b. 1903), who belonged to the same generation as the early *Claridade* writers. He is said to have been helped and encouraged by one of the younger members of the group, António Aurélio Gonçalves. But whereas there was little sense of racial discrimination in Cape Verdean writings of the thirties, Almeida's *Maiá Pòçon: Contos africanos* (Maria from the city, 1937) illustrates the peculiar problems of the mulatto in São Tomé society, and the meek resignation of Alegre's poetry makes room for mocking irony in Almeida's prose fiction. In these stories Almeida offers a different perspective on the very issue central to Costa Alegre's poetry: white prejudices regarding race and colour. Here the theme of racial self-awareness is etched with more of a biting edge, more rebelliousness. One readily comprehends that Almeida is not of the same generation as the more prudent, more fatalistic Costa Alegre.

Yet the ambiguous status and outlook of the São Tomé mulatto intellectual are best exemplified in the work of Francisco José de Varques Tenreiro (1921–1963),[32] who was hailed as the first articulate exponent of negritude in the Portuguese language. In addition to being a writer, he was also a scholar, geographer, and deputy to the Portuguese National Assembly. His only book of poetry *Ilha do Nome Santo* (Island of the Holy Name, 1942) reveals the influence of the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire and the American poets Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes. Tenreiro calls for a collective

[32] See Maria Manuela Margarido, "De Costa Alegre a Francisco José Tenreiro," *Estudos Ultramarinos*, No. 3 (1959), 93–107.

onslaught against the white man's tyranny, which oppresses black men everywhere. Tenreiro's Panafricanism, which makes him the first and most prominent spokesman for negritude in Afro-Portuguese poetry, is concerned with more than just local colour or skin colour: it is an effort to define and exalt African cultural values in opposition to the arrogance of Western cultural ethnocentrism and its remoteness from the awesome, revitalizing power of nature. The predominant mood of his work is, for the first time in mulatto writing, one of complete identification with Africa and the Negro race.

Ilha de Nome Santo was a landmark in Luso-African poetry. Most earlier African writers in Portuguese had accepted the premise of assimilation, even though they did occasionally satirize the white man's frequent departures from his official purpose, or lament their own estrangement as half-castes or black intellectuals. The *claridosos* had been the first to form a fairly clear notion of their insular identity, their *caboverdeanidade*, but they had not yet begun to evince any sense of solidarity with Africa. Tenreiro's proclaimed devotion to his black mother contained the seeds of an outlook that was to develop during the following decades, both through his increasing awareness of French negritude, and through his own contacts with the Luso-African intelligentsia of the continent. Coming between the *Claridade* movement and the *Mensagem* movement in Angola, Tenreiro's first volume was therefore rightly characterized by Mário António as the second crucial event in the historical evolution of African literature in Portuguese. The widening of his inspiration beyond the narrow confines of insular experience became obvious with the posthumous publication of *Coração em África* (1964) in which he explored the whole range of negritude themes: the negro's close intimacy with nature, his spiritual and sensuous integration in cosmic unity, his unique contribution to world civilization in art and music and many other motifs which were new to Portuguese writing, although they were usually echoes of Senghor and the milder utterances of Césaire.

The frequent note of pride and anger in Tenreiro's poetry seemed likely, at one time, to make him join the ranks of the more rebellious Angolan poets of the fifties. But two years before his death Mário Pinto de Andrade, with whom he had co-edited a slim anthology of black poetry in Portuguese, *Caderno de poesia negra de expressão portuguesa* (1953) was to complain in a French journal that Tenreiro had since relinquished his revolutionary inspiration and was "regrettably supporting Portuguese colonial policy."[33] Alfredo Margarido recalled soon afterwards that Tenreiro, who had spent most of his life in Lisbon, had described himself as a "dark-skinned European" and had echoed the Africans' problems merely out of "spiritual sympathy."[34] Preto-Rodas, too, commented on the discrepancy between the anger in Tenreiro's poetry and his refusal to commit himself to rebellion, whether in his life or in his theoretical writings.[35] In a long essay on black literature published in 1962, Tenreiro had defined negritude as a

[33] Mário de Andrade, "Poètes noirs d'expression portugaise", *Europe*, 39 No. 381 (1961), 3–10.
[34] Alfredo Margarido, "Incidences socio-économiques sur la poésie noire d'expression portugaise," *Diogène*, No. 37 (1961), 65.
[35] Preto-Rodas, op. cit., pp. 4–52.

"humanist philosophy", stressing its more mystical facets, and expressly dissociating himself from the militantly anti-colonial stance of some negritude writers.[36]

Living in Portugal as Costa Alegre had done before him, Tenreiro became increasingly estranged from the concrete realities of his native island, where inhuman working conditions had led to a rebellion of plantation workers in February 1953. The riots were ruthlessly suppressed by the Portuguese police, who killed more than one hundred demonstrators in three days. Younger intellectuals on the island began to turn their attention away from their personal problems as members of the mulatto élite and from the grandiose abstract vistas of negritude, in order to concentrate on the social and economic plight of the black majority thus causing the two islands to join the chorus of protest that was to dominate lusophone writing from Africa for a few years.

[36] Francisco José Tenreiro, "Acerca da literatura negra," *Estrada larga*, 3 (1962), 472–481.

GERALD MOSER

2. ANGOLA

Although literary activity in Angola can be traced back to individuals writing there in Portuguese as early as the seventeenth century, black Africans did not participate in those early efforts. The first decisive event in the setting up of an Angolan literature[37] was the introduction, in 1845, of a government printing press, which led at once to the publication of a journal that was as official as the press itself. This was followed in short order by the publication of books—a volume of poetry (dated 1849, but more likely 1850) and an almanach (1851)—as well as by the appearance of a literary journal, *A Aurora* (1856).

Two major events contributed to creating conditions favourable to literary growth in mid-nineteenth-century Angola. One was the rise to power of a more liberal government in Lisbon in 1834. For the overseas territories, the new leadership planned many enlightened reforms, few of which, admittedly, materialized. All traffic in slaves was officially suppressed in 1836, and soon slavery itself was abolished; while these measures proved largely ineffectual, authorities both in the mother country and in Angola called for a drastic reorganization of the colonial administration. The publication of the *Boletim official* in Luanda in 1845 was one of the consequences. The second event occurred in 1848, when nativistic uprisings among the black population of Pernambuco discouraged prospective Portuguese emigrants from sailing to Brazil. It had been the view of the Portuguese administration in Angola that larger white immigration was necessary to strengthen the economy and accelerate the development of the colony. New settlers began to arrive in 1849 and in the following years, as demobilized soldiers were systematically encouraged to seek their subsistence in Africa. Such steps inevitably led to an increase in the male white population and to a correlative increase in the proportion of mulatto children. When David Livingstone visited Luanda in 1854, "he found the colony decadent, but there seemed to be hope for the future, and he noted a modest spirit of change and progress."[38]

While the vast inland stretches and their native populations remained largely

[37] Apart from the Angolan sections in the general works on Luso-African literature that have been listed earlier, the most rewarding historical surveys of Angolan literature are those of Carlos Ervedosa: *A literatura angolana: Resenha histórica* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1963); *Itinerário de literatura angolana* (Luanda: Culturang, 1972); and *Breve resenha histórica de literatura angolana* (Luanda: University, 1973).

[38] Duffy, *Portugal in Africa*, p. 72.

unaffected, the social composition of the coastal towns was changing as the previously highly mobile elements connected with public administration, justice or commerce, were joined by a mixed flow of adventurers, some of them from Brazil, missionaries, exiles, demobilized soldiers and new settlers intending to stay permanently in Africa. Then it was that such coastal settlements as Luanda or Benguela truly became, in Mário António's phrase, "creole islands":[39] the scarcity of white women made it necessary for many settlers to set up hybrid families, thus shaping, in the words of Carlos Ervedosa, "a society in which the mulatto element was preponderant at the end of the century".[40] A number of these *mestiços* were brought up in European fashion in spite of the shortcomings of the educational system.

While the *Boletim Official* is known to have contained some poetry and prose sketches (still to be examined critically), one can be sure that they were written in standard Portuguese by people who considered African society backward, if not downright barbaric. At most they could express imperial, instead of narrowly European feelings, being in constant touch not only with Lisbon but with the other far-flung African possessions and certainly with Brazil, Angola's partner in the slave trade as in other branches of commerce.

Nevertheless, from the middle of the last century on, Angolan themes began to inspire a few writers to compose something more than satires or eulogies of the establishment, even though Angola remained on the outer fringe of a Portuguese literature that stagnated until after 1870 when Eça de Queiroz and his contemporaries breathed a little new life into it. For example, a minor Angolan government clerk from the old, fever-ridden port of Benguela in southern Angola, José da Silva Ferreira Maia, is credited with the very first book of poetry ever published in Portuguese Africa: *Espontaneidades da minha alma* (My soul's spontaneous outpourings). The title-page bears the date 1849, but it is likely that the actual date of publication was 1850 since the work contains a poem referring to an anniversary falling in that year. Dedicated to "African ladies", the poet's mother among them, the book, one is tempted to conclude, must have been written by one of African descent. Nothing in the text either confirms or contradicts such a guess. Filial love for little Benguela inspires some verses. Only one poem mentions the black tribes, in the picturesque fashion of late Romantic poetry. The tender or pious verses that fill most pages betray an education received in Portugal, as well as contemporary Brazilian models.

Like other Portuguese colonials across the continents, from the Americas to East Asia, Maia contributed to the pages of an annual that was open to any amateur, particularly to the lover of poetic charades. This annual, *(Novo) Almanach (Luzo-Brazileiro) de Lembranças* was published in Lisbon from 1850 on. Original signed contributions did not appear in it until Vol. IV (1854), and Angolans began to write for it in Vol. VII (1857). The annual gives some idea of what were the prevailing tastes among the small literate class, chiefly made up of Portuguese officials, who considered Africa an

[39] On this topic, see the title essay in Mário António, *Luanda, "Ilha" crioula* (Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1968). A French version, *Luanda, île créole*, was issued at the same time.

[40] Ervedosa, *A literatura angolana*.

exile. At most, they wrote sketches of manners or descriptions of places in a ponderous style, or else light verse, frequently in praise of dusky and perhaps unexpectedly coy beauties, with eyes

> às vezes feros, irados,
> outras meigos, divinais;
> como os brilhos prateados
> destas noites tropicais.[41]

Besides Portuguese colonials, such as judge João Cândido Furtado (1820–1905), with poems from 1857 on, several Angolan *mestiços* were contributors, for example a dean of the cathedral of Luanda, António José do Nascimento (1838–1902), whose sketches of native customs appeared from 1869 on, the journalist João Feliciano Pedreneira, represented from 1860 on with geographical descriptions, or beginning in 1879, the learned lumber dealer and poet Joaquim Dias Cordeiro da Mata. Local colour was heightened through the use of expressions and entire verse lines in the Kimbundu language, put into the mouths of black girls, as in Mata's poem "Kicôla!", in the *Almanach* for 1888.[42] Eduardo Neves (1854–1899), a Portuguese book-keeper with a poetic vein, had done so in 1880 already, in his poem "Num batuque" (During a dance). "Tribal legends" and sketches of African customs were frequently published. Their early model was a legend in verse about a zombie, *Juca, a matumbola* (1865), composed by Ernesto Marecos (1836–1879), a minor Portuguese Romantic. Marecos spent many years in Angola, where he was one of the founders of *A Aurora*. Other examples of the genre were Pedro Félix Machado's novel *Scenas d'Africa* (Scenes from Africa, 1880) and a prose tale by the lawyer-journalist Alfredo Troni (1845–1904) *Nga Mutúri* (The widow lady, 1882), dealing with funerals in old Luanda and with the African mistresses of Portuguese traders.

By far the most remarkable figure among those forerunners was Joaquim Dias Cordeiro da Mata (1857–1894).[43] He began by writing poetry, publishing verse from 1875 on, and in 1889 he was able to get a book of poems published under the title *Delírios* (Ravings).[44] The rest of his short life was dedicated to philological, historical and folklore studies and writings. Unfortunately his prose fiction seems to have perished with

[41] "Now fierce and angry, / now soft, divine; / like the silvery glimmers / in these tropical nights": Alvares Paes, "Africana," *Almanach Luzo-Brazileiro de Lembranças*, (1881), 180. On this publication, see Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira, "Colaborações Angolanas no *Almanach de Lembranças*, 1851–1900," *Boletim do Instituto de Investigação Cientifica de Angola*, 3, 1 (1966), 75–85.

[42] Paradoxically, this first generation of writers, which appeared on the scene about 1880 in Luanda, was for a long time the only one to write both in Kimbundu and Portuguese. It is true that excepting a few folklorists such as Cordeiro da Mata, Luís Bastos and the Swiss missionary Héli Chatelain, no one entertained the idea of writing in Angola's vernaculars: the colonizers insisted on assimilation as the goal of their few schools, and only Portuguese was to be taught and used, even though the groundwork for vernacular writing had been laid centuries earlier by the first Catholic missionaries. It was not until a few years before the colonies gained their independence that serious attempts were made at creative writing in Kimbundu.

[43] See Mário António, *A sociedade angolana do fim do século XIX e um seu escritor* (Luanda: Nós, 1961), and "Para uma perspectiva crioula da literatura angolana: *O Repositorio de Coisas Angolenses* de J. D. Cordeiro da Matta," *Cadernos Gil Vicente*, 25 (1974), 59–73.

[44] The date 1889 is given in *A sociedade angolana* by Mário António who, however, had not been able to locate any copy of the book. Another date, 1887, is given in Leonel Cosme's catalogue to the *Primeira exposição de bibliografia angolana* (Sá de Bandeira: Camara Municipal, 1962), p. 65.

him. In his poetry he did not achieve originality, and his verses lack polish. Even so, strong, sincere emotions speak through his best poems, as through his other surviving writings.

The period culminated in a contribution to the debate among Europeans about the intellectual capacities of the "black race," which most assumed to be obviously inferior to their own. Flying into the face of prejudiced opinions, António Francisco Nogueira wrote *A raça negra sob o ponto de vista da civilisação da Africa* (The black race from the viewpoint of African civilization, Lisbon, 1880). He was a Portuguese who had been in business in southern Angola for a dozen years. In his book he not only documented the mental abilities of black people but challenged his countrymen to do everything in their power to provide them with schools so as to make of the Africans partners in the development of Angola. "My experience of twenty-five years in Africa," he writes in the preface (p. 7), "has taught me that the Negro is not the utterly inferior being we suppose him to be. If he needs our help, his help is no less useful to us in order to develop our colonies."

Mata was only one among dozens of talented young Africans who had received some education in newly opened schools. The granting of the freedom of the press (1856) had combined with the abolition of the slave trade (finally in 1876) to remove serious obstacles to the formation of a more settled literate and multi-racial society. The intellectual development of a black and *mestiço* élite was assured when schools were opened by educators that had confidence in native ability and some respect for the cultural traditions of Africa. A Catholic seminary began to train African clergy in Luanda in 1861. Father António Barroso created a Catholic school system from 1881 on, with São Salvador in the North as the centre. And in 1878, English Baptists established their mission schools in the North, followed in 1880 by American Presbyterians and in 1884 by American Methodists in the south-central highlands. These widening educational opportunities coincided with a surge in exploration, including intensive ethnological and linguistic studies in preparation for effective territorial occupation. The Portuguese had to defend their "civilizing action" against powerful European rivals, whose hypocrisy was painfully felt in 1890, when Cecil Rhodes and Her Majesty's Government in London threatened Portugal with an ultimatum to stop it from further expansion in southern Africa.

Thus, pressure from the outside provided the native Angolans, particularly the assimilated *(civilizados) mestiços* with their first chance to call for reforms, including political autonomy. The literature they produced took the form of political journalism. Contributors were recruited from the fairly numerous urban middle class of black and mixed families, closely associated with the then very small group of European settlers, many of whom had African mistresses or wives. For a short period lasting roughly from 1880 to 1910, autochthonous men of letters emerged in Angola as well as on the islands of São Tomé and Cape Verde. They were eager to contribute by means of their writings to the social advance of this African middle class in the towns, particularly in Luanda. They were given encouragement by members of the clergy, such as Dean Nascimento and especially Héli Chatelain (1859–1908), a Swiss Protestant missionary familiar with

Kimbundu folklore and the Kimbundu and Umbundu languages. The introduction to Mata's book of Kimbundu proverbs, *Filosofia popular* (1891), contains under the significant heading "Angola's need for a literature of her own", the transcription of an important letter from Chatelain, where the missionary called on Mata and others—Neto (Alfredo de Sousa Neto), Lino (Lino M. de Sousa Araújo, Director of *O Cruzeiro do Sul*, Luanda, 1873—1878 [?]), Pinho (João Ignácio do Pinho, a Kimbundu scholar) and Luís Bastos (Luís Moreira Bastos?)—to collaborate in developing the nascent Angolan literature. But with the exception of Mata, the Africans preferred to struggle for reforms as journalists instead of engaging in creative literature. No doubt they reached a wider public in so doing, and at any rate this trend ushered in a new phase in the literary evolution of the country, a phase characterized by intense journalistic activity.

The newspapers of the republican opposition, such as *O Cruzeiro do Sul* (The Southern Cross) opened their columns to those ambitious young Africans. In the wake of *O Echo de Angola* (Luanda, 1881–1882) a bevy of small journals were started by African editors. Bold ideas, including independence through foreign intervention if need be, were advocated by the lawyer José de Fontes Pereira (1823–1891). The *mestiço* son of a banished Portuguese baker, Pereira had his own mouthpiece, *O Futuro d'Angola* (founded in 1882). He was supported by Dean António José de Nascimento, whose protest writings formed the centrepiece of a book written by several Angolans who had been stung to the quick by a racist article which had appeared in a Luanda newspaper. The biblical title of their book, *Voz d'Angola clamando no deserto* (The voice of Angola crying in the wilderness, Lisbon, 1901) conjured a vision of prophets to whom the Portuguese were not listening. Another *mestiço*, the government official António Joaquim de Miranda (b. 1864) took up the challenge in his periodical *O Apostolado do Bem* (The Good Cause, 1910), founded a mutual society for popular education (1911), and for his pains, was transferred to an obscure post in the backlands. Among the last flickerings of a self-supporting African press were two attempts to create cultural reviews: *Ensaios Literários* (Literary Essays, 1901) was edited by the historian Francisco Castelbranco; *Luz e Crença: Propaganda Literária* (Light and Belief: Diffusion of Literary Enlightenment, 1902–1903) was edited by Pedro da Paixão Franco (ca. 1869–1911) a railway clerk and journalist, who was poisoned by fellow Africans whom he had pilloried in his polemical book *História de uma traição* (History of a betrayal, Porto, 1911).[45]

Both reviews died after one or two issues. A few writers—Augusto Bastos, António de Assis Júnior, Domingos Van-Dúnem—continued to publish elsewhere, but they were isolated and eventually fell silent. Thus the great expectations—which had been kindled in the last decades of the century by educational improvements and a modicum of political liberalization, and which had been further stirred by anti-monarchic agitation emanating from Portugal under the aegis of popular poets—were short-lived. When the house of Braganza lost its throne in 1910, the few civil liberties were soon replaced by military dictatorship while compulsory labour became the rule. The policy of assimila-

[45] Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira, "Para uma perspective crioula da literatura angolana: *Historia de uma traição*." *Ocidente*, 82 (1972), 250–256. On this period, see Julio de Castro Lopo, *Jornalismo de Angola* (Luanda: Centro de Informação e Turismo de Angola, 1964).

tion was so tightened up that it excluded an even larger number of mixed and black Angolans from cultural as well as political life. As a result, a new wave of colonial literature swept over Angola.

The fading out of the African press, from the turn of the century onwards, may have been related to the influx of Portuguese who arrived by the thousands after the "pacification" of the country, when the last independent tribes had been subdued by force of arms. This occurred during and shortly after World War I. What African writing there was lost its journalistic, polemic, autonomist punch. Even before the end of the war, the African middle class had lost all hope of reforms. On the contrary, the Republic established in 1910, from which so much had been expected, sapped the economic basis of the Africans by confiscating land and raising qualification requirements for government jobs without providing enough schools. The shrinking process was alluded to with bitterness by Mário António, a later member of that middle class, when he underscored the importance of studying "the general decay" of this social group, "beginning with its *élites*, and of its forms of expression (journalism, creative writing)". The decay, he pointed out, had been rapid, "so much so that within not much more than half a century, little was left of what must have been a shining example of a Portuguese community in the tropics."[46]

The poet Viriato da Cruz was later to offer a prototype of the once prosperous African bourgeoisie in old "Sô Santo" (Mistah Santo):

> Quando Sô Santo morrer,
> Vamos chamar um Kimbanda
> Para Ngombo nos dizer
> Se ele é o símbolo da Raça
> Ou a vingança de Sandu.[47]

Less known is the character of the *mestiço* trader "Joe", representing the same displaced group in Benguela, who appears in António de Aguilar's posthumously published novel *Funantes* (Backland traders, Braga, 1969). Joe asks his Portuguese visitors: "Why is it that nowadays natives no longer are promoted to governorships, city council memberships, and other positions of command?" (p. 213).

Loss of status induced a melancholy tendency to look back which is strikingly apparent in works that appeared after 1917. For example, in every one of the five traditional "Angolan tales", published in the *Novo Almanach Luso-Brasileiro de Lembranças* between 1918 and 1926, Domingos Van-Dúnem deals with people that were losers, whereas an earlier one published in 1913, had told a story of successful vengeance.

[46] "O processo de decadência geral de um grupo social, começando pelas suas *élites*, e das formas porque se expressou (no jornalismo, na criação literaria), a ponto de, pouco mais de meio século volvido, quase nada restar do que deve ser tido um dos exemplos mais brilhantes de sociedade luso-tropical de todo o chamado 'mundo que o Português criou'" Mário António, A *sociedade angolana*, p. 58.

[47] Viriato da Cruz, *Colectânea de poemas, 1947–1950* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961): "When Mistah Santo dies, / We're going to call a Conjurer / To make the Truthful One tell us /... If he is the symbol of our Race / or if the White Spirit revenged himself."

The portrayal of Angolan society as it had been at the turn of the century provided the background for *O segredo da morte* (The dead girl's secret), the only novel of a black lawyer, António de Assis Júnior (1878–1960). First issued serially in a Luanda journal in 1929, it appeared in book form in 1934. The central character is a black girl whose two names, Elmira and Capaxi, are symbolic of cultural duality. On the one hand, she was born in Dondo—with Ambaca, one of the "creole islands" whose most accomplished example was Luanda,—under the influence and protection of the local sea and river gods; on the other hand, she is dedicated by her mother to the Virgin Mary. In spite of her attachment to the traditional world-view, she exhibits an unusual spirit of entrepreneurship in various business ventures. With a beginner's awkwardness, Assis Júnior has his protagonist go insane after contracting the sleeping sickness. In spite of its clumsy style and plotting, *O segredo da morte* provides a detailed and impressively realistic description of a mixed society, where, for example, native funeral rites are integrated into Catholic ceremonies, and where an elementary barter economy subject to the vagaries of rainfall subsists while the first railroad is being built. It was also the first Luso-African novel to focus attention squarely on the psychological and social aspects of acculturation, emphasizing not only the duality of traditional and modern, but also the contradiction between the two religions—that of Christ and that of Mammon—brought by the conquerors. This seems to be what the author wished to convey in perhaps deliberately obscure fashion in his preface, when he wrote: "The Angolan's life which civilization has not totally obliterated—that civilization which is imposed rather through compulsion and fear than through persuasion and reasoning, upon him who is living after his fashion and educating himself as far as his means allow—that life represents a problem today for which there is no easy solution."

Both the preface and the pathetic ending of the novel—which was written after the author had been exiled to Portugal for publishing a pamphlet against the ruthless suppression of the peasant revolt of 1917—are indications that although the novelist was an *assimilado* and for a while taught Kimbundu at the Instituto Superior de Estudos Ultramarinos, he did not share the roseate view of assimilation put forward by official Portuguese propaganda. A nostalgic idealization of past expectations was to remain a continuous trend in the work of later writers, such as Óscar Ribas or Geraldo Bessa Victor.

In Benguela, Augusto Bastos (1872–1936),[48] a self-taught book-keeper, sought escape in the writing of detective stories and of a series of tropical adventures under the general title *A vida nas selvas, colecção romântico-histórica* (Life in the jungles, a collection of historical romances). The first novel in the series was issued in 1917 as the first volume of prose fiction to be published in Angola. Bastos also wrote on philology, ethnography and history. Like many other prominent *mestiços*, Assis Júnior and Domingos Van-Duném among them, Bastos was arrested in 1917: too well-known as a journalist and a lecturer of liberal ideas, he was falsely accused of fomenting a nativist revolution.

[48] See Geraldo Bessa Victor, *Intellectuais angolenses dos séculos XIX e XX: 1. Augusto Bastos* (Lisbon: Author, 1975).

The following generations were co-opted into assimilating the Lisbonese ideology of a centralized Christian empire inspired by the unique colonizing genius of Portugal. In the process, the writers were alienated from Angolan aspirations. The most promising ones, such as Victor and, more recently, Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira, were lured to Lisbon and never lived anywhere else after that.

While Assis Júnior's novel was a belated product of the generation that had ensured the short-lived flowering of Luanda journalism at the turn of the century, the earliest representative of the next generation was Óscar Bento Ribas (b. 1909),[49] a mulatto of uncommonly precocious ability, who attended the *Liceo de Salvador Correia* in Luanda, and had published two short novellas by the time he was twenty: *Nuvens que passam* (Passing clouds, 1927) and *O resgate duma falta* (Ransom for a fault, 1929). Aged 21, he was struck with blindness and, although he went on with writing and folklore research, he did not publish anything significant for the next two decades. *Flores e espinhos* (Flowers and thorns, 1948), a collection of poetry, essays and short stories, was followed by a novel, *Uango-feitiço* (The evil spell, 1951), which had been started before 1934. Subtitled "An Angolan Folklore Novel," it is based on what the writer had been told by his family and friends. It was intended as a "documentário da sociedade negra inculta", a documented narrative of black illiterate society, i.e. the native black people of Luanda; and the main plot and its episodes were placed back in the year 1882, when the city was smaller and more homogeneous, containing a proportionately numerous and secure African lower middle class, whose way of life had as yet been barely modified by urban Portuguese civilization. Part of the interest of the work, and especially of the enlarged second edition (Luanda, 1969), lies in the fact that numerous anecdotes and folk stories are fitted into the plot. Ribas was thus trying to preserve a valuable traditional art form within the alien form of the Western-type novel. His *Ecos da minha terra* (Echoes of my land, 1952) is a collection of short stories which dispenses with a novelistic plot altogether. One of the stories is an African version of the fairy-tale situation of the poor but resourceful young man winning the hand of a princess; elsewhere, Ribas impartially exposes the joint barbarism of fetish-cults and of slavery; or he analyses the pathetic but common situation of the black girl who is sold out by her family and despised by the white man. One of the stories, "A praga" (The curse) earned the author the Margaret Wrong prize of the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa in 1952. It is perhaps significant, however, that after this Óscar Ribas devoted most of his scholarship and talent to anthropological, linguistic and folklore research rather than to creative writing: *Ilundo* (1958) is a study of Angolan religious beliefs and rites; the three volumes of *Missosso* (1961–64) contain an impressive collection of folktales, proverbs, laments and other types of oral art; *Sunguilando* (1967), is a further collection of folk stories.

Apart from Óscar Ribas, the only native writer born during the first two decades

[49] For Ribas' influence on the introduction of traditional techniques into modern prose narrative in Angola, see Gerald M. Moser, "Oral Traditions in Angolan Story Writing," *World Literature Today*, (1979), 40–45.

of the century was Geraldo Bessa Victor (b. 1917),[50] who studied in Portugal where he spent the greater part of his life as a lawyer. He did not embark on his literary career until the early forties. His *Ecos dispersos* (Dispersed echoes, Lisbon, 1941) has since been described by Mário António, another Angolan author living in Portugal, as "echoes of his readings of continental Portuguese literature, then completely out of fashion". Though his next collection, *Ao som das marimbas* (1943) had, in the words of Ervedosa, "all the defects characteristic of an inexperienced writer often resorting to facile exoticism", it carried the promise of a genuine africanization of Portuguese poetry. But after settling in Portugal in 1946, the poet temporarily relinquished his African inspiration in *Debaixo do céu* (1949) in which he expressed his feelings as an exile in an alien world. The essays in *Minha terra e minha dama* (My land and my lady, 1952), significantly stressed the need for "an imperial Portuguese consciousness," and the importance, for writers from the African "provinces", to look towards Brazilian literature for "a lesson without which a true African poetry will never come into being." True African poetry, he added, can only be created by "a son of Portuguese Africa—preferably with some negro blood running in his veins—who has consciously assimilated European culture, without, however, allowing it to subordinate his African personality." The noted Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira wrote an encomiastic preface for the Angolan's next volume of poetry, *Cubata abandonada* (Abandoned hut, 1958), which was to prove mildly controversial: Portuguese critic Amândio César, writing in *Ultramar* (1962), asserted that the poet had outgrown the mystical sensuality of his previous two volumes to create "a new aesthetic in an African literature," a genuine African form of the *saudosismo* which had animated Portuguese poetry during the second decade of the century; but Carlos Ervedosa described *Cubata abondonada* as "a mediocre book devoid of any value whatsoever in spite of the fact that it was awarded the Camilho Pessanha prize by the Agência Geral do Ultramar." After another volume of poetry, *Mucanda* (Letter, 1964), Victor turned to prose fiction and published eight short stories in *Sanzala sem batuque* (Village without batuque, 1967), which reverts, to some extent, to the social inspiration of Assis Júnior and Óscar Ribas, and focuses on the problems of present-day society in Portuguese Africa.

Throughout the thirties and forties, literary life in Angola was marked by the activity of a number of so-called "colonial writers", nearly all of whom were born and raised in Europe. They premised their work on the assumption that Angola would become more and more like Portugal. They glorified the pioneering first settlers—bush traders or planters—while describing the natives' life as picturesquely exotic but hopelessly barbaric. They could not help seeing the African from the outside. Typical of their outlook was fiction which became popular in Portugal, such as the stories in *Feitiços* (Magic spells, Lisbon, 1935) by Guilhermina de Azeredo (b. 1894) or the novel of Ferreira da Costa (b. 1907) *Na pista do marfim e da morte* (On the track of ivory and death—Lisbon, 1944).

In a few minds, however, the notion of a civilizing mission combined with a sense

[50] A. Alvaro Dória, "Um poema da negritude," *Cadernos Gil Vicente*, 17 (1966), 119–129; Donald Burness, "Geraldo Bessa Victor and the Voice of a Gentle Negritude," in his *Fire* (1977), pp. 35–54.

of indignation and shame because of abuses, such as forced or contract labor. Among them were prose writers who went into political opposition as the colonial regime hardened under the long Salazar dictatorship. Thus, Augusto Casimiro (1889–1967) wrote *Nova largada* (A new departure, 1929), and Henrique Galvão (1895–1970) *O velo d'oiro* (The golden fleece, 1931); above all, Fernando Castro Soromenho (1910–1968) produced two novels that were his masterpieces, *Terra morta* (Dead land, 1949) and *Viragem* (The turn, 1957). Drawing on historical accounts and his own experience of life in the interior of north-eastern Angola to trace the changes in the relations between the blacks and the whites during the early part of this century, Soromenho indicted the dehumanizing effects of colonialism on colonizers and colonized alike. Soromenho had started out as a labour-recruiting district official, writing exotic, ethnographic articles for *O Mundo Português* of Lisbon from 1936 on. But he changed radically, for he possessed the imagination, power of observation, growing experience and skill to put himself into the position of the African people. He adopted their point of view in his fiction.[51]

In poetry, one figure dominated colonial writing, Tomás Vieira da Cruz (1900–1960). He came to Angola as a young man, stayed on, married a *mestiço* girl, and celebrated her, her people and her land in melodious, sentimental poems which became popular in the colony. A first collection titled *Quissange, saudade negra* (Thumb piano, black nostalgia, 1932) was followed by two more. In all honesty, he admitted that in spite of his empathy, he would never feel other than an exile, an outsider.

The limitations of this colonial literature were clearly perceived at the time by F. Morais Sarmento in his essay "Literature sem ambiente" (A literature in the void):

> Our poets and prose writers, today the same as yesterday, have so far been influenced more by ideas and subjects from the outside, which they have carried over into our literary milieu, than they have been imbued with a colonial *[sic]*, clearly Angolan nationalism, in the psychological and social, geographical and anthropological sense. ... The characters which appear in this literature are Blacks, Mulattoes and Colonists only because [we are told that] there are such people in Angola, and never because they convince us by their reactions to local problems.[52]

It took the defeat of the Axis powers at the end of World War II to weaken the grip of the Portuguese regime temporarily. In the late 1940s, the African push for self-determination was renewed and achieved successes which it had been denied after World War I. The Angolan movement for autonomy and eventual independence in all fields was resurrected, this time with the support of leftist movements, including well-

[51] Franco Nogueira, "Castro Soromenho, romancista da África negra," in his *Jornal de crítica literária* (Lisbon: Livraria Portugália, n. d. [1954]); Alfredo Margarido, "Castro Soromenho, romantista angolano," *Estudos Ultramarinos*, 3 (1959), 125–139; Roger Bastide, *L'Afrique dans l'œuvre de Castro Soromenho* (Paris: Oswald, 1960); Gerald M. Moser "Castro Soromenho, an Angolan Realist," *Africa Today*, 15, 6 (1968–1969), 20–24; revised version in his *Essays in Portuguese-African Literature* (1969), pp. 42–60; Alexandre Pinheiro Torres, "O processo da marginalização do mulato na trilogia de Camaxilo de Castro Soromenho," *África*, 1,1 (1978), 5–10.

[52] *A Província de Angola*, Sunday supplement, 268 (1941), quoted in Ervedosa, *Itinerário da literatura angolana*, pp. 65–66.

organized Communist intellectuals from within Europe. Even before students from the various African colonies, whites born in Africa as well as non-white Africans, went to study at Portuguese universities and came into direct contact with each other there, the new generation began its search in Angola for national expression and assertion. It could not engage in political activity, but it was free to express its feelings indirectly through literature, especially through poetry. Young Angolan intellectuals familiarized themselves at home with the *négritude* ideology, the neo-realistic writings of North-east Brazil, the experimentalism of the Brazilian modernists, and the cultural awakening in the Cape Verde islands, one and all products of the era between the two wars with an African ingredient.

In 1947–1948, a few budding writers formed the first native literary movement that Angola had known, the Movimento dos Jovens Intelectuais (Movement of Young Intellectuals), which raised the battle cry "Vamos descobrir Angola!" (Let's discover Angola!). Its purpose, as defined by Viriato da Cruz (1928–1973) was both educational —to instruct the Angolan people in the history, geography and folklore of their own country—and literary: "to recapture the fighting spirit of the African writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries," in reaction against "exaggerated respect for the values of western culture," and with a view to promoting "the expression of popular concerns and of genuine African nature, without any concession to colonial exoticism." Under the sponsorship of a brand new organization, the Associação dos Naturais de Angola, these young writers published the first anthology of Angolan poetry, *Antologia dos novos poetas de Angola* (Luanda, n.d. [1950?]) presenting in it "the work due to the indomitable will of a few."[53] With the same sponsor, they also issued a journal, *Mensagem* (The Message, Luanda, 1951–1952), in the fervent hope that it would "mark the beginning of a New Culture, of and for Angola, fundamentally Angolan, being constructed by the youth of our country."[54] *Mensagem* was banned after its second issue, but it had managed to print contributions by a number of Angolan writers who were later to achieve some fame. The three key figures were Agostinho Neto (1922–1979), Viriato da Cruz and Mário Pinto de Andrade (b. 1928) who were to become the leaders of the Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola (MPLA) from its foundation in 1956 until it seized power in 1976. But the diversity of talent and outlook in *Mensagem* was illustrated in contributions by such personalities as the woman journalist Lília de Fonseca (b. 1916), Alexandre Dáskalos (1924–1961), Tomás Jorge Vieira da Cruz (b. 1929), the mulatto son of the elder poet, António Cardoso (b. 1935) and Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira (b. 1934). Most of these belonged to the mulatto élite of urban *assimilados*. Some were university graduates. As a group, they were more compact, better educated, and had a more cosmopolitan outlook, a more acute political consciousness, than their elders.

The suppression of *A Mensagem* launched a new phase in the literary and political growth of Angola. The more radical among those young intellectuals found themselves

[53] Translated from the "Pórtico" as quoted in Manuel Ferreira's anthology of Luso-African poetry, *No reino de Caliban*, Vol. 2 (Lisbon: Seara Nova, 1976), p. 62.
[54] Ibid., p. 91.

deprived of any legal forum for their progressive ideas. Consequently, in 1953, Viriato da Cruz founded the Partido da Luta Unida dos Africanos de Angola, which has been described as "the first revolutionary political party which planned to operate as an illegal mass organisation." But literary activity—even if confined within certain ideological limits—was not stopped altogether. On the contrary, there were indications that Angola, although its literary flowering came later than that of Cape Verde, was on its way to become a centre for twofold literary collaboration: between black and white, and between like-minded intellectuals from all parts of Portuguese Africa. This is symbolized in the career of Orlando de Albuquerque (b. 1925), a white medical doctor born in Mozambique, who went to live and practise in Angola. His first book, *Batuque negro* (Black dance, 1947), was confiscated. His wife, Alda Lara (1930–1962), was also a physician and a poet, who used the symbols of Mother Africa and of young blacks and whites marching together. Her brother Ernesto Lara Filho (1932–1977), whose collection of poetry, *Picada de Marimbondo* (The sting of Marimbondo, 1961) was published in Angola, had written in 1952: "Eu gostava de ser negro. E sou sincero" (I would like to be a black. Honest, I would.) Black and white Angolan-born poets joined in dreaming of a free, brotherly human community. They symbolized it in poetic images of colour-blind childhood, as they had known it. There were António Cardoso and António Jacinto (b. 1924), the white militant whose poems told of solidarity with all of the poor in Angola:

O meu poema anda na praça trabalha na cozinha
vai à oficina
enche a taberna e a cadeia
é pobre roto e sujo ...
Mas o méu poema não é fatalista
o meu poema
é um poema que já quer
e já sabe.[55]

In the literary field, the most impressive *local* achievement of this new generation was the creation in 1960 of a collection published in the Angolan upland town of Sá da Bandeira under the imprint "Imbondeiro", that is, "baobab". At the time, this was the most important publishing firm on African soil between the Mediterranean and the Union (soon to become the Republic) of South Africa. Orlando de Albuquerque was closely involved in this new venture, which had the same multi-racial character as the literary-political movements of the late forties. Indeed, it was in the Colecção Imbondeiro that several of the *Mensagem* writers first appeared in book form, as witness Lília de Fonseca's stories in *Filha de Branco* (White man's daughter, 1960) the *Poemas e canto miúdo* (Poems and a small song, 1960) and the story *Gente para romance* (People for a

[55] "My poem moves in the market place works in the kitchen / goes to the workshop / fills the café and the jail / is poor ragged and dirty /.... / But my poem is not fatalistic / my poem sure wants / and sure knows": António Jacinto, "Poema da alienação" in *Colectânea de poemas* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961), p. 41.

novel, 1961) by Mário António [Fernandes de Oliveira], António Cardoso's *São Paulo* (1961), the poems in *Areal* (Sand Dune, 1961) by Tomás Jorge [Vieira da Cruz].

But Imbondeiro also launched a number of new Angolan writers, such as [José Esteves] Rebello de Andrade (b. 1935) with his story *Um grito da noite* (A shout in the night, 1960), Benúdia (pseudonym of Mário Lopes Guerra, b. 1939), whose *Dumba e a bangala* was printed in 1960 together with Cardoso's *São Paulo, Uíge* by Arnaldo Santos (b. 1936) and, more important, Luandino Vieira's *Primeira canção de mar* (First song of the sea). Reviewing the Imbondeiro anthology of Angolan tales, *Contos d'Africa* (1961), Amândio César sarcastically observed that of the eleven contributors five were born in Portugal, and revealingly noted that "the low level of the stories [was] intentionally worsened by the systematic motif of the black that almost always encounters in open antagonism the white man who ill-treats him or exploits him like a beast of burden for his own needs, or releases his violent instincts upon him."[56]

This was simply an orthodox commentator's response to an unorthodox fact: the Imbondeiro publications provided evidence that ideological divisions could run across racial categories, that if there were *assimilados* among black and mulatto writers, there were on the other hand white authors who had identified with Africa as completely as was conceivable. This is symbolized in the career and inspiration of two authors belonging to the same generation: mulatto poet and critic Mário António, and white prose writer José Vieira Mateus da Graça (b. 1935), better known as Luandino Vieira, a pseudonym which he chose no doubt to show his attachment to Luanda, the city where he grew up, having been taken there as a small child from his native Portugal.

A meteorologist by training, Mário António was the most esteemed of the non-committed writers, even though he was detained for some time in 1959 as a "threat to inner peace and the unity of the nation."[57] As a scholar who taught African languages in Lisbon, where he spent a considerable part of his life, he has written abundantly on the cultural and literary history of Angola. His deeply lyrical temperament has kept him aloof from the political struggle. Even negritude appears only as a subordinate motif in his many collections of verse—*Poésias* (1956); *Amor* (1960); *Poemas e canto miúdo* (1961); *100 poemas* (1963); *Era: Tempo de poesia* (1966); *Rosto de Europa,* (Face of Europe, 1968); etc.—of short stories—*Crónica da cita estranha* (Chronicle of a strange city, 1964); *Farra no fim da semana,* (Week-end spree, 1965)—and of folktales (*Mahezu: Tradicões angolanes,* 1966). Although António's scholarly writings seem to evince some belief in the literary unity of the Portuguese-speaking world, he can by no means be considered a whole-hearted adherent of *lusotropicalismo.* Much of his poetry implies, in elegiac or sarcastic tones, that miscegenation and cultural assimilation have meant spiritual loss for the black man who has forfeited his original animistic companionship with nature. Nor are the themes of slavery and economic exploitation absent from António's verse, the bulk of which, however, is in the Western tradition of lyrical self-exploration. While Portuguese critic Amândio César has hailed António as "one of

[56] Amândio César, *Parágrafos de literatura ultramarina* (Lisbon: Sociedade de expansão cultural, 1967), p. 135.

[57] Jahn, *Who's Who in African Literature,* p. 42. On António's poems and short stories, see Donald Burness, "Mário António and the Face of Europe," in his *Fire* (1977), pp. 55–73.

the purest voices in Portuguese poetry today", Mário de Andrade has classified him as a "Lisbon esthete" who, like Bessa Victor, has opposed the deeper aspirations of his own people. Such partisan criticism is understandable but does not detract from the exceptional value of António's work. One of his latest volumes of verse, *Coração transplantado* (Transplanted heart, 1970), includes four poems in Kimbundu, thus linking up with late nineteenth-century attempts at creating a modern literature in the vernacular.

As to Vieira, he had begun by drawing illustrations and writing poems, e.g. "Canção para Luanda" (Song for Luanda) published in *Mensagem* in 1950. But he soon turned to the short story. His first collection *A cidade e a infância* (City and childhood, 1957) was confiscated and destroyed by the Portuguese censorship, although an enlarged edition was published in 1960 under the imprint of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império. In 1961, Imbondeiro issued his *Primeira canção do mar* and *Duas historias de pequeños burgueses* (Two petit-bourgeois stories). His fame spread when a new collection of stories, *Lunanda* appeared in Luanda in 1963, and was reprinted in 1965; these tales, which dealt with life in the slums of the Angolan capital earned him a literary prize which had to be handed to his family as he had been arrested by the secret police in 1961 and sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment in the Cape Verde islands. This was the occasion for a highly unusual incident which was reported as follows by Rogerio Fernandes in *The New International Yearbook:*

> The Portuguese Society of Writers bestowed its Prémio de Novelística upon Luandino Vieira's *Luanda* [sic], a story about life in the *muceques* (slums) of the Angolan capital. Its prose, rich in picturesque colloquialisms, is at times, reminiscent of the Brazilian Guimarães Rosa. A serious incident followed the bestowal of the prize. The author, who has for some time been in jail in one of the Cape Verde islands for supporting Angolan nationalism, was characterized by some Portuguese newspapers, radio, and television stations as a "terrorist", and the granting of the prize was considered an act of treason by official circles. In protest against the jury's decision, a few writers resigned from the Society, among them J. Paço d'Arcos, who explained his move in a pamphlet. The five members of the jury were jailed for a few days, but the PSW did not retract its decision, for (it said) the prize had been given for literary, not political, reasons. The headquarters of the PSW were assaulted and wrecked by a "mob" as the government announced the Society's dissolution.[58]

While Imbondeiro thus offered an opportunity for local publication to a number of Angolan writers, black, white, or *mestiço*, it is equally important to note that the firm acted as a meeting-place for a few writers from Portugal's other "provinces". *Carta do capataz da Estrada 95* (Letter from the overseer of platform 95, 1960), the second work of Orlando Mendes from Mozambique, whose collection of poetry, *Clima* (Climate, 1959) had been issued in Coimbra, was soon followed by the first book of Onésimo Silveira (b. 1935) from Cape Verde: *Toda a gente fala: Sim, senhor* (Everybody says "Yes, Sir", 1960). In 1961 came *Morabezza*, stories by Manuel Ferreira (b. 1917), a Portuguese

[58] *The New International Yearbook: A Compendium of the World's Affairs for the Year 1965* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1966), p. 381.

who was to become one of the most distinguished writers of Cape Verdean inspiration and an unchallenged authority on Luso-African literature. Other significant Imbondeiro publications from Cape Verde were *Tutchinha* (1962), stories by the *Claridoso* poet, Ovídio [de Sousa] Martins (b. 1928) and a re-issue of António Aurélio Gonçalves' *Pródiga* and *O Enterro da nhâ Candinha Sena* (1962).

The uprising of February 1961 and the savage cruelty of the ensuing repression were an omen that the spirit of understanding and co-operation between black, mulatto and white, as well as the concentration on aesthetic values, which had characterized the Imbondeiro venture were doomed. In retrospect, and with the wisdom of hindsight, it is now clear that, in spite of many similarities, the vastly more radical trend that was developing simultaneously inside Portugal around the Casa dos Estudantes do Império was more attuned to the historical course of the events that were to determine the future of Angola and of Portuguese Africa in general.

MANUEL FERREIRA

3. MOZAMBIQUE

Although Vasco da Gama landed at the mouth of the Quelimane river as early as December 1498 and although the Portuguese remained in control of a colonial area that went on expanding until its present borders were established at the Berlin Conference in the late nineteenth century, literary activity in Mozambique is an extremely recent phenomenon. Indeed, in the present state of our knowledge, it seems that Mozambique has produced no work corresponding to Silva Ferreira's *Espontaneidades da minha alma* (Spontaneous outpouring of my soul, 1849) in Angola, to the first Cape Verdian novel, *O escravo* (The slave, 1856) by José Evaristo de Almeida, or to the poetry which São Tomé's Caetano da Costa Alegre composed in the 1880s although it was not printed until 1916. According to Rodrigues Júnior (b. 1902), a Portuguese writer who lived in Mozambique from 1919, this tardy emergence of local creative writing was due to the fact that until the 1920s, the European population of this far-away dominion along the Indian Ocean was more transient and more overtly business-minded than was the case in Portugal's other African colonies.[59] The administration of the territory was largely in the hands of chartered companies and the first official primary school was not opened until 1899.

While the possibility remains that a few random poems may still come to light, particularly from the *Almanach de Lembranças* (Almanach of memories) which was published in Lisbon from 1888 onwards, it seems very likely that no creative writing of Mozambican stamp emerged until the twentieth century. A belated local manifestation of the journalistic impetus that had developed on the western seaboard of the continent at the end of the nineteenth century was the foundation of *O Brado Africano* (The African roar) by the black journalist João Albasini (1876–1925) in 1918; this bilingual weekly printed in Portuguese and Ronga, retained its African orientation even after it came under control of the administration some time later. Albasini's only published volume, a collection of short stories entitled *O livro da dor* (The book of sorrow, 1925), is not even to be found at Portugal's Biblioteca Nacional in Lisbon. Until some forgotten copy of this first work of Mozambican authorship has been found, it is impossible to decide whether it can really be classified as belonging to "African" or to "colonial" literature. For in Mozambique as elsewhere on the Black Continent, many works have

[59] José Rodrigues Júnior, *Para uma cultura moçambicana* (Lisbon: Author, 1951), p. 19.

been written, as a rule by Europeans of long-established residence, which are not the outcome of creativeness inspired by authentic African experiences and values. In this "colonial" literature, both condemned by history and regarded as outdated in all areas where Portuguese is spoken, the white man, or rather the white settler, is generally presented as a mythical figure, the bearer of a superior culture and religion and therefore "predestined" to carry out a civilizing mission. His presence in Africa, rather than being seen for what it was, a simultaneously aggressive and repressive form of activity, is represented as a mission to raise and spread human values. The European acquires in these works an image of grandeur and self-denial. By contrast, the black, exploited and assailed socially, physically and culturally, is relegated to a secondary role in the text, as though he were some humble object or animal. Even when it is the writer's intention to avoid a frankly colonialist stance, his paternalism nevertheless remains.

Specialists in the Portuguese-African literatures have long been wrestling with the methodological problem of drawing distinctions between such texts and those that are genuinely African. Now that the countries concerned have at las won their independence, this complex question, which has provoked no little disagreement, will find its solution. When African literary historians set about examining the literary output of their countries, the most likely tendency will be for them to gather in all the national writers regardless of their literary characteristics or the nature of the content of their works, since content is not itself a factor at variance with national consciousness. On the other hand, in respect of Europeans of long-established residence or indeed of the Euro-Africans, the tendency will be to forget those who abandoned Africa and only to integrate into the history of national literature and culture those who opted for African nationality. In view of the complexity of the issue, it is fruitless at this stage to adopt a rigid stance: this study will seek to avoid extremes, and, within the limits of our present knowledge, to establish a sensible and defensible working framework. At all events it is important to recall that these literatures came into being and developed in historico-cultural conditions of a very specific nature and that, by and large, ideology has been a dominant factor from the very beginning.

It is usual to name Rui de Noronha (1909–1943) as the harbinger of Mozambican poetry. The son of an Indian mother and a black father, this contemporary of Senghor's lived in a land in which to turn to genuine African values for poetical inspiration was problematical, to say the least. His *Sonetos* (1943), published posthumously, certainly cannot be accepted without reservations. Apart from its incompleteness as a collection of all his poems, it is clear that this edition contains several mutilated and mangled compositions. But even so in what remains we can detect what is arguably the poet's most authentic trait, when he addresses the *patria do misterio* (mysterious homeland):

> Desperta. O teu dormir é mais que terreno...
> Ouve a voz do progresso, este outro nazareno,
> que a mão te estende e diz—África, surge et ambula.[60]

[60] "Awake. Your slumber is not earthbound. Listen to the voice of progress, to this other Nazarene,/who stretches out to you his hand and say—Africa, surge et ambula." On the writer, see Rodrigues Júnior, "Rui de Noronha o esquecido," ibid., pp. 99–134.

— a theme later to be glossed by other poets, not all of them from Mozambique.

In such a transitional period, replete with historical and cultural contradictions, in which one could barely glimpse a truly indigenous literature, it was only natural that hesitancy should impose limits on genuine self-expression. Even so, there seems to be little doubt that Rui de Noronha, an introverted and embittered figure—"A cruel ilusão de quanto existe (the cruel illusion of all that exists)—responded to African values, deeply aware as he was of the unjust suffering of wretched, toiling blacks:

> Ó negros! Que penoso é viver
> a vida inteira aos fardos de quem quer
> e na velhice ao pão da caridade.[61]

A contemporary of Rui de Noronha was Caetano Campo (1897–1957), a Portuguese journalist who spent part of his life in Mozambique, where he died. All his works, beginning with a collection of stories, *O homem das 7 horas* (1937), but consisting mainly of several volumes of poetry—*Claridades* (1946), *Véu de fumo* (1951) and *Rosa Branca* (1954)—were published in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo). But only one of these, *Nyaka* (1942), is of relevance here, reflecting as it did a conscious effort to integrate with the world of the African; for that reason it may be accepted as a precursor of a literature that harks back nostalgically to forgotten realities:

> Ó ÁFRICA profunda, extensa, enorme [...]
> [...] apronta a alma em fontes de energia,
> abre ao Futuro o seio deslumbrado:
> do feito fecundo do Passado,
> darás ao Mundo a luz de um outro Dia.[62]

Yet another poet to emerge during the early forties was Orlando Mendes (b. 1916), a Portuguese born in Mozambique, who established himself as a pioneer of Mozambican poetry with "Evolução", one of the poems in his first collection, *Trajectorias* (Coimbra, 1940). Although he published nothing more until 1959 when his second collection, *Clima* (Coimbra, 1959) appeared, his later poetry steadily widened in scope while gaining also in depth. As one of those who are conscious of their responsibilities as writers he constantly exercised the right to say no, more especially in the 1960s.

In 1941 there began the publication of the periodical *Itinerário* (1941–1955) with the objective of "propagating human knowledge" of "developing critical faculties to their highest level" and of "enriching the field of literature through the bringing together of new values of great potential." For fifteen years *Itinerário* held out against all odds and with dogged honesty pursued a programme of awakening literary consciousness, even though some of its contributors were suffering from the effects (or defects) of the

[61] "O blacks! How grievous it is to live/all life long bent beneath other men's burdens/and in old age to eat the bread of other men's charity." Rui de Noronha, *Sonetos* (Lourenço Marques: Minerva Central, 1949), p. 71.

[62] "O deep and wide and enormous AFRICA, let your soul drink at the fountains of energy,/open to the Future your innocent bosom:/from the fertile achievements of the Past,/you will give to the World the light of another Day." Caetano Campo, *Nyaka (humus); poemas bárbaros* (Lourenço Marques, 1942). pp. 61–62.

period. Yet from 1950 it was here, in *Itinerário*, that most of the talented new writers of poetry and short stories were to be found, sometimes appearing alongside their Angolan counterparts, who in turn owed not a little to two Portuguese neo-realists living in Angola at that time, the poet Augusto dos Santos Abranches and the novelist Afonso Ribeiro.

It was in Lisbon, however, that the first collective manifestation of Mozambican poetry appeared. It originated from the cultural focal point of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, under whose imprint an anthology entitled *Poesia em Moçambique* was published in 1951 under the editorship of Orlando de Albuquerque (b. 1925) and Victor Evaristo (b. 1926). The number of those who contributed both to *Itinerário* and to this anthology was quite considerable. Some, like Glória de Sant'Anna (b. 1925) were Portuguese who had lived in Mozambique for decades but were to leave the country after independence. Others, however, exhibited more authentically Mozambican characteristics which became increasingly marked during the fifties.

A voice of unmistakable solidarity, on a firm ideological basis, was that of Manuel Filipe de Moura Coutinho (b. 1931), whose *Direito de cantar* (Right to sing, 1957) often expresses a clear awareness of cultural metamorphosis at work. In a long poem entitled "Um iguala a um" (One equals one) he cites Guillén, Hughes, Villa, Huerta, Jorge Amado, America, the Ku-Klux-Klan and even employs textual interpolation. With reckless disregard for his own physical safety he proclaims:

> Na pátria do negro o branco ladrão
> Mandou
> Que eu fosse um homem e ele fosse um cão.[63]

Moura Coutinho is a white man and a Portuguese. He now lives in Portugal, but in Mozambique, at that time, he underwent the process of regeneration that others were experiencing in Angola. This makes it appropriate to mention him here: the "white thief" "gave orders" that the black "was a dog", but the poet as though choosing to take an intention for fact, disobeyed the orders:

> Conheci hoje o negro que há em mim
> e que vive no meu peito ignorado
> sob uma pele branca de europeu
>
> Hoje o negro é meu irmão[64]

Orlando de Albuquerque was born in 1925 of European parents in Mozambique, studied in Portugal and settled in Angola where he lived until independence, whereafter

[63] "In the black man's very homeland the white thief/gave orders/that I was a man and that he was a dog." Manuelo Filipe de Moura Coutinho, *Direito de Cantar* (Lourenço Marques, 1957), p. 17.

[64] "Today I got to know the black man within me/who lives unheeded in my breast/under the white skin of a European/Today the black man is my brother." ibid.

he chose to make his home in Portugal. While his work, therefore, derives from both Angolan and Mozambican experiences, his early poetry, which includes *Batuque negro* (Black stomp, 1947) and *Estrela perdida* (Lost star, 1951) must be placed against a Mozambican background, in recognition of the fact that for many years this was the predominant influence in his verse.

Alberto Lacerda (b. 1928) is another Euro-Mozambican, who had long since left the Isle of Mozambique, where he was born, and lived for many years in England, before settling in the United States of America. His poetry[65] reflects nothing of Mozambican reality: the presence of the blacks, the exploitation, the tragedy of colonialism, or even the nascent determination to wrench freedom from the oppressor. Yet, none of these omissions detracts from the high quality of Lacerda's writing. Poet of "exile", of "grim solitude", of love, ever searching for the "hidden equilibrium" of "total purity,"[66] he offers a vision of the world based on a belief in a universe filled with transcendental harmony. His is the poetry of "mystery", of ecstasy, "of the hidden wonders of the world":

> Serenamente como o mar inunda
> de plenitude a linha do horizonte
> esse corpo canta deslumbrado
> o ritmo prometido e cristalino
> estátua múltipla de gestos perfeitos
> que deixa no meu corpo a luz sibilina
> de todas as maravilhas ocultas do mundo.[67]

Lacerda's name appears regularly in manuals of Portuguese literature. One can only wonder whether it will ever be found in histories of Mozambican literature.

Another Portuguese contributor to Albuquerque's collection was Fonseca Amaral (b. 1929) who went to Mozambique as a child and is today a Mozambican citizen. As far back as the forties his poetry stressed Mozambican realities and his resultant influence on later poets was recognized by Rui Knopfli.[68] Although none of his poetry has been published in book form, he is nevertheless one of the most talented Mozambican poets. In Lisbon, where he lived for some years, he regarded himself as an exile, a feeling expressed by other poets in identical circumstances:

> Nos dias mais soalheiros da diáspora
> és tu quem materna vem dizer "aqui estou"
> à emoção que nos habita.
> Marulham outras águas aqui
> mas quando as invocamos é Baía do Espírito Santo
> o nome que nos corre à boca.[69]

[65] Alberto Lacerda, *Poemas* (Lisbon: Cadernos de Poesia, 1951); *77 Poems*, bilingual edition (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955); *Palácio* (Lisbon: Delfos, 1961); *Exílio* (Lisbon: Portugália, 1966).

[66] Ramos Rosa, Preface to *Exílio*, p. xix.

[67] "As the sea serenely fills up/the line of the horizon/her body innocently sings/its promised and crystalline rhythm/a multiple statue perfect in its movements/leaving in my own body the sibylline light/of all the hidden wonders of the world." Alberto Lacerda, *Palácio* (Lisbon: Delfos, 1961), p. 40.

[68] Rui Knopfli, "Notas para a recordação de meu mestre Fonseca Amaral," *Caliban*, 2 (1971), 46–47.

[69] "On the sunniest days of the Diaspora/you're the one who in a motherly voice repeats "Here I am"/when nostalgia fills our hearts./Other waters lap these shores/but when we invoke them then Espirito Santo Bay/is the name that springs to our lips." From "Exilio", *Caliban*, 2 (1971), 59.

There is a sensual, earthy quality in Fonseca Amaral's lyrics, a cosmic identification with the very soil of Mozambique. This is immediately evident in his earliest verse in the personification of animals, objects and birds, in the many evocations of the local landscape and the abundant references to flying ants, cicadas and lizards, to tropical trees, roots and plants, to wind and water; in his verse are embedded idioms taken from the Ronga language while the poet looks ahead to the days when the homeland will speak with a new range of expressions:

> Quando um dia, amiga, com doces termos
> tivermos baptizado, escrito pela primeira vez
> o nome dos bichos e aves, rios e ruas,
> gentes e gestos, danças e doces, frutos e factos
> e os quisermos preservar na Arca de Noé da Poesia
> será mais rico o colorido do nosso canto.[70]

Among the poets of this group, special mention must be made of Noémia de Sousa (b. 1926) because, unlike the others, she is a mulatta, and deeply aware of it. After receiving her secondary education in Brazil, she lived in Lisbon from 1951 to 1964, then moved to Paris and currently lives once more in Lisbon. Like Fonseca Amaral she has published no book of poetry but a vast number of her poems are scattered through various journals and anthologies. Most of her poetry was composed while she was in Mozambique in the late forties and early fifties. Rising straight up from deep African roots, it is shot through with "a certeza radiosa de uma esperança," the radiant certainty of a hope—and the hope of the downtrodden is always for liberation. What she longs for is better knowledge of her African ancestry, of the Africa that is her very lifeblood:

> Eu quero conhecer-te melhor,
> minha África profunda e imortal.[71]
>
> Ó minha África misteriosa e natural,
> minha virgem violentada,
> Minha Mãe![72]

One of the most representative poets of Mozambique, Noémia de Sousa led the way, along with José Craveirinha, in the exaltation of Mother Africa, in the glorification of African values, in protests, in denunciation:

[70] João Fonseca Amaral, "As palavras", *Estudos Ultramarinos*, No. 3 (1939), 216.: "One day, my dear, when in sweet terms/we've baptized, and written for the first time/the names of all the animals and birds, rivers and streets,/peoples and gestures, dances and sweetmeats, fruits and facts/and wish to preserve them in the Noah's Ark of Poetry/then will our song be of richer and brighter hue."

[71] Noémia de Sousa, "Quero conhecer-te, África" in Rodrigues Júnior, op. cit., pp. 201–202: "I want to know you better, my deep, immortal Africa."

[72] Id., "Sangue negro", *Mensagem*, No. 2/4 (1952): "O my mysterious and native Africa,/my violated virgin,/My Mother."

Somos fugitivas de todos os bairros de zinco e caniço [...]
Oh sim, viemos!
sob o chicote da esperança
nossos corpos capulanas quentes
embrulharam com carinhos marítimos nómadas doutros portos,
saciaram generosamente fomes e sedes violentas...
Nossos corpos pão e água para toda a gente.[73]

The accusing tone of such poetry of vigorous social protest calls to mind the writings of Aimé Césaire, not only from a thematic viewpoint, but also because of its verbal resonance. Noémia de Sousa strings together harsh sounds pregnant with meaning and makes use of evocative vocabulary: "otherworldly tears," "profound mysteries," "delirium and witchcraft", "revulsion", "anguish", "humiliation", "sleepless nights", "frenetic dancing", "slave songs", "visible wounds", "incurable wounds", "decaying teeth". Sometimes the evocation is vehement—"O minha Mãe Africa, ngoma pagã" (Oh my mother Africa, pagan drum),—sometimes the tone is imperious—"Oh deixa passar o meu povo" (Oh let my people pass)—expressed in a "shrill cry swelling with hope."

Another important development that took place in Portugal at the turn of the decade was the appearance of a successor to João Albasini in the field of prose fiction. This was a black journalist, João Dias (1926–1949), whose father was editor of *O Brado Africano* and who had studied in Coimbra and in Lisbon. His story *Godido* was published in Coimbra in the year of the author's untimely death, and reprinted as the title story of *Godido e outros contos* by the Mozambique section of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império in 1952, with a preface by Orlando de Albuquerque. The writer's youth and immaturity are evident in his stories, and his view-point as narrator is that of one conscious of his status as a colonial subject and reacting vehemently against it. He presents the relationship between colonizer and colonized in ciritical yet courteous terms. He brings to fiction for the first time the black Mozambican, locked in a colonial system. *Godido e outros contos* was the first piece of narrative fiction to draw attention to the racism and exploitation to which the blacks were subjected daily. Despite this, the message of João Dias was to remain virtually unheard for a long time, a voice crying in the wilderness.

Almost simultaneously, an interesting experiment took place in Mozambique with the first group attempt to produce a poetry magazine with a nationalist outlook seeking to take the pulse of a new era. Entitled *Msaho* after a type of song popular among the Chope tribesmen, its first issue (1952) offered contributions from eight poets: Alberto Lacerda, Domingos de Azevedo, Duarte Galvão (pseudonym of Virgílio de Lemos, b. 1929), Noémia de Sousa, Ruy Guerra (b. 1931), Augusto dos Santos Abranches (1912–1963), Cordeiro de Brito (1905–1966) and Reinaldo Ferreira (1922–1959). These

[73] Id., "Moças das docas" in *Poetas moçambicanos*, ed. Alfredo Margarido (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1962), p. 50: "We are fugitive women from every zinc and wattle slum [...]/Ah yes, we came!/whipped on by hope,/our bodies warm capes/swathed with maritime affections the nomads from other ports,/generously sated violent appetites.../Our bodies bread and water for everybody."

were poets of an indisputably high standing. Yet the simple fact is that the three last-named were Portuguese who had settled in the country. With the exception of Santos Abranches, they were in no sense involved in seeking to create a form of poetry with specifically Mozambican characteristics. Cordeiro de Brito belongs properly to the *Presença* group of Coimbra. Reinaldo Ferreira whose *Poemas* (1960) was published soon after his death in Lourenço Marques, lived merely on the fringe of the real problems of Mozambique and whatever Mozambican resonances were to be expressed in his verse appeared only after the publication of *Msaho*. His choice of poetic language is in the main dominated by a deep sense of existential anguish, of living in a constricted and incoherent world:

Dispersa entre os átomos dispersos,
se acumula a tristeza deste dia
e a razão destes versos.[74]

or again:

Apenas sei a vibração e o desânimo
(o sol excessivo e a sombra opaca),
olho-te no deslumbramento
de quem se banha
e se deslumbra
em penumbra.[75]

Life to him was cruelty and existence an "infernal" fatality:

Já não basta morrer;
tanto me falta a certeza
que paro todo de ser
ne vida sem mim ilesa.[76]

Much exalted as he was in Mozambique—"a great poet", said Eugénio Lisboa— and fêted in Portugal, especially by José Régio, a major figure in Portuguese literature, it remains to be seen which country will ultimately claim the works of Reinaldo Ferreira as her own. But already he is presented in Portuguese manuals as a front-ranking literary figure.

Of the other *Msaho* poets Domingos de Azevedo is of Angolan origin and had a brief, meteoric poetic career. In 1952 Ruy Guerra was already regarded as a young hopeful in a changing world; three years later in *Itinerário* we find him poking sardonic fun at Christian civilization, at least in its African manifestation: "twenty centuries of

[74] Reinaldo Ferreira, *Poemas* (Lourenço Marques: Imprensa Nacional, 1960), p. 31: "Dispersed among the dispersed atoms,/mounts up the sadness of this day/and the reason for these verses."

[75] Ibid., p. 35: "Once I know the shimmering and the discouragement/(the excessive sun and the opaque shade)/, I gaze upon you in the dazzlement of one who bathes/and is dazzled/in the half-light."

[76] Ibid., p. 97: "It's no longer enough to die;/so much do I lack the certainty/that I completely cease to exist/amid life still inviolate without me."

culture in every litre of water"; later on still, he was to exile himself to Brazil where he pursued a prestigious career as a film producer. Duarte Galvão (i.e. Virgílio de Lemos) was arrested in 1960 in connection with his volume *Poemas do tempo presente* which had just been printed in Lourenço Marques. By that time he was one of those, like Noémia de Sousa, who were unhesitatingly committed to black Africa. His message of negritude finds expression in such poems as "Cantemos con os poetas de Haiti" (Let's sing with the poets of Haiti):

> Uma canção negra que não se perca
> Cantemos em uníssono, porque lá ou aqui,
> Os segredos iguais, fundos de angústia,
> e os poemas verticais, também de desespero.[77]

In fact, in Mozambique, just as in Angola, writers stood on the threshold of a new era for poetry, of a new and liberating consciousness. Yet whereas in Angola the magazine *Mensagem* was stretching into the future like a deep and lasting scar, *Msaho*, for all the efforts of some of its contributors, despite its genuine significance, brought a rather ineffectual response to a summons which continued to echo. On the other hand, it bore the stamp of poetic modernity, and (thanks to some) a Mozambican modernity at that.

In his introduction Virgílio de Lemos had made the following statement: "Though aspects of this number may jar somewhat, both in form and in expression, later issues should see an increasing homogeneity, a sharper definition resulting from the presence of indigenous Mozambican characteristics which at present appear only as a blurred, subordinate and amorphous mass." But as it happened, there were to be no further issues of *Msaho*, and Virgílio de Lemos later expressed his disillusionment in no uncertain terms: "Contrary to all our expectations, we came to realize that the poetic diction of *Msaho* offered nothing original in terms of expressing anything radically Mozambican." Plainly, if the result ran contrary to expectations, there must have been a lot of talk about producing "radically Mozambican" poetry at the time, and Virgílio de Lemos' words underscore the lack of definition typical of Mozambican verse then. Or rather, they reflect what was to become its constant feature: two basic lines that ran parallel, if not exactly in total opposition, to each other, the one essentially European or Europeanized, the other rooted in the Mozambican experience. This feature differentiated such poetry from what happened in Angola where "Angolanness" came to predominate quite early —not to mention even more cohesive examples as in São Tomé e Príncipe and Cape Verde.

For nearly three years from 1955 onwards *O Brado Africano* placed more and more emphasis on the Mozambican "line", not only in the body of the paper but also in the literary pages and even in the ladies' supplement "Chez elle"; all the indications were that here was the spearhead of Mozambican literary consciousness, as the literary

[77] Virgílio de Lemos, *Poemas do tempo presente* (Lourenço Marques: Author, 1960), p. 61: "A black song never to be lost/let's sing in unison, because there or here/all secrets are the same, full of deep anguish,/ all poems vertical, full of despair."

supplement which was introduced in 1955 provided further writers with an opportunity to express themselves in print.

One of the voices to ring out from the African substratum was that of Marcelino dos Santos (b. 1929). Firmly clinging to the concepts of Black Mother, of Mother Africa, his vision was clearly formulated as "The wondrous world/where her son will be able to live." Gradually his verse was to reflect an ever-ripening political awareness which would ultimately lead to deeds as well as words. Such awareness was already apparent in the deep-felt nationalism of his poem "Oferenda" (Offering):

Eis-me agora aqui,
Mãe!
árvores, cobrindo-te nos teus braços
e envolvendo-te na sombra
do teu repouso impossivél,

rios, correndo na planície do teu corpo,
banhando as tuas mãos,
dádivas à terra
onde nasceste.

Eis-me agora aqui
Mãe![78]

Perhaps because political militancy gradually took up more and more of his time, Marcelino dos Santos' output in verse has been relatively small, some of it appearing under the African name Kalungano. He first appeared in book-form under yet another pseudonym, Lilinho Micaia,[79] with a short collection of Russian translations published in Moscow: *Pesnja istinnoj ljubvi* (Song of true love, 1959); when a considerably expanded version was printed under the writer's own name in 1962, it was graced with an introduction by the famous Turkish revolutionary poet Nâzim Hikmet (1902–1963).

As to Rui Nogar (b. 1933), he has not even published one single volume. Nevertheless, although his literary output is both scant and scattered, he made a reputation for himself from the outset as a truly representative poet of Mozambique, primarily if not solely because he was one of the small number to attempt an individual poetic diction based on the speech of the streets of Lourenço Marques and other cities. Typical devices are the multivalent usage of the third person singular of verb forms, the absence of plural markers from nouns where determiners themselves provide the necessary information, and the failure of adjectives to register agreement.

It was also in the literary supplement of *O Brado Africano* that José Craveirinha (b. 1922) issued his early poems in the mid-fifties. A more productive writer than Nogar,

[78] "Now I'm here,/Mother!/trees, covering you with your own arms/and swathing you in the shade/of your own impossible repose,/rivers, running across the plain of your body,/bathing your hands,/gifts to the land/where you were born./Now I'm here,/Mother!" Marcelino dos Santos, "Oferenda" in *O Brado Africano*, (7 February 1955), 7.

[79] A Chinese version of Marcelino dos Santos' poetry was later printed in Beijing under the same pen-name.

he was to enjoy, along with Noémia de Sousa, particular prominence as a fitting representative of Mozambican literature. But already at the beginning of his career as a writer, he was consciously involved in the process of shaping a poetic mode that would be representative of Mozambique and at the same time reach the highest artistic level:

Eu sou carvão
e tenho que arder, sim
e queimar tudo com a força da minha combustão.
Eu sou carvão
tenho que arder na exploração
arder até às cinzas da maldição
arder vivo como alcatrão, meu irmão
até não ser mais a tua mina, patrão.
Eu sou carvão
tenho que arder
queimar tudo com o fogo da minha combustão.
Sim!
Eu serei o teu carvão, patrão![80]

Such poetry has a note of assurance, the significance of which would grow with the passing years.

While, then, several gifted poets had begun in the fifties to sow the seeds of a new, truly Mozambican poetry, it must be admitted that prose fiction made little progress, even though as from 1949, *Itinerário* occasionally published stories by Alexandre Sobral de Campos, Ruy Guerra, Vieira Simões (b. 1925), Virgílio de Lemos, Ilídio Rocha (b. 1915) and a few others, and José Craveirinha also made a few attempts at the short story around 1955 in *O Brado Africano*. Genuine Mozambican prose fiction inspired by local black experience was not to produce its first masterpiece until 1964, with the emergence of Luis Honwana (b. 1942).

The advent of negritude in the post-war years, its spreading at the Paris Congress of 1956, the subversive publications of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, led to ambiguous changes inside Mozambique. On the one hand, a few black writers emerged, who were aware of the vast movement of emancipation that was developing throughout black Africa: they endeavoured to bring their own contribution to the liberation of their country by voicing more or less obliquely their protest against Portuguese colonialism. The trend was of course encouraged by FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front, which was founded in 1952 and initiated armed fighting in 1964. A number of mulattos and whites rallied to this nationalist movement. These will be examined in their capacity as representatives of African protest writing.

But on the other hand, the majority of Mozambican writers were whites and the greater part of the local output emanated from them. This does not mean that they were

[80] José Craveirinha, *Chigubo* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1964), p. 29: "I'm coal/and I have to burn, yes/and burn everything up with the power of my combustion./ I'm coal/I have to burn away, exploited,/right down to the last accursed embers/burn alive like tar, my brother/until I'm no longer your mine, boss./I'm coal/I have to burn away/burn everything up with the fire of my combustion./Yes! I'll be your coal, boss!"

all in favour of the status quo, far from it. Some were aesthetically inclined and concerned first and foremost with the writing of poetry. Others were hoping that Mozambique would become some sort of multiracial democracy; a few could be described as "revolutionaries". Obviously, the bulk of locally printed Mozambique writing was bound to remain under fairly strict official control until the colonial system broke down, which does not mean that the literature was devoid of aesthetic quality or intellectual subtlety. At any rate, local literary activity was comparatively intense.

In 1957, a new magazine, *Paralelo 20,* was launched in Beira. For some three years it cast its net wide and included news-reporting, features on cinema, art, theatre, history, folklore and music, as well as book reviews. Starting, however, with issue 5/6 it devoted itself exclusively to "culture and art"; thereafter it enjoyed an element of cultural independence. By the seventh issue it was unmistakably a literary magazine, almost solely written by Mozambican writers. As a result there was a noticeable decrease in the number of contributions by progressive Portuguese intellectuals who, on grounds of political and cultural solidarity, had been sending material from Portugal, a frequent practice with Angolan and Mozambican publications of the period.

In its final issues, *Paralelo 20* nobly strove to present distinctly Mozambican subject-matter, most markedly in verse. The results were not wholly successful: such ambitions could not be truly fulfilled in Mozambique before 1974, in marked contrast with the literary scene in Angola and Cape Verde. At all events, issue 10/11 openly objected to "art forms" that arose simply from an "affected presentation of outmoded folklore" when there was so much to be founded in the "real life of Mozambique in a human context, not only in its variety of races, but also in the evershifting nature of its social and spiritual problems"; on this basis a Mozambican literature could be created "which was necessarily still in the process of self-discovery." In the ninth issue, a Portuguese expatriate, Carlos Alberto Lanca, had contributed an essay the title of which shows its special relevance to this discussion: "Da viabilidade de uma literatura moçambicana" (On the viability of a Mozambican literature).

Also significant is the supplement of the newspaper *Notícias* (News), which bore the title "Mozambique 58: literary and artistic panorama". The series ran on into 1959 (as "Mozambique 59") and comprised some sixteen issues. The proclaimed objective was to "bring together in one voice the voices of all Mozambicans, whether steady in their footsteps or hesitant at every crossing along the way". The editors of the supplement seem to have been only too aware of the poor progress made since *Msaho* in creating a predominantly Mozambican literary style. In *Msaho* there had been a clear recognition that it was still too early to expect to find an "individual style of composition that is rootedly Mozambican." In "Mozambique 58" we read that "it goes without saying that the Mozambican scene in both literature and the arts is, in the eye of the independent observer, plainly wanting in definable characteristics." The anonymous author of these words, who was probably Nuno Bermudes (b. 1921), went on to observe that literary awareness is nothing but a mirror to political awareness and that in many respects intellectuals (and particularly writers) in Mozambique failed to grasp this reality with all its implications. He noted "the vast poignant and silent drama of a land that is deaf to the most urgent appeals, when these should become the concern of every painter, poet

and writer in Mozambique; instead they are gradually becoming ever more enmeshed in the exclusive pursuit of mere local colour." No artistic breakthrough would come from such an activity; indeed "so many Mozambican artists and writers were obsessed with subjects that were quite alien to the very ground they trod."

Most of the poets living in Mozambique in the fifties collaborated on these magazines and their supplements. It would be idle to list them all, but a few of them succeeded in attaining a measure of fame and began to publish their own collection in addition to their contributions to *A Voz de Moçambique, A Tribuna* and the last issues of *Paralelo 20*.

One of the most coherent and enduring voices in Mozambique was that of Orlando Mendes, whose *Trajectorias* had singled him out as a pioneer of modern Mozambican poetry; after a long silence, this early work, printed in Coimbra, was followed throughout the sixties and the seventies by a number of locally published collections in which he expressed his pride in *a grandeza nova que transmito*[81] ("the new greatness I transmit") and later his pathetic awareness that

> Porém mais veloz
> que tu és, ó vento,
> é o rio barriente
> renado por nós.[82]

Fernando Couto (b. 1924), a Portuguese who had been living in Mozambique since 1953 published three collections in those years: *Poemas junto à fronteira* (Poems written at the frontier; Beira, 1959), *Jangada do inconformismo* (Raft of a non-conformist; Lisbon, 1962) and *O amor Diurno* (Love day by day; Beira, 1962). Initially and fleetingly he sought to give expression to African aspirations by seeking analogies with Whitmanesque rhetoric. Later the tone grew noble, passionate, rich in sensorial imagery. The five senses came to dominate his brief poems, giving expression to a mood of innocent ecstasy.

Nuno Bermudes, a writer of both verse and fiction, is a white born in Mozambique. The central motifs of his first collection, *O poeta e o tempo* (Lourenço Marques, 1951) are solitude, disenchantment and the fires of love; his early verse displays a kind of perplexity resulting from his inability to trust the real world around him:

> Falo dos homens e dói-me
> esta minha condição
> de ser capaz de heroísmos
> e não ser deste chão.[83]

[81] Orlando Mendes, *Véspera confiada* (Lourenço Marques: Livraria Acâdemica, 1968), p. 48.

[82] Id., *Adeus de gutucumbi* (Lourenço Marques, 1974), p. 64: "Swifter however/than you are O wind/is the muddy river/we row through." A *gutucumbi* is a Mozambican bird whose song is supposed to announce the coming of rain.

[83] Nuno Bermudes, *O poeta e o tempo* (Lourenço Marques: Gráfica Industrial, 1951), p. 28: "I speak of men and am in anguish/at my condition,/at being capable of heroism/while not belonging to this land."

His poetic gift was confirmed in *Exílio voluntário* (Beira, 1966), where he owns to a feeling of disdain that readily accounts for the pose of being "in exile":

É África—dizem-me
e eu faço por acreditar
porque é mais cómodo
e tira-me a insónia.[84]

It comes as no surprise to learn that Bermudes left Moçambique in 1975.

Virgílio de Lemos (b. 1929), who had been actively involved in the creation of a native Mozambican poetry, published *Poemas do tempo presente* (1960), which was immediately banned and led to its author's imprisonment; although Lemos later dissociated himself from Frelimo, his poetry from 1960 to 1965 continued to be one of the most eloquent statements on the problem of Mozambican identity and the blacks' condition.

In *Sete canções de amor e pombas de papel* (Seven love songs and paper doves, 1964) Ilídio Rocha, also a Portuguese citizen living in Mozambique, clearly succumbed to the seduction of Africa's exotic folklore but displayed genuine leanings toward solidarity with black people forced into a life of servitude.

The great revelation of this period was the poet Rui Knopfli (b. 1932) with *O país dos outros* (The country belonging to others, 1959). His considerable talents have unfolded from book to book: "in stony silence" "the seed persists/in the slow metamorphosis" and "blossoms with the vehemence/of a phallic object". He himself described his dual status as European and African:

Europeu me dizem.
Eivam-me de literatura e doutrina
europeias
e europeu me chamam.[85]

In his early career, he was obviously influenced by Portuguese neo-realism. But the passing of the years witnessed his growing search for an aesthetic purity of expression within the limits of the writer's cultural dualism. Indeed, cultural duality was a major theme in his poetry: *Chamaisme europeu? Pronto, calo-me.*[86] In *País dos outros* he had strongly identified with the African land where he was born. In *Reino submarino* (Undersea kingdom, 1962), in a humorous vein he metaphorically compared European and African cultures, starting from a reference to the rivers of both continents:

[84] Id., *Exílio voluntário* (Beira, 1966), p. 19: "It's Africa—that's what they tell me/and I try to believe it,/because it's less effort/and rids me of my insomnia."

[85] Rui Knopfli, *O país dos outros* (Lourenço Marques, 1959), p. 41: "They call me a European./They contaminate me with European literature and doctrine/and they call me a European."

[86] Ibid.: "Are you calling me a European? All right, I'll be quiet."

Toda a poesia oculta é a dos rios
da minha terra.[87]

Nevertheless, there was in this poetry, as in *Máquina de areia* (Sand machine, 1964), a latent conflict between the actual and the desirable, between reality and aspiration, and when the implacable process of history came to force him to make a final decision, Knopfli chose to leave Africa for Britain, later rejecting his ties with Mozambican culture in *Escriba acocorado* (Crouching scribe, 1978), where he asserted "I am a European writer"—a dubious statement when his earlier works are taken into consideration.

By the beginning of the 1960s, "Moçambique 58/59" had breathed its last. *Paralelo 20* appeared for the last time in January 1960, with contributions from Agueda Ceita and Zita Leão, who then vanished without trace from the literary scene. *O Brado Literario* (and its variant versions) had already ceased publication; indeed it had fallen away badly in terms of the quest for Mozambican literary values. In 1958 two issues of the short-lived *Capricórnio* ("Capricorn") had done nothing to advance that cause. The "Arts and Letters" supplement of *Notícias*, despite an occasional clearer-sighted article, was not, and never sought to be, anything but an instrument of the official imperialist line. Yet, at this unpropitious time *A Voz de Moçambique* (The Voice of Mozambique) emerged along with its cultural supplement, coming out successively on a monthly, fortnightly, weekly and ultimately irregular basis. As proclaimed in the issue of 24 March 1965, "This newspaper not only is, but will also continue to be, a serious voice in Mozambique." Indeed it kept up a constant running fight against the threat of closure at the hands of officialdom. The armed struggle was already well under way by then. It has been argued that the objectives of those who wrote for the supplement were in some measure achieved. At least they did their best in the circumstances, publishing poetry, reviews, literary notes, comments, short stories, interviews. One cannot but subscribe to the evaluation formulated in the early seventies by Eugénio Lisboa, a Mozambican critic currently resident in England: "They bustled around somewhat chaotically, generating theories of alienation and incompability, and for a spell balking at the opportunity of forming a unified system that could be seen as a reasonably cohesive expression of Mozambican literature, yet asserting sporadically a literary level of achievement that at once spared them any sense of responsibility to the future;" moreover, "despite all its well-known weakness, setbacks and ups and downs it has gradually emerged, I repeat, as the most serious, most concerned, least self-seeking and most adult literary and cultural journal that this beautiful land of Mozambique has yet witnessed."[88] Through contributions by Angolans, Portuguese settlers and just about the whole cultural élite at hand in Mozambique, *A voz de Moçambique* provides a clear perspective of literature and the arts in the country in that long period stretching from 1961 to the mid-seventies when it ceased publication. In its last two years an effort was

[87] Id., *Reino submarino* (Lourenço Marques, 1962), p. 25: "All hidden poetry belongs to the rivers of my land." Knopfli's later volumes of poetry, also published in Mozambique, include *Máquina de areia* (Beira, 1964). *Mangas verdes com sal* (1969) appeared in Lisbon. His latest collection to date is *A Ilha de Prospero* (Lourenço Marques: Minerva Central, 1972).

[88] Eugénio Lisboa, "Perspectiva sumaria da literatura em Moçambique", *A Voz de Moçambique*, XII, No. 346 (15 August 1971).

made to revitalize the supplement, which gave particular prominence to Angolan authors.

Mention should also be made of "Despertar" (Awakening), the supplement of *Notícias* of Lourenço Marques. Largely compiled by younger writers, it was an undertaking with a broad outlook, which unfortunately came to an early end in 1962. In its pages are to be found names like that of Luís Bernardo Honwana. Yet its activity was not really relevant to Eugénio Lisboa's concern for the formation of "a reasonably cohesive expression of Mozambican literature". More significant perhaps was the part which a few Mozambicans were taking in the collective African effort at the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, in Lisbon. For the times were changing. At the turn of the decade, the greater part of Africa had become independent. With unshaken obstinacy the Portugal of Salazar was clinging to its African empire. The cruelty of Portuguese repression grew in proportion to the intensity of African aspiration to freedom. Mozambique had been dominated by plantation owners and chartered companies that had no qualms about the uglier aspects of colonial exploitation and were also influenced to some extent by the apartheid attitudes in neighbouring Rhodesia and South Africa. Soon the country was to follow in the wake of Angola: the Mueda massacre in June 1960 was bound to give rise to fundamental questionings. It is true that until the early sixties those writers who dealt with explicitly Mozambican subject matter had been united in their rejection of colonial racism, even though this did not always mean a fully conscious recognition of the conflicting pressures that had shaped their rejection. But whether humorous, mordant, embittered or simply disillusioned, it was clear that such mild rejection, often coupled with romantic idealizations of an Africa that never was, were no longer in tune with the dynamics of the times. In 1962, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane (1920–1969) had established the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) in Dar es Salaam; armed fighting broke out in 1964; Mondlane was killed in 1969. Creative writing could not fail to respond, one way or another, to such momentous events. A new era was beginning in the literary field as well: as early as 1963, a few young intellectuals had started a kind of debating club, the Nucleo dos Estudantes Africanos de Moçambique whose purpose it was to outgrow what Honwana was later to describe with a note of subdued contempt as "mulatto poetry".

(Translated from the Portuguese by R. Clive Willis)

CHAPTER V

ANNETTE I. DUNZO

HISPANIC AFRICA

Whereas Spain, from the late fifteenth century onward, created an immense empire in the Western hemisphere where her tongue became the language of many millions and created a literature of striking originality and impressive vitality, her presence in colonial Africa remained, contrary to that of the Portuguese, limited to a few towns in North Africa, some sandy and—as it seemed at the time—profitless stretches of desert land in the western Sahara, and, in sub-Saharan Africa, the comparatively small country that has been known as Equatorial Guinea since it became independent in 1968. Apart from a few tiny islands, it was made up of the island of Fernando Po, which was named after the Portuguese navigator who discovered it in 1483, and a continental part, Rio Muni, a tiny enclave of thick forest between Cameroon and Gabon. The Spaniards brought those two territories together under a single administration in 1909, although in all major respects, they differ greatly from each other with regard to both their population and their history.[1]

According to the 1960 census, Rio Muni had some 180,000 inhabitants, belonging mainly to the Fang group which is also widely spread in Gabon and Cameroon. The Spaniards did not set foot there until the 1870s. They gained legal possession of the area through a treaty with France in 1900. Actual "pacification" and occupation were not achieved until 1925. The recorded past of Fernando Po and its Bubi population is both longer and more checkered. It was bought by Spain from Portugal in exchange for some territories along the Brazilian border in 1778. Three years later, the Spanish left and the island was used by the British as a base for their anti-slavery patrols and for the resettlement of freed slaves. There was thus a close link between Fernando Po and what was happening during the first half of the century in Freetown for, as René Pélissier points out, "Liberated slaves and Creoles from Sierra Leone gradually constituted an urban nucleus." As the island's cocoa plantations were becoming more and more prosperous, these groups were joined by other African immigrants: men from Lagos, Kru-men from Liberia, Luso-Africans, Fantis from southern Ghana; together they constituted a kind of economic and cultural creole *élite* known as Fernandinos.

Christianity and literacy were introduced by the earliest of the British missionary

[1] For more details, see René Pélissier, *Los Territorios Españoles de Africa* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1964), and "Spanish Guinea: An Introduction," *Race*, 6, 2 (1964), 117–129.

societies, the English Baptists (founded 1792). Although Spain decided to regain control of the island in 1843, the first governor appointed by the Spanish authority was John Beecroft, a British merchant seaman who had taken part in the struggle against the slave trade, and who was later to play some part in the history of Nigeria.[2] But with the appointment of the first Spanish governor in 1858, the Baptist missionaries were expelled,[3] and official British influence came to an end. Nevertheless, as I. K. Sundiata remarked, "throughout the nineteenth century English culture played a dominant role in molding the Fernandino life style, even in the face of a competing model. Only gradually was the culture of the metropole taken on; with great difficulty an Anglophone and Protestant community became Hispanophone and Roman Catholic."[4] As Pélissier put it in 1964, "hispanisation is strongly coloured by an Anglo-Saxon heritage all the more difficult to forget as Bubis and Fernandinos taken together may still constitute a minority (43 per cent in the 1950s) in the midst of a mass of temporary Nigerian labourers who threaten gradually to colonise the island."

These events probably go a long way towards accounting for some of the peculiarities in the literary history of Spanish Africa. The eviction of overt English Protestant influence may be held responsible for the total absence of creative writing in the vernacular languages of Equatorial Guinea. The comparatively greater length of the European presence on Fernando Po accounts to some extent for the fact that nearly ten per cent of the island's population was of European origin by the time independence came, and this undoubtedly bolstered the process of cultural creolization which had been at work from the early years of the nineteenth century. The attention given by the Spanish Catholic authorities to educational matters explains the priority of Fernando Po in the production of a native literature in the Spanish language.

In spite of this, the extreme literary backwardness of those Spanish territories which were by no means lacking in economic resources is not to be denied. Although the Spanish Catholic missionaries—The Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, an order founded in 1849—established their first station on the island in 1883, introduced a printing press in 1901 and started a monthly journal in 1903, they showed little interest in the promotion of native writing, not only in the vernacular, but even in Spanish. During the late 1960s, *La Guinea española* published some local folk tales translated into Spanish by Ramón Perramon, under the title "Literatura bubi". The journal also printed descriptions of Fang life and history written in Spanish by a Fang author from Rio Muni, Marcelo Asistencia Ndongo. But by the time independence was granted, only two novels had been written in Spanish, in spite of the fact that, if we are to believe René Pélissier, by 1964 Spain had succeeded in eradicating illiteracy among her young Fernandian citizens and was attempting to do the same in Rio Muni. Such sluggishness was

[2] Cf. J. D. Fage, *A History of West Africa*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 127.

[3] It was then that the pioneer missionary and linguist Alfred Saker moved across to Cameroon, where he translated the Bible into Duala (1870).

[4] I. K. Sundiata, "Creolization on Fernando Po: The Nature of Society," in *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays*, ed. Marion L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 406.

probably due to the paralysing effect which must have resulted from the co-presence of the two competing models mentioned by Sundiata.

Strangely enough, the first book written in Spanish in Sub-Saharan Africa was the work of a Congolese of Zande origin, Francisco José Mopila, who claims (probably erroneously) to have been born in 1915. He became assistant to a Spanish surgeon who had settled in the area, and so was able to learn Spanish. According to his autobiography, he accompanied his master on a holiday to Spain where he studied fine arts in Madrid and became an occasional movie actor; he travelled a good deal throughout Europe. The first part of his *Memorias de un Congolés* (1949) was published apparently as an ethnographical document by the Instituto de Estudios Africanos. No second part ever reached print. According to his French translators, when his country became independent, Mopila returned home, where he became active in the Ministry of Culture.[5]

As to the first creative work by a Guinean writer, it did not appear until a dozen years later. While its author, Leoncio Evita Enoy (b. 1929), was earning his livelihood as a clerk in Santa Isabel, the capital of Fernando Po, he was not a true Fernandino: he was born in Rio Muni and belongs to one of the smaller coastal tribes of the continent, the Combe, who had been overrun by the Fangs in the course of history. Although his only piece of narrative fiction so far, *Cuando los Combes luchaban* (When the Combe were fighting, 1953) is a historical novel set in the nineteenth century,[6] it does not deal with tribal fighting, but focuses on the struggle of Chief Upolo to retain his power among the Combe against the "leopards" that terrorize his village. It later emerges that these "leopards" are members of a secret sect, the Bueti, which was spread among the Combe by one Mabando.[7] According to Raphael Evita, brother of the writer, the conflict between the Combe and the Bueti reflects a traditional way of settling rivalries between African chiefs,[8] but the novel allots the anecdote a larger significance than this purely individual struggle for power.

Not unexpectedly—but the theme was a novelty in Spanish writing and in Guinea—the basic conflict is between African traditions and the Christian religion, through which European civilization is projected as a possible source of enlightenment for Africans. The Bueti represents unconditional misoneism, and the main character, Penda, who, although a close adviser to Upolo, is in fact a secret leader of the Bueti, repeatedly expresses his distrust of whites whom he accuses of attempting to destroy African traditions. The other side is of course impersonated by Upolo, who soon realizes that he can only remain in power through the willing aid of the Spaniards and of some American missionaries stationed along the banks of the Río Benito. For example, Spaniards lead a make-believe elephant hunt designed to track down the chief's enemies, and an American minister, the Reverend John, acts as a direct spokesman for the chief, which will earn him the glorious title of "brother".

[5] Francisco José Mopila, *Memorias de un Congolés (ensayo de autobiografia)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Estudios Africanos, 1949). The French translation by Jaime Castro-Segovia and Jacques Lanotte is entitled *L'Enfance* (Kinshasa: Editions du Mont Noir, 1972).

[6] Like Mopila's autobiography, Evita's novel was published by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid, presumably also as an ethnographical document.

[7] See on this Antonio de Veciana Vilaldach, *La secta del Bwiti en la Guinea Española* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1958), p. 43.

[8] Personal interview with Raphael Evita in Washington, D. C., 24 August 1978.

Evita does not make the simplistic claim that only evil sorcerers are in favour of tradition and hostile to civilization. When Vilangua, a grandson of Upolo's father-in-law Dyewe, disappears and is believed dead, Dyewe exclaims: "Este infeliz necesitaba aprender las cosas nuevas que esos benditos hombres de otro color nos traen." But an immediate rebuttal comes from his audience: "La civilización de que tanto apetecemos es como una antorcha; alumbra mucho, pero quema todo lo que encuentra a su paso."[9] But all this seems to be a mere device to introduce dramatic tension and a modicum of verisimilitude. The author's own viewpoint, as evidenced in his appraisal of his characters and in the way the action is conducted, is entirely orthodox. Of Upolo's predecessor he says that "A pesar de que Roku era salvaje, despreciaba las creencias del país ... Nunca acudía a las ceremonias de los hechiceros."[10] Poetic justice is very much at work, aided, it is true, by disguised spies painted in red and white, who reveal the designs of the Bueti. Ultimately the Bueti is destroyed as Mabando, its founder, and Penda, its representative at Upolo's court, are both killed by the Combe loyalists. The disappearance of the Bueti removes opposition to European influence and to multiracial harmony. The theme of mutual respect and cooperation between Europeans and Africans dominates the tone of Evita's novel. Indeed, the final message can only be one of harmony among the races since Evita was writing in the early fifties, at a time when "negritude" had not yet become a household word among African intellectuals: hence his concluding admission that the land of the Africans will continue to be controlled by the Europeans.

This first Guinean novel was an excellent example of what Janheinz Jahn was to call *Zöglingsliteratur,* pandering to the innate vainglory of the colonizer, which is undoubtedly one of the reasons why it was published under the imprint of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Carlos Gonzales Exhegaray, went so far as to assert, in his encomiastic preface, that the book "provides evidence of the good relations which always [sic] existed between the Spaniards and the foreign protestant missions in Guinea"; as to Evita's presentation of his Spanish characters, it is supposed to reflect the balanced appraisal of the educated African in whose view "the little temperamental defects of the Spaniards—their hot temper, their impulsive character, their pride" are more than offset by their "fundamental virtues—generosity, faith, simplicity, enthusiasm—and especially their remarkable courage, which has always stirred the natives' enthusiastic admiration."[11] As in many African stories of the colonial period, the ideal character is the old chief, who is proud of his ancestors and of their traditions, but rejects

[9] "This unfortunate one needed to learn the new things that those blessed men of another colour bring us". "The civilization that we desire so much is like a torch: it shines a great deal, yet it burns everything that it meets in its path." Evita, *Cuando los Combes. . .*, pp. 25–26.

[10] "Although Roku was a savage, he despised the beliefs of his country. He never attended the ceremonies of the sorcerers." (Ibid., p. 13.)

[11] "Valga también esta novelita como une prueba de las buenas relaciones que siempra han existido entre los españoles y las misiones protestantes extranjeras en la Guinea, relaciones desar—rolladas siempre en un ambiente de tolerancia, en contra de las falaces insidias que alcunas sectas han querido arrojar sobre la conducta de España en la política religiosa. Y, al mismo tiempo, atestigua la sincera opinión que a un indígena evolucionado, le mercen el carácter y la colonización de los españoles con sus pequeños defectos temperamentales—violencia, irreflexión, orugullo—y sus virtudes fundamentales—generosidad, fe, sencillez, enthusiasmo —, y, especialmente, su denodado valor, que ha sido siempre el imán de la admiración entusiasta de los indígenas." (Ibid., p. 6.).

their more objectionable customs, and is willing to help his people share in the benefits of the civilization brought by the white man.

The next and, as far as is known, latest Guinean novel in Spanish, *Una Lanza por el Boabi* (A spear for the Boabi, Barcelona, 1962), was the work of Daniel Jones Mathama (b. 1913), who belongs to an entirely different social group from Evita's, and who is wrongly described on the title-page as "Primer autor de la Guinea Española". The Joneses were a wealthy creole family who had some impact on the economic and cultural life of Fernando Po. The writer's father, Maximiliano Jones, was a leading cocoa producer. In the early 1920s, the period during which the novel takes place, he was very much concerned with technology and modernization: in 1925 he constructed a thermal electricity-generating plant in the capital—a likely source for one of the most significant incidents in the story. He sent his sons to Europe for their education.[12] While one of them, Adolfo, was trained as an electrical engineer, Daniel Mathama claims that he started his education in Nigeria in 1923, then went on to England in 1925, and did not reach Spain until 1929, which is when he studied Spanish for the first time.[13] Actually, Daniel Jones Mathama also authored several short stories in English, which, he claims, were printed in Irish newspapers. One of them, entitled "I Denied my Father" (1968), deals with a political incident that occurred during the Spanish Civil War.

By the time Mathama started writing his Spanish novel, the ethnic situation in Fernando Po had become one of considerable complexity. While a large influx of Spanish capital and settlers had deprived the creoles of their privileged status, the growth of cheap migrant labour from Nigeria was threatening employment among the Bubi natives. The community of interests between creole and Bubi that was thus created explains to some extent why a novel written by a member of an influential Fernandino family should be chiefly concerned with Bubi mores and problems. But the writer's attitude to the predominantly Bubi society which he is depicting is itself highly ambiguous and typical of the problems encountered by creole communities, whether in Sierra Leone, Liberia or Fernando Po. What a historian of Liberia has noted of black settlers there is also valid for Fernando Po creoles: "the colour of their skins made it important for them to stress the social distance between themselves and the local Africans. The fact that they were not obviously physically different accentuated the fear—shared by other colonial communities—of being submerged in what was to them a barbarous and heathen society."[14] Some such psycho-cultural mechanism is obviously at work in Mathama's attitude towards his story and his characters.

Although his novel is not subtitled, as was Evita's, "novela de costumbres," *Una Lanza por el Boabi* is essentially a documentary on Guinean customs, interspersed with commentaries on the nature of the interaction between Europe and Africa. The didactic intention is especially unmistakable in the first third of the novel, where the author intrudes frequently and clumsily in such obsolete formulas as "If it were possible, dear reader, I would take you by the hand and guide you;" "Friendly reader, I am going to

[12] The history and influence of the Jones family is discussed in I. K. Sundiata, *The Fernandinos: Labor and Community in Santa Isabel de Fernando Po* (Diss., Northwestern University, 1972), p. 346.

[13] Personal letter to Albert Gérard, 2 February 1969.

[14] Merian Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class in Monrovia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 13.

show you the trees from which the natives make their eating utensils;" "Look at that man carefully;" "Don't forget, dear friend, that each village has its own customs." Often his work is a mere cataloguing, devoid of any symbolic meaning, of the fauna and flora of Africa. The landscape of Equatorial Guinea and the customs of the people are meticulously described. Obviously, Jones is writing more for the European reader than he is for the African.

At the same time, however, the author is at pains to draw a clear distinction between the two strata of the society he describes. He devotes several paragraphs to describing in some detail the two types of breakfast: the Fernandino, which strives to comply with European food habits, and the Bubi, which has remained purely African, consisting mainly of fried plantains. But although the Boabi, the enlightened chief of the Bubi, is often praised for his loyalty to the spirit of African custom and although the beauty of the local landscape is often emphasized, favourable references to the people's history and customs are rare. Indeed, negative criticism of Africa increases in intensity as the story unfolds. Cruel practices such as scarification are shown to be common, even though they are outlawed and punished by the Boabi. The whole of the second third of the 300-page novel is devoted to the description and denunciation of a far more disgusting practice. It appears that young village women are systematically seduced by some unknown force which hypnotizes its unsuspecting victims. At the end of the episode, the hypnotizer and his accomplices are identified, but it is also disclosed that most of the village men, who are uniformly characterized as weak and/or villainous, have been remunerating the procurer. Those who refused to have their wives and daughters serve as prizes were forced to pay ransom. Fearing to report their plight to the Boabi, the women suffered the injustice silently, and many of the girls became pregnant without knowing the identity of the fathers of their offspring.

This unacceptable behaviour is first denounced by an educated young man, Edwin, who in effect acts as protagonist in this part of the novel. Returning from his studies in Sierra Leone, and observing the traditional customs in his home town of San Carlos, Edwin, obviously reflecting the author's view, comments to his sister: "Las viejas ideas de las absurdas supersticiones se van desmoronando." His sister considers his remarks almost sacrilegious and replies: "Pero aquí nadie se atreve a reírse de estas cosas." To which the young man retorts almost scoldingly: "Esto se debe exclusivamente al enorme retraso en que aquí se vive."[15] Unfortunately, Edwin's idea of a fair retribution is to inflict retaliation on the men who participated in this organized raping enterprise, thus creating more havoc and more suffering.

The situation is ultimately resolved when the Boabi learns of the disgraceful acts and redresses the dishonour which the victims had experienced as a result of the conspiracy with the hypnotizer-procurer and the sexual assaults by a revengeful Edwin. Due to the Boabi's timely intervention, the women who give birth to children are awarded a monthly sum of money, some male participants in the seductions are jailed,

[15] "The old ideas of the ridiculous superstitions are decaying." "But here no one dares to laugh at these things." "This is due essentially to the backwardness in which the people live." Jones Mathama, *Una Lanza...*, p. 143).

and Edwin is reprimanded and allowed to marry one of the girls threatened in this episode. The Boabi restores order through this distribution of justice to those who suffered injustice, and honour to those who suffered dishonour. Thus, the villagers' faith in the wisdom of the Boabi is strengthened and they vow always to follow his advice: The Boabi triumphs magnificently as a symbol of traditional Africa and is the guardian of harmony in the village. Once more, an African novel extols the stereotype of the wise, moderate chief who manages to control the barbarousness, savagery and general immorality otherwise inherent in the African tradition.

But the Boabi's validity as a symbolic figure of Africa's qualities is chiefly due to his enforcement of Christian notions of morality in ways than can be approved by the European colonizers—not in the ruthless manner practised by Edwin. It also results from the welcome he extends to technological progress: when the Boabi supervises the installation of electricity in San Carlos, he is graced by praises not only from local Europeans, but even from the King of Spain. This aspect of Mathama's message comes to the fore in the third part, mainly centered on the Boabi's son and prospective successor, Gue, who leaves his native island to receive a modern education in Nigeria and Spain.

The duality which implicitly underlies the first two parts of the story can be accounted for in terms of Sundiata's observation to the effect that "The acculturation of creole groups seldom reached the point at which European culture completely effaced its African predecessor. The process was one of synthesis and in many instances African culture predominated. Yet devotion to aspects of a European culture could be tenacious." Although Mathama at times proclaims—and, through the idealized father-figure of the Boabi, impersonates—his respect for and acceptance of African culture, the apparent objectivity of the narration hardly conceals the implicit criticism of African ways. Since it can be assumed that the villagers do not see sin and evil in their scarifications and in their adherence to the secretiveness of their religion, the author-narrator in his negative comments is influenced, of course, by standards outside of the African order. This adamant rejection of African models prepares the way for an unquestioning acceptance of European values. The explanation behind this detached attitude of the author-narrator, a native of the region, becomes evident in the concluding pages of the novel, which concentrate on the respective roles of Europe and Africa as regards the future of African society. Mathama's outlook is generally less monolithic than Evita's. Although he emphasizes the contribution of the Christian missions to the progress of medicine and morality, he is not blind to the egoism and brutality of many European settlers, and he is highly critical of the self-centredness of many African students in Europe. On the other hand, while the lengthy episode of the rape conspiracy illustrates native superstition and coarseness, the book also contains several idyllic descriptions of native life and ascribes some of its corruption to the European example. But as the book comes to a close, the author's main concern clearly appears to be education.

The vital importance of education is the subject of a piece of advice which the novelist quaintly gives not only to Gue,—a character of his own creation, who is probably an impersonation of himself—but to the African reader generally: "Lo más importante y lo primero que debéis hacer es demostrar que valéis, esto se logra instruyén-

dose, úncia forma de poderse situar al nivel del europeo."[16] But a European education inevitably demands the negation of traditional aspects of the African society to which Gue belongs. It is education against supersititions and secret societies, against sacrification, and especially against polygamy: "La educación es base principalísima para frenar en gran parte los instintos raciales de la poligamia, sobre todo la educación cristiana, pilar básico para la más sólida moral en la formación del perfecto hogar[17]". Thus, while it is recognized that modern education gives rise to both social and scientific progress, the emphasis in the novel is on education as the indispensable way towards improving one's status in the eyes of European observers. Similarly, in Diego Jiménez de Enciso's play *Juan Latino,* the sixteenth-century African slave-scholar of Granada was made to proclaim that education will erase the stigma of bondage and colour and make him the equal of his white countrymen:

> "My studious labors shall produce a soul
> As lovely as my body is uncouth.
>
> When I reflected what I was—a black,
> A thing that's bought and sold—and realized
> That honor was not mine, I wished to know,
> Since color is no bar to wisdom's realm.[18]

This is the form of cultural hybridization often referred to as *mestizaje* in Afro-Hispanic writings. Thus the Cuban author Nicolas Guillén, in such socio-political poems as "Balada de los dos abuelos" or "Un son para niños antillanos", endeavours to maintain a balance between the black and the white worlds by setting them on an equal footing. But Richard Jackson, a foremost critic in the field, observes that this so-called mulatto vision often results in the mulatto world serving as a metaphor for the White, with the Black taking a secondary role.[19] Mathama's novel confirms this appraisal: after embarking on what seems to be an apology for the African reality, the author feels unable to admit its worth and its values: he ends with what is in effect a condemnation of the black component in the dual Afro-Hispanic society created in Fernando Po by the meeting between Africa and the West.

In the concluding pages, an older Gue, thoroughly matured by his studies in Nigeria and in Spain, celebrates the progress achieved in Guinea under the Spaniards. Amazed and pleased with the advancement in his home town, he remarks that the village has lost many of its aspects of the past. The Boabi is dead and the one obvious remnant of the past is a pathway that leads to a monument erected to his memory. There is symbolic

[16] "The most important and the first thing that you must do is to prove that you are worthy: this can be achieved by educating yourself, it is the only way to place yourself at the level of the European." Ibid., p. 161.

[17] "Education is the principal base to hold largely in check the racial instincts towards polygamy, above all Christian education, the basic pillar for a more vigorous morality and the formation of the perfect home." Ibid., p. 274.

[18] Translation in V. B. Spratlin, *Juan Latino: Slave and Humanist* (New York: Spinner Press, 1936), pp. 104, 109.

[19] Richard L. Jackson, *The Black Image in Latin American Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), pp. 1–4.

significance (in all likelihood unintended) in the disappearance of the old chief, who was so impressively representative of Africa's potentialities through his strength and wisdom, and his sense of honour and justice. Gue merely serves as a recipient for European values, and meekly praises the excellent school system and the magnificent hospital established by the Spanish government which he commends for its contributions to education and religion.

It is ironically significant that 1962, the year when Jones Mathama's novel appeared, was also the year when Admiral Carrero Blanco pledged that "Spain would put no obstacle in the way of negotiating the future of the two provinces with their inhabitants," and when two political leaders "claimed independence and denounced Spanish domination and colonialism" from their exile in Gabon and Cameroon.[20] The "provinces" became independent in 1968 as the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, whose later fate further compounded the irony.

For, as Sundiata coldly observed in 1976, "The mainland Fang are, unfortunately for the insular élite, in the majority. The black élite has witnessed the exodus of its former European patrons and is viewed suspiciously by the new government. The traditional masses have emerged and are attempting to escape the consequences of creolization. Old forms are consciously disparaged; the new government has noted that formerly 'education was cast in European models and did not correspond to the necessities of African countries'. The cry of the government has become: Cultura sí, pero africanizada! Rejection of white political authority often involves a conscious rejection of European models."[21] The extreme paucity of creative writing in Spanish during the colonial period, and its total absence since independence, do not augur well for the future of literature in a European language in that unfortunate part of the Black continent.

[20] Pélissier, "Spanish Guinea," p. 125.
[21] See Kilson and Rotberg, *African Diaspora*, p. 413.

PART TWO

BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

To describe this second phase of the history of African literature in European languages, the phrase "black consciousness" is used in commemoration of the martyrdom of Steve Biko, who gave it wide currency among South African "non-whites" during the early 1970s. Actually, of course, being conscious and proud of himself, of his group, of his language, of his being and his beliefs and his doings, has always been the normal state of the African: this is overabundantly attested in traditional African arts and oral traditions; indeed, a considerable part of the latter consists of praise-poems and heroic tales exuding self-confidence. It is also noteworthy that practitioners of vernacular writing have always devoted a large proportion of their activity to committing their folk tales, songs and proverbs to the permanence of the printed pages. It goes without saying, however, that creative writing in European languages could not arise in Africa until the black subcontinent, or at least part of it, or perhaps even merely some sections of its population, had been submitted to, indeed overwhelmed by, the alien influence of the white man. Nevertheless, some of the writings that have been discussed so far demonstrate most decisively that many among the Africans of that period who had been privileged to receive a modicum of education enabling them to become articulate in book form, were aware of their separate identity as members of a culture different from the white world's. In other words, black consciousness was by no means totally absent from their mental make-up.

An American economist who has the distinction of paying due attention to anthropology and social psychology, Everett E. Hagen, has argued that the main operative force behind rapid culture change (as distinct from the slow, century-long, natural evolution of any social group) is an experience which he grandly calls "withdrawal of status respect", which is a peculiar form of contempt. His argument runs as follows:

> The satisfaction derived by an individual from his activity in life depends in part on the status associated with it. That status shall be satisfying requires not that it is high but merely that it is deemed appropriate by the person occupying it and is respected by others .... One's status derives not only from one's economic function, however, but from all that one does and believes, all of one's relationships to other persons and to the unseen forces in which one believes .... One's status, that is, is one's identity: it includes one's purposes and values in life.

The root of the black man's experience insofar as he has been exposed to the harsh workings of world history during the last few centuries has been this sense of withdrawal of status respect, this awareness of contempt, "the perception on the part of the members of some social group that their purposes and values in life are not respected by groups in the society whom they respect and whose esteem they value."[1]

In the course of a half millennium, more and more important segments of Africa's population became gradually exposed and subjected to the vastly superior, indeed the irresistible, strength of Western man. Gradually, the unformulated assumption underlying oral art and even much of pre-colonial writing, namely the African's organic sense of a worthwhile identity, both private and collective, became challenged and effectively undermined not only by the sheer power of European technological achievement, but even more effectively, perhaps, by the overt contempt that went with the slave trade until the end of the eighteenth century, and especially with late nineteenth-century colonial imperialism.

To this depressing experience, ordinary illiterate, powerless men and women both in Africa and in the Diaspora, would respond, when the oppression and humiliation became unbearable, with the many rebellions which historians are now discovering as they turn new, unprejudiced eyes towards the past. These rebellions, more numerous and more ferocious than was usually acknowledged at the time, give the lie to the once common image of the negro as a naturally submissive being, deprived of any personality, expressly created by God to serve his white masters. They are evidence for the continued existence of a black consciousness, i.e. of a pride that refused to accept the white man's derisive appraisal. It took the form of more articulate self-awareness in the folk art, in the blues of the western hemisphere, in the historical tales that went on being produced in Africa. This oral art often reflects a sense of hurt pride or of undeserved tragic fate; it seldom reflects the alienation which results from the acceptance and internalization of criteria that disparage the once glorified values of the group.

Alienation applied to a minority within black society: to those who were in closer contact with the white man, who were in a position to imbibe some of his ways, who had a glimpse of the main sources of his superior power: education and its corollaries, language and religion. This was the so-called "intellectual élite," from whose ranks writers are recruited. And while it is with this tiny minority that we are concerned as literary historians, we should never forget that its ideals and purposes, however well-meant they may have been, did not necessarily represent the leanings and aspirations of the mass of the black people. For the chief ambition of this élite, or at any rate, of most of its few members, was to escape their alienation and their inferior status by becoming assimilated into white society, by adopting the white man's beliefs and values, his dual cult of Christ and Mammon, by enjoying the fruits of his educational system, by imitating his behaviour in every conceivable way. This was the Booker T. Washington trend, and most black writing in Africa, in America and in the West Indies, was its literary reflection: more than a century after Phyllis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammon, a contemporary of Washington, Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), dedicating his poet-

[1] Everett E. Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change* (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1962), p. 185.

ry to the black man, still made him consonant with the white man's image of the Negro: an inferior being who accepts his underprivileged status and lives in picturesque primitiveness. As to Dunbar's first three novels, they dealt with white characters involved in conventional middle-class plots. It was not until his last novel, *Sport of the Gods* (1902), that Dunbar chose Harlem for his setting and introduced black characters that were no longer comic or bathetic, good-natured and resigned, but who lived in a realistic context of social protest. This was a bold innovation at the time. Indeed, throughout the century, French-speaking writers in the West Indies, especially in Haiti, had obstinately copied, sometimes with considerable skill, the poetic techniques that were becoming old-fashioned in Paris, without attempting in any way to transfer their own black experience and identity to their creative works.

In fact, the actual materialization of "black consciousness," a genuine attempt to re-assess black culture and to define its value rationally, had first occurred in West Africa and was best represented by the multifarious activity of Blyden. These efforts came to nothing because of the hardening of colonial racialism in the late nineteenth century. But this evolution did not have the same form or the same intensity everywhere. It seems that British administration, with its system of indirect rule, made it possible to preserve African cultures and even African forms of authority; its educational policy, exemplified in the foundation of such quality schools as Fort Hare in South Africa or Achimota in the Gold Coast, both enabled political thinkers to be more explicitly and overtly articulate, and made for less alienation among the few creative talents that arose during the first half of the twentieth century. The French policy of strict centralization, its proclaimed ideal of total assimilation for the élite, its contemptuous rejection of vernacular languages, undoubtedly made for greater alienation, but at the same time, African intellectuals educated in French universities in the 1930s received the sophisticated training in abstract thought that enabled them to elaborate, with greater success than Blyden, a coherent, systematic description of African culture, and this, under the name of "negritude," was to play an extremely important role both in the political emancipation of Africa and in the extraordinary growth of African creative writing from the middle of the century. It is only fair, however, to recall that while negritude was still merely a subject for heated discussions among black intellectuals in Paris, Portuguese Africa had coined the word "caboverdianidade" which implied a very clear and explicit awareness of justified pride and worthy identity in at least one part of Portugal's African empire: there is little doubt that this pre-eminence should be ascribed to the peculiar quality of race relations between the Portuguese and the coloured peoples that were subjected to them.

All the same, literary manifestations of black consciousness—oral art on both sides of the Atlantic, the early writings in English from West Africa, the inchoative attempts at conceptualization in Portuguese Africa—remained ephemeral and strictly localized until World War II, in the same way as political attempts at fostering Panafricanism remained limited to a handful of vocal black intellectuals mainly from the western hemisphere. And a large part of the creative writing produced in Black Africa until the middle of the twentieth century certainly belonged to what Jahn was to call, with perhaps not entirely deserved contempt, *Zöglingsliteratur*. It was the manifold upheavals result-

ing from the war in all fields of human activity—economic, social, political, cultural, literary—which provided an opportunity for black consciousness to come out into the open with the combination of articulateness and publicity necessary to pave the way for the political and cultural emancipation of the continent. The juxtaposition of a few dates is more symbolic than just coincidental: after a lapse of nearly twenty years, the traditional Panafrican conferences were resumed in 1945: like those of Paris (1919), London (1921 and 1923), and New York (1927), the Manchester conference was convened by Dr. W. E. B. DuBois from the United States; but an important part was played in the proceedings not only by George Padmore from Trinidad, but also by such African leaders and thinkers as Kwame Nkrumah from the Gold Coast, Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya and Peter Abrahams from South Africa. Barely two years later, Alioune Diop from Senegal, was launching *Présence Africaine* and the publishing house of the same name, and in 1948 Léopold Sédar Senghor edited his *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française,* where the operative word was of course "nouvelle," in implicit contrast with both the oral folk art of Africa and with the weakly imitative versifiers that had originated in the French West Indies.[2] The significance of the anthology was both defined and enhanced by Jean-Paul Sartre's famous preface, "Orphée noir."

A dozen years after the Manchester conference, political evolution in British West Africa led to the independence of Ghana, which itself heralded the dismantling of Britain's African empire: in less than a decade, the whole of British Africa was to become independent, with the exception of South Africa and Rhodesia. But this momentous event had been preceded by the first conference of black writers and artists, held at the Sorbonne in September 1956. This was not just a francophone manifestation as Senghor's anthology had been: the conference was attended by such lusophone poets as Mário de Andrade and by black American writers like Richard Wright, not to mention a few English-speaking authors such as Peter Abrahams. In spite of the heated polemic that was bound to show Richard Wright in opposition to the spiritualistic outlook of a Senghor, the Paris conference was crucial in creating, among African and West Indian writers at any rate, the sense of a common struggle, the awareness of a common mission and the hope of a common victory.[3] For a time, it also gave worldwide currency to the word "negritude" as an apposite hieroglyph for the values of the black world, as the carefully articulate and therefore deeply convincing philosophy that systematized the Black man's *Weltanschauung* in a perfectly coherent and universally acceptable way.

The course of Africa's literary history was to show that the negritude concept, although it is now generally abandoned as pure myth, was the central dynamic factor, the radiating nucleus, the *idée-force,* which released the imaginative energies of a number

[2] Senghor's anthology, which has now been reprinted (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), contained about a hundred poems. Of these, more than half (62) were by West Indian poets; Madagascar and the African continent have each about twenty pieces by three poets. These proportions are extremely significant as regards the comparative status of the various segments of the francophone black world in the late forties. Equally significant is the fact that the three African poets—Birago Diop, David Diop, and of course Senghor himself—were Senegalese.

[3] A full report of the conference was published in *Présence Africaine,* 8/9/10 (June–November 1956), an issue which is a fundamental document in the intellectual history of African emancipation.

of African writers, first in French and later in English: it encouraged lusophone poets in the determination to define and proclaim their African identity which had for a long time been manifest in Cape Verde and in Angola, and it bolstered their striving for political emancipation. But although negritude undoubtedly provided most of the impetus that was to lead to the rapid growth of European-language writing in sub-Saharan Africa throughout the last quarter-century, it was not unanimously accepted by Negro intellectuals, whether in Africa or in the Diaspora. In fact, while Marxist opposition was overt from the very beginning, the educated class throughout British Africa also showed considerable reluctance in accepting the somewhat nebulous abstractedness of the negritude concept. In British West Africa this was probably due to the lesser degree of alienation resulting from indirect rule, from the existence of educated professional classes of long standing, from Protestant respect for and active interest in the vernacular languages, and from other, similar aspects of local experience. An entirely different attitude prevailed among South African blacks and other non-whites: indeed, for this fairly numerous, largely urbanized intellectual section of the South African population, negritude could only spell regression, an unacceptable return to tribal societies, their obsolete beliefs and mores, in brief, it implied an ominous degree of compliance with the apartheid policy of maintaining the inferior status of the non-whites by allegedly preserving their traditional identity. When Peter Abrahams attended the Paris conference, he had been an exile for nearly twenty years, out of touch with the increasingly harsh realities of the black predicament in South Africa. And when his contemporary Ezekiel Mphahlele fled to exile in 1957, the year after the Paris conference, he became known, as soon as he arrived in Nigeria, as a determined opponent of the negritude ideology.

The peculiar situation in the then Union of South Africa, thus gave black consciousness there a specific orientation, which went through three stages: while Abrahams and the few English-language non-white writers of his generation were intent on calling the attention of South African and world opinion to the injustices of racial segregation and man's inhumanity to man in the Union, presumably in the hope that sincere eloquence and sweet reasonableness were capable of leading to desirable change, the generation that came to the fore in the early sixties responded in anger and verbal rage to the constraints of apartheid which had been increasing since the victory of stark racialism in the 1948 elections. In response to ever heavier repression, leading up to the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the elegiac tone which had been characteristic of Black South African writing was gradually replaced by anger and even rage in the vast amount of short fiction that appeared at the time. When this also proved useless—as was to be expected—in the face of Nationalist determination to maintain white supremacy unaltered, many a South African writer in exile began to advocate violence and open rebellion. This is ominously exemplified in the case history of Ezekiel Mphahlele, who is probably South Africa's best-known "man of letters": a short-story writer, a novelist and a critic, he has done more than any other single person to encourage the development of English writing throughout Africa, from Nigeria to Kenya and Zambia. As with many another South African writer, the greater part of his work shows that in spite of the black people's sufferings and rage, he had been hoping for some sort of peaceful arrangement, of

orderly harmony and fairness between that unfortunate country's various racial groups. By the early seventies, however, he had been compelled to argue as follows:

> I say in *The African Image* that I cannot think of a South without the white population, that their destiny and ours are interlocked. This can of course only be realized *after a bloody revolution*. The black man will have no mercy, and rightly so. White technicians will still be required by a black government.[4]

Equally eloquent is the example of Jordan N. Ngubane (b. 1917), a Zulu author who had used his native language for a historical novel about the rapid destruction of African culture in Zululand during the first decade of the century. After moving to Swaziland in 1962, he settled in the United States in 1969. It was while teaching at Howard University, Washington, D.C., that he composed *Ushaba* (1974), a very strange work combining features that might have been borrowed from narrative fiction, historical writing, journalistic pamphleteering and revolutionary thinking; but Ngubane calls it an *umlando*, which he describes as a "form of narrative used by the ancient Zulus when they talked to themselves about themselves," as "a vehicle for developing the collective wisdom or strength of the family, the clan or the nation," as "a story of ideas in action," in which "the Zulu poet moves action freely from the present to the past and the future with what looks like a total disregard for the time-unity."[5] The point is, however, that the book exudes unconcealed hatred for the Afrikaner ruling class, and contempt for the white man's civilization; in an urgent call for African unity, Ngubane insistently invites all black workers to go on strike so as to destroy, by withdrawing their cheap labour, the very foundation of the white man's comfort, prosperity and power; with terrifying—yet understandable—equanimity, he views the prospect of the blood-bath that would be necessary for the total eviction of the white man from South Africa. Yet, perhaps the most startling novelty of Ngubane's work—at any rate in our present context—is his repeated advocacy of a return to an outlook which he calls *Buntu*, and which is alleged to be the philosophical outlook commanding the principles of traditional, pre-colonial behaviour. Closer scrutiny might reveal little difference between this and Senghor's "values of the black world."

At the moment of writing (1979), it is impossible to decide whether Ngubane's *umlando* is just a freak of history, or whether it will prove to have heralded a new, significant phase in the evolution of the black mind in the Republic of South Africa. The paradoxical fact remains that throughout the quarter-century that followed the war, South African blacks—who, incidentally, had a considerably higher rate of literacy than prevailed anywhere else on the continent—and their writers, saw little point in negritude and its appeal to traditional values. The so-called "civilisation de l'universel" after which it was supposed to hanker, necessarily appeared to them, in their conflictual situation, as a mockery, and its "regressive" tenets as a real threat to their own emancipation. In their increasingly activist stance, necessitated by the growing aggressive violence of white

[4] Unreferenced quotation in Don E. Herdeck, *African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing 1300–1973* (Washington, D.C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1973), p. 255. My italics.

[5] Jordan N. Ngubane, *Ushaba* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1974), pp. 2, 5.

supremacy, they could not but resent negritude as a potential ideological weapon in the service of the Bantustan policy of the R.S.A. authorities.

The years that followed the end of World War II thus formed, for the greater part of sub-Saharan Africa, a period of transition from colonial status to the achievement of black power, or political independence. This transition took various forms, according to the diversity of the colonial regimes. And its duration has been of unequal length: independence was achieved during the early sixties in French, Spanish and Belgian Africa as well as in the greater part of British Africa; it had to wait until the mid-seventies in Portuguese Africa and until 1980 in Zimbabwe; majority rule has not yet been achieved in the R.S.A. There was and still is a similar variety in the literary expressions proper to such a transition period. But the ideological phenomenon which proved decisive on the continental scale and which had the most momentous consequences for literary output was negritude.

CHAPTER VI

NEGRITUDE

The fairly straightforward purpose of negritude has always been to formalize spontaneous black consciousness into articulate self-awareness so as to promote the African's sense of his own value. Yet the history of negritude is fraught with paradoxes, the most obvious and intriguing of which is perhaps the fact that it was hatched, born, and propagated in and from Paris: although the theory contains few ideas that were not already present in the writings of Blyden and his West African contemporaries, no direct affiliation has been traced between both movements. It is therefore necessary to enquire why France of the 1930s provided a peculiarly favourable environment for the elaboration of a theory of black culture by Senghor and Césaire. In the first place, a careful reading of Senghor's theoretical writings shows most conclusively that much of their compelling persuasiveness derived from the author's typically French academic training. Nowhere but in France could Senghor have acquired the habits of mind which come so obviously to the fore in his analytical thinking and in his prose writings: the need for precise, logical reasoning and for clear, lucid, economical exposition. But although Senghor's rhetoric may hold a distinguished place in an essentially French tradition, the concepts which were thus elaborated and formulated could only mature because they grew and developed in a specific climate which extended beyond the boundaries of French learning and literature.

ALBERT S. GÉRARD

1. THE WESTERN MOOD

For all its apparently startling novelty, the concept of negritude was generated by a systematic, rational, indeed Cartesian, application of several important trends in European culture to the specific problem of African identity. It resulted from a slow development of the Western image of the Negro, the starting-point and the earliest coherent expression of which is to be found in the *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* that the Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882) began writing in 1850.[6]

To sum up very briefly, it may be said that Gobineau in his classificatory zeal, put the black race at the bottom of the human scale because nature had allegedly deprived it of the higher intellectual faculties best represented in the Teutonic branch of the white race. The black man was, therefore, entirely subjected to the irrational impulses of instinct, emotion and the imagination: hence his ineptitude in connection with the more positive achievements of civilization, material and intellectual; hence, too, his peculiar sensitiveness to art, and especially to the least rational of all arts, music.

About a century later, the negritude school was to base its reappraisal of Negro identity and culture exactly on the racial characteristics which Gobineau had defined as the stigma of its inferiority. According to Senghor, it was precisely because of his irrationality, because of his gift for emotion and of his instinctive communion with nature and the spiritual world, that the Negro was bound to play a worthy and indeed decisive, role in healing the evils of white civilization. This dramatic reversal was not merely the result of a semantic trick on the part of the negritude thinkers. On the contrary, it was implicit in various developments in Western culture.

First in time came the contribution of modern anthropology, the beginnings of which reach back to Charles Darwin (1809–1892). Slightly older than Gobineau, Darwin was a genuine scientist whose work revolutionized biological thinking at many levels. Traditional biology had been concerned with description and classification. Gobineau's definition of the black race may be more subtle than Linnaeus' description of *homo Afer* as cunning, slow, negligent and ruled by caprice, but it was the outcome of the same

[6] See Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 vols. (Paris: Didot, 1853–1855). It is of some interest to note that the first foreign translation was an English version of the first volume, published in the United States just a few years before the civil war under the title, *The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1956). But racialism was a preoccupation in England as well, as witness Robert Knox (1791–1862), *The Races of Men* (London: Renshaw, 1850).

polygenetic concept of human races created separately, each with its own distinguishing features and mental endowments, each with its own unchangeable stance on a fixed ladder, the upper steps of which were gloriously occupied by the white man. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) inaugurated a dynamic, evolutionary viewpoint, based on the principle that the various forms of life all evolved from simple one-celled organisms through infinitely varied processes. More specifically, in *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin claimed that modern primitive societies are vestigial remnants of a way of life which the more civilized peoples have outgrown. He thus transferred the concept of evolution from the field of biology and of physical organisms to that of sociology and human communities. From then on, so-called "primitive" cultures held special fascination for social scientists, who started studying them in the hope of finding a key to the genesis of modern civilization.

It was along those lines that modern anthropology was launched by Theo Waitz (1821–1864) with his *Anthropologie der Naturvölker* (1859–1871) in Germany, and by E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) with his *Primitive Culture* (1871) in England. While Tylor kept to Darwin's opinion that primitive peoples represented elementary stages of social organization, only traces of which could be found in the folklore of civilized societies, he firmly advocated the principle of the psychical unity of mankind. He held that all men share the same faculties, rational and irrational, the same type of intellect, the same need for rational explanations of their fate and environment; the difference was that limited knowledge prevented the "primitive" mind from elaborating explanations of a scientific type.

Consequently, a generation of major European scholars born in the 1850s—James G. Frazer (1854–1914), Sigmund Freud (1850–1939), Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1930) and Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)—made constant use of ethnological data in order to account for the genesis of the social and psychological forces and processes at work in modern man. Their approach rested on the notion that the main difference between modern and primitive societies was that the former are more complex and therefore more difficult to analyse and understand. Indeed, this led Lévy-Bruhl—in *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910)—to depart from Tylor's principle of the psychic unity of mankind. In his opinion, the difference between primitive and civilized thought was one of kind rather than of degree. Primitive thinking was dominated by two main factors. One was the law of participation: primitive man, he claimed, does not experience his individuality as separate from the surrounding universe of things, men and the gods; the world he feels himself part of is a vast living whole animated by a constant flow of intercommunication between man and nature, the individual and his society, the living and the dead. The other factor was primitive man's allegedly pre-logical mentality; he does not share in the basic assumption of rational logic, the principle of identity; feeling as it does intimately bound up with all other things, natural and supernatural (a distinction which it does not make), the primitive mind is unable to frame abstract, generalized concepts derived from detached analysis of objective evidence.

Although Lévy-Bruhl referred to primitive man in general, and not specially to the negro mind, his views were (in an obviously limited sense) an elaboration of Gobineau's racial definition, and they were likewise to be exploited by the proponents of negritude

for their own, highly different purposes. It is noteworthy, however, that in the conclusion of his book Lévy-Bruhl reverted to the evolutionist outlook which he had seemed to discard, and acknowledged that societies do change, that a sense of individuality is something that can grow, and that it is possible for mental functions to pass gradually from the pre-logical to the logical phase.

For all their interest in primitive cultures, the outlook of that generation of scientists was based on a fundamental premise: the belief that Western civilization represented progress, the unchallenged assurance that primitive societies represented inferior, elementary stages in the evolution of mankind. This ethnocentric assumption was brought into question through the influence of two thinkers who probably did more than any others to change the mind and mores and the self-appraisal of Western man: Sigmund Freud, and his French contemporary Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Freud's scientific and therapeutic concern with the unconscious led the popular mind to a revulsion against the taboos and inhibitions of traditional morality, and to an overt revaluation of instinctual life freed of Victorian restraint. Whereas Freud disavowed the popular inferences which were drawn from his teaching in the sphere of practical morality (or immorality), Bergson deliberately set out to undermine the basic premise of modern scientific and philosophical thought; while Freud was emphasizing the importance of the unconscious as opposed to man's conscious mental activities, Bergson attacked the primacy of abstract reasoning in the name of intuition: intuition was supposed to be living knowledge because it meant a quasi-mystical identification of object and subject. The kinship with Lévy-Bruhl's concept of participation will be obvious.

Whether they intended it or not, the net effect of Freud's and Bergson's research and doctrines was to dissolve the belief in the primacy of reason—rational control of instinctive impulses, abstract knowledge through rational logic—which was Western man's chief claim to cultural superiority over primitive people. Actually, Bergson's intuitionism and Freud's psychoanalysis were effects as much as they were causes of mental change in the Western world. As the nineteenth century wore on, a small but influential élite became more and more diffident about Western man's scientific and technological supremacy. Literary, artistic and scientific interest in the eastern cultures of India, China and Japan, was symptomatic of an increasing willingness to suspend such overall value judgements. This, ultimately, was to lead to cultural relativism in the sphere of scientific anthropology. In the more speculative areas of European thought, World War I and its aftermath bent this trend in the direction of a truly apocalyptic vision of the fate of Western civilization, as exemplified in the notorious work of Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918–1922).

With regard to Africa, the new approach to non-Western cultures had been adumbrated by one of Gobineau's contemporaries, the German traveller, scientist and missionary Heinrich Barth (1821–1865). One of the greatest European explorers, he had travelled extensively across the continent during the early 1850s, and the four volumes of his *Reisen und Entdeckungen in Nord- und Central-Afrika* (1857–1858)[7] show him to

[7] A five-volume English version was published simultaneously in London and New York under the title *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*. The French translation appeared in 1860–1861.

have been aware of the refined complexities of Sudanic societies, emphasizing their political and administrative organization and the value of their artistic achievements. At the time, Barth's was an isolated voice. But already in the last decade of the nineteenth century, whole-scale systematic reassessment of African cultures was undertaken with Teutonic thoroughness and profundity by Leo Frobenius (1873–1938). After his early work on Africa, Frobenius was strongly influenced by the new *Kulturwissenschaft*, which viewed cultures as living organisms, each of them a self-contained whole with its own identity, its own rationale; value judgements were therefore irrelevant. In 1911, Frobenius stated that "the concept of the 'savage negro' is a European figment." Later, comparative study led him to a morphology of cultures that cut across geographical and racial boundaries. In his *Schicksalskunde im Sinne des Kulturwerdens* (1932), he expatiated as follows:

> The West created English realism and French rationalism: the East, the German mystique.... The harmony with related civilizations in Africa is complete. The *sense of fact* in French, English and Hamitic civilizations—*sensing of the real* in German and Ethiopian civilizations.[8]

Whatever the value of such wide generalizations, based as they were on little that could pass for scientific knowledge, that work, and Frobenius' *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* (1933), were soon translated into French and so came to figure, in Senghor's words, "among the sacred books for a whole generation of black African students."[9]

These developments in the European image of Africa were of a scientific and/or philosophical character and did not affect more than a restricted élite in the West until the Negro suddenly invaded two other, more popular areas of Western civilization.

About 1905, a group of young avant-garde French artists – most notably Vlaminck (1876–1958), Matisse (1869–1954), Derain (1880–1954), and Picasso (1881–1973)—discovered African masks and statuettes kept as exotic souvenirs in *bistrots* along the Seine, or preserved in a dusty, forgotten room of the Trocadéro Museum. As Picasso was to put it half a century later, "the discovery of African sculpture coincided with the kind

[8] "Der Westen verlieh dem Ausdruck im Realismus Englands, dem Rationalismus Frankreichs, der Osten in der Mystik Deutschlands... Die Übereinstimmung mit den entsprechenden Kulturen Afrikas ist hierin eine vollkommene. *Tatsachensinn in der französischen, englischen und hamitischen—Wirklichkeitssinn in der deutschen und äthiopischen Kultur!*" Leo Frobenius, *Schicksalskunde im Sinne des Kulturwerdens* (Leipzig: Voigtländer, 1932), pp. 109–110. Frobenius' terminology is of course uncommonly nebulous; it is clear, however, that what he calls "Hamitic" civilizations are those of West Africa, while "Ethiopian" civilizations are supposed to prevail in Central Africa. Black students in Paris could read the French version, *Le Destin des civilisations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940). For recent discussions of Frobenius' image of Africa, see J. M. Ita, "Frobenius, Senghor and the Image of Africa" in *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies*, ed. R. Horton and Ruth Finnegan (London: Faber, 1973), pp. 306–366; Janheinz Jahn, *Leo Frobenius: The Demonic Child* (Austin, Texas; African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center, 1974); Hugo Dyserinck, "Die Quellen der Negritude-Theorie als Gegenstand komparatistischer Imagologie," *Komparatistische Hefte*, 1 (1980), 31–40; and Jürgen C. Winter, "Leo Frobenius' Image of Africa: An Ethnologist's Work and Ethnology's View of it," Ibid., 2 (1980), 72–91.

[9] Leo Frobenius, *Histoire de la civilisation africaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936) was already referred to in Senghor's essay "Ce que l'homme noir apporte," published in a collection entitled *L'Homme de couleur* (Paris: Plon, 1939). This was later reprinted in L. S. Senghor, *Liberté 1: Négritude et humanisme*, (Paris: Seuil, 1964), pp. 22–38, but see especially "Les leçons de Leo Frobenius" in *Liberté 3: Négritude et civilisation de l'Universel*, (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 398–404. On Senghor's relation to Frobenius, and to German thought in general; see Martin Steins, "Léopold Sédar Senghor und Deutschland," *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, 29, 2 (1979), 225–242.

of thing we were searching for."[10] Whereas Maurice de Vlaminck was impressed by the treatment of color on masks from the Guinea Coast, Picasso and the Cubists were more interested in the African way of manipulating shapes and volumes and stylizing the human figure. First to show genuine sensitiveness to the religious implications of this "primitive" art was a young French poet of the same generation, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918). The vogue for African art spread with such speed among the artistic set in Paris that in 1917 Apollinaire could legitimately speak of "melanophilia" and even "melanomania"![11] A further step was taken in 1919 when the first commercial, as distinct from scientific, exhibition of African sculpture was organized in Paris by a private gallery.

The same phenomenon, cutting across the divisions of World War I, occurred almost simultaneously, though on a smaller scale, in Germany. Already in 1904, Kirchner (1880–1938) had admired the austere shapes and simple lines of primitive sculptures from Africa and Oceania in the Dresden ethnographic museum. He was to found *Die Brücke* in 1905. And in 1912, photographs of African masks and statuettes appeared in *Der blaue Reiter* published in Munich by Wassili Kandinsky (1860–1944). The first book-length study of African art was Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik* (1915).[12]

While painters and sculptors were thus finding fresh inspiration in African plastic art, Negro music had crossed the Atlantic. In fact, it was in Europe that jazz gained recognition as a new, serious form of musical art, and not just the minor kind of jocular entertainment which it was held to be in the United States.[13] When Louis Mitchell and his orchestra performed in London in 1914–1915, they not only gained immediate popular success: they were also graced with the Prince of Wales' special attention; and the Liberal *Daily Chronicle* pronounced—rather startlingly, considering the times—that Mitchell's "Syncopated Band" brought "new blood into the cultured music of Western civilization"! After the war, Mitchell crossed to the Continent and enjoyed huge success in Paris, first at the Casino, and later at the select Grand Duc night club, which was patronized by royalty and other distinguished personages from all over Europe; the

[10] For a detailed account of this process, see Jean Laude, *La Peinture française (1905–1914) et "l'art nègre"* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968).

[11] Guillaume Apollinaire, "La vie anecdotique," *Mercure de France*, 120 (1917), 557–561. It is in this little unassuming piece of social gossip that Apollinaire observed, almost casually, that "depuis quelques années, des artistes [,] des amateurs d'art ont cru pouvoir s'intéresser aux idoles de l'Afrique et de l'Océanie au point de vue purement artistique et en faisant abstraction du caractère surnaturel qui leur était attribué par les artistes qui les sculptèrent et les croyants qui leur rendaient hommage." This penetrating observation, which seems to have eluded Jean Laude, clarifies the two lines about the "fétiches d'Océanie et de Guinée" in Apollinaire's poem of 1913, "Zone":

Ils sont les Christs d'une autre forme et d'une autre croyance
Ce sont les Christs inférieurs des obscures espérances.

Even Michel Decaudin, in "Guillaume Apollinaire devant l'art nègre," *Présence Africaine*, No. 2 (1948), 317–324, fails to point out the poet's remarkable perception of the religious significance of African art.

[12] For more information on the influence of African art on German sculpture and painting, see W. Grohmann, *Bildende Kunst zwischen den beiden Kriegen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1953), H. M. Wingler, *Die Brücke* (Feldafing: Buchheim, 1954), W. Hofmann, *Zeichen und Gestalt. Die Malerei des XX. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1957), and Werner Haftmann *et al., German Art of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1957).

[13] Most jazz historians understandably concentrate on its origin and diffusion in the United States. For the introduction of jazz music to Europe, and the response it elicited, see Robert Goffin, *Jazz, from the Congo to the Metropolitan* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1944) and *Nouvelle histoire du jazz* (Brussels: l'Ecran du monde, 1948).

doorman of this establishment was a young American black named Langston Hughes. The hectic enthusiasm aroused by those early jazz performances was best conveyed by Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) who in 1919 hailed blues and ragtime for their infectious broken rhythm, their noisy, instinctive savagery, their melancholy and cruelty.

During the first quarter of the century, then, a new image of Africa and of the Negro took shape in Western Europe. At the same time, important changes occurred in the literature of the American Diaspora, which was to exert considerable influence on the negritude poets.

In the United States, part of the aftermath of the Civil War and of the Reconstruction period was the increasing revulsion of young black intellectuals against the policy of assimilation which was advocated by such older men as Booker T. Washington (1850–1915). As mentioned earlier, the last novel of Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Sport of the Gods* (1902) was at the very least a token of the Negro writer's incipient recognition that the experience of his race was valid material for imaginative literature. Dunbar's inspiration was specifically American, but awareness of Africa was soon injected into Negro thought and poetry from two directions. First, as early as 1897, W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963) had realized that "If the Negro were to be a factor in the world's history, it would be through a Pan-Negro movement."[14] Through his publications at the beginning of the century, through his participation in the First World Races Congress (London, 1911) and in the Pan-African Congress held in Paris in 1919, DuBois did more than any other leader to impress upon the minds of black Americans some sense of solidarity with the Negroes of Africa, the sense of a common oppression to be shaken.

While DuBois's main concern was with political action and the emancipation of the black race, Africa first appeared as a literary theme in the works of a noted white poet of the day, Vachel Lindsay (1879–1930), of whom it was once said that "No other writer will have done so little with so much ability."[15] His lengthy jangling poem strangely entitled "The Congo (A Study of the Negro Race)" was a compendium of the exotic commonplaces connoted by the word "Congo;" it described an Africa that never was, adorned with "ebony palaces," peopled with "wild crap-shooters," "skull-faced witchmen" and "tattooed cannibals;" after describing the "basic savagery" of the Negro race in the first section, and celebrating their "irrepressible high spirits" in the second, the poem closed on a pious vista of Africa redeemed by the Christian gospel, as

> Pioneer angels cleared the way
> For a Congo Paradise, for babes at play
> For sacred capitals, for temples clean.[16]

Lindsay's Africa was of course no more than a picturesque figment of the poet's ebullient imagination, not very different from the throbbing paradise of rhythm and

[14] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Race," *American Negro Academy Occasional Papers*, No 2 (1897), p. 10, quoted in G. Shepperson and T. Price, *Independent African*, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1958), p. 103.

[15] Quoted anonymously in *Literary History of the United States*, by Robert E. Spiller *et al.* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 1178.

[16] Vachel Lindsay, *Collected Poems* (New York: Macmillan 1955).

passion which jazz music was soon to conjure up in the fancy of such French writers as Jean Cocteau, Blaise Cendrars or Paul Morand. The Africa motif, however, received new dimensions of intensity and depth when it was seized upon in the 1920s by younger black poets, the offspring of the Negro Renaissance of the previous decade.

Thanks mainly, perhaps, to DuBois' success in making American Negroes aware of Africa, such writers as Langston Hughes (1902–1967) or Countee Cullen (1903–1946) expressed their alienation within American society in terms of their yearning for the homeland of their forefathers. Cullen's well-known "Heritage" shows the writer fully conscious of the falsity of the conventional image of Africa that he holds in common with Lindsay:

What is Africa to me?
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree.

But the inspiration soon gains in depth and poignancy as the poet realizes that besides being rejected by American society on account of his colour, he is also irretrievably estranged from his African origin because of his American culture:

Quaint, outlandish heathen gods
Black men fashion out of rods,
Clay, and brittle bits of stone,
In a likeness like their own.
My conversion comes high-priced;
I belong to Jesus Christ,
Preacher of humility;
Heathen gods are naught to me.
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
So I make an idle boast;
Jesus of the twice-turned cheek,
Lamb of God, although I speak
With my mouth thus, in my heart
Do I play a double part.
Ever at the glowing altar
Must my heart grow sick and falter,
Wishing He I serve were black,
Thinking then it would not lack
Precedent of pain to guide it,
Let who would or might deride it;
Surely then this flesh would know
Yours had borne a kindred woe.[17]

[17] Countee Cullen, *Color* (New York: Harper, 1925). See Arthur P. Davies, "The Alien-and-Exile Theme in Countee Cullen's Racial Poems," *Phylon*, 14 (1953).

As the black American's twofold alienation applies not only to the members of the Diaspora but also, in some measure, to the Westernized African it is not surprising that the poetry of the "New Negro," though it was but a minor tributary of the wide stream of American literature, spread rapidly among coloured writers in the West Indies and eventually became a source of inspiration and encouragement for African students in Paris.

Throughout the Caribbean, the twenties were a time of literary upheaval and turbulence, in English, in Spanish and in French.[18] But cutting across linguistic distinctions, three main trends can be observed. The same pathetic sense of estrangement that was expressed by Cullen also prompted Jamaica's Claude McKay (1890–1948), for example in "Outcast":

> For the dim regions whence my fathers came
> My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs.
> Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
> My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
> I would go back to darkness and to peace,
> But the great Western World holds me in fee,
> And I may never hope for full release
> While to its alien gods I bend my knee.
> Something in me is lost, forever lost,
> Some vital thing has gone out of my heart,
> And I must walk the way of life a ghost
> Among the sons of earth, a thing apart.
> Far I was born, far from my native clime,
> Under the white man's menace, out of time.[19]

Likewise the Haitian poet Leon Laleau (1892–1979) bewailed

> cette souffrance
> Et ce désespoir à nul autre égal
> D'apprivoiser, avec des mots de France,
> Ce cœur qui m'est venu du Sénégal.[20]

An acute sense of linguistic alienation has often been a characteristic of poets from the French colonies, whose medium in writing was necessarily the conqueror's language. At about the same time, Rabéarivelo in Madagascar was lamenting in academic alexandrines:

> Qui donc me donnera de pouvoir fiancer
> L'esprit de mes aïeux à ma langue adoptive,
> Et mon cœur naturel, calme et fier, au penser
> Pervers et sombre de l'Europe maladive.[21]

[18] The following pages owe a considerable debt to a remarkable book by G. R. Coulthard, *Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[19] Claude McKay, *Selected Poems* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1953), p. 41.

[20] Leon Laleau, *Musique nègre* (Port-au-Prince: 1931), p. 15.

[21] Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, *Volumes* (Antananarivo: Imprimerie de l'Imerina, 1928), p. 34.

It should be pointed out, however, that Rabéarivelo's native tongue, Malagasy, was a written language, with a literary tradition that was not oral only, whereas francophone Caribbean writers had no other mother tongue but standard French, or some creole dialect of it.

No evidence of any similar feature has been unearthed in the Hispanic islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico, where the emphasis seems to have been laid on the connection between the inner decay of European civilization and the cultural ascension of the negro: in 1927, Luis Palés Matos (1898–1959), whom Coulthard regards as "the initiator of the Afro-Caribbean movement," claimed that "the aesthetic sense of the white race has reached a stage of dangerous cerebralisation, cutting itself off from its cosmic roots ... I only believe in an art which identifies itself with the thing and fuses with the essence of the thing." And in 1938, two years after Spengler's death, another Puerto Rican intellectual went so far as to assert "that Spengler was the intellectual apostle of the appearance of the Negro in the artistic sphere of Europe!"[22]

In such statements we can easily perceive a sort of syncretic application of trends deriving not only from Spengler, but also from Bergson, Freud and Lévy-Bruhl. In the minds of West Indian intellectuals, the natural corollary to negative judgments on European civilization was the revaluation of black culture. In the United States, the Negro Renaissance had occurred mainly in response to social and economic conditions. In the West Indies, the poetic revival seems to have been primarily the result of the anthropological revaluation of local culture which was carried out by Jean Price-Mars (1876–1968) in Haiti and by Fernando Ortiz (1881–1963) in Cuba. As this was inevitably the culture of the underprivileged peasant class, an easy connection was soon established with Marxism, socialism and the concept of a universal class struggle. About 1925, this led to the Cuban *movimiento negrista,* most of whose members—with the important exception of Nicolas Guillén (b. 1902)—were white writers. Shortly after, there began to appear in Haiti a succession of little magazines in which young poets, who liked to dub themselves *griots,* noisily voiced their rejection of the imitative manner that had prevailed so far in Haitian poetry, championing what they variously, and somewhat indiscriminately, called *indigénisme, haïtianisme* or *africanisme.*

Among both the white poets of the *movimiento negrista* and the black writers of Haiti, the influence of local anthropologists was strengthened by the romantic exaltation of the primitive that was fashionable in avant-garde intellectual circles in Paris. Much of their poetry was made up of hysterical shrieks proclaiming their hatred of Western civilization and projecting the myth of a prelapsarian Negro or African culture concocted of rhythm and sex, voodoo and praiseworthy cannibalism. R. G. Coulthard has perceptively disentangled the four main ingredients in West Indian poetry of the mid-twenties and after:

> First, the feeling that the Caribbean Negro is somehow constricted in the moulds of European thought and behaviour patterns which are not fitted to his nature. Linked with this is the interest in African cultures, past and present, both in Africa

[22] Quoted in Coulthard, op. cit., p. 54.

and their remains in the West Indies. Second, the feeling that European civilization has failed, by becoming excessively concerned with power and technical progress and not sufficiently concerned with the production of happiness for the human individual. African or Negro culture is presented as being nearer to nature and nearer to man. Third, the rejection of Christianity as an agent or ally of colonialism; and finally the attack on European civilization for the brutality and cynicism with which it enslaved and exploited the Negro, while still maintaining high-sounding principles of freedom and humanitarianism.[23]

It may seem strange that Haitian poets especially should have found it necessary to denounce white colonialism: after all, the island republic had been formally independent ever since Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines had inflicted on Napoleon's troops their first defeat in the early years of the nineteenth century. But it must also be remembered that strategic reasons impelled the American army to establish firm control over Haiti in 1915: this occupation did not come to an end until 1934. Further, the new breed of Haitian intellectuals that was coming to the fore under the guidance of Jean Price-Mars resented the maiming of native literary talent by servile imitation of French academic literature in the past. They also resented the exploitation of the native lower classes by the Frenchified black bourgeoisie, and they entertained strong feelings of solidarity with the predicament of the black people in the neighbouring French colonies, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guyana.

For all their intrinsic interest, those local developments became important chiefly because of their aftermath in Paris in the 1930s, when social and political protest, side by side with the influence of the new anthropology, the artistic revaluation of Negro art and music, and the influence of American and Caribbean poetry upon young black writers, played a prominent role in the elaboration of negritude. The latter process, however, was preceded by the emergence of a new image of Africa in the French literary world.

Immediately after World War I, a growing interest in Africa among the French public, due to the impact of African art and Negro music, had prompted Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961) to publish his bulky *Anthologie nègre,* which went through two editions in 1921. It was a large and diversified collection of folk tales from all over Africa, selected from earlier works by missionaries, linguists and ethnologists. Janheinz Jahn has scathingly, but not altogether unfairly, observed that this book, "which for the first time introduced the West European public to the wealth of African tradition, is unfortunately also the worst."[24] In fact, Cendrars's *Anthologie* was a belated, and simply the most popular, product of what was already a tradition in Western writing: for since 1854, when the German scholar and explorer Sigismund Koelle had published his *African Native Literature,* the first volume of African tales and proverbs, similar collections had appeared in increasing numbers as the rapid growth of European imperialism nurtured popular interest in black Africa.[25] Among the most important were *Reynard the Fox in*

[23] Ibid., p. 52.

[24] Janheinz Jahn, *A History of Neo-African Literature* (London: Faber, 1968), p. 61.

[25] See on this Veronika Görög, "Bibliographie analytique selective sur la littérature orale de l'Afrique noire," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines,* No. 8 (1968), 453–501.

South Africa (1864) by W. H. I. Bleek (1827–1875), *Swahili Tales* (1870) by Bishop Edward Steere (1828–1882), *Folk-tales of Angola,* (1894) by Héli Chatelain (1859–1908). A later generation was to give us François-Victor Equilbecq (1872–1917) and his *Contes indigènes de l'ouest africain français* (1913–1916), while in Germany Leo Frobenius (1873–1938) was publishing *Der schwarze Dekameron* (1910) and the twelve volumes of *Atlantis: Volksmärchen und Volksdichtungen Afrikas* (1921–1928). But, Jahn points out, all those earlier anthologists had been men who knew and studied Africa; whereas Cendrars, "sailor, juggler, foreign legionary, journalist and poet, picked some of the plums out of their collections and translated them into French, mixing the traditions of various peoples with a view of the world and nature of his own design".[26] What caught the readers' attention was probably the name and literary reputation of Blaise Cendrars: in later years, French readers and, consequently, French publishers seemed to lose all interest in African literature. The image of Africa that became popular in French literature of the twenties reflected the same combination of exoticism, sensuality and rhythm that was being hailed by Jean Cocteau: it reverberated in the jazzy travel accounts and short stories of Paul Morand during the late twenties.[27]

But 1921 was also the year when *Batouala* was awarded the much coveted Goncourt prize. Its author was René Maran (1887–1960), a black civil servant from French Guyana, who was to rise to high administrative office in French Equatorial Africa. The book was a rather nondescript picture of African life as Maran saw it. Although the writer sympathized with the plight of the Africans under colonial rule, and although he understood their rancor and rebelliousness, and admired the resilience of their traditional way of life, on the whole his viewpoint did not differ significantly from that of many enlightened French administrators who, while deploring the cruelty of colonialism, nevertheless saw the African from the outside, as savage and uncivilized, capable as yet of acquiring no more than a superficial veneer of polished behaviour. Clearly, René Maran with his thoroughly French educational background was unable—nor did he try—to achieve imaginative identification with his black brothers in Africa. But the Preface to *Batouala* contained a scathing denunciation of colonialism in pre-paternalistic days, and it was probably this revolutionary stance, although confined to the Preface, which earned the book the Goncourt prize—never an undisputed label of quality anyway.[28]

All the same, the popularity of *Batouala* and of the *Anthologie nègre* was symptomatic of an interest in Africa which could not fail to encourage West Indian students, who were comparatively numerous in Paris. Nor could it fail to stimulate such sense of

[26] For a defence of Cendrars, see of course Robert Cornevin, *Littératures d'Afrique noire de langue française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), pp. 89–90.

[27] In the course of the last decade, considerable attention has been devoted to the evolution of the image of Africa in European literatures. See most notably: Léon Fanoudh-Siefer, *Le Mythe du Nègre et de l'Afrique noire dans la littérature française de 1800 à la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), Martine Astier-Loufti, *Littérature et colonialisme: l'Expansion coloniale vue dans la littérature romanesque française, 1871–1914* (La Haye: Mouton, 1971), and Martin Steins, *Das Bild des Schwarzen in der europäischen Kolonialliteratur 1870–1918* (Frankfurt: Thesen Verlag, 1972).

[28] On this important West Indian writer, see the collections of essays *Hommage à René Maran* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965) and the bibliography in *René Maran,* ed. Femi Ojo-Ade (Paris: Nathan, 1977). In relation to the duality that characterizes *Batouala* see especially Michel Fabre, "Autour de René Maran," *Présence Africaine,* No. 86 (1973), 165–172, and Chidi Ikonne, "René Maran, 1887–1960: A Black Francophone Writer between Two Worlds," *Research in African Literatures,* 5, 1 (1974), 5–22.

racial kinship as they were bound to feel for that section of the Paris population which was also black, but really came from Africa: the *lumpenproletariat* of cheap black labour left over from World War I, which was joined, in the late 1920s, by the first African students permitted to attend French institutions of higher learning. Against the general Western background which has just been delineated, it was this conjunction which was to lead to the elaboration of negritude in the 1930s.

MARTIN STEINS

2. BLACK MIGRANTS IN PARIS[29]

Following World War I, there was a sudden increase in the number of mulattos of French West Indian origin arriving in metropolitan France. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the "coloured" West Indian bourgeoisie, an impenetrable social caste which jealously defended the social privileges associated with a paler skin, had been sending its children to complete their studies in France, a country to which they owed their political emancipation and cultural advancement since 1848. This flow of emigration grew as a result of the war. On the whole, these coloured people had received an advanced education; they considered themselves French and were culturally assimilated; due to an exotic image of the "Islands," they were generally well received, even courted, by a metropolitan society as yet unaware of the threat posed by the coloured peoples. Brought up on the ideals of Parisian civilization, they worshipped passionately the three-hundred years old heritage of French presence in the West Indies which offered them the means to satisfy their aryanizing ambitions. To them their African origin was an accident of history which they had been able to turn to their advantage insofar as they had been able to escape from it.

This small mulatto élite was separate in every way from those tens of thousands of blacks who, since 1914, had been arriving in France in the uniform of the "Tirailleurs

[29] While works on the literary revival inspired by negritude abound, the historical and ideological origins of this movement have not so far been the subject of advanced study in France. In the by now classic work by the Belgian pioneer of African studies, Lilyan Kesteloot, *Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française. Naissance d'une littérature* (Brussels: Institut de Sociologie, 1963), the chapters relating to the genesis of negritude are now out of date. An important work on the whole of African movements in France is unfortunately not readily available: James S. Spiegler, *Aspects of Nationalist Thought among French Speaking West-Africans, 1921–1939*, Ph. D. Thesis, (Oxford: Bodleian Library, Rhodes House Div., M. S. D Phil. c 522, 1968); this author, however, does not take up the West Indian aspects of the movement. No work on Aimé Césaire has attempted to establish links with the thought of his predecessors. Among the works devoted to L. S. Senghor, we should mention Jacques L. Hymans, *Leopold S. Senghor: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1971); based on a 1964 Ph. D. thesis, this book aims to give an historical account of Senghor's thought after his arrival in France. However, with the exception of *La Revue du Monde Noir*, the author neglects the political background of blacks living in France. In my Ph.D. dissertation, *Les Antécédents et la genèse de la négritude senghorienne* (Université de Paris III, 1981), I have attempted to place Senghor's negritude in the framework of black movements between the wars; the reader is referred to this work for further details concerning the present chapter in which the footnotes, necessarily limited in number, can only touch upon some aspects of the question. The present essay is partly based upon an examination of files kept at the Archives Nationales, in the section "Ministère de la France d'Outre Mer," rue Oudinot, Paris, under the title Fonds SLOTFOM (Service de Liaison des Originaires des Territoires de la France d'Outre-Mer), which gathers together documents and police reports relating to black agitation between the two wars.

Sénégalais." Once peace had been signed, many of them stayed on or came back. Fresh from their native bush in the depths of a continent colonized for less than a generation, these men were in no way assimilated. There were nonetheless among them a few autodidacts thrilled by their extraordinary adventure. They were not "citizens," but "subjects" who in France escaped the legal status of "the native." They were not integrated into the social life of the country; they lived on the fringes of society as social outcasts. Employed in the ports and in bars, they had access only to lowly occupations which, in turn, condemned them to becoming a bohemian proletariat. They were "les Nègres."

From the very beginning we have therefore two separate groups of people on metropolitan soil, kept apart by their social origin, by degree of assimilation, by political reality and awareness, even by their historical background, for whereas the one group had a colonial past, the other feared it for the future. Finally, to a certain extent, they were kept apart by biological factors. These antagonisms ran deep. Two decades of trial and error were to pass before the two groups discovered that they had anything in common. The ideology which was to be created by Césaire and Senghor around 1938/1939, replaced, if only for a limited period, the American Negro ethnic consciousness which, had been forged in the United States by racial prejudice as far back as 1905, when the coloured élite found themselves obliged to join forces with the black masses. Our intention here is to follow the current of ideas which was to culminate in the concept of "negritude," a product of the fusion of West Indian and African thinking. We say "West Indian" purely for convenience's sake, as in fact one should include the learned élite of the old French colonies which comprised the Four Communes of Senegal: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque and Dakar.

The black American emancipation movement set the process in motion following the victory of 1918. The Versailles conference had to decide the fate of the former German colonies. The strength of President Wilson's arguments prevented a simple revision of the Berlin Conference which had initially divided Africa. The idea of colonial mandates was launched. As a result the colonial question became to some extent an international issue. W. Burghardt DuBois, director of *The Crisis,* the organ of the N.A.A.C.P., moved into action and organized the first international Negro conference in Paris in February 1919.[30] Hoping to revive the spirit of the crusades against slavery and the slave trade, DuBois drew attention to a worldwide *black problem;* he wanted the colonial powers to recognize their responsibilities to ensure the advancement of the black race as a whole, whose problems might otherwise be subordinated to the demands of Western national interests. In this view the cultural and socio-economic difficulties encountered by the blacks were simply the result of a refusal to apply the great universal principles of democracy to their particular case; these principles included legal equality and the right to self-determination.

[30] Cf. Maurice Delafosse, "Le congrès pan-africain," in: *Renseignements coloniaux,* supplement to *L'Afrique Française,* 3/4 (1919), 53–60. Cf. also *La Dépêche Coloniale,* issues of February 7, 11 and 25, 1919.

DuBois' colleagues in Paris, the deputies from the old colonies,[31] could not envisage a future along these lines, nor even define their situation in terms of an acknowledged oppression. Having been democratically elected in their overseas constituencies, they contested the very existence of a *racial problem*. Since the development of the African peoples was to culminate in total integration, it could not be achieved outside the boundaries of a French context, the West Indies showing the way. No one doubted that colonial attitudes would improve, for blood had been shed for the fatherland. Even the African colonies were destined to become one day French provinces similar to Corsica or Brittany. This was, moreover, France's official doctrine which regarded the colonies as "extensions of metropolitan France." DuBois' arguments could not prevail against this doctrine which was firmly rooted among the assimilated blacks. Furthermore, the British concept of self-rule was foreign to the habits of cultural and administrative centralization shared by the colonial deputies. They dreamed of completing a process of assimilation the feasibility of which was made manifest by their own existence. They saw no alternative to a *national solution*.

If the concept of a common destiny for all blacks the world over was rejected in Paris, DuBois' initiative nonetheless gave birth to the idea among West Indians that as "coloured men" they had a moral responsibility towards black Africans. In this way, the 1919 conference was the first step towards that common identity which was to be expressed through negritude. The second step towards that goal was René Maran's commitment to the cause. It is true that the Guyanese novelist also objected to the racial view, fearing the worst from such an approach.[32] For this reason he declared his solidarity with all French colonized peoples, whether black or yellow. His career in Africa had made him aware of the reverse side of colonialism. Maran was the first to contrast colonial practice with its theory, and his criticism opened a new perspective. In writing *Batouala*, Maran was not, however, criticizing the principle of *colonization*, with its well-known "mission civilisatrice," but rather the reality of *colonialism* (this derogatory term had been coined in 1905 purely to denounce exploitation and abuse). Maran thought little of the efficacy of the French presence. His portrayal of tribal realities in Africa was as sombre as his portrayal of the abuses perpetrated by the colonizers. Although Maran spoke out in his journal *Les Continents*[33] against the crimes committed in Equatorial Africa, this was not done in the name of racial solidarity, but rather in the name of those Immortal Principles held in trust by the Republic. Such was the

[31] Among these deputies was Blaise Diagne who had represented Senegal since 1914. Cf. G. W. Johnson, "The Ascendancy of Blaise Diagne and the Beginnings of African Politics," *Africa*, 36 (1966), 235–253. Cf. also Charles Cros, *La Parole est à M. Blaise Diagne* (Paris, 1961).

[32] Cf. the extracts from Maran's letters, quoted by Bernard Kotchy, "Un Antillais et le monde africain noir: René Maran," in *Négritude Africaine, Négritude Caraïbe* (Paris: Université de Paris-Nord, 1973), p. 53.

[33] *Les Continents* was a colonial journal founded by R. Maran and the Dahomean Kojo Tovalou-Houénou (i.e. Quenum), and edited by Jean Fangeat, a white Frenchman. The journal appeared only a dozen times during the year 1924; it dealt with colonial questions in general, but with a marked bias towards the French colonies in Africa. Blaise Diagne brought an action for libel against it, which caused something of a stir. In 1924, Tovalou-Houénou founded a "Ligue Universelle pour la Défense de La Race Noire," inspired by the Garvey model; in the summer of 1924, he left for America to contact Garvey, but his trip proved fruitless; once back in Africa, Tovalou-Houénou took part in political activities only occasionally. *Les Continents* is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and in SLOTFOM V,6; on the "Ligue Universelle" cf. SLOTFOM, III, 24.

direction of his activities after 1921; it was also the basis of the support he had received from his French colleagues when they awarded *Batouala* the Prix Goncourt.

Once the war was over, the "assimilés" began by demanding the *immediate implementation of the promises* implicit in the colonial theory of political and cultural assimilation. They saw colonialism as a temporary phase leading to the elimination of the inequalities which had brought it about. However, by their insistence on basing their anti-colonialism on the principles of Republicanism, the élite deprived itself of a platform of its own. Since its starting-point remained the France of 1789, the struggle against colonial practices created an inter-colonial solidarity in which the blacks were victims, but not because of their colour. If France was acting wrongly overseas, she did so through ignorance of the truth. Hence, the action undertaken by such figures as Maran and Tovalou-Houénou began in the press;[34] it would be sufficient, they thought, to enlighten public opinion. Naturally, they found their first allies in France itself, in those circles which had always been severely critical of colonial expansion: the left, the radicals, the freemasons, the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*.[35]

Two factors helped to take matters beyond the simple stage of *inter-colonial solidarity* and to question the aims of complete and unconditional assimilation: the American Negro awakening, especially the "New Negro," and Communist propaganda. Although these factors worked against each other, they both undermined the faith in the ultimate success of the colonial enterprise, the former by stressing the concept of race, the second by criticizing the principle of colonization itself, by attacking not the weaknesses of an administrative regime, as hitherto, but the system as such;[36] in this way Communism sowed the seeds of political separatism, while the American influence helped to formulate the idea of a cultural separatism.

At an early stage the French black élite had been confronted with Garveyism, which, during the second Negro conference in Europe in September 1921,[37] had proposed a sort of *Africanization* of the black question. Garvey had spoken of an African citizenship, of an African "nationhood," attached more or less automatically to racial identity. He wanted to give the colonial problem a nationalist perspective and turn it into a question of geopolitical sovereignty whose legitimacy would be grounded in biological fact. In both the United States and France, the mulatto élite could not accept this axiom; they refused to take action for any cause other than that of aryanization, towards which they had already made such remarkable progress. The fact that civiliza-

[34] Cf. for instance the journal *L'Action Coloniale*, between September 1920 and the end of 1924 (passim). The pioneer work of a Dahomean teacher, Louis Hunkarin, must also be mentioned here; during a brief stay in France, he published *Le Messager Dahoméen* (November 1920 to October 1921). Cf. J. Suret-Canale, "Louis Hunkarin, un pionnier méconnu du mouvement national et démocratique en Afrique," *Etudes Dahoméennes*, 3 (December 1964), 5–31.

[35] Interesting details on the relationship between the "assimilés" and these circles can be found in Brian Weinstein, *Eboué* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[36] Cf. *Thèses, manifestes et résolutions adoptés par les I, II, III et IV congrès de l'Internationale Communiste (1919–1923), textes complets* (Paris, 1934; facsimile reprint, Paris, 1969).

[37] On Garvey in France cf. especially *La Dépêche Maritime et Coloniale* for June 16, June 23, and July 1, 1921 (the last two articles are signed by Delafosse). On the second pan-Negro conference see Gratien Candace (deputy for Guadeloupe), "Le Second Congrès de la Race Noire", *Colonies et Marine*, 5 (November 1921), 725–41; René Thierry, "Les Congrès Pan-Noirs", *L'Afrique Française*, September 1921, 293–6; cf. also several articles in *La Revue Indigène* (Paris), September 1921 and December 1922.

tion was white seemed to them to be of no consequence. The bourgeois opportunism which characterized the "assimilés" caused the failure of Garvey's plan for politicizing the colonial question on the basis of a pan-Negro separatism. The absence of a colour bar convinced the francophone élite that it was not worth losing metropolitan support by adopting a 'blacks alone' approach. However, if Garvey's ideas were rejected in Paris, his propaganda still had the effect of introducing the idea of a *specific solidarity* between the élite and the African masses, as a means of fighting an oppression which affected them all as members of one race.

The refusal to abandon political assimilation was reinforced by certain tendencies within the colonial administration. Already before the war, theorists had begun to question the old official doctrine of assimilation at all levels.[38] The occupation of Africa had given a tremendous boost to anthropology; knowledge of native societies had progressed enormously and their complexity was beginning to be measured. The idea that one was dealing with "primitive" peoples, capable of developing further and therefore of becoming French, was replaced by the discovery of a cultural difference which was more or less insuperable: it would be stupid if not dangerous to destroy native civilizations so as to replace them with an imported civilization, wholly or partly unsuited to African circumstances. Once the attachment to the concept of the universality of Western culture which lay behind the colonial enterprise had been lost, the feeling began to grow that time barriers were not all that separated human civilizations, that these civilizations expressed natural, that is, racial differences. It seemed clear to an administrator like Delafosse that the difficulties of achieving a rapid westernization of African peoples should be attributed to the existence of an inalienable native genius.[39] Without referring explicitly to the biological argument, *native policy* endorsed a separate future for the natives. The "assimilés" immediately opposed this new tendency; in 1922, Lamine Gueye from Senegal defended a dissertation on the dismantling of the legal foundations of assimilation in the Four Communes. *Les Continents* criticized the rehabilitation of customary law, upon which "native policy" was based.[40] This rehabilitation in effect undermined the desire recently expressed by the "assimilés" to be consulted by the colonial authorities until such time as they could actually share the power. In the beginning, "native policy" therefore pushed the "assimilés" in the opposite direction to that which was to be taken later by the founders of negritude. Immediately after the war, the élite demanded the speedy destruction of the old tribal order in Africa, in the name of the French concept of progress and equality.

At the same time, however, growing contacts with the American Negro élite which was beginning to discover the existence of Europe and in particular of France, brought about substantial change among the "assimilés" with regard to their views on race. The

[38] Cf. amongst others Léopold de Saussure, *Psychologie de la colonisation dans ses rapports avec les sociétés indigènes* (Paris, 1899); Jules Harman, *Domination et colonisation* (Paris, 1910); Louis Vignon, *Un Programme de politique coloniale* (Paris, 1919); Georges Van der Kerken, *Les Sociétés bantoues du Congo Belge et les problèmes de la politique indigène* (Paris, 1920); Henri Rolin, *Du Respect des Coutumes indigènes relatives aux biens et aux personnes dans l'Afrique australe et centrale* (Bruxelles, 1921).

[39] Cf. M. Delafosse; "Sur l'orientation de la nouvelle politique indigène dans l'Afrique Noire," *Renseignements Coloniaux*, supplement to *L'Afrique Française*, 6 (1919), 45–53.

[40] Cf. *Les Continents* for May 5, July 1, July 15 and September 1, 1924.

Negro renaissance in the United States convinced the French élite that the concept of race could overcome African weakness.[41] A kind of *racial pride* began to emerge, based upon the idea that civilized blacks could make a special contribution to metropolitan civilizations, bringing a touch of colour and a tropical fragrance. Whereas in the beginning the élite had argued on the basis of the equality of all men, and had denied that race had any real relevance—they fought against racial "prejudice,"—towards the middle of the 20s, they gradually came to acknowledge the existence of a specific racial identity which could be revitalized through assimilation into Western culture. A multitude of literary works and musical compositions appeared in support of their assertions. Having previously demanded their rights, the élite now began to proclaim their cultural merits. This gave new impetus to their activities which turned henceforth in the direction of what may be called *the racial pluralism of civilization.*

Despite all this, prejudice remained. It even gained ground. The influx of Africans into France had provoked a change of attitude towards West Indians, who were henceforth relegated to the same category as black Africans. The intrusion of cultural and racial considerations—the anthropologist's concept of the "black soul"[42]—increasingly led to discrimination which was growing more and more openly racial in character (and no longer purely colonialist); this was evident in the pension scheme for ex-servicemen, in the range of careers open to qualified colonials, etc. The euphoric hope of overcoming the prejudice which attributed to them a congenital cultural barrenness turned to resentment at being denied their just rewards for their contribution to civilization, which was being acclaimed everywhere by artists and intellectuals: in music, painting, choreography and even in literature. Under the pressure of this nascent racism, the differences of outlook which had so far separated West Indians and Africans began to disappear.

The next step was for the members of the élite to acknowledge their blackness; they adopted a *racial identity* which they had previously regarded as an unfortunate accident, the effects of which they had hoped to erase. The West Indian mulattos now began to refer to themselves as "Negroes," or at least as "blacks." As the colonial system gradually petrified into a type of domination that was more racial than political, it tended to eliminate the intermediate stages, the various steps of a gradual progression from a state of inferiority to the level of the masters. In biological terms, the mulattos represented a transition between the two distinctly separate poles which supported the colonial relationship. However, this racial conversion seems to have been in part a peculiarly Caribbean phenomenon (Garvey and McKay came from Jamaica); as the majority of coloured people there were highly westernized, the racial divisions were seen

[41] On the relationship between American and French blacks, see *Les Continents*, where this question is discussed at considerable length. See also Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Knopf, 1940); Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Furman, 1937); see also Michel Fabre, "René Maran, trait d'union entre deux négritudes," in *Négritude Africaine, Négritude Caraïbe*, pp. 55–61, and "René Maran, The New Negro and Negritude," *Phylon*, 36 (1975), 340–351.

[42] Cf. among others Adolphe Cureau, *Les Sociétés primitives en AEF* (Paris: Colin, 1912); Louis Huot, "L'âme noire," *Le Mercure de France*, September 1, October 1 and 15, November 15, 1921; Maurice Delafosse, *L'Âme nègre* (Paris, 1922); Georges Hardy, "L'âme africaine," *Revue des Vivants*, January 1930, pp. 102–111; *Manuel à l'usage des troupes employées outre-mer*, vol. 2; *Afrique Occidentale et Equatoriale* (Paris, 1923; reprinted 1925, 1927, 1934).

to be running counter to the Social Contract. This was not the case in Africa, where colonial power had not lost the despotic authority it had assumed from the outset; the conflicts there were political and cultural, even religious, rather than specifically racial.[43] The recognition of racial differences, however obsessive it was, was not the moving force behind the change in Africa. The development of Africans living in metropolitan France will confirm this.

Since they belonged mostly to the proletariat, the Africans were strongly influenced by Communist ideas.[44] Lenin's views on the colonial question spread among them like wildfire and raised aspirations of hope and liberty; they denounced the enslavement of *colonial peoples exploited* for the benefit of big business. Such views were accepted all the more easily because they offered an explanation for colonial evils without questioning the desire to participate in the progress of modern civilization which was admired for its manifest superiority. The communists in effect equated colonialism with the *class struggle;* as the ultimate stage of capitalism, imperialism had transformed the peoples outside Europe into a proletariat. The victory over the colonial system therefore depended on a worldwide revolution which should be carried out by the European working masses. Economic exploitation created an active solidarity between black and white workers. This general programme offered Africans the invaluable support of men who professed themselves anti-racist and who welcomed them as brothers into their powerful organizations; it awakened them to the need to press political demands and to struggle for their material interests.

There was, however, another side to the story: the anti-colonialist efforts of the *Parti Communiste français* (P.C.F.) were not directed towards Black Africa, but towards Indochina and the Maghreb; in the trade unions and particularly in the *Union Intercoloniale,* where the Communists gave their support to discontented colonials—the *Union* published a journal with the revealing title: *Le Paria*[45]—blacks were in the minority and felt it. Their resentment encouraged them to close their ranks. In October 1925, Lamine Senghor,[46] an ex-serviceman who had become a member of the P.C.F. formed the plan to establish a Senegalese Section within the *Union Intercoloniale.* In this way an unofficial black Communist Internationale emerged more or less spontaneously in French factories and ports. Their awareness of a particularly wounding form of

[43] Cf. among others E. Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (London: Whittingham, 1887).

[44] Cf. amongst others Gustave Gautherot, *Le Bolchévisme aux colonies et l'impérialisme rouge* (Paris: Librairie de la Revue française, 1930); J.-O. Levine, "Le communisme et les noirs," *L'Afrique Française,* December 1934, pp. 708 *sqq.*

[45] *Le Paria* appeared from April 1922 to April 1926. It was the first periodical edited entirely by colonial subjects; it was dominated by the figure of Ho Chi Minh, writing under the name of Nguyen ai Quoc. In the first issues we find a few contributions signed by members of the West Indian bourgeoisie. The extremist character of *Le Paria* and of the *Union Intercoloniale* very rapidly persuaded them of the need to counter an undertaking that verged on the subversive. In the context, *Les Continents* appears as a distinctly anti-Communist manoeuvre.

[46] Lamine Senghor (born 1889 in Kaolack, Senegal; died November 1927 in Fréjus) was an ex-serviceman of the 1914–18 war; he first gained recognition during Diagne's proceedings against *Les Continents.* A member of the P.C.F., he ran a Senegalese section of the *Union Intercoloniale* and represented the C.D.R.N. at the Brussels conference; he wrote a pamphlet (no copies of which are in existence today), "La violation d'un pays", in which he expressed his support for a policy of resistance on both a proletarian and a nationalist basis.

exploitation drove the Africans to unite. Another significant move was the founding of the *Amicale des Originaires de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française* by A. Matswa in 1926. The growth of solidarity among black workers opened the door to a dialogue with the "assimilés," which the latter welcomed. The Communists had denounced the bourgeois nature of the élite, its reformist tendencies, and, in particular, the argument that racial solidarity should have priority over class solidarity. In effect, the Communists denied the racial character of the colonial question of which, in their dogmatic adherence to the concept of the United Front, they would only admit the economic dimension. No, they said, the exploiters were not by definition white; the black bourgeoisie of the colonies and the feudal power of the traditional chiefs should not be forgotten. On their side, the "assimilés" rejected the argument for immediate withdrawal from the colonies preached by the Communists; the élite could not agree to hand the African masses back to the obscurantist rule of the traditional chiefs. But this was in fact where the P.C.F.'s strategy led, in its support for Abd-el-Krim in the Rif War (1925–1926).[47] The African spirit of revolt, which was beginning to challenge political tutelage, did not therefore facilitate an agreement with the "assimilés" whose ambitions were solely cultural. However, this feeling of racial solidarity of which both groups became aware when they recognized their special condition as "blacks" created the basis for common action. The difficulties of the encounter between the two groups have been well illustrated by McKay in his novel *Banjo,* set in the Marseilles of 1925–1926, in which the situation is seen through the eyes of the hero, a Caribbean poet.

The creation of a *Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre* (C.D.R.N.), in Paris in March 1926, confirmed the alliance.[48] The C.D.R.N. for the first time united West Indians and Africans, the proletariat and the "assimilés," writers and politicians, in a single, exclusively racial, organization whose aim was to speak for the blacks as one race. Here, René Maran and Lamine Senghor were to be found side by side. The key idea was that racial solidarity should be the basis for all future action with a view to improving the position of colonized blacks. In order to achieve this, they must begin by organizing themselves in France. The C.D.R.N. nevertheless declared that it wanted to avoid politics; this demonstrates the essentially precarious nature of the consensus, beyond the level of the most elementary and urgent self-help. Inevitably, latent antagonisms came to the surface: Lamine Senghor's stand on the definition of the word "nègre", published in the first issue of the journal *La Voix des Nègres* (January 1927)—the organ of the C.D.R.N.—prompted the departure of several "moderate" West Indians. This was followed in March by the group's disintegration after Lamine Senghor's speech at the first Anti-Imperialist Congress in Brussels,[49] where he gave liberation through revolution priority over colonial reform. The C.D.R.N. was in fact divided on the *direction that*

[47] Cf. Jacques Doriot, *Les Colonies et le Communisme* (Paris, 1929); Doriot was at the time secretary of the "Jeunesses Communistes."

[48] On the "Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre," cf. SLOTFOM, III, 37 and V, 3. The statutes were published in the *Journal Officiel* for March 30, 1926. With the support of René Maran, Lamine Senghor was elected president of the C.D.R.N.

[49] Cf. *La Voix des Nègres,* March 1927. The journal ceased publication after the second issue which reflected mainly the ideals upheld by Lamine Senghor at the Anti-Imperialist Congress of February 1927 in

should be given to their racial solidarity. For Lamine Senghor, the race factor meant simply the amount of suffering the blacks had undergone: their *sub-proletarian* conditions was creating this "black" identity; once worldwide revolution had put an end to exploitation race would cease to have any significance; this concept was fated to disappear as social and national liberation progressed. In fact, Lamine Senghor regarded racial identity as the lowest social common denominator. This was something the West Indians could not accept, for such a conception of racial identity relegated them to the level of the West Indian black proletariat and of the uneducated Africans. The "assimilés" rebelled against a discrimination that denied them as blacks the right to cultural assimilation: "La race nègre a quelque chose à apporter au monde. Elle ne peut rester éternellement frappée d'ostracisme. La *race nègre cultivée* révèlera au monde, elle aussi, des génies universels," such were the terms in which the C.D.R.N. made its appeal.[50] Citizens belonging to the élite refused to allow themselves to be mobilized against France under the pretext of solidarity with the black proletariat. The élite had begun to consider its biological heritage in a more positive light and intended, like their counterparts in Harlem, to exploit it for their climb up the cultural ladder and their integration into French society.

For a long time, the schism in the C.D.R.N. divided French blacks into, on the one hand, an élitist group interested only in cultural questions, and, on the other, a proletarian group which demanded national independence for the African colonies as of 1927. The first group, consisting almost entirely of mulattos was, of course, actively to advocate reforms, but was to concentrate especially on *raising the race in the world's esteem;* it followed that the cultural problems inherent in the colonial reality would have to be considered. The other group, which saw colonization as nothing but *capitalist exploitation and political subjection,* was to try to steer a course between the dangers of nationalist separatism and the stranglehold of revolutionary internationalism, which continually threatened to absorb the black organizations. The moderates gathered around *La Dépêche Africaine,* published from February 1928 to February 1932 by the Guadeloupean Maurice Satineau:[51] his periodical contained a literary page and an English supplement; it anticipated the creation of the bilingual *Revue du Monde Noir* (November 1931 to April 1932), whose interests were to be exclusively cultural. The creation of the *Revue du Monde Noir* proved necessary as *La Dépêche Africaine* increasingly became the mouthpiece of its director's Guadeloupean interests; however, we find the same themes in *La Revue*—Negro art, the racial personality—and the same contributors, notably Paulette Nardal. In the field of political opposition Lamine Senghor founded, just before his premature death, the *Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre*

Brussels. On this congress, cf. *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont. Offizielles Protokoll des Kongresses gegen koloniale Unterdrückung und Imperialismus, (Brüssel, 10–15 Februar, 1927)* (Berlin, 1927); cf. also SLOTFOM III, 47.

[50] The C.D.R.N.'s call was reproduced in *L'Humanité* on September 25, 1926 (see "Les Opprimés noirs se groupent," an essay signed Gothon-Lunion). It is followed by an extremely revealing commentary.

[51] *La Depêche Africaine* appeared regularly from February 1928 to March 1929; after the latter date, publication was sporadic. The journal also contained articles by Paul Morand, Robert Randau, Francis de Miomandre, Paul Guillaume, etc. The literary column was written by René Maran. A complete set of *La Depêche Africaine* is held at SLOTFOM, V, 2.

(L.D.R.N.) and a new journal, *La Race Nègre*.[52] Despite very irregular publication, this journal survived until 1936; admittedly, it changed sides completely in April 1931. Two remarkable rival figures were associated with the L.D.R.N.: the Sudanese Garan Tiémoko Kouyaté[53] and a mulatto engineer from Saint-Louis, Emile Faure.[54] Let us now consider the evolution of these two tendencies which, on the whole, still follow the division between West Indians and Africans.

The position of *La Dépêche Africaine* may be summarized under three headings: the *depoliticization* of the black question; the desire for collaboration between French and natives within the *Empire* (this term indicated a new conception of colonial relations); and the defense of racial and cultural *cross-breeding*. The staff of *La Dépêche Africaine* kept themselves aloof from Communist and nationalist activists: "Notre organe se sépare nettement de tous ceux qui, sous le fallacieux prétexte de défense des indigènes, préconisent l'autonomie de toutes les colonies, quel que soit le stade de l'évolution sociale à laquelle elles sont parvenues" (February 1928). "Le séparatisme ne peut ni faciliter, ni hâter l'évolution des races retardataires." The journal called for the departmentalization of the old colonies, and, as regards Africa, for the appropriate reforms needed to advance its ultimate integration with France. The assimilated élite should eventually assume power in their own territories and, together with the mother country, govern one single nation of 100 million multicoloured Frenchmen, the "new race." This fundamental loyalty should not, however, prevent French blacks from tightening the natural racial bonds with their foreign brothers. However, this "intellectual cooperation" for the time being only affected the "40 million" people scattered beyond the shores of Africa who constituted the black Diaspora; these were carefully distinguished from "all our backward brothers" living under tutelage in Africa. On behalf of the entire black race, this intercontinental élite could there and then "make its spiritual contribution to the common human heritage" by asserting "the personality and originality of its genius." This black personality had, in fact, only very few links with traditional Africa. On both sides of the Atlantic, the *"internationale métisse"* held itself aloof from this Africa. In his essay "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," published in the anthology *The New Negro* (1925), Alain Locke contrasted the spirit of African civilizations with the mentality acquired by the Afro-Americans during their centuries-

[52] On the *Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre* and *La Race Nègre*, cf. SLOTFOM III, 24, 45, and V, 3.

[53] Garan Tiémoko Kouyaté, born in Segou, Mali, in 1902, studied first at the Ecole William-Ponty, and later in France, in Aix-en-Provence. He soon joined Lamine Senghor and became his successor as the head of the L.D.R.N. He travelled extensively, especially in Germany and the USSR, seeking everywhere to make contact with other black movements. Having founded successively *Le Cri des Nègres* and *Africa*, he was assassinated during the Occupation in what are still mysterious circumstances. He may be regarded as the first French-speaking black African to have systematically sought a position of leadership in political resistance.

[54] Emile Faure was born in Saint-Louis, Senegal in 1892. A descendant of Samory on his mother's side, he was educated in France, but visited his family in Senegal regularly. Like Kouyaté, he was active from 1923 in anti-colonialist organizations, while at the same time pursuing a career in engineering in Paris. In April 1931, he expelled Kouyaté from the L.D.R.N. and *La Race Nègre;* with the help of the Guadeloupean, André Beton (brother of Isaac Beton who had attended the 1921 Pan-Negro Conference), and of the Haitian Macombe, Faure became the precursor of cultural nationalism in French West Africa; the rest of his group consisted of Senegalese and Sudanese adherents. In 1938, he again approached the left and, with Daniel Guérin of the *Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan*, attempted to establish a common plan of action with Padmore and Kenyatta in London. Convicted and exiled to the Ivory Coast, Faure was unable to regain a foothold in the political arena after the war.

old experience of the New World; after detribalization there had been a transformation of their racial spirit. There was no question of a return to their roots. The French "assimilés" were strongly influenced by the American Negro position, to the extent of coining the relatively unsuccessful but ideologically apt term "Afro-Latin" to describe themselves. The term was launched by Jane Nardal in *La Dépêche Africaine* in February 1928: "Etre afro-américain, être afro-français, cela veut dire être un encouragement, un réconfort, un exemple pour les noirs d'Afrique en leur montrant que certains bienfaits de la civilisation blanche ne conduisent pas forcément à renier sa race." The distinction is therefore clear between the fostering of the spirit of the race within white civilization itself and the contemporary cultural state of Africa, about which no illusions were harboured. Nonetheless, there was an interest in it: Father Aupiais' lectures in Paris met with huge success; this missionary from Dahomey had initiated a regionalist movement while exhorting his converts not to despise their ancestral cultural links.[55] It is interesting to note just which aspects of his defence of indigenous societies were taken up by *La Dépêche Africaine:* "Il sut nous révéler l'Afrique! L'Afrique dans son art .... Il nous montra un Africain bien différent du sauvage de l'histoire, du valet ... du cannibale .... Il nous montra un Africain artiste-né, doué d'une rare faculté d'idéalisation." It was therefore on the basis of the *artistic genius of the race* that the West Indians acknowledged their blood ties with the Africans. This genius provided them with the weapons for their integration into Western society, that is, for the advancement of all blacks in the civilized world.

The new concept of the French Empire[56] provided the perfect answer to the expectations of the élite who saw themselves as the vanguard of their backward brothers. *La Revue du Monde Noir* was, moreover, directly related to that great imperialist manifestation, the Vincennes exhibition, opened in May 1931. This exhibition aimed at illustrating the marvellous cultural diversity of all the races under French tutelage. Its purpose was to demonstrate that of all these colonized peoples each had its own unique civilization, which did not prevent them all from progressing towards a common goal and a centre, France, the source of all light. The new imperial theory included notions of regional autonomy, economic solidarity and a sort of cultural symbiosis, of which the concept of Afro-Latinity was the best example: it derived from the marriage between the black race and French civilization; the blacks' portion was their aesthetic sense, which would revive a civilization threatened, on its own admission, by the sclerosis of mechanization. Contemporary judgements on "Negro art" were abundantly quoted.[57] Even in Africa, this particular gift was beginning to revive: *La Dépêche Africaine* published

[55] Cf. *La Dépêche Africaine*, February 1928 and April 1929. In August 1925 in Porto-Novo, Dahomey, Father Aupiais founded a journal of "religious instruction and historical studies," *La Reconnaissance Africaine*. Cf. "Elites en pays de Mission. Compte rendu de la 5ème semaine missiologique de Louvain (1927)," *Museum Lessianum*, 1927. pp. 90–100.

[56] Cf. Raoul Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: Table Ronde, 1972).

[57] Almost all the issues of *La Dépêche Africaine* contain articles or "judgements" on "negro art." In the first issues, the journal reproduced numerous texts published by the review *Action* under the title "Enquête sur l'art nègre," April 1920. In February 1928 and October 1929, *La Dépêche Africaine* also published articles by Paul Guillaume on this subject; Guillaume was a Parisian art dealer who, as far back as 1917, had launched a first album of *negro sculpture, sculpture nègres;* the preface by Guillaume Apollinaire also appeared in *Le Mercure de France*, April 1, 1917.

the stories of Félix Couchoro; Satineau published his novel *L'Esclave;* this Dahomean author was heralded as the first genuine African writer.[58]

It was not intended, therefore, that political unity should result in the standardization of culture on the French model. In cultural terms, the Empire would be a multicellular entity in which, like a diamond, the French heritage would shine with the thousand facets created by the various racial and ethnic characteristics of the imperial community. In this spirit the "assimilés," conscious of their race, tried to enter into a civilized dialogue. If, on the political and economic level, total assimilation was a duty of the Republic, and if, from the biological viewpoint, cross-breeding was to be symbolic of a collaboration of equals, the preservation of cultural diversity was a precondition for the enormous future richness of "la France totale." In this way, the African world which was awakening to modernization should not copy the French model blindly: old customs should be adapted selectively in order to pave the way towards harmonious social development.[59] Above all the creation of "uprooted individuals" should be avoided by preserving as much as possible of African culture, without allowing the cult of tradition to impede progress. This illustrated a radical innovation as against the earlier attitude adopted by the "assimilés." However, their about-face with regard to Africa was, in the beginning, nothing but a form of cultural aestheticism in the Gobineau tradition as revived by Paul Morand:[60] *cultural differences were now deemed worthy of respect.* This attitude was the African extension of the discovery of "primitive" art to which the élite had been introduced by the European avant-garde.

The stage of development represented by *La Dépêche Africaine* and *La Revue du Monde Noir* reflects a progression beyond totally receptive assimilation towards a selective assimilation guided by the creative qualities peculiar to the black race. Having decisively brushed aside all political conflict with the colonial powers—for such conflict was inspired and animated by Marxist ideology, which linked it with the anti-bourgeois social revolution and was therefore hostile to civilization itself—the black élite carried its liberation movement into the cultural, and more particularly literary spheres. As G. Denys-Périer was to state in the last issue of *La Revue du Monde Noir:* "Partout, les gens de couleur marquent une dévotion particulière à la poésie, forme nouvelle de la guerre future que les civilisés n'avaient point prévue."[61] The mode of action adopted by negritude as a *literature* of emancipation, has its origins here: it is indeed significant that

[58] Félix Couchoro, *L'Esclave,* (Paris: La Dépêche Africaine, 1928). Several stories by Couchoro were published in the journal—cf. amongst others the issues for June, July, August and December 1928, October 1929; an important article on Couchoro was published in the July 1930 issue.

[59] Cf. especially *La Dépêche Africaine,* August 1928.

[60] Cf. Paul Morand, *Magie Noire* (Paris: Grasset, 1928); *Paris-Tombouctou* (Paris: Flammarion, 1928); *Hiver Caraïbe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1929); cf. also his preface to the French translation of Carl van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven, Le Paradis des Nègres,* (Paris: Kra, 1927). *Magie Noire* was the subject of heated discussion among Parisian blacks; cf. G. T. Kouyaté's detailed criticism in *La Race Nègre* October 1928; Leon Damas, on the other hand, arrived at a different appraisal of the work in "Misère Noire," *Esprit,* 7, No. 31 (1939). 333–354; see especially pp. 352–353.

[61] Cf. Gaston Denys-Périer, "La Poésie ethnique," *La Revue du Monde Noir,* April 6, 1932. Denys-Périer, a Belgian, was one of the first to analyse the black literary awakening in *Nègreries* (Brussels, 1930).

negritude found its own political formula only in 1949, in the programme of the *Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais.*[62]

If the "assimilés" were in a position to emphasize the value of their race's contribution to Western culture, it was because the existence of a cultural crisis, noted by Oswald Spengler as much as by the Surrealists, gave them the idea of a gap waiting to be filled and suggested that the arts required an injection of black culture in order to be revitalized. This conception of a racial contribution eventually developed into *an early criticism of Western cultural values* and inspired greater interest in a living Africa which stood in contrast to it. In part, this curiosity about Africa, which arose among West Indians, was not without ambiguity; it was influenced by an interpretation of Negro art put forward by its admirers—notably the Surrealists,—which owed more to philosophy than to anthropology. They had been excited by the poetic richness of the "mentalité primitive";[63] their critical attitude towards civilization led them to admire in the blacks everything that put them in radical opposition to Europe: the creativity of the irrational, emotion as the enemy of bourgeois conformity, and a non-dogmatic, pagan religious feeling whose only morality was that of a primitive poetic freedom. Constant exposure to these ideas directed the interest in Africa along somewhat mystical lines, which ultimately led to a dead end: *Légitime Défense*. We shall return to this later.

A few exceptional contributors to *La Revue du Monde Noir,* however, were not sidetracked by the seductiveness of things African to the literary myth of primitive man and a revolutionary utopia. Starting from a new awareness of alienation, Paulette Nardal probed, though cautiously as yet, the possibilities revealed by anthropology; in April 1932,[64] she described the latest metamorphosis of black racial consciousness, which now abandoned its earlier condescension towards the "backward brothers" in Africa. This Martiniquan woman no longer expected salvation from some future cultivation of her race's aesthetic gifts alone; she called for the exploration of contemporary Africa: "Espérons que les étudiants ... tireront parti des richesses que leur offre le passé de la race noire et le continent africain." Quoting as examples Félix Eboué and René Maran, whose novel *Le Livre de la Brousse* was soon to constitute "a true and magnificent *rehabilitation of African civilization,*" she reached this essential conclusion, which opened new horizons for the West Indians: "Nous avons pleinement conscience de ce que nous devons à la culture blanche ... mais nous entendons *dépasser le cadre de cette culture (blanche)* pour chercher ... à redonner à nos congénères la fierté d'appartenir à une race dont la civilisation est peut-être la plus ancienne du monde." The "assimilés" therefore grew aware that an African civilization still existed and that it offered perhaps as much cultural nourishment as the West: even better, *the black race perhaps possessed a civilization of its own, distinct* from all others. There was as yet no question of a return to sources; this, Paulette Nardal proclaimed, would be "obscurantism." Nor does this

[62] Léopold Senghor, "Vers un Socialisme africain," *Liberté* 2 (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 45–50; "Naissance du Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais." ibid., pp. 51–59.

[63] Cf. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: Alcan, 1910); *La Mentalité primitive* (Paris: Alcan, 1922). The latter especially was extraordinarily successful until the early 50s; it influenced a large number of European writers, even those who were professed leftists; the case of André Gide is significant.

[64] Cf. Paulette Nardal, "L'Eveil de la conscience de race," *La Revue du Monde Noir,* April 6, 1932.

new discovery as yet really require a choice to be made between Europe and Africa. However, when *La Revue du Monde Noir* stopped publication, there were signs of a change of attitude among certain West Indians. The desire for political assimilation no longer prevented them from considering the possibility of *cultural separatism* as well. At about the same time, a similar development was getting underway among some Africans, who started out from a purely political confrontation.

From its very first issue in June 1927, the journal *La Race Nègre* stressed the principle of *unconditional independence for African colonies*. This was based on President Wilson's doctrine of national self-determination. However, the idea that African nations really existed was still a faltering one, vacillating between the artificial entities created by the colonizer and the concept of a pan-Negro nation, inherited from Garvey. To prepare for independence, it was necessary to bring together and organize the blacks, beginning with those in metropolitan France, so as to start a mass movement capable of opposing the colonial power. It was this desire to create a political organization that provoked the break with the West Indian élite. The members of the *Ligue* declared themselves: "unanimes à reconnaître que l'Internationale communiste est le seul et véritable défenseur des peuples opprimés. Sans doute n'acceptent-ils pas dans son ensemble le programme communiste, mais ils acceptent sans réserve ... la partie de ce programme relative à la question coloniale."[65] Following Lamine Senghor, Kouyaté imitated P.C.F. tactics by organizing cells of *Ligue* members in Paris and in the French ports. The support given to his enterprise by the Communists pushed the L.D.R.N. more and more into the proletarian camp, but at the same time placed it under a form of ideological tutelage which soon led to profound differences within the group.

The P.C.F. did try to gain control of nascent nationalism by incorporating it into its anti-imperialist strategy, based on the United Front of white and black workers. Certain activists in the *Ligue* were aware of the confusion towards which they were being led by the Communists' refusal to admit that along with anti-imperialist solidarity there was also the need to act against the racial aspect of colonialism. This need had initiated the movement and it created problems of its own with which, it was believed, the Communists could come to terms. But it was difficult to establish good relations with militants of a party accustomed to iron discipline, which over the years had hardened ideologically, while at the same time putting out black propaganda in competition with the *Ligue*, whose growth as a national organization it watched with growing distrust.[66] At first the L.D.R.N. steered a course between class solidarity and racial solidarity. Two courses of action were conceived simultaneously: "C'est *uniquement dans une collaboration étroite avec les travailleurs des métropoles* que les Nègres trouveront la voie de leur libération"[67]—this was Kouyaté's view particularly. But the natives had other problems

[65] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, October 1928.

[66] Since July 1928, the Communist Internationale had been publishing a cyclostyled journal, *L'Ouvrier Nègre* (SLOTFOM, V, 10); George Padmore collaborated in the English version, *Negro Worker*. There was also *Le Cri des Peuples*, and *Chaînes*, a propaganda pamphlet published by the League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression. From 1933 to 1936, *Les Cahiers du Bolchévisme* contained a *Bulletin Colonial*. In September and October 1931, *Masses* devoted a special issue to the colonies.

[67] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, October 1928.

apart from those of low wages: the "indigénat" laws, compulsory labour, the arbitrariness of the administration, land despoliation, inadequate schooling, etc. The merit of the L.D.R.N. lay in its awareness of the different nature of their struggle. This was what inspired Emile Faure to seek "a specifically black policy" whose aim would be *"la libération des pays de race nègre de toute domination étrangère"*;[68] in this case, the struggle "n'a aucun rapport avec les revendications des masses européennes."[69] But how was a specifically black policy to be formulated? Recourse to the principle of national entities was not enough to resolve this difficulty. Indeed, the economic analysis of the colonial phenomenon, as borrowed from the Communists, forced the blacks in the *Ligue* into a deadlock by assuming that within the relationship between metropolitan France and her colonies, there existed a fundamental convergence of interests, merely vitiated by the capitalist regime. The effect of this view was to inhibit any black reformulation of the concept of national awareness.

The dispute centered around the demand for political assimilation, which the Communists saw as the first step towards liberation. In 1927, *La Race Nègre* still declared itself in favour of "wholesale naturalization which will grant the individual his political rights, his means of defence." Two years later, in April 1929, the journal took up the opposite stance, but the argument was a new one: "On n'aura pas changé *la mentalité de tout un peuple* parce qu'il aura solennellement déclaré renoncer à ses coutumes pour adopter la constitution française." The idea had been borrowed from the concept of native policy: *La Race Nègre* was fond of quoting Delafosse. Whereas the policy of separate development saved the élite from the temptation of nationalism by encouraging it to explore the contribution the black race could make to civilization, the same "native policy" suggested to the Africans a separatism based on the awareness of an *African racial identity* having "sa propre histoire, son art, ses traditions, ses mœurs, en un mot, son génie propre." In September 1927, this principle was formulated for the first time. Ethnic consciousness demanded an approach towards the colonial phenomenon which was very different from that proposed by the Communists: henceforth, colonization became "l'oppression d'un peuple faible par un autre peuple fort."[70] However, the definition of *colonization as the confrontation of two peoples* implied a criticism of cultural assimilation. Now, under the pretext of anti-racism, the Communists had never questioned the latter; their economic codification of history relegated cultural pluralism to the realm of folklore. As a member of the P.C.F. Kouyaté had, as from October 1928, contradicted Paul Morand's arguments on black atavism by declaring forcefully: "Les Nègres sont des Occidentaux en puissance."

His fellow-member Faure, on the contrary, considered that the struggle could not be reduced to a fight against capitalism; colonial tutelage should not be exchanged for ideological dictatorship. Faure perceived an ethnic awakening within the body of the party, a rebellion against a whole way of living, thinking and working, which the whites, even those who professed themselves allies, were attempting to force on the blacks. There

[68] In a letter to *L'Ami du Peuple*, February 1, 1931, Faure took up a different position from Kouyaté on this particular point of an alliance with the Communists.

[69] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, April 1931.

[70] Ibid., September 1930.

was therefore a growing consciousness of a profound difference between the peoples involved. As distinct from the West Indian approach, this difference was not perceived as resting in a specifically racial genius, but in cultural antagonism. The conclusion Faure came to was that imperialism also had its cultural aspect. Under the pressure of these very divergent views on the way in which the blacks should conduct their struggle, the L.D.R.N. split in April 1931.

Kouyaté left the *Ligue* and brought the majority of members into the Communist orbit; in August 1931 he founded *Le Cri des Nègres* as the organ of an *Union des Travailleurs Nègres* faithful to the tenets of the United Front. As for Faure, he transformed *La Race Nègre* into the organ of a black version of total nationalism. While the L.D.R.N. collapsed as a militant organization, its journal appearing only very irregularly, the small group centered around Faure, composed principally of Africans, mostly Senegalese, was to define, between 1931 and 1936, a new dimension of anti-colonial resistance: *first and foremost the struggle against cultural colonization.*

This new concept of the recovery of cultural independence seems to have originated in the Haitian context: Dr. Price-Mars' indigenism inspired *La Race Nègre* to promote a radical africanization of culture, capable of encouraging unaided a sense of nationhood. Commenting on the failure of the American intervention in Haiti, Faure's journal concluded: "Une nation blanche ne peut en aucune manière mener à bien une entreprise d'évolution nègre."[71] Such a development should be based on three principles which were spelt out in full. First, the rejection of European ideologies of liberation in favour of a purely black approach capable of reconciling *the national, racial and cultural demands for independence:* "Nous, nationalistes nègres, nous n'avons pas besoin de nous référer à l'étranger pour nous libérer idéologiquement de la tutelle blanche."[72] "C'est en vain qu'on leur parlera [aux Nègres] de capitalisme et de prolétariat. Ils ne voient chez eux que des dominateurs et des asservis."[73] Second, the restoration of *a black community, cemented by organic links* between race, indigenous civilization and national sovereignty, which implied a defence of "purity" (both biological and cultural) and a condemnation of élites, alienated through latinization: "Les races, comme l'individu, ont besoin d'une vitamine impondérable, sans laquelle toute vie est impossible .... Cette vitamine collective est le sentiment d'être partie intégrante d'une collectivité vivante et qui se respecte. Un peuple dont la personnalité morale est détruite par l'étranger, s'éteint sans rémission."[74] Third, the return to ancestral traditions, even in politics (i. e. despotic monarchy) and to an *African civilization* which must be revived: "Nous voulons retrouver notre indépendance politique et ressusciter, à sa faveur, notre antique civilisation nègre. Le retour aux usages de nos ancêtres, à leurs philosophies, à leurs organisations sociales, est une nécessité vitale."[75] On its own admission, this doctrine was regarded as a black version of German national socialism.

[71] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, August 1931. In *La Race Nègre*, the Haitian Ludovic Lacombe put forward arguments, notably on the africanization of education in the West Indies, which foreshadowed certain ideas of negritude, with the difference, however, that Lacombe was at the same time calling for an extremely right-wing political regime.

[72] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, July 1935.

[73] Ibid., November–December 1934.

[74] Ibid., February 1932.

[75] Ibid., July 1935.

Faure therefore attacked both the "assimilés" and the Communists; concealed under their slogan of a supra-racial solidarity, he saw the new mask of white imperialism. This quarrel had already been made public in 1930, when François Coty's *L'Ami du Peuple* joined the fray.[76] At the same time Faure denounced the treachery of the West Indian élite, who were, in his eyes, nothing but mulattos with middle-class pretensions. For all its exacerbation, his black chauvinism nevertheless led to a new approach to the question of cultural assimilation: "Nous n'avons que faire de singer les blancs .... A vouloir les imiter, l'élite nègre perd son temps .... Ceux qui, aplatis par des siècles d'oppression, n'osent plus porter le moindre intérêt à ce qui émane de leur race et cherchent, dans une soumission à la culture blanche, une base possible d'évolution pour nous, ignorent que les civilisations ne sont pas faites pour quelques intellectuels, mais pour les peuples." This is what *La Race Nègre* said in July 1935 to all those black students who crowded the Sorbonne. Every civilization was the product of a race; it maintained a vital link with its biological foundations. To tamper with the Africans' native civilization was therefore tantamount to working towards their physical extinction. Hence, to defend oneself against all the temptations of cultural assimilation was a matter of life and death. "L'école européenne, et surtout celle d'essence latine .... doit être considérée comme notre pire ennemie."[77] It was absolutely necessary to africanize education: "Dans l'antique civilisation africaine et dans l'étude objective des us et coutumes, des richesses industrielles et agricoles des pays nègres, ils [les nouveaux maîtres] retrouveront les éléments nécessaires à l'établissement d'une *culture raciale*."[78] The return to sources was therefore the indispensable condition for a true and complete independence.

If such ideas isolated Faure from the Parisian blacks, they nonetheless quickly gained ground; in 1937, Léopold Senghor also came to challenge unconditional cultural assimilation and, to champion a partial africanization in education through his support of the Ecole Rurale Populaire, a reformed type of elementary school which emphasized manual skills and knowledge of things African.[79] However, even before this change of attitude, the possibility of a reconciliation began to emerge among supporters of opposite political tendencies. In April 1932, Paulette Nardal was preparing to go beyond Afro-Latinity and declare her conversion to the "âme nègre." She began to take an interest in the "antique civilisation africaine." It is significant that the attempt to create an *Institut d'études nègres*, dedicated to the exploration of the possibilities of a development in accordance with racial factors, created conditions favourable to the bringing together, in May 1930, of advocates of conflicting political opinions (Faure, Kouyaté, Paulette Nardal and Dr. Sajous) and diverse geographical origins. Within this new

[76] Cf. François Coty, *Sauvons nos colonies. Le Péril rouge en pays noir* (Paris, 1931). The book contains a series of articles on the subject of black agitation which had appeared in *L'Ami du Peuple*.

[77] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, July 1935.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Cf. Léopold Senghor, "Le Problème culturel en AOF," *Liberté 1* (Paris: Seuil, 1964) pp. 11–21; "La résistance de la bourgeoisie sénégalaise à l'Ecole Rurale Populaire," *Exposition Internationale de Paris, 1937, Congrès International de l'Evolution culturelle des peuples coloniaux, 26–28 septembre 1937. Rapports et compte rendu* (Paris, 1938), pp. 40–44; Senghor's text should be read side by side with the general report in the same volume, which contains valuable discussions of Senghor's views.

perspective of a black culture, the publication of *Légitime Défense*[80] in June 1932 represents just one more false start: in fact, the alliance with the P.C.F. proposed by these students ran counter to racial aspirations, while the Surrealist model inspired revolt against a Europe that was "chrétienne, capitaliste et bourgeoise," without, in cultural terms, offering an African or even a black alternative. *Légitime Défense* favoured social revolution (solidarity of middle-class mulattos with black West Indians as an exploited class) and a literary revival within the narrow definition of the European avant-garde. For the time being, therefore, allegiance to metropolitan movements prevented the emergence of a *common cultural platform.* In *Le Cri des Nègres,* opposition to any approach based on race remained adamant. Though demands were made for the immediate evacuation of the colonies, the editorial policy was to refuse to see in traditional Africa the basis for a future society. A "Manifeste de la ligue de lutte pour la liberté des peuples du Sénégal et du Soudan," published in *Le Cri* between December 1933 and May 1934, denounced the collusion between tribal chiefs and colonial powers and proposed a social system on Soviet lines.

If *Légitime Défense* manifests the hold the progressives still had over the black students of the Latin Quarter in 1932, the contemporary development of other militants shows the extent to which the alliance with the Internationalists had been weakened. Kouyaté had returned from the black workers' conference, organized in July 1930 in Hamburg by the *Intersyndicale Rouge,* with the conviction that only the victory of the United Front could ensure the liberation of the colonies; this had provoked the rift with Faure. But Kouyaté was also to break with the Communists: in October 1933 he was expelled from the Party and dismissed as editor of *Le Cri des Nègres* for having attempted to organize a World Black Conference.[81] The Communists planned to go on directing anti-colonialist movements while conceding nothing to those who stood outside what was to be known henceforth as the "anti-fascist" line. It was obviously easy for Communist propaganda to denounce the reformist compromises preached to the West Indian faction by the advocates of race; Faure's support of tribal hierarchies was similarly branded as "trahison objective." We may note nonetheless that black secessions always took the same direction and set against the socio-revolutionary dogmas of the internationalists their immovable racial or ethnic consciousness. The intellectual development which gave birth to negritude emerged essentially out of a continual withdrawal from Communist policy. Kouyaté's is, indeed, far from an isolated case. At approximately the same time as Kouyaté, George Padmore too was renouncing his allegiance to Communism; in 1931 Padmore published a pamphlet denouncing not only foreign imperialists, but also "native exploiters" and attacking "le chauvinisme racial"; he wanted to unite "par-delà toutes les barrières de couleur, les ouvriers de toutes races et nations."[82] However, shortly afterwards Padmore was expelled from the Communist movement, the event being reported by *Le Cri des Nègres* in an article entitled: "L'action

[80] On *Légitime Défense* cf. Martin Steins, "Non-lieu," *Cultures et Développement* (Louvain), 9 (1977), 32–63.

[81] Kouyaté's expulsion is reported in *Le Cri des Nègres,* November–December 1933. His plan to organize a conference is mentioned in the same journal, January 1934.

[82] Cf. George Padmore, *La Vie et les luttes des travailleurs nègres,* (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque de l'Intersyndicale Rouge, 1931).

anti-fasciste—Tous dans la bataille pour barrer la route au fascisme"; the article accused Padmore of attempting to "affaiblir le mouvement ouvrier sous le signe du ralliement à *'l'unité de race'* au lieu de *'l'unité de classe'*, en renforçant ainsi l'oppression des impérialistes et de leurs alliés nègres."[83] The Laval-Stalin pact in May 1935 was soon to oblige the P.C.F. to curb its anti-colonialist propaganda and especially to abandon demands for independence; under the Front Populaire, the party completely changed sides and when it applauded the ruthless repression of Messali Hadj's *Parti Populaire Algérien* and the outright annexation of Algeria to France, a Colonial Convention organized by Faure united the blacks in their hostility towards the comrades who had so miserably betrayed them. In December 1935, Kouyaté returned to the arena with the journal *Africa* in which he backed the Front Populaire and its policy of colonial reform; he showed Africans the road to an enlightened collaboration by proposing solutions of a federalist nature.[84] It could be said that from 1936 the controversies raised by the question of immediate independence began to die down; this was partly due to the disastrous results of the Italo–Ethiopian war, which convinced Africans of the *dangers of separatism* and of the advantages of French Republican protection.

Nevertheless, controversy between the two camps was still raging when the first student movements began to come to the fore. That this was so is demonstrated by the fact that the students grouped themselves according to geographical origins, forming separate associations for natives of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Dahomey, etc. The exclusively Martiniquan nature of *Légitime Défense* illustrates this as well. The call by *La Race Nègre* in April 1929 for the creation of a united association of black students had therefore gone unheeded. The journal had argued the need for establishing an "étroite coopération de l'élément ouvrier et de l'élément intellectuel de la race." Faure's ideas were already in evidence: students should take care not to "tomber demain dans le ridicule d'une bourgeoisie hautaine;" it was their duty to "sortir nos camarades de l'individualisme farouche qui leur est perfidement conseillé quand ils débarquent à Paris!" It was desirable, on the other hand, to "fraternize" with natives of the various black colonies in order to undergo "l'apprentissage de la solidarité." Seeking to counter what could have been a fundamental objection, the L.D.R.N. appeal continued: "Cependant, ne craignez pas, chers compatriotes, que notre corporation estudiantine ... puisse jamais dégénérer en un bouillon de culture pour le préjugé de races."[85] In this way the L.D.N.R. tried to attribute to black students a phobia which spoke volumes about their aversion to classification by race. From this there emerged regional divisions which even the editorial staff of *l'Etudiant Noir* did not succeed in overcoming.

It is nonetheless revealing that in October 1933, Léopold Senghor created an *Association des Etudiants Ouest-Africains*.[86] It is even more significant that he an-

[83] Cf. *Le Cri des Nègres*, July 1934. A collection of *Le Cri* can be found at SLOTFOM, V, 23.

[84] *Africa* continued to appear regularly until September 1938 (cf. SLOTFOM, V, 21). For the sake of comparison, it should be mentioned that *Africa* printed an average of approximately 5,000 copies, having attained some printings of 10,000. *La Race Nègre* and *Le Cri des Nègres*, on the contrary, never exceeded a maximum of 3,000 copies.

[85] Cf. *La Race Nègre*, April 1929; on the same subject see also the issues of March and May 1929.

[86] Cf. SLOTFOM III, 119.

nounced this publicly in *Le Cri des Nègres* in August 1934, at the very moment when the journal demonstrated its strictly orthodox policy in racial matters by condemning Kouyaté's and Padmore's racial deviationism. Although his choice of *Le Cri* was attributable to his political convictions, another step taken during those same years indicates that Senghor did not yet appreciate Faure's views concerning the africanization of education. Indeed in May 1934, in a letter inviting Lamine Gueye to put himself forward as successor to Blaise Diagne, Senghor listed the demands of the West African students: warning of the threat of "la réaction" to "les quelques libertés qui nous restent sur la terre africaine," he calls for "l'assimilation progressive et totale" of French West African establishments of higher learning "aux établissements d'enseignement correspondants de la métropole," and goes on to demand an increase in the number of scholarships.[87] At that time, he was still opposed to the Ecole Rurale Populaire. By the middle of the thirties, we can place West Indian and African students on the political left, with all the ideas about race and culture that follow from such an affiliation. One may accept that Kouyaté's enthusiastic support of the Front Populaire and especially of its Minister for Colonies, Marius Moutet, reflected the position of most Africans in 1936. A natural solution to the problem of colonization could be glimpsed in the future: the élites formed by the colonizer would participate gradually in a type of colonial administration which would result in a *fraternal federation* with France. A brutal break with metropolitan France ceased to be a valid proposal.

Once this thorny problem of political separatism dividing West Indians and Africans was dealt with, the cultural issue returned to the fore and a dialogue became possible. We know that Césaire and Senghor were the main instigators of this shift. The reconciliation took place under the rallying call of "culture d'abord," in other words a renunciation of any challenge of the bases of the colonial order itself. Given the left's opposition to any intrusion of racial ideas, the allocation of priority to culture in fact entailed a depoliticization of the black question and was symbolised by the new title given to *L'Etudiant Martiniquais* in March 1935: *L'Etudiant Noir*.[88] However, the ideas inherited from Paulette Nardal on the one hand and from Emile Faure on the other, namely, pride in a racial potential which was proving itself in modern civilization, and awareness of an age-old African heritage, prompted West Indian and African students to form very different conceptions of their cultural future.

Let us first consider the Africans. Already in May 1934, Senghor had given his *Association des Etudiants Ouest-Africains* a clearly defined cultural aim: "On pourrait lui donner comme devise: 'assimiler la culture européenne en restant près de son peuple'. C'est à cela que répond l'organisation de ses causeries mensuelles, suivies de discussions. C'est grâce à ces fréquents échanges d'idées que les étudiants ouest-africains pourront élaborer, peu à peu, un idéal commun, né de l'accord entre leurs civilisations indigènes

[87] Cf. Lamine Gueye, *Itinéraire Africain* (Paris: Présence Africaine [1966]) pp. 59–60.

[88] *L'Etudiant Martiniquais*, "organe de l'association des étudiants martiniquais", had appeared once, in February 1932. Following a two-year silence, it reappeared in May 1934 and January 1935. At this time, Césaire took over the direction of the association and published the March 1935 issue under the title *L'Etudiant Noir*. It does not seem that the student paper continued publication. Cf. Martin Steins, "Jeunesse Nègre", *Neohelicon* (Budapest), 4 (1976), i/ii, 91–121.

et les exigences du monde moderne."[89] The idea is clear: to discover a middle ground upon which to define a *new cultural ideal,* supplemented by such concrete elements from native civilizations as would remain viable in the modern world. This is not a question of a continental African civilization (in the singular), nor of a "black" civilization, maintained by race. Rather, the perspective is one of diverse ethnic cultures. The ideal was to attain a state of harmonious cross-breeding between the traditions peculiar to each of the West African peoples and their initiation into the twentieth century. In other words, it was a question of adjusting the past to the future; the latter being quite simply "modern," that is, shaped by the West. The problem was how to avoid the dangers of cultural uprooting. Senghor and his friends provided almost the same solution as Robert Delavignette[90] who, following Delafosse, called for the development of *"cultures franco-indigènes"* (in the plural).

The two novels published in 1935 and 1937 by Ousmane Socé illustrate this solution of cultural crossbreeding: *Karim* went beyond the old viewpoint of unconditional assimilation. The hero of the novel has partily been westernized but remains rooted in his native environment. The narrative demonstrates the difficulties of this uncomfortable position. True, Karim fails in his search for a *harmonious balance* between the demands of "modern" life in Dakar, and his nostalgia for an "Afro-Islamic" culture. His uncle Abdoulaye, however is very successful in this respect, for he manages to reconcile the ancient and the modern: "Il était 'progressiste', partisan d'une évolution ayant pour base le fond propre des indigènes." The novel thus describes a dilemma which, significantly, is expressed not in racial, but in ethnic terms: "Au fond, ils hésitaient tous à rompre définitivement avec le vieux Sénégal pour épouser les mœurs d'Europe, dont certaines s'imposaient. Leur cœur parlait en faveur de la tradition ancestrale et leurs intérêts en faveur du modernisme pratique de l'Occident. Mais, par-dessus leurs discours, d'année en année, *une civilisation métisse* s'organisait." In *Mirages de Paris,* Socé asserted with even greater clarity that "le métis sera l'homme de l'avenir." The students' duty was to facilitate the birth of new cultures in Africa; they should eliminate from the past all the useless elements—of which there were many—without breaking radically with their motherland and rushing into total assimilation. "C'est aux jeunes de détruire les routines entre lesquelles étouffe notre pays. Il y a la théorie de 'l'évolution sans heurts'; sa principale qualité est la prudence."[91]

In the article he contributed to *L'Etudiant Noir* in March 1935, Senghor went further than this form of modified assimilation. In this article he makes it clear that he no longer believes in the concrete elements of Senegalese culture as described by his compatriot. Senghor posits the existence of an *"âme nègre" as the inspiration of an African civilization,* as illustrated in René Maran's *Le Livre de la Brousse.* To the question whether it is advisable to devote oneself entirely to this original civilization, Senghor

[89] Cf. Léopold Senghor's introduction of the Association des Etudiants Ouest-Africains, in *L'Etudiant Martiniquais,* May 1934. Cf. also the notice in *Le Cri des Nègres,* August 1934.

[90] Cf. Robert Delavignette, *Soudan, Paris, Bourgogne* (Paris, 1935); *Les Vrais chefs de l'Empire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939); "Equipe eurafricaine: Place pour l'Allemagne?," *Esprit,* 7, No. 73 (1938), 211–230.

[91] Cf. Ousmane Socé, *Karim, roman sénégalais,* (1935), quotations are from the third edition (Paris: Nouvelles Edition Latines, 1948), p. 105; this had a preface by R. Delavignette. Quotations from *Mirages de Paris* (1937) are from the second edition (ibid., 1955), pp. 201, 204.

replies in the negative. It is true, he says, that we must revive "le vieil homme en nous," that is, the pre-colonial African, but within the broader perspective of *a black humanism.* This is "un mouvement culturel qui a l'homme noir comme but, la raison occidentale et l'âme nègre comme instruments de recherches; car il y faut raison et intuition." In this way Senghor widens the cultural confrontation to include the whole of the two cultures, condensing them into value equations: reason—imagination, mind—soul, etc. However, quite unlike his friend Césaire, he refuses to view these elements as irreconcilable; "Maran est arrivé à les concilier, car il n'y a pas là antinomie." Senghor's black humanism therefore proposed a fusion of the values flowing from the two centuries-old civilizations which had been thrown into contact by colonization. The fact that these cultural entities coincided with racial divisions troubled Senghor no more than cross-breeding did Ousmane Socé; "être nègre," Senghor argues, "est affaire de psychologie, plus que de pureté de sang."[92] The ambition of black humanism is therefore to achieve *a synthesis;* Maran proved that this was possible; he was able to combine logicality with sensitivity. This was Senghor's reply to Césaire, who had insisted upon the concept of a "duel" opposing irreconcilable values between which a choice must be made. However, Senghor's synthesis is of a different nature from the Franco-Senegalese cross-breeding discussed by Socé; Senghor extended the concept of ethnic individuality to encompass all of black Africa. For him, it was not so much a question of reconciling picturesque local customs with the demands of modern life; he conceived of two value systems both simultaneously drawing the colonized African towards them. Europe had developed man's technical and mechanical skills, whereas the African soul had remained close to everything that had constituted the strength of Greco-Roman antiquity. Senghor's classical education inspired him to see in this the source of an essentially humanist renewal, while to Socé it was nothing but antiquated clutter fit only for the museum. Senghor's idea was to promote, through the revival of the "vieil homme," a *Renaissance* similar to the one which had brought the Middle Ages to a close in Europe.

The situation was quite different for the West Indians. What had mobilized the students was the miserable condition of the black proletariat; *Légitime Défense* had put their protest into words. However, the social denominator of student action, that is, the attack against the hegemony of the "békés", was incapable of transcending the various antagonisms between the assimilated "bourgeoisie de couleur" and the West Indian "Nègres." Racial solidarity, which the élite had so ardently advocated since the mid-twenties, was constantly being defeated by the racial divisions peculiar to the West Indians. Having failed to abolish social differences, the students wanted to seek elsewhere the means of reshaping an *insular and fragmented society.* In 1934–1935 Aimé Césaire abandoned the idea of a social revolution in favour of cultural action. This gave rise to a fairly heated controversy which filled the pages of *L'Etudiant Noir.* An examination of the extreme positions should allow us to pass over the shades of opinion in between. The poet Gilbert Gratiant[93] represented the old school of social commitment

[92] Cf. Léopold Senghor, "L'Humanisme et nous—René Maran," *L'Etudiant Noir,* March 1935.

[93] Cf. Gilbert Gratiant, "Mulâtres... Pour le bien et le mal," *L'Etudiant Noir,* March 1935. This lengthy article takes up almost a quarter of the journal. Gratiant has remained true to his ideas, as illustrated by his *Crédo des Sang-Mêlé* (Fort-de-France, 1948).

to the "Nègres"; however, at the same time he transferred the Afro-Latinity of his predecessors from the individual level to that of the group. Gratiant considered that the centuries-old combination of heterogeneous racial and cultural elements in the West Indies had given rise to new elements: the mulatto race and *creole civilization*. In the latter all West Indians, whites as well, could find a specific identity different from any other, which would in turn produce a new society capable, through a process of social revolution, of absorbing the black masses. This essentially nationalist solution distinguished between the social problem (solidarity with the black proletariat) and the cultural reality of a "mulatto civilization" dedicated to an extensive (though not complete) aryanization of the "Nègres".

Aimé Césaire, on the other hand, started from the fact of the biological blackness of the majority. Racial affinity with other blacks, that is with Africans, led him to conclude that it was necessary to revive a purely black civilization in the West Indies. West Indian revival would be effected through *a radical negrification*. In the manner of the contributors to *La Race Nègre*, Césaire in fact established an unbreakable link between race and civilization. "Nul ne peut changer de faune," he wrote in *L'Etudiant Noir*.[94] Man's culture is predetermined by his biological nature. For this reason, all attempts at assimilation of the blacks are doomed to failure and, as in the past, can only result in an aping of Western culture. In spite of indications that the Negro element within the West Indians had died away and that they had become "hommes de couleur" different from the Africans, Césaire declared that within their racial identity, their inalienable legacy from the continent of their origin, there lay hidden a lost Africa. By accepting the teaching of *l'Esprit de Brousse*, it would be possible to recreate a black civilization, similar to that of the Africans, if not identical in inspiration. For Césaire, every civilization was, in reality, nothing but racial instinct become flesh. By defining the West Indian in racial terms and by putting forward the suggestion that race was identical on both sides of the Atlantic, Césaire opened the door to cultural communion. Therefore, any form of cross-breeding went against nature and her aims. In March 1935, Césaire denounced not only assimilation into the bourgeoisie, but above all the creole cultural ideal as alien to the black racial culture which must be revived. This led him to adopt an attitude very close to that of Faure's journal, where similar ideas had been vigorously maintained by the Haitian Lacombe, but with the difference that the national corollary of Faure's "racism" no longer had any attraction for the young Martiniquan. Further, in expressing his commitment as *an existential choice* rather than as a struggle for black social equality, Césaire had totally divested the West Indian conflict of its political character. As against a specifically West Indian creolization, Césaire proposed his black alternative, based on the laws of *racial atavism*. In this way, not only did he turn his back on the internationalists, but he also abandoned the quest for a purely West Indian identity. Rather, he declared his loyalty to the ideal of a black civilization, rooted in race, and to his sworn quest for an ancestral civilization of which he had been robbed by French assimilation.

Some of his African colleagues prepared, in their turn, to meet him halfway. There was, however, some hesitation. The concept of "black humanism" did not prevent

[94] Cf. Aimé Césaire, "Nègreries—Jeunesse noire et assimilation," *L'Etudiant Noir*, March 1935.

Senghor from remaining faithful to Léon Blum and from sympathizing with his comrades' progressive ideals, as is indicated in his poem "A l'Appel de la Race de Saba," written in Tours in 1936. In Africa, political problems could not easily be avoided, for they affected all aspects of life much more directly than in the West Indies. The *Front Populaire* had, in a sense, once again united the aspirations of the élite and the masses, that is, of this "people" addressed by Senghor in 1934, which symbolized at one and the same time the masses and their ethnicity. The African situation was free from the internal divisions, both racial and social, which had caused Césaire to reject cultural cross-breeding, the "creole" culture of his elders, and to advocate pan-Negro cultural separatism. As late as 1937, Senghor was still referring to the cultural conditions created by colonialism as "Afro-French";[95] as a result, he came to the conclusion that bilingualism, that is, *biculturalism,* was the solution for the future. By adopting an ideal of cross-breeding, which was, in reality, the same as that of the franco-indigenous cultures of the Africanists, Senghor came up against the assimilated Senegalese who still believed firmly in total assimilation. They would not hear of African languages or of an africanization of education. This indicates how far apart were Césaire's and Senghor's starting points, and that a reconciliation of their respective aspirations was indeed difficult.

The two speeches made by Senghor in 1937[96] show him to be straddling two positions. At Dakar, where he scandalized the élite by supporting the Ecole Rurale Populaire, his argument was the need for an ethnic cohesion, for a revival of Senegalese culture: "Il y a dans un tel enseignement d'abord un intérêt social. L'élite est appelée à être exemple et intermédiaire. ... Quelle compétence si elle ignore son peuple?" In this speech, Senghor declares himself in favour of cultural cross-breeding, of promoting a *Franco-Senegalese* culture. In Paris, on the other hand, he seems to have founded a similar rejection of unconditional assimilation upon the argument of a civilization no longer Senegalese, nor even African, but *black in the racial sense* which would include the contemporary Afro-American culture. The cultural criterion had thus changed from an ethnical to a more clearly biological one; however, at the same time, what this criterion gained through racial extension, it lost in concrete ties with the African, and therefore the colonial, reality.

What still separated Senghor from this purely racial culture advocated by his friend Césaire, was that "le retour aux sources" disregarded the necessity for Africa to enter the modern world. Faure's solution of a chauvinist approach had proved dangerous in the light of the Ethiopian war. Was it possible to divest the cultural search of its political element, that is, to eliminate all conflict with the colonial power? At this point the decisive influence of Leo Frobenius, whom the two friends read in 1937,[97] intervened. Frobenius' thoughts permitted a distinction to be drawn between "civilization"—defined as the area of technical progress, both economic and social, which was reserved for "l'homme hamitique" that is, the colonizer—and "culture" or "esprit de la civilisation," which brings together all the creative elements at man's disposal in order to arrange them according to an existential plan, which varies from

[95] Cf. Léopold Senghor, "Le problème culturel en AOF." loc. cit.
[96] Cf., note 79 above.
[97] Cf. Leo Frobenius, *Histoire de la Civilisation Africaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936).

one culture to the next. Thus separated from its as it were quantitative infrastructure, the concept of a racial culture ceased to create possible areas of friction with colonization, which became merely a technical enterprise. Understood as a specific arrangement of values, as a *qualité de l'âme,* culture (in Frobenius' terms) cleared the field of action which Césaire and Senghor were attempting to define, of all the local obstacles peculiar to the West Indies and Africa. The fusion of the two attitudes, invoking respectively a racial culture and a continental culture, became possible and encouraged the establishment of a *common cultural identity,* henceforth referred to as *Negro-African.* What was new in negritude was the union of these two terms, one applying to race, and the other, implicitly, to culture. The concept of negritude as a racial culture with African origins opened new vistas where blacks on both sides of the Atlantic regained their freedom, but where the formulation of this freedom was confined to the cultural, or, more precisely, to the literary field.

From this point on, mother Africa and her children in the Diaspora came together. This was undoubtedly the beginning of intellectual decolonization, but it entailed giving up to the colonizer everything associated with "civilization". This accounts for the political positions of negritude's two protagonists on the eve of the war. In effect, at the time of France's entry into World War II, Césaire and Senghor had broken away from the blacks' traditional political allies and announced to the French that "l'esprit de la civilisation négro-africaine" would save the West. The *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* as well as the essay published in 1939 in *L'Homme de Couleur,* both contain a settling of accounts with left-wing ideologies. It should be emphasized that the version of the *Cahier* published in August 1939 in the journal *Volontés* was considerably revised after the Liberation. In 1939, Césaire and Senghor drew closer to literary circles, namely the journals *Volontés* and *Charpentes,* which were soon to lend their support to the "Révolution Nationale" of the Vichy government. As early as 1937, Senghor had found a receptive audience among those Frenchmen who, like himself, rejected cross-breeding at all levels and who wanted to protect the native genius of each people from encroachment by cosmopolitanism.[98] Nonetheless, the quasi-religious enthusiasm of their newly discovered negritude prompted Senghor and Césaire not to break their links, but to invert the meaning of cultural colonization.[99] In the *Cahier,* Césaire was to put forward negritude as a response to universal thirst and hunger, while Senghor, thinking in terms of a colonization in reverse, was defining "Ce que l'Homme Noir apporte."[100]

(Translated from the French
by Arleen Schenke)

[98] Cf. "Les Elites indigènes et la culture," *L'Action Française,* October 4, 1937. This text refers directly to Senghor's speech in Dakar and quotes him as rejecting complete assimilation. It is interesting to contrast this with another article published in *Africa* in February 1937 ("La Grande pitié de l'enseignement en AOF") which categorically rejected the Ecole Rurale Populaire, thereby expressly opposing Léon Daudet's arguments on the subject.

[99] Cf. Léopold Senghor, "La Culture et l'Empire'," *Charpentes,* 2 (July–August 1939), 61–64. This issue contained an editorial entitled "Colonies". The first issue appeared in June 1939 and contained a poem by Senghor ("Neige sur Paris"), a "conte nègre" by Damas and a translation by Aimé Césaire of a poem by Sterling Brown ("Les Hommes Forts"). Carl Brouard and François Duvalier also appeared in *Charpentes.* The journal was edited by Lucien Combelle: this former private secretary to André Gide was given a heavy prison sentence after the Liberation. Another contributor to *Charpentes* was Georges Pelorson, director of *Volontés,* who had had the courage to publish the very long manuscript of Césaire's *Cahier,* exactly as he had received it from the author.

[100] Cf. Léopold Senghor, "Ce que l'Homme Noir apporte," in *Liberté 1.*

ABIOLA IRELE

3. THE NEGRITUDE DEBATE

There is a sense in which the development of negritude,[101] both as a movement and as a concept, has been marked by a fundamental irony. This irony stems from the fact that the first extended discussion and systematic formulation of negritude was provided by Jean-Paul Sartre. In many ways, it was Sartre's brilliant analysis in the essay "Orphée noir" that consecrated the term and gave negritude the status of one of the most important ideological concepts of our time. At the same time, it can be argued that his very formulation has been in large measure responsible for the ambiguity that has surrounded the term and generated the controversy that negritude has attracted to itself ever since.

The starting point of Sartre's analysis is the complex of emotions and attitudes

[101] Although the term "negritude" was first coined and used in print by Aimé Césaire, the concept was most articulately expounded by Léopold Senghor in a number of essays which were later conveniently collected as *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964). The first book-length exegesis was produced by Cameroonian scholar Thomas Melone, *De la négritude dans la littérature africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962): this was followed after a few years by Haitian writer René Piquion's *Manuel de négritude* (Port-au-Prince: Deschamps, 1965). Later books on the topic include: I. Montenegro, *A Negritude, dos mitos as realidades* (Braga: Pax, 1967); *Negritude: Essays and Studies*, ed. A. H. Berrian and R. A. Long (Hampton Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1967); Lilyan Kesteloot, *Négritude et situation coloniale* (Yaunde: C.L.E., 1968); Jean-Marie Abanda Ndengue, *De la négritude au négrisme: Essais polyphoniques* (Yaunde: C.L.E., 1970); Stanislas Adotevi, *Négritude et négrologues* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1972); L.S. Senghor, Mercer Cook, *et al.*, *Colloque sur la négritude* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972); Jeanne-Lydie Goré, *Les Littératures d'expression française: Négritude africaine, négritude caraïbe* (Paris: Université de Paris-Nord, 1973); Rosa Marie Villarello Reza, *Negritud y colonialismo cultural en Africa* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autonoma, 1975). Negritude has been a fashionable topic for numberless articles of unequal scholarly value in a great variety of languages. Special mention should be made of Professor Abiola Irele's own contributions: "Negritude or Black Cultural Nationalism," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 3 (1965), 321–348; "Negritude, Literature and Ideology," Ibid., 499–526; "Negritude Revisited," *Odù* 5 (1971), 3–26; "Negritude et *African Personality*," in *Colloque sur la négritude* (1972) pp. 151–168; and "Négritude: Philosophy of African Being," *Nigeria Magazine*, 122/123 (1977), 1–13. Some of the most cogent discussions of negritude will be found in books dealing with Senghor's poetry and ideas, as for example R. Zastrow, *Der negro-afrikanische, existentialistische und lyrische Sozialismus Leopold Senghors* (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1965); Sébastian O. Mezu, *Léopold Sédar Senghor et la défense et illustration de la civilisation noire* (Paris: Didier, 1968); Ernest Milcent and Monique Sordet, *Léopold Sédar Senghor et la naissance de l'Afrique moderne* (Paris: Seghers, 1969); Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Senghor and the Politics of Negritude* (London: Heinemann, 1969); Barend van Niekerk, *The African Image in the Work of Senghor* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1970); Jacques L. Hymans, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1971); Irmgard Hanf, *Leopold Sédar Senghor: Ein afrikanischer Dichter französischer Prägung* (Munich: Fink, 1972); and Sylvia Washington Bâ, *The Concept of Negritude in the Poetry of Leopold Sédar Senghor* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1973). For an orthodox Marxist–Leninist approach, see Imre Marton, *Contribution à une critique des interprétation des spécificités du Tiers Monde* (Budapest: Institut d'Economie Mondiale, 1978), especially pp. 11–32. [Ed.]

expressed in the poetry of the first generation of French-speaking black poets brought together in the 1948 anthology by L. S. Senghor.[102] These emotions and attitudes, related as they were to a historical experience common to all black people, were subsumed under the term negritude coined by Aimé Césaire and first used by him in the long poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal.* In exploring the universe of feelings of which the poetry was a representation, Sartre was led also to examine the various meanings suggested by the term and to offer a comprehensive interpretation of its significance.

His trenchant summing up of negritude as "the Negro's affective attitude to the world" underlines his understanding of the movement as a response to the specific pressures of a historical situation, as a means for the black man to take his place in history as an active agent rather than as a suffering object. Sartre develops this aspect of the movement as follows:

> La situation du noir, sa "déchirure" originelle, *l'aliénation* qu'une pensée étrangère lui impose sous le nom d'assimilation le mettent dans l'obligation de reconquérir son unité existentielle de nègre ou, si l'on préfère, la pureté originelle de son projet par une ascèse progressive, au-delà de l'univers du discours. La négritude, comme la liberté, est point de départ et terme ultime: il s'agit de la faire passer de l'immédiat au médiat, de la *thématiser.* (p. xxiii)

Sartre further discerns in this progression of the black consciousness towards a full awareness of its determining history a positive manner of transcending experience, of living the world in its fullest implications. This leads him to the well-known formulation of negritude, in terms of his existentialist philosophy, as "the-being-in-the-world of the Negro."

It was perhaps to be expected that Sartre's interpretation would be closely related to his own philosophical and ideological preoccupations at the time he wrote the essay, and generally his discussion refers to an ethical and philosophical tradition of radicalism of which he has been one of the most distinguished contemporary heirs. This radical approach was moreover perfectly suited to any understanding of the actualities of the global experience of the blacks as represented in the poetry Sartre was examining.

However, Sartre deviates from this course for a while, in order to consider other aspects of negritude. Taking his cue from Senghor, he devotes the entire middle section of his essay to an examination of the term as fundamental reference for the black poet in his "existential project." Thus he writes:

> Cette méthode ... est la loi dialectique des transformations successives qui conduiront le nègre à la coïncidence avec soi-même dans la négritude. Il ne s'agit pas pour lui de *connaître,* ni de s'arracher à lui-même dans l'extase mais de découvrir, à la fois et de devenir ce qu'il est. (p. xxiii)

[102] L. S. Senghor, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache* (Paris: P.U.F., 1948). Page references are to the second edition (1969). Sartre's essay was also included in his *Situations III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949). An English translation by Samuel Allen was published as *Black Orpheus* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963).

Sartre goes on to distinguish between what he calls the "objective negritude" which expresses itself in the customs, the arts, the songs and dances of the African populations, and the "subjective negritude" of the black poet, which corresponds to the movement of his sensibility towards the scheme of spiritual values defined by those elements of the African civilization that stand as the objective references of his original identity. And it is precisely Sartre's understanding of this movement that gives point to the title of his essay. As he puts it,

> Ainsi sont indissolublement mêlés chez le *vates* de la négritude le thème du retour au pays natal et celui de la redescente aux Enfers éclatants de l'âme noire. Il s'agit d'une quête, d'un dépouillement systématique et d'une ascèse qu'accompagne un effort continu d'approfondissement. Et je nommerai "orphique" cette poésie parce que cette inlassable descente du nègre en soi-même me fait songer à Orphée allant réclamer Eurydice à Pluton. (p. xvii)

In this light negritude begins to appear as something more than an active confrontation with history, more than a strategy, so to speak, to meet the demands and vicissitudes of the collective existence, but rather as a term or facet of an original being which gives sanction to the historical gesture of the black poet. Sartre elaborates indeed on this aspect. Analysing the symbolism employed by the poets, as expressive of an original mode of apprehension, he comes to the following conclusion:

> Si l'on voulait systématiser, on dirait que le Noir se fond à la Nature entière en tant qu'il est sympathie sexuelle pour la Vie et qu'il se revendique comme l'Homme en tant qu'il est Passion de douleur révoltée. (p. xxxv)

Although Sartre finds a parallel between this vitalism and the Dionysian cult of ancient Greece as celebrated by Nietzsche, he seems to regard it as a specific endowment of the black and as the essential quality of negritude. And relating this to the poetic expression of the French-speaking black, he asks:

> Est-ce une *explication* systématique de l'âme noire ou un Archétype platonicien qu'on peut indéfiniment approcher sans jamais y atteindre? (p. xl)

But though Sartre here appears to envisage negritude from an essentialist point of view, it turns out that in fact his emphasis is elsewhere, and it is here that some of the ambiguity in his analysis resides. For negritude is for him, not so much the expression in time of a definite collective personality and mode of understanding peculiar to the black, but a contingent phenomenon, the provisional outcome of the tension between the black man's "situation" on one hand, and on the other, his "freedom". The sympathy which Sartre appears to exhibit for an idealist notion of a "black soul" proves illusory, as his emphasis on the historical and ideological significance of the concept emerges more clearly towards the end of his essay:

> Du coup la notion subjective, existentielle, ethnique de *négritude* "passe," comme dit Hegel, dans celle—objective, positive, exacte—de *prolétariat*. (p. xl)

And further on he sums up the matter in the following terms:

> En fait, la Négritude apparaît comme le temps faible d'une progression dialectique: l'affirmation théorique et pratique de la suprématie du blanc est la thèse; la position de la Négritude comme valeur antithétique est le moment de la négativité. Mais ce moment négatif n'a pas de suffisance par lui-même et les noirs qui en usent le savent fort bien; ils savent qu'il vise à préparer la synthèse ou réalisation de l'humain dans une société sans races. (p. xli)

In concrete terms, then, Sartre suggests in his essay that the felt intensity of black poetry, related as it is to a specific historical experience, serves indeed to endow that experience with a tragic beauty and symbolic resonance, but that its true direction and meaning reside in its defining for the race a truly historic mission. "Because Negritude is not a state, it is pure surpassing of itself," writes Sartre; since for him, it is simply the effort to create a new and positive mode of historical existence and consciousness for the black race, in a perpetual tension between the actualities of its collective experience, and the humanizing tendencies of its collective will and intention.

Sartre's essay was to exercise a remarkable influence not only in making known black poetry in the French language, but also in establishing negritude as a significant contemporary ideology. It provided not only the main themes of its later development as a concept notably in the writings of Senghor, but also, arising out of its bristling ambiguities, the lines along which much of the controversy on negritude has run. There is a further paradox involved here, for Senghor's formulation, while representing a further expansion of some of the themes which Sartre's essay threw up in such magnificent profusion, shows in fact a clear divergence from Sartre in its emphasis. In an important respect, Senghor in his essays elaborates on these themes in order to gather them, as it were, into a focus upon what seemed to him, as an African, the essential point: the affirmation of negritude as a concept designating the collective personality of the black race, as a quality essential to the race, and only incidentally involved in a particular history which it transcends.

Thus while Senghor does not lose sight of the historical context of negritude as a movement involving the expression of a new spirit of black assertion relative to the political and sociological conditions of the black experience, he tends rather to a definition of the concept itself in terms that are fundamentally essentialist. For him, negritude represents a mode of being and denotes the cultural and spiritual endowment of the black man, a basic groundwork of the collective personality, deriving from the common African origin. Where Sartre's emphasis falls on the "subjective Negritude" which is historical and contingent, Senghor sees this simply as an inner compulsion, arising from the circumstances of history, towards self-affirmation, and therefore as a purely secondary aspect of negritude. The act of self-affirmation itself is related more importantly, for Senghor, to a common consciousness of shared cultural and moral values, and of psychological traits original to the race—hence his most common definition of negritude as "l'ensemble des valeurs du monde noir." There is a clear shift therefore from Sartre's understanding of negritude as a phenomenon subject to the laws

of a historical dialectic to a view of negritude as a unique endowment of the black soul, with an objective expression in those specific features of the African civilization which make it a distinctive organic whole, and which are the determinants of a special disposition of the black race. Where for Sartre, negritude is pure contingence and becoming, for Senghor it is an irreducible essence of the collective identity.

It is instructive to confront the views of Sartre and of Senghor because their divergence on the essential definition reveals not merely a difference of personal intellectual dispositions but, more fundamentally, of interests and involvement in the subject. The essential motivation of Senghor's efforts was to rehabilitate African civilization and through it the black race. Though Sartre shows some sympathy for this consideration and makes some concession to it, his final emphasis, as we have seen, does not rest on a new appraisal of African culture, to which he was an outsider, but rather on the possible historical role of black men in a political and social revolution whose ideological seeds were sown in Europe. Senghor's interest lay elsewhere, and if he concedes a historical significance to negritude, it is a significance that derives from a unique situation of the race, not to be confounded with any other. This much is made clear in the following lines:

> La voix de l'Afrique planant au-dessus de la
> rage des canons longs
> . . . . . .
> Est-ce sa faute si Dieu lui a demandé les prémices
> de ses moissons
> Les plus beaux épis, et les plus beaux corps élus
> patiemment parmi mille peuples?[103]

This view of the race singled out for a unique historical and moral mission derives from an absolute vision of the race which Senghor expresses in another poem:

> Pour tous ceux-là qui sont entrés par les quatre
> portes sculptées—la marche
> Solennelle de mes peuples patients! leurs pas se
> perdent dans les sables de l'histoire.[104]

In other words, the special experience of the race, the particular character of black history, is merely a facet of a collective being that, in its foundation, remains outside history.

Senghor's theory of negritude, as elaborated in some key essays collected in *Liberté I* (1964), and diffused throughout his prose works, rests therefore on this essential vision of the race.

The main lines of this theory are now well established, and can be briefly summarized, in order to place them within the context of the controversy that they have aroused. As is well known, Senghor's thinking is based on an emotive theory of the

[103] "Chant du Printemps" in *Hosties Noires* (Paris: Seuil, 1948).
[104] "Le Kaya-Magan" in *Ethiopiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1956).

African personality, from which he derives his explication of the modes of apprehension that are original to Africa and characteristic of its culture and societies. Senghor has consistently argued that, by virtue of the traditional African's situation within the organic milieu which determines in him a specific psycho-physiological constitution, he is endowed with a special force of response to the outside world, with a mode of feeling which is involved in a form of sensuous "participation" with nature and which affords him an immediate grasp of the inner quality of reality. This form of experience, proceeding from a faculty which, after Bergson, Senghor has termed "emotion," establishes a direct and intense relation between the experiencing mind and the object of its experience; it leads therefore to a fuller apprehension of reality than is afforded by the limiting forms of mental operations associated with the discursive method to which, since the ancient Greeks, Western civilization has given an ascendant position in its approach to experience. The following extract is a characteristic statement of this point of view:

> Ici, les faits naturels, surtout "les faits sociaux ne sont pas des choses." Il y a, cachées derrière eux, les forces cosmiques et vitales qui les régissent, animant ces apparences, leur donnant couleur et rythme, vie et sens. C'est cette *signification* qui s'impose à la conscience et provoque l'émotion. Plus justement encore, l'émotion est la saisie de l'être intégral—conscience et corps—par le monde de l'indéterminé, l'irruption du monde mystique—ou magique—dans le monde de la détermination. Ce qui émeut le Négro-africain, ce n'est pas tant l'aspect extérieur de l'objet que sa réalité profonde, sa *sous-réalité*, pas tant son *signe* que son *sens*.[105]

The whole framework of African sensibility and expression rests on this postulate in Senghor's theory, and determines the African world-view in his formulation. The strong sense of sympathy with the universe which the African's participating relation with nature affords, leads to a conception of the world as a system of vital forces, linked as it were in a hierarchical order within "a great chain of being." The African's mode of apprehension is thus mystical and is sustained by a sense of the sacred, in which reverence for the dead and a belief in the continuing life of the ancestors also play a significant part. All this in turn informs the moral values of African societies and determines their characteristic form of social organization which rests on a close and intensely spiritual sense of community. The social universe appears therefore as a translation into practical terms of the values that derive from a profound level of spiritual experience.

Senghor's theory of negritude rests on what might be termed an African epistemology, and embraces a distinction long acknowledged, even in Western thought, between two different modes of knowledge: on one hand, the intuitive and symbolic, which Senghor attributes to African civilization as its distinctive mode, and on the other, the rational and scientific, which he ascribes to the West. Hence his famous statement: "L'émotion est nègre, comme la raison hellène."

[105] L. S. Senghor, "De la négritude. Psychologie du Négro-africain", *Diogène*, No. 37 (1962), 3–16. See p. 15.

But for all the sharpness of this dichotomy, it does not appear that Senghor wishes to postulate an irreconcilable opposition between the two modes. Although in his writings the question is not given the proper clarification that it requires, there is nonetheless the constant suggestion that he sees the two modes as complementary, and their interaction as necessary to the full development of the life of man. His distinction acquires its sharpness from Senghor's insistence on the need to give recognition to certain aspects of African forms of life and expression which had been taken as indications of the African's inherent inferiority to the European, and Senghor points to these as essential in any consideration of human experience that would understand it in its wholeness. He does not hesitate to reinforce his case by reference to those currents in European thought that, in reaction against the dominant rationalism, had attempted to arrive at a more subtle and more complete view of life by resorting to nonrational categories. In this sense, Senghor's exaltation of the mystical and intuitive allies the anti-intellectual protest within Western thought against rationalism and scientism to a specific effort to rehabilitate the traditional civilizations of his native continent.

This point leads us to a consideration of a special character of his theory that has to do with his position as a poet. It is evident that, for all his borrowing of terms and concepts from contemporary psychology and philosophy, Senghor's formulations derive less from a rigorous investigation of the nature of the African personality and its social expressions than from a personal feeling for the native civilization that stands behind him, and they amount to a passionate defence of what he conceives to be its essential values. In his conception of negritude, these values are directed towards a spiritual vision of man and the universe. The need to rehabilitate African civilization meets here with the poet's requirements for a scheme of spiritual reference for his individual poetic expression. The metaphors with which Senghor habitually decks out his theory are indeed only less opaque than those that animate his poetry; in one as in the other, they serve to convey a personal feeling for a world of primary experience, for a mythical intuition of a reality that transcends the material world and the historical process.

Thus, Senghor's theory fulfils a double function—as an ideological revaluation of African civilization and as the intellectual foundation and reference, derived from a living culture, of his poetic thought and mythology. For Senghor, traditional African civilization provides the active model of a significant form of human experience and thus serves as a source of inspiration for his individual spiritual vision. The ideas that go into his theory of negritude spring as much from a desire to understand the nature of that inspiration as from a need to present a new and positive image of Africa to the world.

The concept of negritude has come today to be associated with the name of Senghor. But the first major attack on the concept was directed not at Senghor but at Sartre. This is perhaps not surprising, since Sartre himself was the first to give some encouragement to the systematic elucidation of the notion of "black soul." At all events, it is in 1953, in a review of "Orphée noir" contributed by an African student, Albert Franklin, to a special issue of *Présence Africaine* entitled *Les Etudiants noirs parlent*, that we find the first extended questioning of this notion and of the ideas which Sartre put forward

around it.[106] Franklin developed a series of objections to negritude both as a concept and as a historical force, and attempted a systematic refutation of it as an inherent racial attribute. His objections are framed within an avowedly Marxist viewpoint, and his arguments are based on a rigorous economic and materialist explanation of the differences between African and European civilizations, and varying patterns of social psychology, of personalities and attitudes, which they may be thought to determine. Thus, examining the notion that the African (and by extension the black man) is endowed with a sense of community as a racial inheritance, whereas the European is predisposed in the same way to a morality of individualism, he writes:

> Mais il est faux d'y voir les effets d'on ne sait quelle vertu originelle de l'Essence Noire. D'autre part, si le Blanc (Européen ou Américain) est devenu individualiste, ce n'est pas davantage grâce à une vertu originelle de l'Essence Blanche. Dans le premier comme dans le deuxième cas, ce sont les niveaux organiques des deux économies respectives qui sont les causes et le soutien matériel.[107]

In a similar vein, Franklin attacks what he sees as a complaisant idealism in Sartre's essay: it appears to concede the racial character of some of the traits which mark out African civilizations and as a consequence, the personality of the African: a sense of rhythm, an organic sense of life with a strong sexual character, a mystic approach to the natural universe and the cult of the ancestors, all of which are assimilated to the concept of negritude. For Franklin, these traits are merely conditioned by the level of technical competence achieved by the traditional civilizations, destined to be transcended as African societies evolve, and a new modern consciousness emerges within these societies. In particular, Franklin attacks the distinction which Sartre appears to make between the intuitive approach of the black man to reality, and the intellection of the white: he rejects the image of the African civilizations as being essentially non-scientific and non-technical.

But Franklin's overriding concern is political. He is plainly preoccupied with the ideological and political implications of these notions which appear to him to buttress the colonialist myth of the black man and to sanction his continued subjugation by the white. His conclusion is unequivocal in its rejection of negritude as a serviceable concept for the blacks in the colonial struggle:

> Dans cette lutte, la Négritude n'est pas faite pour nous aider, puisqu'elle est repos, captation magique du monde, c'est-à-dire abandon, angoisse, déespoir.[108]

[106] Albert Franklin, "La Négritude: réalité ou mystification? Réflexions sur 'Orphée noir'", *Présence Africaine*, No. 14 (1953), 287–303. Prior to that, however, a mulatto intellectual born in Mali, Gabriel d'Arboussier (b. 1908), secretary of Houphouet-Boigny's Rassemblement Démocratique Africain before the latter cut its ties with the communist movement, had published an essay entitled "Une dangereuse mystification: La théorie de la négritude," *Nouvelle Critique*, (June 1949), 34–47. In 1952 d'Arboussier was expelled from the R.D.A., but after independence, he became minister of justice in Senegal.

[107] Ibid., p. 289.

[108] Ibid., p. 303.

Franklin's article holds special interest for any consideration of the negritude controversy. For although, on balance, it reveals a misunderstanding of Sartre's real position, it shows up the ambiguities with which Sartre enveloped the term, and lights up with singular clarity the very paradox of his position. Beyond that, it anticipates with remarkable prescience the very objections which were to be brought against the concept of negritude as it was developed further by Senghor in the two decades or so that followed the appearance of Sartre's essay. From the scattered intimations of the possible lines of the development of the concept in Sartre's essay, it marked out for attack those very points which Senghor himself was to elaborate later into a comprehensive theory. It thus foreshadowed the pattern of the controversy that negritude was later to generate. For while Franklin accepts the necessity of creating a new image of the black man as a psychological reference in the struggle against colonialism and racism, he also indicates that the delineations of such an image, its very character, cannot be a matter of indifference to the reflecting consciousness of the black intellectual caught in the colonial experience. It is this very question that can be considered to be at the heart of the negritude controversy.

In the debate that has attended the development of negritude as a concept, perhaps the most extreme form of the cleavage between adherents and antagonists has been that created by the initial hostility of a significant section of English-speaking intellectuals to the movement as a whole. It seems indeed as if the very degree of elaboration with which Senghor in particular presented his theory has created a climate in which his ideas have been met with incomprehension and indeed a certain scepticism.[109] This initial reaction of the English-speaking intellectuals seems to have been summed up by Ezekiel Mphahlele when he made the following observation: "For us, Negritude is merely intellectual talk, a cult." Mphahlele expands on this somewhat laconic view of the movement by stressing the difference between the cultural situation of the French- and English-speaking Africans within the colonial system:

> It is significant that it is not the African in British-settled territories—a product of indirect rule and one that has been left in his cultural habitat—who readily reaches out for his traditional past. It is rather the assimilated African, who has absorbed French culture, who is now passionately wanting to recapture his past. In his poetry, he extols his ancestors, ancestral masks, African wood carvings and bronze art, and he tries to recover the moorings of his oral literature; he clearly feels he has come to a dead end in European culture, and is still not really accepted as an organic part of French society, for all the assimilation he has been through.[110]

[109] Richard Wright's incredulous dismay as he listened to Senghor's expostulations about negro intuition and surreality at the Paris conference of 1956 were to be expected since his own contribution dealt with "Tradition and Industrialization: The Plight of the Tragic Elite in Africa," *Présence Africaine*, 8/9/10 (1956), 347–360. As he had hoped to be faced with what he called "emancipated," intellectually liberated negroes, his bitter disappointment is conspicuous in the report of the discussions printed in the same special issue of *Présence Africaine*.

[110] Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image* (London: Faber, 1961), pp. 25–26. That the negritude ideology was on the whole irrelevant had always been Mphahlele's view. Reviewing Jahn's report of the Paris conference he had written: "Whether or not Richard Wright has exorcised his African gods or Senghor finds the inspiration he wants in his African past and present, does not matter to anyone else except the two writers.

It would not be difficult to show that Mphahlele's division is not only inadequate as an explanation but that it ignores the facts of the historical development of a theory of Africanism as an integral aspect of African nationalism in British-controlled Africa. For although the concept of "African personality" as it emerged in the writings of the English-speaking African intellectuals in the nineteenth century and particularly in the work of Edward Wilmot Blyden, did not receive the same degree of elaboration as that of negritude, it contained the same elements of racial and cultural awareness as negritude was later to express in a more comprehensive form, and was thus a significant precedent.[111] It is nonetheless true to say that the cultural problem did not lead to the same kind of self-dramatization among English-speaking Africans as among the adherents of negritude, a situation which inspired the well-known *boutade* by the Nigerian dramatist, Wole Soyinka: "The tiger has no need to proclaim its tigritude."

Soyinka has more recently developed his attack on negritude in less elliptical terms. In his book, *Myth, Literature and the African World,* he reproaches its adherents with their failing to pose the question of African civilization in terms proper to it:

> The fundamental error was one of procedure: negritude stayed within a pre-set system of Eurocentric intellectual analysis both of man and society and tried to re-define the African and his society in those externalised terms.[112]

Soyinka argues that this procedure was induced by the defensive attitude of the theoreticians of negritude towards the ideological affirmation of European superiority in the realm of intellectual and technological endeavour, such that they were forced into a romanticism that was essentially a system of counter-values opposed to those impregnably held, as it appeared, by Western civilization. The movement of self-affirmation, which the Nigerian playwright approves in principle, thus coincided in negritude with an over-simplified view of human difference which, in his opinion, does not effect a decisive break with the very structure of European thinking on human and social problems. The result is a curious confirmation, even within its very revolt against Europe, of European judgements and attitudes. Soyinka puts the matter thus:

The African must resolve the 'conflict' in himself as an individual. This struggle will make the literary content of his work." *Ibadan,* No. 2 (1958), 36–37. And two years later, reviewing South African anthropologist Simon Biesheuvel's *Race, Culture and Personality,* he pointed obliquely to the inadequacy of the negritude concept and indeed of any all-black generalizations to the South African situation: "Born into oppression as we Africans are in South Africa, we are keen to seize the tools that keep the white man in power; we are at grips with a brutal present. The past has been used against us by the white man and we have no time to sit and brood about it, even though we reject certain European values and cling to certain of our own that we still cherish. But we don't think for 24 hours of the day on which we are going to adopt or throw aside on any occasion. Three hundred years is a long time in terms of cultural cross-breeding and we have been unconsciously taking and throwing away and sifting. Senghor's people haven't had that experience. It is well that Dr. Biesheuvel talks of 'African personalities', which phrase has no pretention to a mystical unified whole." *Black Orpheus,* No. 7 (June 1960) 57.

[111] For a fuller discussion of this point, see the section "Negritude and African Personality" in my book, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp. 89–116.

[112] Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 136.

> Negritude trapped itself in what was primarily a defensive role, even though its accents were strident, its syntax hyperbolic and its strategy aggressive. It accepted one of the most commonplace blasphemies of racism, that the black man has nothing between his ears, and proceeded to subvert the power of poetry to glorify this fabricated justification of European cultural domination. Suddenly, we were exhorted to give a cheer for those who never explored the oceans. The truth however is that there isn't any such creature.[113]

It is plain that Soyinka reads into Senghor's texts a meaning that their author could never remotely have intended, and even if the rhetoric which Senghor often employs to express his ideas lays open his thinking to this kind of distortion, it must be said that Soyinka is less than fair to Senghor here. But Soyinka's critique is significant, coming from a writer who shares with Senghor a common interest in restoring to the modern consciousness that primal order of the imagination which they both recognize as a privileged mode of experience within African civilizations.

Soyinka's critique of negritude goes beyond a mere expression of antagonism arising out of a difference of intellectual background, as is the case very largely with Mphahlele, to a questioning of the very theoretical foundations of the concept. In this respect, he is adding his voice and the authority of his position to a chorus of objections that have arisen from all sides and especially among the younger generation of French-speaking African intellectuals since Franklin's essay appeared. These objections in the main take up the points already made by Franklin with a new amplification and are directed specifically at Senghor, whose personality has become intimately associated with the concept.

Perhaps the most important charge against negritude is the one that underlies Soyinka's criticism, namely its apparent acquiescence in the stereotype of the black man as a non-rational creature. This charge had been developed at considerable length in the late sixties by another Nigerian, S. O. Mezu, in his study of Senghor's poetry.[114] In Senghor's ideas concerning the emotive disposition of the black man, this critic discerns a throwback to the thinking of Gobineau, and more generally an uncritical acceptance of the theoretical and ideological discriminations between races by which the notion of white superiority is sustained. The close similarity in both conception and presentation between certain aspects of Senghor's theory of the African personality, with its insistence on the "principle of participation" in its mode of apprehension, and that of "primitive mentality" put forward by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, is seen by Mezu as a form of ideological complicity with the colonial system.[115] Mezu's criticism of the derivative nature of Senghor's theory has been further extended by another commentator, Yenoukoume Enagnon in what amounts to a philosophical critique of Senghor's negritude, as the author denies its value as an original system of thought: "la négritude reste un appendice

[113] Ibid., p. 129.

[114] S. Okechukwu Mezu, *Léopold Sédar Senghor et la défense et illustration de la civilisation noire* (Paris: Didier, 1968).

[115] Op. cit., pp. 173–176. On this point, see S. Okechukwu Mezu, "Senghor, Gobineau et l'inégalité des races humaines," *Abbia*, 26 (1972), 121–141.

négrifié de la philosophie idéaliste de Bergson, aménagé par Teilhard de Chardin." Enagnon's view is further developed in the following observations:

> M. Senghor a pratiquement emprunté toute sa terminologie à Bergson et à Teilhard de Chardin. Quant à ses connaissances philosophiques, nous avons vu qu'elles sont très fragmentaires et généralement erronées. En tant qu'africain cependant, a-t-il fait l'effort de dégager une conception du monde qui pourrait valablement porter le nom de philosophie "Senghorienne" et qui, dans l'avenir, pourrait figurer parmi les philosophies africaines, au sens par exemple ou l'on parle de la "philosophie sartrienne" dans le contexte des philosophies européennes? Nous ne le pensons pas. M. Senghor, philosophiquement parlant, est un idéaliste, c'est tout. Mais il n'y a pas "d'idéalisme senghorien."[116]

These objections concern what one might call the fabric from which Senghor's theory of negritude is woven. More important have been the attacks directed against the very content and practical implications of the theory.

The most representative attack on negritude, from this point of view, is that developed by Marcien Towa in his short book, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Négritude ou Servitude,* whose title is sufficiently eloquent of its author's intention. Towa's discussion of negritude is based essentially on an interpretation of Senghor's poetry which relates both to his theoretical writings and to the different phases of his political activity. In this way, Towa attempts to establish a congruence between the dominant attitudes that appear to him to underlie Senghor's poetic expression—attitudes of conciliation and accommodation—and the ideological significance of Senghor's theory within the colonial context. For him, this significance amounts to an acceptance of a subservient role for the black man in the scheme of human affairs, and a collaborative attitude to the white man's domination. Towa proceeds from an examination of Senghor's poetical themes to this conclusion regarding those options that have marked the evolution of Senghor the politician. Thus, after considering the volume *Ethiopiques,* Towa concludes:

> L'insistence sur la sensualité du nègre, son émotivité, son incapacité technique etc... coïncide avec l'opposition active du poète contre toute idée d'indépendance, opposition qui marquera toutes ses démarches politiques durant la période qui va de 1947 à 1958.[117]

This manner of establishing a correspondence between the themes and ideas of a writer and the events and choices of his real life is of course legitimate, but in the particular instance fails to carry real conviction because Towa's procedure is based on a less than sensitive reading of Senghor's poetry and on a somewhat summary consideration of the details of Senghor's political life and activity during the period he alludes to. Towa is however on firmer ground when, in the last chapter of his book, he turns to a direct analysis of Senghor's ideas as embodied in the theoretical and ideological concep-

[116] Yenoukoume Enagnon, "De la 'philosophie senghorienne' ou du charlatanisme philosophique à l'usage des peuples africains," *Peuples Noirs-Peuples Africains,* I, 3 (1978), 11–49.

[117] Marcien Towa, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Négritude ou Servitude* (Yaunde: C.L.E., 1971), pp. 79–80.

tion of culture from which the negritude theory draws much of its impulse. Towa's critique is intended primarily to draw out the practical implication of such a conception for contemporary Africa, as it appears to him to arise from Senghor's theory:

> Acculé à s'adapter à l'univers technico-scientifique que l'Europe fait surgir autour de lui, le nègre ne trouverait dans son patrimoine biologique aucune ressource lui permettant de relever le défi, ni immédiatement ni à terme. Sènghor ne voit d'issue que dans l'acceptation de la tutelle blanche, en attendant que la spécificité biologique du nègre se dilue et disparaisse par métissage dans une humanité sans races.[118]

The point of Towa's critique is made with even greater emphasis by Stanislas Adotevi in his frankly polemical book, *Négritude et Négrologues,* which contains the most comprehensive and the most vigorous attack so far on negritude. Adotevi's objections to the theory are presented with a marked disregard for organization, but with a vehemence that translates a mood of accumulated impatience into open animosity. Like other writers before him, he rejects the notion of an irreducible black soul:

> [La Négritude] suppose une essence rigide du nègre que le temps n'atteint pas. A cette permanence s'ajoute une spécificité que ni les déterminations sociologiques ni les variations historiques, ni les réalités géographiques ne confirment. Elle fait des nègres des êtres semblables partout et dans le temps.[119].

Beyond the abstract notion of a collective being of the race outside history, Adotevi's attack is directed here against the sociological references of the concept of negritude. The notion of a unified African universe, constituting a moral and spiritual whole distinctive of the race and set apart from other racial wholes is struck at, as it were at the base—the empirical facts revealing the rich diversity of African values and forms of expression are thus adduced as evidence of the fundamental infirmity of the notion. Adotevi proceeds from this to a critical review of negritude's various claims to express the truth of the African personality and situation. He attacks in particular the recourse to traditonalism as an unrealistic regressive appeal to an inheritance that no longer has a value for the contemporary African, and he observes: "C'est dans l'inadéquation de ces notions aux problèmes africains que se trouve la clé des difficultés que soulève la négritude."

For Adotevi, the criterion of judgement is not only the objective value and coherence of Senghor's theory but also its relevance to the immediate preoccupations of the African populations. He goes further by attributing to negritude and its derivative, African Socialism, a particular significance in the post-colonial context, for he sees both as an elaborate system of mystification, as an ideological construction in the Marxist sense, intended to mask and preserve vested interests:

> La négritude doit être le soporifique du nègre. C'est l'opium. C'est la drogue qui permettra à l'heure des grands partages d'avoir de "bons nègres."[120]

[118] Ibid, p. 109.
[119] Stanislas Adotevi, *Négritude et Négrologues* (Paris: Editions 10/18, 1972), p. 45.
[120] Ibid., p. 118n. On the anti-negritude movement in francophone Africa, see also Barbara Ischinger, "Negritude: Some Dissident Voices," *Issue*, 4, 4 (1974), 23–25.

The various judgements of negritude discussed here represent a fair summary of the reactions that have been provoked by Senghor's efforts to formulate a comprehensive theory of the black personality and to endow such a theory with a meaning for contemporary African life. What seems clear from these reactions is the fact that while the original stance of negritude as a form of black self-affirmation, is accepted, the particular terms of Senghor's formulations in his development of the concept, as well as the practical orientation of the theoretician himself, in his position as a political leader, are viewed with mistrust. This explains the attempt by many critics of negritude to make a distinction between Senghor's form of negritude and what they take to be Césaire's continued adherence to the original project. Thus, René Depestre writes:

> La négritude, avec Aimé Césaire, père du concept qu'il a défendu et illustré tout au long d'une œuvre exemplaire, était avant tout une prise de conscience concrète de l'oppression, comme chez Guillén, Fanon, Roumain, Damas, etc., c'est-à-dire une recherche passionnée d'identification de l'homme noir profané par des siècles d'esclavage et de mépris.[121]

Seeking to drive a wedge in this way between Césaire and Senghor is made all the simpler by the fact that Césaire himself has made no attempt to develop a theory, though his poetry draws much of its force from many of the ideas that inform Senghor's theory. This limitation of the Martinican poet's negritude to symbolic expression rather than conceptual formulation has preserved him from the attacks discussed here, all of which reveal a preoccupation with giving to the notion of African personality and culture an active and efficient value, indeed a revolutionary significance. This position was well represented at an early stage in Fanon's statement to the effect that

> La culture négro-africaine, c'est autour de la lutte des peuples qu'elle se densifie, et non autour des chants, des poèmes ou du folklore.[122]

Fanon's position is the most extreme taken on the question, and is characteristic of his uncompromising insistence on the primacy of political action, in the colonial situation, over the cultural. It represents a reversal of the priorities which Senghor has attempted to establish in his efforts to promote a new consciousness on the part of the black man through a revaluation of African civilization as a condition for his political and social emancipation. In a more general perspective, Fanon's statement also sums up the underlying postulates of nearly all the critics of negritude: they proceed from what one might call a positivist standpoint, involving a materialist view of society. In their concern with achieving an immediate sense of reality, they have little or no sympathy for any theory of African development that does not appear to bear a direct relation to an objective and practical scheme of historical action in the contemporary world. The appeal to a racial consciousness based on a new appraisal of the potential of African civilization to create a new order of life and expression for black peoples appears to them

[121] René Depestre, "Haïti ou la Négritude dévoyée," *Afric-Asia*, No. 5/6 (January 1970).
[122] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspéro, 1961), p. 176.

to be too remote from the exigencies of the moment to be of any practical and immediate significance.

Despite the continuing attacks levelled against it, it is undeniable that the concept of negritude has acquired a historical and ideological value of the first importance, and, with the literature associated with it, remains the most comprehensive and coherent effort of reflection upon the African situation. Its impact upon modern African thought has been far-reaching. Indeed, what the debate around the concept has demonstrated is the special power it has exercised in black intellectual circles on both sides of the Atlantic. In a more limited perspective, its significance in the movement towards independence has received a recognition which has more recently been expressed by one of the younger African intellectuals in these terms:

> Ce retour aux sources négro-africaines a consacré effectivement les valeurs nègres de civilisation. Et la négritude, par conséquent, a permis de souder les consciences des peuples noirs et les a mobilisés pour les luttes anticoloniales et libératrices.[123]

Within a broader perspective, the negritude movement can also be said to have defined the terms of a projection of the African consciousness into a future in which African development is intimately bound up with the conditions of human evolution in the modern world. Senghor's ideas have constantly been oriented towards such a future in which African civilization will play an original and significant role in what he calls "la civilisation de l'Universel." And the awareness of the necessary integration of modern values into the framework of an original African scheme of life and expression forms an essential part of the intellectual adventure of negritude. That this awareness has become an accepted element of African thinking is well borne out by this statement by another member of the younger generation:

> La renaissance africaine, pour exprimer son africanité, son authenticité et la conscience d'elle-même, devra s'assimiler la modernité selon ses propres termes. Cet effort implique sinon une révolution du contenu des cultures africaines, du moins leur transformation profonde, leur actualisation.[124]

The literature of negritude has given expression to the lived actualities of the black experience. Furthermore, by promoting the concept of an original racial specificity, it has provided the collective consciousness with the fundamental basis for the black man's confrontation of a difficult history and for his determination to create for himself a new mode of historical being.

[123] Alpha Sow, "Prolégomènes" in *Introduction à la culture africaine*, (Paris: Editions 10/18, 1977), pp. 16–17.

[124] Pathé Diagne, "Renaissance et problèmes culturels en Afrique," in Sow, op. cit., p. 291.

CHAPTER VII

PROTEST WRITING OUTSIDE FRENCH AFRICA

MANUEL FERREIRA

1. PORTUGUESE AFRICA: THE NEW MILITANCY

In 1961 the armed struggle against colonial rule broke out in Angola under the leadership of the M.P.L.A. (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola). Similar movements soon launched guerrilla activities in other areas of Portuguese Africa: in 1963, the P.A.I.G.C. (Partido Africano de Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde), and in 1964, the FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) and the M.L.S.T.P. (Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe). Together these liberation movements became a decisive factor in the launching of the Portuguese M.F.A. (Movimento das Forças Armadas) which overthrew the Salazarist government of Marcelo Caetano on April 25, 1974, thus bringing about the inevitable decolonization and independence of the African territories. Clearly, the outbreak of armed resistance against Portuguese colonial rule and the significant political events during the ensuing fifteen years were bound to exercise a powerful influence on creative writing, leading to a complete change in century-old patterns of literary production in Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé e Príncipe, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau.

Authoritarian regimes are of course allergic to freedom of thought and expression, and the rigid censorship policies of the Salazar government, established in Portugal in 1926, were extended to the Portuguese colonies in 1933. Along with the secret police (P.I.D.E.: Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado), government censorship controlled and repressed such organs of cultural expression as were beginning to display subtle but unmistakable signs of anticolonialist sentiments, particularly after 1950. Among the publications subjected to censorship were literary reviews like *Mensagem* (1951–1952) and *Cultura* (1957–1961) in Angola, *Msaho* (1952) and the literary supplements of such journals as *O Brado Africano* in Mozambique. Censorship was less severe toward the Cape Verdean review *Claridade* (1936–1960), but such benign neglect did not apply to the secondary-school periodical *Certeza* (1944) or to *Suplemento Cultural* (1958), both of which were banned after one or two issues. These are only a few examples of the many cultural ventures launched by the press and by a variety of groups and clubs, which government censors and the secret police harassed and suppressed when they discovered, or thought they discovered, motives which were systematically classified as subversive and later as "crimes against national sovereignty."

While periodicals were subject to censorship prior to publication, censorship of books was vigilantly applied *after* their publication, thereby implicating the author, the

publisher (when the author himself was not the publisher) and even the printer. Thus, books were subject to seizure and suppression and their authors faced with the threat of imprisonment. Two examples of such government repression are Luandino Vieira's *A cidade e a infância* (City and childhood, 1957)—not the work published under the same title in 1964, but an edition which was completely suppressed with the exception of about three copies—and Duarte Galvão's *O tempo presente* (The present time, 1960), whose publication in Lourenço Marques resulted in the trial and imprisonment of its author.[1] However, by the late 1950s writers learned how to deceive the watchfulness of censorship and secret police by continually reorganizing themselves and by making use of the press, the radio, clubs, and associations in order to promote their main objective: the creation of national literatures through which they could affirm their status as citizens of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe. This literary and cultural undertaking was essentially political, not only because it expressed the hostility between colonizer and colonized, but also because the driving force behind most African writing came from groups that were politically aware and from nascent (and later full-fledged) political organizations.

Decisive encouragement came from the First International Conference of Black Writers and Artists which was held in Paris on September 19–22, 1956, and concluded with the following statement:

> Nous avons examiné nos cultures en elles-mêmes et en fonction des conditions sociales et générales qui les affectent: le racisme et le colonialisme.
> Nous estimons que l'épanouissement de la culture est conditionné par la fin de ces hontes du vingtième siècle: le colonialisme, l'exploitation des peuples faibles, le racisme.
> Nous considérons que tout peuple doit pouvoir effectivement prendre connaissance des valeurs de sa culture nationale (histoire, langue, littérature, art, etc...) et bénéficier de l'instruction et de l'éducation dans le cadre de sa culture propre.[2]

Among the participants were the Angolan writers Mário Pinto de Andrade (b. 1928), Manuel dos Santos Lima (b. 1935), both as delegates, and Castro Soromenho (1910–1968), and the Mozambicans Marcelino dos Santos (b. 1929) as delegate and

[1] "Duarte Galvão" is a pseudonym used by Virgílio de Lemos (b. 1929) from Mozambique. Many writers in Portuguese Africa thus resorted to pen-names; Marcelino dos Santos has also signed himself "Kalungano" and "Lilinho Micaia": António Quadros is also known as "Grabato Dias" and "Mutimati Barnabé João." At this point, it may be useful to advise the reader who is not aware of the peculiarities of Portuguese onomastics that Mário Andrade, Mário de Andrade and Mário Pinto de Andrade are different ways of denoting the same person; likewise, the full name of the writer who signs himself usually (though not always) Mário António is Mário António Fernandes de Oliveira. In compliance with Portuguese usage, no attempt has been made in this chapter to standardize such pleasant variety. For a detailed history of lusophone writing in Africa, see Russell G. Hamilton, *Voices from an Empire: A History of Afro-Portuguese Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975) and Manuel Ferreira, *Literaturas de expressão portuguesa*, 2 vols. (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura Portuguesa, 1977). While references in the text are to the original editions, a considerable amount of Afro-Portuguese poetry is available in the various anthologies edited by Mário de Andrade, as listed in Jahn's *Bibliography*, and in Dr. Ferreira's three-volume anthology *No reino de Caliban: Antologia panorâmica da poesia africana de expressão portuguesa* (Lisbon: Seara Nova, 1975, 1976; Plátano Editora, 1984) [Ed.]

[2] "Le premier Congrès International des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs", special issue of *Présence Africaine*, 8–9–10 (1956), p. 362.

Aquino Bragança. Thanks to them, the conference and its resolutions had a great impact on other Portuguese-speaking African intellectuals. As Albert Gérard was later to observe,

> La présence du poète angolais Mário de Andrade au Congrès de 1956 contribua à répandre la négritude et la littérature francophone dans les milieux estudiantins africains, qui s'étaient groupés, à Lisbonne, dans la Casa dos Estudantes do Império.[3]

It is nevertheless important to keep in mind that these African literatures had been developing for many years prior to the Paris conference. Indeed, the work "Cabover-deanidade," coined as early as the mid-thirties testified to the emergence of a sense of separate and different cultural identity in one segment at least of Portugal's African empire. In Angola, where the trend was to gain special intensity, three years after the foundation of the Movimento dos Novos Intellectuais de Angola with their significant slogan "Vamos descobrir Angola" (Let us discover Angola), the first issue of *Mensagem* (1951) proclaimed its contributors' determination to make the journal "o marco iniciador de uma Cultura Nova, de Angola e por Angola, fundalmente angolana, que os jovens da nossa Terra estão construindo."[4] This was the common purpose of the four issues of *Mensagem* (1951–1952), of the *Jornal de Angola* (1953–1965), and of the important and very distinguished review *Cultura* (1957–1961) which was a continuation of *Mensagem;* it was also the purpose of other newspapers and literary supplements, as well as of various cultural ventures launched in Luanda and other Angolan cities. Perhaps on a smaller scale, but whith no less determination, Mozambican writers also dedicated themselves to the creation of a native literature. The journals *Itinerario* (1945–1955)—especially during its final years of publication,—*Msaho* in its only issue (1952) and *O Brado Africano* with its literary supplements of the late 1950s bear testimony to the battle fought in Mozambique for the creation of a national—as opposed to colonial—literature.

Alongside this intense intellectual and literary activity in each of the colonial territories that were graced in 1954 with the name of "provinces," a cultural exchange of sorts existed between Angola and Mozambique: the second issue of *Mensagem* listed Noémia de Sousa from Mozambique among its contributors, and several Angolan authors—such as Orlando Tavora (António Jacinto, b. 1924), Mário Pinto de Andrade, and Mário António—wrote in the Mozambican journal *Itinerário*. Their contributions ranged from poems and short stories to ideological and literary essays, as may be seen in the section on Angolan poets compiled by Henrique Abranches (b. 1932) in *Itinerário*. Although there were few books by lusophone African writers published during the 1950s, the overall result of the sporadic contributions by African authors to journals and literary supplements was a substantial corpus of African creative writing printed in

[3] Albert Gérard, "La francophonie dans les lettres africaines," *Revue de littérature Comparée*, 48,3/4 (1974), 372–386; reprinted in his *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977), pp. 60–61.

[4] "the cornerstone for a New Culture, of and for Angola, fundamentally Angolan, which is now being constructed by the youth of our country".

Portuguese on African soil. It was however in Portugal itself, at the turn of the decade, that the co-operation among African intellectuals in the struggle for cultural, political and literary autonomy proved, for a while at least, most effective.

For many decades the children of the African bourgeoisie, later joined by other Africans who won scholarships from various sources, had been going to Portugal to continue their studies. The consequence of the steady influx of African students into Portugal, was the formation of student organizations such as the Casa de África (1925), whose activity during the 1940s was particularly noteworthy, the Casa de Angola, and the Casa de Moçambique which eventually joined together, along with the Casa de Macau, to form a single group called the Casa dos Estudantes do Império. The setting up of a meeting place for African students outside Africa brought about new developments of a political, social, cultural, and literary nature. Many African students began to develop a new national awareness and became conscious of their strength and responsibilities as citizens of occupied countries which were united by a single common factor: the yoke of Portuguese colonial rule.

Obviously, this association of students from the empire had not been created for the purpose of fostering anticolonialist feelings. Since the Casa was supported and assisted, officially or not, by the Colonial Office (later known as the Ministry of Portuguese Overseas Territories) and by Angolan municipal councils, the authorities strove to maintain a sense of subservience among African students, but their efforts proved mostly unsuccessful. In the late 1940s a number of overseas students attempted to unite, organize, and "africanize" their way of life in Portugal. Many of them worked together as underground leaders of the Portuguese Left, known at that time as the "democratic opposition" and organized by the Portuguese Communist Party (Partido Comunista Português) and the Movement for Democratic Unity (Movimento de Unidade Democrática) with its youth division. Some of the black African students who belonged to the Casa dos Estudantes do Império also met frequently at the Casa de África; although the latter was controlled by the government, it had nevertheless been subtly infiltrated by progressive Africans who met there, organized, agitated, and conspired in whatever ways they could.

One of those meetings, as reported by Amílcar Cabral's biographer, was to prove of unusual importance for the future of Luso-African writing. In the winter of 1948–1949, a small grøup consisting of Agostinho Neto (1922–1979), Vasco Cabral (b. 1926), Marcelino dos Santos, Mário Andrade and Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973) were discussing and reading poems,[5] when Neto told his friends:

> Recebi hoje uma carta do amigo Viriato Da Cruz, talvez vocês tenham ouvido falar nele. É um dos nossos poetas. Pois bem, comunicanos que organizaram lá [em Luanda] um centro cultural e que o dominaram: "Descubramos Angola" [i.e. "Vamos descobrir Angola"]. Escreve ele que vão fazer um estudo da historia

[5] It is of some interest to note that one of the poems read by Neto on that occasion was "Canção de Sabalu," the only poem known to have been composed by Mário Andrade, whose anthologies have done so much to popularize the poetry of his friends.

africana, da arte popular, væ escrever contos e poemas, imprimi-los e depois vender os livros e, com o dinheiro que conseguem, pretendem ajudar os escritores e os poetas talentosos necessitados. Parece-me que poderiamos fazer o mesmo aqui em Lisboa. Temos, com efeito, muitas pessoas que sabem compor versos e escrever contos, não so sobre a vida estudantil, mas tambem sobre as nossas terras, sobre Angola, Moçambique, as ilhas de Cabo Verde e S. Tomé.[6]

This plan apparently met with approval from other quarters. For while in 1950 Amílcar Cabral, Mário de Andrade, and Agostinho Neto secretly founded a Center for African Studies (Centro de Estudos Africanos), with a view to studying and discussing the problems of black people living under colonial rule, on a purely literary plane it was the Casa dos Estudantes do Império which in the course of 1951 issued two works of creative writing from Africa: one was *Linha do Horizonte* (Horizon line) by Aguinaldo Fonseca (b. 1922) from Cape Verde; this collection of poetry represented, in terms of its political and aesthetic perspective, a movement away from the trends set by the review *Claridade*, for it displayed more affinities with the poetry of Antonio Nunes than with Jorge Barbosa. The second 1951 volume was the anthology *Poesia em Moçambique*, edited by Orlando de Albuquerque and Victor Evaristo as a reprint of the Casa's highly irregular mimeographed journal *Mensagem* (1949–1964 [?]). This unpretentious little book contained poems by some twenty-five writers from Mozambique, some of whom were neither black Africans, nor Euro-Mozambicans, but Europeans who had been residents of Mozambique for a long time. Most notable because of their later prominence are Noémia de Sousa (b. 1926), Fonseca Amaral (b. 1931), Orlando Mendes (b. 1916), Rui de Noronha (1909–1943) and even the editors themselves, who stated in the introduction:

Ao concretizarem a ideia desta separata de *Mensagem* dedicada à "poesia de Moçambique," não tiveram os seus organizadores outro intento que não fosse o de mostrar um pouco de Moçambique aos moçambicanos na Metrópole, pois a estes é o presente trabalho dedicado.[7]

The editors recognized that the volume was "modest and of limited brilliance" (modesta e de minguado brilho) since it had not been possible to give "a complete representative selection of each author's poetry" (uma representação completa e caracteristica de cada autor). Although they had attempted to assemble a collection of poems by "the principal names in Mozambican poetry," it had not been entirely possible to do so

[6] Oleg Ignatiev, *Amilcar Cabral, filho de África* (Lisbon: Seara Nova, 1975), p. 15: "Today I received a letter from my friend Viriato da Cruz—perhaps you've heard of him. He is one of our poets. He says they've organized a cultural center [in Luanda] and named it "Let's Discover Angola." He also writes that they 're going to do studies on African history and popular art, write stories and poems, publish them, and use the profits from the sale of the publications to help talented and needy writers. I think we could also do this here in Lisbon. There are many people here who can write poetry and short stories, not only about student life, but also about our native countries—Angola, Mozambique, and the islands of Cape Verde and São Tomé."

[7] "In preparing this offprint of *Mensagem* devoted to 'the poetry of Mozambique' we had the sole intention of bringing a little of Mozambique to the Mozambicans living in Portugal and so this endeavour is dedicated to them."

devido à dificuldade que, cá longe, a milhares de milhas, se encontra na colheita dos elementos necessários, difícil mesmo quando em Moçambique ... por falta de publicações convenientes.[8]

Even so, this anthology included Rui de Noronha's poem "Quenquêlequêze,"[9] perhaps the first known example of native Mozambican poetry, and poems by other authors in which national awareness is expressed with angry defiance:

> Ah, mas eu naõ me deixei adormecer...
> A luz verde incendiou-se no meu olhar
> e foi fogueira vermelha na noite fria
> dos revoltados
>
> Noémia de Sousa (Vera Micaia)[10]

or more subtly suggested by the imagery:

> Mas a chama voltará
> quando chegar o tempo.
> E a terra, negra
> de gordura de ambições,
> frutificará então,
> com raízes de sonhos frustados,
> com limos de remorsos antigos,
> mas com a verdade no corpo gretado
> da vida a rebentar de novo.[11]
>
> Víctor Evaristo

Meanwhile, the Casa dos Estudantes do Império was seeking to broaden its field of action and had managed to organize a branch in Coimbra, thanks apparently to the efforts of Orlando de Albuquerque, Víctor Evaristo, Agostinho Neto and Lúcio Lara (b. 1929). For a brief while, the Coimbra group published a mimeographed journal, *Meridiano,* and the magazine *Momento;* the latter brought out only two issues, whose contributors included both Europeans and Africans, the most prominent being Neto, Albuquerque and Lúcio Lara. Their main achievement in the history of Luso-African writing was the posthumous publication of *Godido e outros contos* (1952), by João Dias from Mozambique.

Another early product of the collaboration among African intellectuals in Lisbon and Coimbra was undoubtedly the *Caderno da poesia negra de expressão portuguesa*

[8] "due to the difficulties encountered in obtaining the necessary texts from afar, thousands of miles away ... a task which would have been difficult to accomplish even in Mozambique ... because of the scarcity of appropriate publications."

[9] The title refers to the mythology of some ethnic groups in Mozambique, where it denotes the new moon announcing the birth of a child.

[10] "Ah, but I did not let myself sleep... /The green light flared up in my eyes / and was a red bonfire in the cold night / of the rebels."

[11] "But the flame will return / when the time comes. / And the earth black / with the fat of ambition, / will then bear fruit, / with the roots of aborted dreams, / with the sludge of old remorse, / but with truth in the creviced body / of life bursting forth again."

(Lisbon: Livraria Escolar Editora, 1953), edited by Francisco José Tenreiro from São Tomé and Mário Andrade from Angola with illustrations by António Domingues. This volume brought together for the first time a selection of poems by writers from various African countries. Dedicated to the figure-head of the Cuban *movimiento negrista*, Nicolas Guillén, whose poem "Son número 6" was published in the volume, the anthology contains work by such African writers as Tenreiro himself and Alda Espírito Santo (b. 1926), both from São Tomé, Agostinho Neto, António Jacinto and Viriato da Cruz from Angola, and also by Noémia de Sousa from Mozambique. Cape Verdean writers were excluded because, as Tenreiro phrased it,

> tal sucede por, em nossa opinião, a poesia das ilhas crioulas com rarissimas excepções, não traduzir o sentimento de negritude que é a razão base da poesia negra.[12]

Reacting to the political flare-ups and the Africans' impassioned anticolonialist struggle after World War II, the Portuguese government attempted on several occasions to suppress such a source of growing political awareness among Africans. Consequently, the Casa dos Estudantes do Império was dissolved by the Salazar regime for a short period in 1947, from 1952 to 1957, and again for the first few months of 1961, when it came under control of an administrative commission representing government interests. Manipulation of such groups as labour unions and cultural or recreational associations in accordance with government guidelines was equivalent to the dissolution of these groups. By 1957, when the Casa regained its independence, ten years had passed since the association had first been placed under government control, and during those ten years many socio-political developments had taken place. The number of Angolan, Mozambican, and Cape Verdean university students had increased. Some of these students already collaborated in such cultural and literary ventures as the Angolan review *Cultura* and the literary supplements of Mozambican journals. Their sense of cultural responsibility encouraged the development of political awareness within the African community. And the Paris conference had bolstered their enthusiasm with the knowledge that theirs was not an isolated movement but part of a larger, continent-wide struggle for self-assertion and cultural emancipation. The centre of ideological enrichment was the Casa, whose activities reached their peak from 1960 until it was closed in 1965. Its cultural achievements during this period—the review *Mensagem*, the compilation of several anthologies and collections, and the many cultural events (colloquia, conferences, expositions, etc.)—had unprecedented consequences.

In 1960, Carlos Ervedosa (b. 1932), spokesman for the Cultural Division of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, stated in an interview granted to the São Tomé poet Tomaz Medeiros (b. 1931) that one of the imperatives of the Association was *a divulgação dos valores culturais ultramarinos*[13] ("the spreading of overseas cultural values"): the word

[12] "in our opinion, the poetry of the Creole Islands, with very rare exceptions, does not express the feeling of negritude which is the essence of black poetry."

[13] *Mensagem*, March–April 1960 [?].

"African" in this context was prohibited by official censorship. On March 7, 1960, Ervedosa wrote to the poet Ernesto Lara Filho (1932–1977) in Angola:

> A Colecção Autores Ultramarinos, por ser uma ideia boa de mais para se perder continua sob a minha direcção e do C. Andrade, mas independente da Casa .... Temos que editar com toda a força.... Precisamos de obras de fôlega para nos impormos culturalmente.[14]

Actually, the series continued to bear the imprint of the Casa, whose publishing activities during the early sixties can be summarized under four headings.

First, *Mensagem,* the magazine which had served as a forum for African intellectuals through poetry, fiction, and essays on music, dance, ethnography, etc., resumed publication. Dealing with many different areas of the African world those contributions formed a literary corpus which transcended national boundaries.

A second form of activity was represented by literary essays and ethnographic studies in pamphlet form. These comprised Gonzaga Lambo's *Cancioneiro popular angolano* (1962), Carlos Ervedosa's *A Literatura angolana: Resenha historica* (1963), *Consciencialização na literatura caboverdiana* (1963) by Onésimo Silveira (b. 1935), and *Negritude e humanismo* (1964) by Alfredo Margarido (b. 1928).

Third, and more important for the literary history of Luso-African writing, in order to provide wider access to what had been published thus far almost exclusively in periodicals, several anthologies of prose and poetry were issued. After *Poetas angolanos* (1959), edited by Carlos Ervedosa, came Fernando Morão's *Contistas angolanos* (1960) and Luís Polonah's *Poetas Moçambicanos* (1960); after an interval, these were followed by three anthologies compiled by Alfredo Margarido: *Poetas angolanos* (1962), *Poetas moçambicanos* (1962), and *Poetas de São Tomé e Principe* (1963).

These anthologies made it possible for a number of writers from all the African "provinces" to reach print for the first time in book form. Few of them had previously published a complete volume of his or her poetry. Of the various writers anthologized in the two Mozambique volumes, only Marcelino dos Santos had had a collection of his own printed in 1959, but in a Russian translation; others, who appeared there for the first time, were to become important both in literature and in politics and were later represented in the militant anthology *Poesia de combate* (1977); they included not only Rui Nogar (b. 1933) but also Fernando Ganhão (b. 1937), a Euro-Mozambican who dealt with native African themes, and Sergio Vieira (b. 1941) the youngest of the group, who expressed his confidence that liberation would be achieved some day:

> levanta-te e vem
> que soam as marimbas e tambor
> do nosso povo![15]

[14] "Because it's too good an idea to waste, the Overseas Writers Series is being continued under my and C[osta] Andrade's direction, but independently of the Association.... We must publish with all our might.... We need to produce more lengthy works in order to establish ourselves culturally." Ervedosa's letter is now in the hands of the present writer, to whom it was given by Filho.

[15] Sérgio Vieira, "Poema para Euridice negra" in *Poetas moçambicanos,* ed. Alfredo Margarido (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1962), p. 127: "get up and come here / for the marimbas and drums of our people / are sounding!"

Of equal importance was the São Tomé anthology, in which seven poets were represented: such pioneers as Francisco Stockler (1839–1884), Caetano da Costa Alegre (1864–1890), Francisco José Tenreiro (1921–1963) and Marcelo Veiga (1893–1976), the old black poet from Príncipe, were joined by new mulatto writers like Alda do Espírito Santo, Maria Manuela Margarido (b. 1926) and Tomaz Medeiros. This poetry ranged from Costa Alegre's elegiac mood, "A minha cor é negra/Indica luto e pena"[16] (My colour is black, it signifies mourning and sorrow)—to the anger of Marcelo Veiga at the black man's humiliation and suffering:

Sou preto, Escravo
Vivi,
Na humilhação e agravo
Cresci...

Ja tens de mais do sofrimento o treino.
Eu te abençoo e mando—vai!
Chegou a hora do teu reino![17]

Only Angola seems to have provided sufficient material for an anthology of prose fiction, which included Agostinho Neto, António Jacinto (writing under the pseudonym of Orlando Távora), Costa Andrade (b. 1936), Mário Pinto de Andrade, Pedro Sobrinho (b. 1936), Humberto Sylvan (b. 1925) and Helder Neto (1939–1977). Although, for obvious reasons, their stories could not reflect acute political awareness, yet they break with colonial literary traditions by placing the African at the centre of the narrative, and through their innovative use of metaphor and allegory they suggest the coming changes in a world where colonial oppression will no longer be tolerated.

Since most of the material in the anthologies had first appeared in magazines, journals and literary supplements, undoubtedly the fourth venture in the "Autores Ultramarinos" series was the most pregnant since it resulted from the editors' decision to issue previously unpublished books by single writers. The following, often slender, volumes were printed in 1960: *Amor*, poems by Mário António (b. 1934), *A cidade e a infância* (City and childhood), short stories by Luandino Vieira (b. 1935), *Fuga* (Flight), poems by Arnaldo Santos (b. 1936). The year 1961 was the most productive with *Poemas* by Viriato da Cruz, *Poemas de circunstância* by António Cardoso (b. 1935), *Terra de acacias rubras* (Land of crimson acacias), poems by Costa Andrade (b. 1936), *Kissange*, poems by Manuel de Lima (b. 1935) Agostinho Neto's *Poemas*, António Jacinto's *Poemas*, *Poesia* by Alexandre Dáskalos (1924–1961), *Poesia Angolana* by Tomaz Vieira da Cruz (1900–1960), and *Dialogo*, a collection of short stories by Henrique Abranches. All these writers came from Angola; the only volume published in 1962 was *Caminhada* (Stroll), poems by Ovídio Martins (b. 1928) from Cape Verde. After two years' interrup-

[16] Caetano da Costa Alegre, *Versos* (Lisbon: Ferin, 1916), p. 26.
[17] Marcelo Veiga, "Regresso do homem negro" in *Poetas de S. Tomé e Principe*, ed. Alfredo Margarido (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1963): "I am black, A Slave / I lived, / In humiliation and pain / I grew... You've already had too much training in suffering. / I bless you and order you—go! / The time has come for you to reign!"

tion, this type of publishing activity was briefly resumed in 1965 with Arnaldo Santos' second volume, a collection of short stories entitled *Quinaxixe,* and especially with *Chigufo,* poems by José Craveirinha (b. 1922) from Mozambique.[18]

Except for the collected poems of Tomaz Vieira da Cruz, an anthology of verse written between 1932 and 1951 and edited by Mário António, all this literary output of the early sixties was designed to convey opposition to Portuguese colonial rule through lucid descriptions of the oppressed black African's world and of the long suffering in his everyday life. In one of his poems, António Jacinto, a white man born in Luanda, offers a striking image of the contradictions inherent in colonial society:

O meu poema anda por aí fora
envolto em panos garridos
... corre nas ruas,
... entra nos cafés
... vem do Musseque
... é quitata
no Musseque...
...é contratado
... anda descalço na rua
... carrega sacos no porto
enche porões
esvazia poroes
... o meu poema é um poema que já quer
e já sabe
o meu poema sou eu-branco
montado em mim-preto
a cavalgar pela vida.[19]

Through the words of the obviously white poet, the white man is culturally and ideologically transferred from his position as colonizer to that of the colonial subject: he is transformed into a black man, that is, an Angolan. Emphasis on the black African's social reality was an essential condition for the creation of a native Angolan poetry, which came into being through the newly acquired national awareness, when the Angolan poets had once and for all achieved psychological liberation from their condition as colonial subjects. The new anticipation of freedom and unrestrained happiness was tersely expressed by the mulatto poet Costa Andrade:

Olha amor... escuta
esta imensa sensação
de sermos NÓS.[20]

[18] Quinaxixe was one of the poorer districts of Luanda until it was destroyed as part of a city renewal project. *Chigufo* is local parlance for a song or lyric accompanied by dancing; it is practically synonymous with *batuque.*

[19] António Jacinto, "Poema de alienação," in *Poemas* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1960), p. 41: "My poem wanders around outside / dressed in elegant clothes / ... runs through the streets / ... enters the cafés / ... comes from the *musseque* [black ghetto] / ... has left / the musseque / ... is a labourer / ... walks barefoot in the street / ... carries sacks at the docks / fills the ship's hold / empties the ship's hold / ... my poem—white / astride myself—black / riding on horseback through life."

[20] Costa Andrade, "Confiança" in *Terra de acacias rubras* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961), p. 28/: "Look, love... listen to this immense sensation of being US."

For the first time, Africans were becoming aware of their "Africanness" and discovering their cultural identity. This awareness had grown so strong that everyone began to feel united by the "power of a secret understanding" and experience to a sense of eager expectation, repeatedly voiced by Costa Andrade:

Amanhã
vai nascer um sol maduro
por cima do capim verde
dos meninos pobres sem nada.[21]

The black poet Manuel dos Santos Lima likewise celebrated the maturing of the black night and its wide horizon, inviting the world to listen to the black man's music:

Noite madura e larga
como o horizonte...

Ouve o quissange!
Ouve...ouve...[22]

Already in 1942 the São Tomé poet Francisco José Tenreiro in his *Ilha de nome santo* (Island of the holy name) had proclaimed the idea of universal solidarity of the black people not only in Africa but also in Brazil, the West Indies, Central America, the United States, wherever slavery and racial oppression had forced them to maintain their tortured existence by working in rice paddies or on cotton, coffee and sugar plantations. The Angolan poets of the sixties likewise echoed the accusations brought by *um poveo inteiro sepultado*[23] ("an entire people entombed"), or, as Alexandre Dáskalos, a white veterinarian, phrased it, *duma raça apunhalada*[24] ("a stabbed race"), speaking often with tragic grandeur in what black surgeon Agostinho Neto described as the *vozes dolorosas de Africa*[25] ("the mournful voices of Africa").

The black race is embodied in the pathetic image of "Mother Africa," the victim of all humiliation and suffering, but also the fountain of experience, knowledge and wisdom. This universal duality is perceptible in "Mamãe negra (Canto de esperança)" by the mulatto poet Viriato da Cruz (1928–1973):

Pela tua voz...
Pelo teu dorso ...
Pelo teu regaço ...
Pelos teus olhos, minha Mãe
Vejo oceanos de dor ...

[21] "Tomorrow / a mature sun will be born / above the green grass / of the poor children who have nothing."

[22] Manuel Lima, "Quero uma noite de fantasia" in *Kissange* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961). "Night, mature and broad / as the horizon... / Listen to the quissange! / Listen... listen." *Kissange* or *quissange* is the native word for a kind of local xylophone.

[23] Arnaldo Santos, *Fuga* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1960), p. 8.

[24] Alexandre Dáskalos, *Poesia* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961).

[25] Agostinho Neto, "Fogo e ti ritmo," in *Poemas* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961).

mas vejo também que a luz roubada aos teus olhos, ora esplende
demoníacamente tentadora—como a Certeza ...
cintilantemente firme—como a Esperança ...
em nós outros teus filhos,
gerando, formando, anunciando
—o dia da humanidade
O DIA DA HUMANIDADE ...[26]

Because of censorship and the secret police, explicit reference could only be made to the black race in general and to specific countries of the Diaspora. Nevertheless, such denunciations referred primarily to the oppressive conditions in the Portuguese territories and they were thus interpreted by Portuguese-speaking readers. In this literary and political discourse, metaphor, metonymy, allegory and parable played significant roles, although direct references and direct speech were not uncommon—such as this imperative invocation by Alexandre Dáskalos:

Escravo! Escravo!
... porque esperas?
Ah! Mata, mata no teu sangue
o presságio da sombra das galeras![27]

But the author's political message could seldom be conveyed directly. In order to foil a devious enemy it was often necessary to devise devious ways to express rebellion, hope, and the certainty of the end of colonialism, and to proclaim the "zenith" announced by Jacinto:

Já não ha luar porque a noite morreu.
Chorai vós, poetas—que eu canto o Sol no apogeu![28]

That hope and rebellion were closely associated is clearly shown in a stanza by Alexandre Dáskalos:

Irmãos, vinde!
O sol ergue-se nas pontanhas.
A vida não se fecha,
a todos faz florir...
A vida tem de ser aberta—
sejamos nós o fruto e a oferta
da árvore do porvir.[29]

[26] Viriato da Cruz, *Poemas* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961), pp. 27–30: "In your voice. / In your back... / In your bosom... / In your eyes, my Mother / I see oceans of pain,... / but I also see that the light stolen from your eyes now blazes / diabolically tempting like Certainty... / sparklingly unyielding—like Hope ... / in us, your children, / begetting, forming, announcing / —the day of humanity / THE DAY OF HUMANITY..."

[27] Alexandre Dáskalos, "A sombra das galeras," in *Poesias* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961), p. 55: "Slave! Slave!/... Why are you waiting? / Kill, kill in your blood / the omen of the shadows of the galleys!"

[28] António Jacinto, *Poemas* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1961), p. 12: "There is no more moonlight because the night has died. / Weep, poets—for I sing the Sun at its zenith!"

[29] Alexandre Dáskalos, "Despertar", op. cit.: "Come brothers! / The sun is rising in the mountains. / Life does not close, / it makes everyone flower... Life must be opened— / let us be the fruit and the offering / of the tree of the future."

The capitalization of key words is one of the main devices of this semi-underground poetry. The purpose is to intensify or increase the possibilities of meaning: Life, Man, Peace, Love, Mother, Woman, my Want, my Desire, Desperation, Poetry, No, Sun, Hope, Certainty. These capitalized words delineate a lively semantic field composed of both positive (Life, Man, Peace, Love, Mother, Woman) and negative (Desperation, No) elements signifying a dialectical rupture, the future balanced synthesis being suggested by words like Sun, Hope or Certainty.

Another, more effective, technique resorted to by African writers is irony, which can assume various forms. In the poetry of the bilingual Portuguese-Crioulo poet Ovídio Martins from Cape Verde, it sometimes appears as disdain—

Mordaças
A um poeta?
Não me façam rir![30]

but elsewhere the writer, protected by the Portuguese censors' slight knowledge of Cape Verdean Creole, uses the dialect as a vehicle for the direct expression of his rebellious feelings:

Hora tita tchgá
nhas gente
Hora d'alvantá
quel mon
de cendê
quel luz
de gritá
quel grite
que sô nôs sabê
Hora tita tchgá
nhas gente.[31]

On the whole, however, most of the poetry printed in Lisbon at that time, which was composed between early 1961 when the rebellion broke out in Angola and late 1964 when it spread to Mozambique, offered a lyrical illustration of the excitement generated by the revelation of negritude which, on a more pragmatic level, was leading to a new attitude of defiance and protest and to armed intervention in the dynamics of colonial society. While Angolan poetry of the early sixties, like the contemporary revolutionary war in the country, testified to a particularly acute awareness of national values, the concept of negritude was aesthetically defined by the Mozambican poet José Craveirinha who spoke of *Minha mãe África, meu irmão Zambeze, Culucumba* ("My mother Africa, my brother Zambezi, Culucumba"), turning an individual invocation into the collective voice of the people in this stanza:

[30] Ovídio Martins, "O único impossível" in *Caminhada* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1962), p. 12: "A gag / on a poet? / Don't make me laugh!"

[31] Id., "Hora", ibid.: "The time is coming / my people / Time to lift up / that hand / to light up / that torch / to shout / that shout / for only we know / The time is coming / my people."

E ergo no equinócio da minha terra
o rubi do mais belo canto xi-ronga
e na insólita brancura dos rins da plena madrugada
a carícia dos meus belos dedos selvagens
é como a tácita harmonia de azagaias no cio da raça
belas como falos de outro
erectos no ventre nervoso da noite africana.[32]

With its sexual overtones and its glorification of physical blackness,—

Oh!
Meus belos e curtos cabelos crespos
meus olhos negros...
e minha boca de lábios túmidos
cheios de bela virilidade ímpia de negro...
Oh! e meus dentes brancos de marfim
puros brilhando na minha negra reincarnada face altiva.[33]

—Craveirinha's poetry appears as the final phase in the development of a theme which had been started in desolation by the nineteenth-century São Tomé poet, Costa Alegre —*Todo eu sou um defeito* ("I am all imperfection")[34]—and developed in different ways by Francisco Tenreiro, Noémia de Sousa and others.

Of the fifteen books produced in the "Autores Ultramarinos" series before the Casa dos Estudantes do Império closed in 1965, only three were prose fiction, all of them by white writers. Yet, however few they were in number, the interest of those collections of short stories should not be underestimated. *A cidade e a infância* (1960) by Luandino Vieira, a journey through the author's memory, depicts the contrasts between the dirt streets of the *musseques* and the "city of asphalt", between the living conditions of the colonialist and those of the underprivileged African; Vieira also shows how earlier prospects and hopes for racial understanding had deteriorated. The universe of Arnaldo Santos' *Quinaxixe* (1965) is similar to that of *A cidade e a infância:* the city of Luanda, childhood in the *musseques,* its moments of friction with the white world in schools and streets, its shared dreams, the meetings and partings between whites and blacks. While both these writers share the same understanding of urban life in Angola, Henrique Abranches' *Diálogo* (1963) focuses on the author's experiences in the interior of southern Angola and recreates the tribesman's world, in which tensions are not of an immediate political nature, but derive from traditional tribal structures.

Appearing in mimeographed form with printed covers, issued in limited numbers—in some cases fewer than 500 copies—the works of literature issued by the Casa dos Estudantes do Império circulated among students and intellectuals in Portugal.

[32] José Craveirinha, *Chigufo* (Lisbon: Casa dos Estudantes do Império, 1964), p. 15: "And I lift up into the equinox of my land / the ruby of the most beautiful Ronga song / and on the rare whiteness of the loins of dawn / the caress of my beautiful savage fingers / is like the tacit harmony of spears in the rut of the race / beautiful as the phallus of another man / erect within the nervous womb of the African night."

[33] Id., ibid., pp. 5–6. "Oh! My beautiful short frizzy hair / my dark eyes... and my beautiful thick-lipped mouth/with the beautiful impious virility of the black man... / Oh! and my beautiful white teeth of marble / sparkling pure in my noble reborn black face."

[34] Costa Alegre, *Versos* (Lisbon: Ferin, 1916), p. 47.

They often made their way to the colonies, especially to Angola. Every book ended up —through indirect, non-commercial underground circuits—in the hands of those who were active in the African liberation movements. The "Autores Ultramarinos" series thus represents an important chapter in the history of African literatures which developed along a tortuous path, always hedged in by restraints of one kind or another.

Some of the authors eventually returned to Africa after studying in Lisbon, either because, like so many of their compatriots, intellectuals or not, they wanted to avoid being drafted to serve in the colonial wars, or because they wished to take part in liberation movements. Several of the contributors to the series sought shelter in exile, following the example given in the fifties by Viriato da Cruz, Marcelino dos Santos and Mário de Andrade, who was president of the M.P.L.A. from 1959 to 1962; Noémia de Sousa and Costa Andrade were among these. Others were arrested and imprisoned like Agostinho Neto, who spent much time in gaol between 1952 when he was first arrested, and 1962 when he managed to escape. Because of his future historical role as leader of the M.P.L.A. and first president of the newly independent republic of Angola, his literary odyssey appears in retrospect to have been typical of his generation: one of his early poems had been entitled "Certeza" (Certainty, 1949), but it was not until 1974 that his collected works appeared in Lisbon under the title *Sagrada esperança* (Sacred hope); in the meantime, after his *Poemas* of 1961 and his escape of 1962, two bilingual collections were issued: one, with Italian translations, under the title *Con occhi asciutti* (With dry eyes) in Milan in 1963, the other, with Serbo-Croatian translations and an introduction by Costa Andrade under the title *Ociju bez suza* in Belgrade in 1968. The English version, *Sacred Hope,* was first published in Dar es Salaam in 1974, a short time before the original Portuguese edition. An anonymous French version was printed, almost confidentially, in Paris in 1981. Many writers of Neto's generation went through similar, or worse, ordeals: António Cardoso, António Jacinto and Luandino Vieira were arrested in 1961, at the outbreak of the Angolan war of liberation, and were sent to hard-labour camps on the Cape Verde Islands; Craveirinha was arrested, like his compatriot Luís Honwana, when the revolutionary fighting started in Mozambique in 1964; Alda do Espírito Santo was arrested in 1965 and Henrique Guerra in 1967.

By then, however, the Casa dos Estudantes do Império had been closed for two years. It had done much to promote knowledge, mutual understanding and friendship among all those who objected to the continued existence of Portuguese imperialism in an increasingly independent Africa, irrespective of their skin colour or territorial origin. It is true that the Casa had a predominantly Angolan membership, which was reflected in its publications. This was due to a number of historical reasons which also account for the fact that armed rebellion began in Angola. What chiefly matters for the literary history of Africa is that lusophone writers were taken out of their territorial isolation.

The same determination to work together on an all-African basis was also evidenced in various ways on African soil, chiefly with the launching of the "Imbondeiro" series in Sá de Bandeira (Angola) in 1960, under the leadership of Garibaldino de Andrade (1914–1970), a Portuguese teacher who had been living in Angola since 1953. The Publicações Imbondeiro made a modest start by printing monthly pamphlets containing

poems or short stories; the first of these was *O Tesouro* (The treasure, 1960), a story by Garibaldino de Andrade himself. The publishers then progressed to bulkier collections of short stories (*Contos d'África*, 1961; *Novos contos d'África*, 1962). In 1963, they started the magazine *Mákua*, which brought out four issues containing miscellaneous stories and poems. But although the staff was predominantly Angolan with a few Cape Verdeans, Imbondeiro depended heavily on contributions from non-African writers, some of whom were of questionable political affiliation while many, such as the Brazilian, Azorean and Portuguese contributors, had no connection whatsoever with Africa. In addition, some of the monthly pamphlets and parts of the anthologies of poetry and short stories—such as *Antologia poética angolana* (1963)—were mere reprints of works which had originally appeared in periodicals or in the anthologies of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império. In spite of the professedly international lusophone character of its contributors, Imbondeiro is of special interest as a local initiative, which made it possible for several genuinely Angolan writers to have their works printed: its output is best discussed in a local context. It was because the Imbondeiro Publications succeeded in making several important Angolan writers known both inside and outside their country, that they attracted the dangerous attention of Salazar's secret police: from 1963, there was a considerable slowdown in their activities which were henceforth limited to works by white authors, even if some of them were of African inspiration as for instance *Poemas* (1966), a posthumous collection by Alda Lara (1930–1962); one of the very rare exceptions to this new pro-white bias was Mário António's collection *Era tempo de poesia* (1966).

As regards the national literature of Angola, the chief merit of Imbondeiro had been to publicize such significant writing as Luandino Vieira's prose fiction and the poetry of *Areal* (Sandy shore, 1961) by Tomás Jorge (b. 1929), the mulatto son of Tomaz Vieira da Cruz. For almost a decade, hardening repression made it impossible to express openly even such mildly unorthodox, anticolonialist innuendoes as could be heard in Tomás Jorge's *mulattismo:*

> Que a tua campa
> Não seja uma nódoa
> No corpo e na carne da nossa Mãe.[35]

It was only at the time of the death of Salazar (1972), because of a slight easing in the restictive policies of Marcelo Caetano's government (1968–1974) that cultural initiatives could be resumed in the overseas territories.

In 1969, the literary supplement of *A Província de Angola* resumed publication under the editorship of Carlos Ervedosa, the well-known historian of Angolan literature. New literary journals were created, such as *Convivium* in Benguela, which produced nine issues in 1971–1972, and *Vector* in Nova Lisboa, which had three issues during the same two years. In Lobito, Orlando de Albuquerque who edited the literary supplement of *O Lobito*, launched a new series entitled "Capricórnio". Although such ventures were

[35] Tomaz Jorge, "Aos irmãos", *Mákua*, No 1 (1963): "May your tombstone / Not be a stain / On the body and flesh of our Mother."

tolerated provided they did not conflict openly or even covertly, with the interests of colonialism, unorthodox hints and overtones permeated the works of several writers.

The voice of the oppressed is heard again in the poetry of João Abel (b. 1938), whose career had begun with contributions to some issues of *Cultura* (1957–1961). A Portuguese born in Angola, Abel asserts his solidarity with those who, like him, chose to remain in Angola during the colonial wars. In such collections as *Bom dia* (Good day, 1971) and *Nome de mulher* (Woman's name, 1973), he addresses to them this intimate, yet far-reaching salutation:

> Ora então
> bom di minha gente
> sadia...
> Aqui estou eu homem todo
> num gesto de amor total.[36]

Already in 1959, the poet had proclaimed his deep certainty that a day would come when there would be *paz e pão/em cada rostro*[37] ("Peace and bread/in every face"). In "O sol nasce a oriente," a younger Portuguese poet, David Mestre (b. 1948), established another type of relationship with the Angolan people through imagery pregnant with revolutionary connotations:

> Povo, de ti canto o movimento
> teu dome, canção feita de fronteiras
> lua nova, javite ou lança
> tua hora, quissange em trança.[38]

As to the mulatto poet Manuel Rui (b. 1941), who had been closely linked with the Casa dos Estudantes do Império when he was studying law in Coimbra in the early sixties, he exemplified the inspiration of those who felt they were witnessing the birth of a new homeland while living in exile, and he voiced his *esperança* (hope) for the African exiled

> nas esquinas
> europeias desta minha África
> presente[39]

[36] João Abel, "Bom dia" in *Bom dia* (Luanda, 1971), pp. 27–29: "And now, / good day, my able-bodied people... / Here I am, a complete man / in a gesture of complete love."

[37] Id., "Três", *Cultura*, 9–10 (1959); revised version in *Bom dia*.

[38] David Mestre, "O sol nasce a oriente" in *No reino de Caliban*, ed. M. Ferreira II, pp. 387–388: "People, I sing your spirit, / your name, song made of frontiers / new moon, axe or spear, / your time, plaited *quissange*." In 1971, Mestre had organized a literary group, "Poesias—Hoje," which was active in several Angolan cities. He also edited the literary pages of the newspaper *A palavra*. His first collection of poems, *Kirnan* (1967), had been printed in Luanda. It was followed by *Crónica do ghetto* (Lobito, 1973).

[39] Manuel Rui, "Aqui e deste lago," in *A onda* (Coimbra: Centelha, 1973): "in the European corners of my everpresent Africa."

Significantly, yet another Portuguese, Ruy Duarte de Carvalho (b. 1941), who was later to become an Angolan citizen, serenely and confidently conveyed his African choice in *Chão de oferta* (Land of offer, 1972):

> Olha-me, amor, atenta podes ver
> uma historia de pedra a construir-se
> sobrenima historia morte a esboroar-se
> em chagas de salitre.[40]

Not surprisingly, one of the recurrent motifs in this poetry of the early 1970s is the silence which was stifling the voices of Africa. While the Portuguese poet Monteiro dos Santos (b. 1947) observes that *a palavra cresce desfolhada numa horizontal de silêncio*[41] ("the word grows bare in a horizontal line of silence"), the mulatto author Arlindo Barbeitos (b. 1940) speaks of

> o grande silêncio
> onde toda a tempestade
> começa e acaba.[42]

Another mulatto poet, Jofre Rocha (b. 1941), calls the period *tempo de silêncio,* yet chose *Tempo de cicio* (Time of whispers, 1973) for the title of his first published collection, where he implies that the colonial rulers must be driven out of the country if freedom is to be achieved:

> pelo trilho batido do fundo da floresta
> partamos até ao mar cruel
> o mar sem fim, veículo da nossa servidão.[43]

And in *Vinte cançaões para Ximinha* (Twenty songs for Ximinha, 1971) an elder poet who signs himself João-Maria Vilanova (b. 1933) but whose identity had not been disclosed, effects an interesting transmutation in which the silence motif becomes a symbol of collective suffering:

> Os quimbos quietos
> pensados
> no silêncio...

[40] Ruy de Carvalho, "Chagas de salitre" in *Chão de oferta* (Luanda: Culturang, 1972): "Look at me closely, love, and you can see a history being built of stone on top of a dead history, crumbling in wounds of saltpetre."

[41] Monteiro dos Santos, *Mar ie mil* (Agueda: Author, 1974).

[42] Arlindo Barbeitos, *Angola Angolê Angolêma* (Lisbon: Sà da Costa, 1976), p. 70: "the great silence in which the tempest begins and ends." This poem was not included in the first, mimeographed, bilingual (Portuguese-German) edition of this collection which was printed in the Netherlands (Amsterdam: Anansi Presse, 1975): it was first published in *No reino de Caliban,* ed. Ferreira II, p. 418. Barbeitos had been a secondary school teacher in one of the M.P.L.A. bases in 1971 before he was sent to Germany for medical treatment.

[43] Jofre Rocha, *Tempo de cicio* (Lobito, 1973), p. 30: "With the trail beaten into the depths of the forest / let us part even the cruel sea, / the endless sea, vehicle of our servitude."

Da Evangélica os cânticos
se derramando
na voz do vento:
povo.[44]

As esoteric obliqueness can more easily be achieved in lyrical poetry than in prose fiction, it is not surprising that more new poets than novelists or short story writers were allowed to emerge during the last few years of the colonial regime. Apart from the later works of fiction by such established writers as Geraldo Bessa Victor and Mário António, apart from *Chaga* (Wound, 1970), the posthumously printed last novel of Castro Soromenho, who had died in Brazil in 1968 at the end of eight years' exile, and the likewise posthumous tales in Alda Lara's *Tempo de Chuva* (Rainy season, 1973), published in Lobito, the only title of some note is *Tempo de Munhungo* (1968), a collection of stories in which the mulatto poet Arnaldo Santos (b. 1936) examined the social and racial conditions in Luanda, using a transparent angolanized language. Most writers of protest fiction were thus effectively silenced. One interesting exception was the very active black author Manuel dos Santos Lima (b. 1935), whose first novel, *As sementes da liberdade* (Seeds of liberty, 1965) was printed in Brazil. Its primary purpose was to show both whites and blacks as victims of the colonial system. After independence, Manuel Lima issued his second novel, *As lagrimas e o vento* (Tears and the wind, 1976) which demonstrated considerable improvement in his mastery of narrative techniques. Dealing simultaneously with the colonial war and the liberation war, though with emphasis on the latter, the story is told by a guerrilla officer who has deserted from the Portuguese army, and whose dual point of view successfully conveys an impression of impartiality. This novel is typical of the fate of most prose fiction written during the period of the colonial wars and generally inspired by them: it remained unpublished until the achievement of independence.

Although José Craveirinha's poetry was published by the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, Mozambican students in Lisbon do not seem to have played a major part in the development of the movement. The reason is perhaps to be found in the overwhelming importance of Euro-Mozambicans in creating a "national" literature. The result was that local literary ventures were both more prominent and more significant in Mozambique at the beginning of the sixties than they were either in Portugal or in Angola, with the exception of the Publicaçaões Imbondeiro. In 1963, immediately after the disappearance of *Despertar*, a new group was founded, the Núcleo dos Estudantes Africanos de Moçambique, which soon came to play a leading part in the cultural life of the country, carrying out an extensive programme of cultural activities which included day and evening classes, educational film shows, public debates on such topics as the bride-price or "Medicine Men, Witch Doctors and Progress", and even scholarships for black students. Luís Honwana later gave the following account of the Núcleo's activities:

[44] João-Maria Vilanova, *Vinte cançoes para Ximinha* (Luanda, 1971), p. 43: "The quiet villages / pensive / in the silence... / From the Evangelical Church, the hymns / spilling out / in the voice of the wind: / the people."

Qualquer deles prolongou-se por várias semanas com serões aos sábados e domingos. Desses debates, deram notícia os jornais de Lourenço Marques, nomeadamente *A Tribuna, Notícias, O Brado Africano* e *A Voz de Moçambique*. Na leitura de trabalhos de José Craveirinha, Noémia de Sousa, Rui Nogar, Orlando Mendes e Kalungano (i.e. Marcelino dos Santos) colheram esses jovens a sua linha de orientação. Todavia, a breve trecho, os poetas do Núcleo abandonaram (talvez ultrapassando) aquilo a que eles chamaram "poesia mulata." Na realidade eram outros os seus condicionalismos socio-políticos, outra a África que eles viviam. A uma problema de "identificação" e "elitismo" contrapunham uma perspectiva de "situação" e „massificação". Eles já não catavam a "Mãe Negra" com a mesma intenção valorativa a "dignificativa" que confessam os poetas moçambicanos de 58/59/60. Para eles não tinha grande força motivacional a impenetrabilidade da sociedade branca.

Armando Guebuza, Albino Magaia e Marcelino Comiche são os representates máximos do Núcleo.

Devido à mesma tendência centrípeta do movimento do Núcleo, pelo menos em relação à poesia mais ou menos consagrada de Moçambique, não contamos hoje com registos da sua produção literária.

Este movimento não foi antologiado, não conquistou o espaço de nenhuma página literária, não arriscou nenhuma edição policopiada. Os poemas de Guebuza e Comiche apenas ouvidos (entusiasticamente) nos saraus de poesia organizados pelo Centro dos Negros—associação que em meados de 1965 foi encerrada pelas autoridades.

Este encerramento, que levou à dispersão dos jovens poetas coincidiu com a publicação num número de *O Brado Africano* de algumas peças literárias produzidas ao longo da vida do Núcleo.[45]

It is evident, then, that in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities in Mozambique, two important literary-cultural groups had emerged in the country; of these, the *Núcleo* had the potential ability to update and expand the concept of "Mozambicanness" which had first been expressed in the 1950s in the literary supplement of *O Brado Africano*. However, government authorities became aware of the growing national consciousness in Mozambique and succeeded in suppressing it to some extent. It was not

[45] Personal communication from Luís Honwana to the present writer in 1971–1972 when a student at the Law School of Lisbon University: "Each debate organized by the Nucleus lasted several weeks, including evening sessions on Saturdays and Sundays. The journals of Lourenço Marques—*A Tribuna (The Tribune), Notícias (News), O Brado Africano (The African Cry)*, and *A Voz de Moçambique (The Voice of Mozambique)*—carried announcements of these debates. The basic political and aesthetic orientation of the members of the Nucleus was derived from the works of José Craveirinha, Noémia de Sousa, Rui Nogar, Orlando Mendes, and Kalungano (Marcelino dos Santos). However, the poets of the Nucleus soon abandoned and perhaps outgrew, what they called "mulatto poetry" because their socio-political backgrounds and experiences as Africans were different from those of the 1958 group of poets. Against the problems of "identification" and "elitism" the poets of the Nucleus offered their own perspective of "situation" and "populism". They were no longer concerned with evaluating and dignifying the concept of the "Black Mother," nor were they interested in the theme of the impenetrability of European society.

"Armando Guebuza, Albino Magaia, and Marcelino Comiche were the most important members of the Nucleus. Since the Nucleus evidently did not conceive the publication of its members' literary efforts to be its task, few examples of its literary production exist today.

"This movement was not anthologized, did not enter the space of any literary page, and did not risk publishing even a mimeographed edition of its works. The poems of Guebuza and Comiche were received enthusiastically only in the poetry recitals organized by the Black Centre—an association which was closed down by government authorities in mid-1965.

"The closing of the Centre, which led to the dispersion of the young poets of the Nucleus, coincided with the publication of some of the Nucleus' literary pieces in an issue of *O Brado Africano*."

until the slight relaxation of control under Caetano in the early seventies that some mildly unorthodox poetry was once more allowed to appear. It was perhaps best represented by J. Pedro Grabato Dias (b. 1933) who is also known as António Quadros and Mutimati Barnabé João. Together with Rui Knopfli, he was responsible for the launching in 1971 of a new journal, significantly entitled *Caliban*, which survived for four issues. Dias, a Portuguese citizen living in Mozambique, had already gained some local fame as a poet by the time he published *Laurentinas* (1971) which provides an excellent satirical insight into the "Laurentine" (i.e., of Lourenço Marques) way of life. His unorthodox, innovative idiom is a disturbing as well as fascinating development in Mozambican literature with regard to both form and meaning. In this complicated parody of the bourgeois European (and europeanized) mentality, Dias' diabolical irony is aimed at several targets:

Mestiços somos nos todos
e eu também
mestediços visigodos
tinham um palato a modos
não muito por ai além.[46]

One of the outstanding Mozambican poets of Portuguese origin who emerged in the seventies is Sebastião Alba (b. 1940) whose poems, written before the Portuguese revolution, appeared as *O ritmo do preságio* (Rhythm of the omen, 1974), with an introduction by José Craveirinha. In his firm belief that a true portrayal of reality does not derive from spontaneous expression but from deep thinking and hard work, he imbues his poetry with the hope for, or rather, the certainty of, a future of liberty:

Certo de que voltas, cançao
a incerta hora,
espero como quem mora
só, a visitação.[47]

As to Mozambique's most prominent non-white poet, José Craveirinha, who had been arrested in 1964, when the war broke out in his country and his first collection was published by the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, more of his poetry had to appear, like Neto's, in Italy, in a bilingual edition under the title *Cântico a um dio catrame* (Hymn to a tar god, 1966): it was not until the revolution that he was able to publish a new collection, the title of which, *Kiringana ua karingana* (Tale of tales, 1974), is the Ronga formula announcing the telling of a folk story: it consisted of poems which he had composed before his long stay in prison.

In the years preceding independence, Mozambican prose fiction followed a roughly similar pattern. A new series, "Prosadores de Moçambique," was started in 1959 by

[46] Grabato Dias, *Uma meditação, 21 laurentinas e dois fabulírios falhados* (Lourenço Marques, 1971), p. 26: "All of us are mongrels / and so am I / little Visigoth mongrels/with a made-to-order palate / not too far away from here."

[47] Sebastião Alba, *O ritmo do presságio* (Lourenço Marques, 1974), p. 40: "Certain that you'll return, song / at an uncertain moment, / I wait as one who awaits / alone a visitation."

Nuno Bermudes (b. 1921), a Euro-Mozambican poet and short story writer who eventually left the country. It included *Gandana e outros contos* (1959) by Bermudes himself, *Ra no pântano* (Frog in the swamp, 1959) by Almeida Santos (b. 1926), *A menina Elisa e outros contos* (Little Elisa and other stories, 1960) and the novel *As raízes do ódio* (The roots of hatred, 1965) by Guilherme de Melo (b. 1931), *Cidade dos confins* (1963) by Vieira Simões (b. 1925) and *Cães de mesma ninhada* (Dogs from the same litter, 1965) by Ascênsio de Freitas (b. 1926).

Although nearly all these volumes contributed in some way to the development of a native Mozambican fiction, the most significant pieces of prose fiction after João Dias' *Godido* were Orlando Mendes' *Portagem* (Tollgate, 1965), which depicts the diverse worlds of whites, mulattos, and blacks in Lourenço Marques, and especially *Nós matámos o cão tinhoso* (We killed a mangy dog, 1964) by Luís Bernardo Honwana (b. 1942), with whom the journey begun by João Dias was at last resumed. An excellent story-teller, Honwana bases his narratives on his own personal experiences as a black. Despite his youth (some of the stories apparently having been written when he was only about eighteen years old), Mozambican life truly comes alive in his stories. The dialectic of the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized is subtly developed in a variety of ways and through a variety of characters and situations. The situations include exploitation, lack of understanding, injustice, alienation, reconciliation, dreams, hopes. Whereas the experiments of Luandino Vieira are directed in such a way as to produce language that is hybrid and syncretic, Honwana's stories cling to mainstream Portuguese enriched by occasional Mozambican linguistic elements. However, a later experiment, an attempt to re-create popular speech in the short story "Rosita até morrer"[48] (Rosita till death) may perhaps point to a new phase in his work. It is noteworthy, however, that already in *Nós matámos o cão tinhoso* Honwana's grammar reveals traces of local, Mozambican elements adapted to the higher levels of literary creativity.

Shortly after independence, the *Contos e lendas* (Stories and legends, 1975) of António Carneiro Gonçalves (d.–1973) was published posthumously in Maputo: this excellent work, which oscillates between myth and reality was one of the few Mozambican pieces of prose fiction of the time, to refer directly to the armed anticolonial struggle.

In stark contrast to what occurred in Angola, writers of European stock in Mozambique constituted a literary group distinct from writers of mixed or black origin. Since the 1950s, Mozambican writers had been divided into two separate, though not entirely opposed, factions: those who declared themselves militantly for the real world of Africa, and those who, while not directly concerned in the same way, yet did express some understanding of Mozambican life and displayed a progressive attitude which could be called anticolonialist, even though many among them were not, or not completely, opposed to the colonial regime. Skin colour obviously cannot be considered a criterion for defining literary categories, but the fact remains that most Euro-Mozambicans could not avoid being influenced by their European heritage and by the limitations of the narrow Europeanized society in Lourenço Marques and Beira. It was no doubt partly

[48] Luís Honwana, "Rosita até morrer," *Vertice*, 31 (1977), 634–635.

in response to this Eurocentricity that Frelimo promoted the literary activities of its cultural division. Apart from the *Bulletin du Frelimo*, these publications included several anthologies issued in the late sixties: *Breve antologia de literatura moçambicana* (Dar es Salaam, 1967), *Poesia de combate*, which was to be re-issued in 1977 and *Poems from Mozambique*, all of which brought together already established poets like Noémia de Sousa or Marcelino dos Santos and such younger writers as Jorge Rebelo (b. 1940), Sérgio Vieira (b. 1941) and Armando Guebuza (b. 1935). Usually printed in Tanzania or Zambia, such works were paving the way for the new literature that was to emerge in Mozambique after the liberation of the country.

Cape Verdean literature is distinct from other Portuguese African literatures in terms of its development and basic character. This is not only the effect of insularity and isolation; another important contributing factor is the long historical process of acculturation due to a high degree of cultural and ethnic diversity. In the 1930s, *Claridade* had introduced the explicit concept of the archipelago's national identity. After the initial phase of self-revelation—exemplified in the works of Jorge Barbosa (b. 1902), Manuel Lopes (b. 1907) and Baltasar Lopes (b. 1907) — the development of Cape Verdean literature was marked by *Certeza* and the poems of António Nunes (1917–1951). After two decades of growing self-awareness and increasing opposition to Portuguese rule, the conflict between colonizer and colonized found articulate expression in the literature of the islands. This qualitative change began in the late 1950s but its full significance was only seen in 1961, when Jaime de Figueiredo (1905–1974) edited his anthology *Modernos poetas cabo-verdianos* in Praia and when the Casa dos Estudantes do Império provided an outlet for the poetry of Ovídio Martins and for the nationalist prose of Onésimo Silveira.

The poverty of the Cape Verde Islands is such that writers, like a great many of the island's able-bodied workers, have to emigrate for survival. Most poets, therefore, have lived, composed and been published abroad, even though attempts were made to provide opportunities for publication at home. In 1958, *Supplemento Cultural*, which was banned after its first issue, had published poems by Ovídio Martins and several of his contemporaries, such as Gabriel Mariano (b. 1928) and Terêncio Anahory (b. 1934). In 1959, the little magazine issued by the *liceu* Gil Eanes on the island of São Vicente had revealed the talent of Corsino Fortes (b. 1933), and from 1949 to 1964, there was hardly any living Cape Verdean poet who did not contribute to *Cabo Verde*, the official propaganda bulletin of the archipelago: from Daniel Filipe (1925–1964) to Luís Romano (b. 1922) and Teobaldo Virgínio (b. 1924).

In spite of this, few books were printed on the islands: more resources were available in other lusophone countries, such as Portugal itself, Brazil and especially Angola. Imbondeiro issued stories by Ovídio Martins, Onésimo Silveira, Gabriel Mariano and Teobaldo Virgínio, and it was in Nova Lisboa that Silveira issued *Hora grande* (Great time, 1962), a collection of poetry in which he identifies with the oppressed and sees revolution as the only way to liberation:

Atrás dos ferros da prisão
É préciso levantar os braços algemados
Contra a prepotência![49]

Romano's *Clima* (Climate, 1963) which includes poems in Crioulo, was published in Recife, Brazil and Nuno Miranda (b. 1924) had his poetry—*Cais de ver partir* (The farewell quays, 1960), *Cancioneiro da ilha* (1964)—and the stories in *Gente da ilha* (Island Folk, 1961) printed in Portugal, as had Anahory his slim collection of poetry *Caminho longe* (Long road, 1962), Gabriel Mariano's *12 poemas de circunstância* (1965) appeared in Cape Verde's capital, Praia.

The less repressive political climate of the early seventies made it possible for Virgínio to publish his *Viagem para além da fronteira* (Journey beyond the border, 1973) in Portugal, but Ovídio Martins, though still living in Portugal, found it advisable to turn to Holland for the publication of his second collection, *Gritarei, berrarei, matarei—Não vou par Pasárgada* (I'll shout, I'll yell, I'll kill—I won't go to Pasargada, 1973), the title of which was taken from the poem "Anti-evasão" in his earlier *Caminhada.*

Whereas in Cape Verde as elsewhere in Africa lyrical poetry had constituted the bulk of creative writing in Portuguese, the most significant development of the sixties and early seventies was probably the growth of Cape Verdean prose fiction. In 1960, Baltazar Lopes' *Antologia de ficção cabo-verdiana contemporânea* included the nine writers who had had some success in the field since the appearance of *Claridade* in the mid-thirties. Likewise in 1960 the elder writer Manuel Lopes (b. 1907) who had pioneered the Cape Verdean novel with *Chuva Braba* (Wild rain, 1956), issued his last novel, *Os Flagelados do vento leste* (Victims of the east wind), which also deals with man's powerlessness to overcome the hostility of the elements. At the same time, a member of the new generation, Onésimo Silveira, had a 35-page story, *Toda a gente fala: sim senhor,* printed in Angola together with three of his poems.

After 1960, there was a considerable increase in imaginative fiction ranging from the full-length novel *Famintos* (Famished, 1962), which Luís Romano published in Rio de Janeiro, to Teobaldo Virgínio's stories in *Distância* (1963), published in Lisbon by the Agência Geral do Ultramar at the same time as his *Beira do cais* (Alongside the quay) appeared in Angola under the Imbondeiro imprint, and to his novel *Vida crioula* (1967), which was also published in Portugal. In the field of short story there was Nuno Miranda's *Gente da ilha* (Island Folk, 1961), issued in Portugal, and Gabriel Mariano's *O rapaz doente* (The sick boy, 1963), another Imbondeiro pamphlet.

The seventies were inaugurated by two *noveletas* (as the writer calls his stories) by António Aurélio Gonçalves (1901–1984), whose two stories of the fifties had been reprinted in 1962 by Publicações Imbondeiro. After a long silence, he published *Noite de vento* (Windy night, 1970) and *Virgens loucas* (Foolish virgins, 1971). Several collections of short stories by younger writers appeared in the course of the ensuing years: *Contra mar e vento* (Against sea and wind, 1972) by Teixeira de Sousa (b. 1919),

[49] Onésimo Silveira, *Hora grande. Poesia caboverdiana* (Nova Lisboa: Bailundo, 1962), p. 41: "Behind the prison bars / We must raise up our shackled arms / Against tyranny!"

Caes-do-Sodré té Salamansa (From Caes-do-Sodré [a Lisbon district] to Salamansa, 1974) by the first female story writer on Cape Verde, Orlanda Amarilis (b. 1924).

Generally speaking, this fiction did not show any decisive change from the characteristics of the period before 1960 except that the range of themes had been expanded to include or emphasize the problems of hunger and emigration, the persistent dilemma of "wanting to stay and having to leave," suffering intertwined with compensatory yearnings, love, disappointment, insularity, the mythical vision of the "faraway land," and Diaspora. The works of Manuel Lopes, based on the author's own experiences on the island of Santo Antão, depict the tragedy of famine caused by prolonged drought. Teobaldo Virgínio increased the stylistic flexibility of Cape Verdean literary language by emphasizing the islander's roots in the soil and his lyrical capacity. In his short stories Teixeira de Sousa focused on life on Fogo island, with its persistent conflicts and tensions inevitable in a society stratified by the *latifundio* system. António Aurélio Gonçalves, in *Virgens loucas,* as to some extent in his earlier works, dealt with the small universe of the city of Mindelo on the island of São Vicente, revealing a rare gift for manipulating apparently insignificant details which actually possess a broad range of mythical meanings, and for exploring the drama of the local people's exhausting struggle for economic survival. Luís Romano, who lives in Brazil—and was therefore not subjected to the Portuguese government's repressive policies—vehemently protested against the exploitation and oppression of Cape Verdean labourers. The importance of Orlanda Amarilis lies in her innovative, Cape Verdeanized idiom and her deep understanding of the expatriates who were confronted in Lisbon with an environment which, without being hostile, was not entirely hospitable.

When the Portuguese colonies finally became independent in the mid-seventies, many African writers, blacks, whites and mulattos alike, returned to their native lands from such places as Algiers, Lusaka, Portugal or Cape Verde. There was a veritable literary explosion, as protest writings could now be openly printed in Portugal, and as ambitious cultural programmes in the former colonies made it easier for writers to have their works published locally. This was especially true in Angola with the creation of the União dos Escritores Angolanos (Union of Angolan Writers), the Colecção Autores Angolanos (Angolan Authors Series) and the Colecção "Lavra e Oficina" ("Work and Workshop" Series). Although many of the books that were issued in the late seventies had been written during the colonial period, or were concerned with memories of colonial days and the experiences of the struggle against imperialism, some of the new lyrical poetry was not confined to exultant celebration of newly-won independence, but showed a modicum of awareness of and concern with, the new type of problems which the future was bound to hold in store for often vast and heterogeneous nations whose leaders had had little experience in managing the complexities of the modern world.

After a long period of imprisonment in Portugal, Henrique Guerra (b. 1937), the Portuguese writer from Angola whose story *A cubata solitaria* (The lonely hut, 1962) had appeared under the Imbondeiro imprint, published *Quando me acontece poesia* (When poetry occurs to me, 1976), a collection of poems some of which had been written in the late fifties, when he was closely associated with *Cultura,* others in prison—"Dez anos

de ausência de mim mesmo" ("Ten years of absence from myself")—while others again were composed after his release:

Regresso!
Regresso à coragem dos que combateram sempre
Regresso à cobardia dos que não compreerderam
Sua
morte
fome
desamparo
Dolorosamente nasce o novo dia![50]

If Angola's "new day" is born "painfully" because of internal divisiveness and South African intervention, the fundamental note remains one of eager expectation. After once more denouncing the ferocity of colonialism and uttering *o brado de uma consciência revolucionária amadurecida no dia a dia do maquis* ("the cry of a revolutionary consciousness brought to maturity in the daily life of the guerrilla"), João-Maria Vilanova anticipates a reign of freedom and peace:

arma na mão
arma na mão
a paz sem capataz
do homem novo.[51]

Back in Angola, Costa Andrade calls upon his experiences in the ranks of the M.P.L.A.—*vem, irmão ... percorramos o mesmo trilho batido do fundo da floresta* ("Come, brother ... let's go down the same path beaten into the forest floor")—but his inspiration soon turns to *a canto de alforria* ("a song of freedom"):

Angola pátria
nascida no combate!
defender-te-á o poema
Caldeado em Fevereiro
Com sangue do povo[52]

proclaiming finally, in *Poesia com armas* (1975), that

Estão presentes os heróis
em todos nós
o povo inteiro![53]

[50] Henrique Guerra, *Quando me acontece poesia* (Luanda, 1976), p. 29: "Return! ... Return to the courage of those who always fought / Return to the cowardice of those who did not understand / their / death / hunger / distress / Painfully, the new day is born."

[51] João Maria Vilanova, *Caderno de um guerrilheiro* (Luanda, 1974), p. 50: "Weapon in hand, / weapon in hand / the peace without overseer / of the new man."

[52] Costa Andrade, *Poesia com armas* (Lisbon, 1975), p. 155: "Angola, my country / born in combat! / The poem, forged in February will defend you / with the blood of the people."

[53] Ibid., p. 131: "The heroes are present / in all of us, / the entire people."

And Manuel Rui, in *11 poemas em novembro* (11 poems in November, 1976), hails the new dawn, i.e. the revolution in progress, with a different metaphor:

> Sobre este grão fermento de alimento
> laborioso cristal de uma epopeia
> Semente semeada a demear
> onde de cada fruto nasce a veia[54]

Thus Angolan poets remained faithful to the confidence and determination of Agostinho Neto who as a convict in Cape Verde in December 1960 had given utterance to

> a voz do presente
> gritada e rubra
> certeza do ter
> para dar ao futuro
> a glória soberba
> da voz da vitória

adding that

> Neste amanhecer vital
> para os acontecimentos extraordinários
> por montes e rios, por anharas e preconceitos
> caminhamos já vitoriosos
> sobre a condição moribunda.[55]

Most of the prose fiction published in the wake of Angolan independence had likewise been written during the last decade of the colonial era. Not until ten years after his epoch-making *Luuanda* was José Luandino Vieira able to see his many short stories through the press: *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier* (The true life of Domingos Xavier, 1974), written in the early sixties, had been published in a French translation in 1971; also in 1974 he published the tales in *No antigamente na vida* (Life in the old days) and *Velhas estórias* (Old stories), as well as his novel, *Nós os do Makulusu* (We, the boys from Makulusu). Like most of Vieira's writings, this longer story deals with the misery and the disruption in the daily lives of the inhabitants of the shanty towns around Luanda; it had been composed in 1967, while the author was a prisoner in the, Cape Verde camp of Tarrafal. In these works as in *Vidas novas* (New lives, 1975), a French edition of which had appeared in 1968, and in *Macandumba* (1978), Vieira made systematic use of a truly Angolan language, based on the mixture of Kimbundu and Portuguese spoken actually in such *musseques* of Luanda as Makulusu. This stylistic innovation gave a truly aesthetic dimension to his impressive recording of the national awakening in Angola, of the problem of collective identity in a fast-changing world, and

[54] Manuel Rui, *11 poemas em novembro* (1976): "Above this leavening grain of food / laborious crystal of an epic poem / sown seed sowing / where a vein is born from every fruit."

[55] Agostinho Neto, *Sagrada esperança* (Lisbon: Sa da Costa, 1974), p. 130: "the voice of the present / shouted and blood-red / certainty of having to give to the future / the sublime glory / of the voice of victory/ ... / In this vital dawning / towards extraordinary events / through mountains and rivers, through *anharas* [pastures] and prejudices / we walk victorious / upon a dying condition."

of the dramatic revolutionary struggle against colonial oppression. Whereas Castro Soromenho's characters were predominantly European, with blacks and mulattos playing secondary roles, in the world described by Vieira, black and mulatto characters are in the foreground, with Europeans acting contrapuntally in the background.

It was also at the Tarrafal concentration camp that Manuel Pacavira (b. 1939), a companion of Vieira and of Jacinto, wrote his first two novels: *Gentes do Mato* (Jungle people, 1974) in which he analyses the relationship of the black and mulatto petty bourgeoisie of traders and smallholders with the settlers, and *Nzinga Mbandi* (n.d. [1974?]), a historical novel centring on the figure of a celebrated African queen of the early seventeenth century, whose desperate resistance to the Portuguese conquerors is identified here with the modern war of independence. Yet another inmate of the Tarrafal camp, Agostinho Mendes de Carvalho (b. 1924), introduced a new note in *Manana* (1974) and *"Mestre" Tamoda* ("Master" Tamoda, 1974), handling his material with caustic pungency in a parodying, accusatory style.

While the literature of the newly independent republic was bound to remain obsessed for some time to come with the memories of the centuries-old confrontation between Africans and Portuguese, the very titles of such works of fiction as *As aventuras de Ngunga* (1976) by Pepetela (pseudonym of Artur Carlos Pestana, b. 1941), *Estórias de Musseque* (1976) by Jofre Rocha (b. 1941); *Gente do meu barrio* (People from my neighbourhood, 1977) and *Clima do povo* (Climate of the people, 1977) by Jorge Macedo (b. 1941), were highly suggestive of the writers' fundamental preoccupation with the life and experience of the common people, with their focal relationship between colonized and colonizer. A signal exception to this was the novel of mulatto poet Manuel Rui (b. 1941) *Sim camarada!* (Yes, comrade!, 1977) in which he, following in the footsteps of Manuel Lima, focused on the armed struggle itself, the popular mobilization against the colonial rulers, and the heroism of the pioneers who fought in Luanda to bring about national independence.

In Cape Verde, too, the first few years following independence witnessed the publication of much protest poetry which had been written earlier. This confirmed the trend away from the *Claridade* tradition in several directions. In *Pão & fonema* (Bread and phoneme, 1974), a collection which was the product of years of careful revising, Corsino Fortes (b. 1933) abandoned the language of the *Claridade* poets, constructing another type of discourse, rich in metaphors, symbols and distinctive imagery:

Que as colinas nascem
  na omoplata dos homens
Com um cântico na aorta
Árvore & tambor tambor & sangue
Punho
  pulso de terra erguida
    Argora.[56]

[56] Corsino Fortes, *Pão & fonema* (Lisbon, 1974): "For the hills are born / in the scapula of men / With a canticle in the aorta / Tree and drum drum and blood / Fist / wrist of the earth raised up / Now."

Gabriel Mariano, who was exiled by the Portuguese authorities to the island of Mozambique in 1965, was at last able, ten years later, to publish his long narrative poem, *Capitão Ambrosio* (1975), which deals with a popular rebellion at a time of famine in the archipelago in such a way as to herald the revolution —

> De novo nas mãos cintila
> a espada do gladiador[57]

—and to foretell the liberation of Cape Verde:

> Meu Pai!...
> Manda o povo cantar com tambores e búzios
> quando Ambrósio chegar.[58]

A similar taste for narrative poetry was evidenced in *O primeiro livro de Notcha* (The first book of Notcha, 1975), written between 1961 and 1972 by João Varela (b. 1937), a biologist living in exile, who published this work under the pseudonym of Timóteo Tio Tiofe, although he had signed himself João Vario in his earlier works, *Exemplo geral* (Coimbra, 1966) and *Exemplo relativo* (Antwerp, 1968). His epic poem recounts the Cape Verdean saga from its origin to the present day in almost Biblical tones. The story of Notcha (the nickname of the poet's father) opens up on prospects of revolt and freedom:

> E se essa licudade se revolta
> (onde os vestígios do harmatão?)
> Não há madressilvas nem hortênsias, muitas,
> para os seus crâneos de jovens revoltando-se
> para os seus braços de jovens preparando-se
> para a luta, para a libertação do país,
> jovens de Cabo Verde.[59]

After Virgínio's *Vida crioula* of 1967, no further prose fiction came from the archipelago until independence, when Nuno Miranda, who had published nothing since the poems in his *Cancioneiro da ilha* (1963), issued *Caminho longe* (The long road, n.d. [1975]). In *Vida e morte de João Cavafume* (1977), Gabriel Mariano gathered revised versions of most of the stories he had previously published in a number of magazines, especially in *Cabo Verde;* the picaresque element is expressed through typical local forms of the Portuguese language as the writer describes the various strata of the archipelago's society, including the insular lower petty bourgeois class that has gone to live in Lisbon. Significantly, Teixeira de Sousa's novel *Ilheu de contenda* (Isle of strife, 1978), although

[57] Gabriel Mariano, *12 poemas de circunstância* (Praia, 1965), p. 13: "Again in his hands sparkles the sword of the gladiator."

[58] Id. *Capitão Ambrosio* (Lisbon, n. d. [1976?]), p. 13: "My Father! ... Tell the people to sing with drums and trumpets / when Ambrosio arrives."

[59] Timóteo Tio Tiofe, *O primeiro livro de Notcha* (Sao Vicente, 1975), p. 90: "And if these youths rebel / (where are the traces of the harmattan?) / There are few honeysuckles and hydrangeas / for the heads of the youth in rebellion, / for the arms of the youths preparing themselves, / for the struggle, for the liberation of the country, / youths of Cape Verde."

published after independence and free from any censorship restrictions, did not take place in the present or in the recent past; nor was it concerned with the struggle for liberation: the story was set in the early years of the Salazar regime and was designed to document the decay of the old *latifundio* system on Fogo island and to denounce in retrospect both colonialist paternalism and police repression.

Yet the most important single event for the literary life of Cape Verde was probably the launching of the magazine *Raízes* (Roots) in 1977. In the first issue, the revolutionary triptych of construction, production and reconstruction was unfolded in a poem by Ovídio Martins:

> Livres os gestos,
> mas encontram-se ainda longe nossos jardins suspensos.
> Deixá-lo.
> Poesia é agora sentir o futuro-presente ...
> Davagar, a reconstrução nacional avança.
> Ilha a ilha. Dor a dor. Amor a amor.[60]

And Corsino Fortes expostulated in a similar vein:

> Não me peças milagres
> por favor
> pede-me revolução! camarada ...
> Mas a revolta do pão
> entre o sangue e a seiva
> Mas a revolta do rosto
> entre a roda e o mundo.[61]

Despite the stylistic differences between Corsino Fortes and Timóteo Tio Tiofe, both poets complete the break with the *Claridade* manner initiated by Jorge Barbosa, and already confirmed in 1944 by the *Certeza* writers' adherence to the principles of Portuguese neorealism. It is revealing that the second issue of *Raízes* reprinted a poem by a prominent member of the *Certeza* group, António Nunes:

> Mamãe!
> sonho que, um dia,
> estas leiras de terra que se estendem,
> quer sejam Mato Engenho, Dàcabalaio, ou Santana,
> filhas do nosso esforço, frutos do nosso suor,
> serão nossas.[62]

[60] "Gestures are unfettered / but our hanging gardens are still far away. / Leave it all. / Poetry is to feel the future-present now... Slowly, the national reconstruction progresses. / Island by island. Pain by pain. Love by love."

[61] "Don't ask me for miracles / please, / ask me for revolution, comrade! ... But the revolt of the bread / between the blood and the sap / But the revolt of the face / between the wheel and the world."

[62] Antonio Nunes, *Poemas de longe* (Lisbon, 1945), p. 32: "Mother! / I am dreaming that one day / these long furrows of earth, / whether of Mato Engenho, Dàcabalaio or Santana, / daughters of our efforts, fruits of our sweat, / will be ours." This poem, very well-known on the archipelago, first appeared in the second issue of *Certeza*.

While the latest poetry from Cape Verde—not only the works of Fortes, Varela and Mariano, but also *Caboverdeamadamente construção meu amor* (Cape-Verde-belovedly construction my love, 1975) and *Cântico do habitante* (Hymn of the inhabitant, 1978) by Oswaldo Osório (b. 1937)—confirms that the *Claridade* influence, already eroded by the *Certeza* poets, and later by such writers as Aguinaldo Fonseca, Ovídio Martins and Onésima Silveira, is now a thing of the past, it is important to note that Cape Verdean Creole which had first been used for creative literature by Eugénio Tavares, has become an increasingly appropriate vehicle for imaginative writing. The most consistent elder representative of Crioulo poetry was Sérgio Frusoni (1901–1975), but the language was used occasionally for special effects by a number of other Cape Verdean poets. Its revolutionary potential was exploited in a small volume entitled *Noti* (Night, n.p., n.d.) by Kaoberdiano Dambará (pseudonym of Felisberto Vieira Lopes, b. 1937). This collection of militant vernacular poetry appeared in fact in Paris in 1964 under the imprint of the Central Committee of the P.A.I.G.C. and has been described as representing "an important and necessary phase of an autochthonous African-creole literature."[63]

In 1975—Mozambique's "year of independence"—an original work of poetry, *Eu, o povo* (I, the People) was allegedly found in the knapsack of "Mutimati Barnabé João", claimed to be a missing guerilla. It was published immediately by the Serviços Culturais da Frelimo. The importance of the techniques used in *Eu, o povo* cannot be ignored. The poetic speaker is a guerrilla of limited education who spills out his thoughts in a borrowed language, moulding it to suit the Mozambican consciousness—*Há alguém aí tanto assim muito Enorme?* ("Is there someone out there really so Enormous?"). This device is intriguing and apparently contradictory because the impact of what is said depends primarily on *how* it is said. Imagery, metaphor and metonymy are the main creative forces, and the poetic discourse here resembles the innocent use of a learned language, it is nevertheless constructed with uncontrovertibly keen aesthetic sense. The poet describes his experiences on the march southward and his determination both to express the feelings of the entire community and to ally himself with "all the Great Forces" of a "Nature" that is truly theirs:

> Eu, o Povo
> Conheço a força da terra que rebenta a granada do grão
> Fiz desta força um amigo fiel
> O vento sopra com força
> A água corre com força
> O fogo arde com força

The speaker (not always speaking collectively) conducts a dialogue between himself and others, but primarily between *I* and *me*, as he participates in the advance of the "liberation army":

[63] Russell G. Hamilton, *Voices from an Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), p. 307.

Por onde passa o Exército de Libertação
Fice um rasto verde e cheiroso e o caminho aberto
Pra passar a Liberdade e o Futuro.[64]

The speaker extols "Practical Science" that is, science applied to reaping the benefits of the land's natural resources, and emphasizes the theme of "Production," the great pathway toward the development of the "Seeds for the Future." In Mutimati Barnabé João's poetry message and form are fused in such a way that political slogans are incorporated into the fabric of the text with brilliance and originality.

In the years immediately following upon independence, Orlando Mendes, who remained in Mozambique during the liberation wars, published three volumes of poetry, fiction and drama, two of which were entitled *País emerso* (Emerged country, 1975 and 1976), and the latest one *Produção com que aprendo* (Production I learn from, 1978). Because of his political commitment the author explores the possibilities of literature as a means of spreading the ideology of Frelimo:

Temos agora uma Oficina
onde se caldeiam experiências transformadoras
e se forjam ideias pela prática diária
e com as ideias se fabricam novos instrumentos
que fazem a nossa vida.

Nor did his poetry avoid referring to

o Partido que propõe o amanhã de cada hoje
e o dinamiza e constrói com o Povo.[65]

But the most significant publication in the new republic was *Poesia de combate–2* (1977), an anthology which brought together twenty Mozambican poets.[66] Some of these, already well-known, had been persecuted and imprisoned, like José Craveirinha, who speaks for the Mozambican people in "Primavera de balas" (Springtime of bullets), a poem dated 1970:

Escondido em posição no meio do mato
Com a minha primavera de balas apontada
Faço desabrochar no doman do Sr. Capitão

[64] Mutimati Barnabé João, *Eu, o povo* (Maputo, 1975), pp. 17 and 11: "I, the People, / I know the force of the land which explodes the seed grenade / I made a faithful friend of this force / The wind blows with force / The water flows with force / The fire burns with force." "Wherever the Liberation Army goes / It leaves behind a green fragrant trail and an open road / So Freedom and the Future can pass through."

[65] Orlando Mendes, *Produção com que aprendo* (Maputo, 1977), pp. 82 and 83: "Now we have a Workshop / where transforming experiences are welded / and ideas are forged through daily practice / and with these ideas are made new instruments / which build our lives." "The Party that proposes the tomorrow of each today / and energizes and builds it together with the People."

[66] An anthology entitled *Poesia de combate* had been issued in 1971; it was to be reprinted as *Poesia de combate-1, 2a edição* in 1979. Meanwhile, the Frelimo's Departamento de Trabalho ideológico had published in Maputo *Poesia de combate-2* which seems actually to have come out in 1978 and from which all quotations in the next few pages are taken.

As mais vermelhas flores florindo
O duro preço da nossa bela
Liberdade reconquistada
Aos tiros![67] (p. 55)

Or like Rui Nogar (b. 1933) who had written in 1965, during his stay at Machava prison, from which he was freed in 1974:

ah, sinto-me estrada fertilizando
milhões de passos ao nosso encontro[68]
("Mensagem da machava", p. 49)

Others were younger men, often guerrilla poets, and indeed, except for one poem by Craveirinha dated 1962, all of *Poesia de combate* was written during the years of guerrilla warfare, so that far more than mere artistry was involved in the composition of such verse. Indeed the purpose of Frelimo, as explicitly described in the preface was to produce

> [um] livro de poemas [que] é menos de versos que de testemunho. De testemunho activo. Testemunho dinâmico.... Nestes poemas, forma e conteúdo compõem uma necessidade de harmonia com a vida de luta, os sacrifícios e os infindáveis dias de angústia que, em conjunto, cada um foi capaz de suportar para a libertação da sua Terra.[69]

In this explanation of the function of art emphasis is placed on the idea that each poem represents

> acima de tudo participação. E essa participação só surge quando o combatente se torna o Homen Novo, o Povo, a Classe. Aqui os poemas estão numa vanguarda de luta. Eles próprios são de luta.[70]

The result is a non-abstract poetry in which the motifs of certainty, hope, liberation and revolution—typical of the underground poetry written before 1974—remain common:

Estes tempos são de certeza do dia alegre[71]
("Esses tempos estranhos", p. 38)

[67] "Hidden in position in the middle of the jungle / with my springtime of bullets aimed / I cause to bloom in Mr. Captain's jacket / The reddest flowers flowering / The grim price of our beautiful / Freedom reconquered / With gunshots!"

[68] "Oh, I feel like a highway, fertilizing / millions of footsteps which come to meet us."

[69] "a book of poems [which] are more important as testimony than as verses. Active testimony. Dynamic testimony.... The form and content of these poems spell out the guerrilla's need for harmony within his life of continual struggle, sacrifice, and anguish, which he endured for the cause of liberation."

[70] "above all, participation. This participation occurs only when the combatant is transformed into the New Man, the People, the Class. These poems are in the vanguard of the struggle. They are poems of the struggle."

[71] "These are times of certainty of the joyful day."

Armando Guebuza asserts in 1967, as does Marcelino dos Santos:

O tempo da Revolução
é o tempo de certeza[72]
("Para uma moral IV," p. 105)

to which Sérgio Vieira adds in 1969:

Amanhã sera o tempo do amor
com o tempo das estrelas
o tempo da humanidade.
AMANHÃ[73]
("Amanhã" p. 86)

This is no hollow rhetoric, for those poems were written by guerrilla fighters when first tasting the freedom which they had won for themselves, while still struggling against the colonizer. The poetic message is therefore stated in simple terms, as exemplified in Sérgio Vieira's straightforward lines:

Nos gritamos a nossa vontade
de libertar a Pátria.[74]

It is this determination based on a sense of brotherhood and justice which inspires Jorge Rebelo (b. 1940) in a poem of 1965:

Mãe, é belo lutar pela liberdade!
Há uma mensagem de justiça em cada bala que disparo
há sonhos antigos que acordam como pássaros[75]
("Carta de um cumbatente", p. 56)

Obviously, this poetry is no longer aimed at the colonizer or exploiter. The poetic speaker is a guerrilla, a prisoner, or some African citizen involved in underground activity, and he speaks to the Mozambican people: speaker and audience share the same socio-political background.

It is highly significant that the message given in the Frelimo preface to *Poesia de combate* could also be heard in statements formulated in three other anthologies of the late seventies, two from Guinea-Bissau and one from São Tomé e Príncipe.

A country with limited opportunities for primary education, Portuguese Guinea had a 97 per cent illiteracy rate, and a total lack of secondary and higher education. In

[72] "The time of the Revolution / is the time of certainty."

[73] "To-morrow will be the time of love / with the time of the stars / the time of humanity. / TO-MORROW."

[74] "We are shouting our determination / to free the Fatherland."

[75] "Mother, it's beautiful to fight for freedom! / There's a message of justice in each bullet I fire / there are old dreams that awaken like birds."

other words, colonialism completely failed to provide for the possibility of literary expression in a country with a population of nearly 600,000. The small anthology *Mantenhas para quem luta!* (Greetings to the fighter!, 1977) was the first manifestation of the poetic talents of the people of Guinea-Bissau. It comprises poems written before independence as well as some that were written after 1974. The main themes are similar to those of protest poetry from the other lusophone African nations: liberation, celebration of heroes, rediscovery of cultural and personal identity, and the victorious revolution in progress. One fairly typical example is Nagib Said voicing his hope that

> O eco da revolução propagar-se-á
> Através das mil montanhas do Mundo![76]

In 1978 there appeared another slender volume entitled *Antologia de jovens poetas: Primeiros momentos da construção* (Anthology of young poets; First moments of construction). A few of the anthologized poems had been written before 1974, but the majority were of a more recent date and dealt with the revolutionary experience. A new development was the large number of texts by Crioulo authors, who played a minor role in the previous anthology. A poem by Helder Proença (b. 1956), dated 1973, expressed hope for the future, one of the most persistent themes in Portuguese African literature:

> Nós cantamos amanhã, au sei-o bem
> cantaremos a melodia do querer.[77]

The "new day" or "new dawn" which passes through the new African nations generally connotes political commitment, as in this verse by Tony Tcheca (b. 1951):

> Companheira minha ...
> vem, canta comigo a nova madrugada.[78]

This "new dawn" also demands a generous self-surrender and a revolutionary consciousness which can lead to changes in society. A similar motif, "the first moments of construction", is developed by José Carlos [Schwartz] (1949–1977):

> Digo-te que os novos herois chegarão ...
> Dentre ventos soalheiros a aumentar a produção.[79]

The aesthetic level in these poems is not always commensurate with the earnestness of the writers' intentions, but it should be remembered that unlike the other former Portuguese colonies, Guinea-Bissau lacks a long established literary tradition. Full awareness of this fact is apparent in the book's unassuming preface which makes it clear that

[76] "The echo of the revolution will continue / across the thousand mountains of the world!"
[77] "We sing of tomorrow, I know it well / we will sing the melody of our wants."
[78] "My comrade... come with me and sing the new dawn".
[79] "I tell you that the new heroes will arrive... Amid sun-drenched winds, increasing production."

a importância dos trabalhos contidos nesta antologia, não deve ser medida só pela forma como se apresentam ou pela sensibilidade estética (poética ou não) que poderá transmitir a um ou outro leitor, mas sim pela firme vontade de integreção no processo revolucionário e pela certeza na transformação das realidades contrárias à existência do homem.[80]

The theme of construction or production is of paramount importance in the recent poetry from São Tomé and Príncipe, as it is in the literature of all former Portuguese colonies in Africa. To the themes of "slavery," the "colonial spectre", "total liberation" and the "colonial menace" which are developed in the *Antologia poética de São Tomé e Príncipe* (1978), is added the motif that nineteen-year-old Ana Maria de Deus Lima (b. 1958) calls *marcha de reconstrução,* which inspired the following lines of Alda do Espírito Santo:

O fruto da terra
Não jorra no silêncio ...
O fruto da terra há-de brotar fecundo ...
Quando nossas mãos unidas ...
Empurrarem até à praia
O padrão da exploração.[81]

This mulatto woman, the most prominent living poet from the twin islands, soon published her first volume, *É nosso o solo sagrado da terra* (The sacred soil of the earth is ours, 1978), a collection of her poetry since the 1950s, which reveals the constancy of her loyalty to the cause of liberation. But it should be noted that in the *Antologia poética de São Tomé e Príncipe* the elder poets already represented in the 1963 *Poetas de São Tomé e Príncipe* were joined by members of a younger generation, some of whom—like Carlos Espírito Santo (b. 1952) in his *Poesia do colonialismo* (1978)—chose to use Crioulo as their poetic medium.

Towards the end of the seventies, it was becoming clear that the lusophone writers of Africa had not yet fully realized the implications of their new condition as citizens of independent countries. Their inspiration, long repressed by Salazar's censorship, was still confined to lyrical outpourings in praise of the revolution and to indignant denunciation of the cruelty and injustice of the colonial past. The problems that beset the new states of the third world had not yet been integrated into the sources of their inspiration: the inner divisions, the foreign interventions, the difficulties of introducing a modicum of social equity into parts of the world that had long been subjected to pitiless extortion by Western capitalism. But the fact that Portuguese had only been mastered by a tiny minority in the new countries of the continent, viewed in correlation with the increasing use of Crioulo for creative purposes on the islands, raised a different problem, one that

[80] "the works in this anthology should not be judged according to literary or aesthetic criteria, but should be considered as evidence of their authors' determination to be integrated into the revolutionary process and to play a role in changing conditions contrary to human existence."

[81] "The fruit of the land / Does not burst forth in silence... The fruit of the land will sprout abundantly... When our united hands... push out to the beach / The pillar of exploitation."

was of more immediate interest for the future of these African literatures: the prospects (if any) of the Portuguese language as a literary medium in Africa.[82]

From one country to another, the status of the European language differed greatly a few years after independence.

A limited use could be recorded in Guinea-Bissau, especially in the areas that had been long under Portuguese control, as compared with those dominated by the P.A.I.G.C. before its mass literacy campaign got under way; a limited use as well in São Tomé and Príncipe; a scant use likewise in Mozambique, with a more encouraging percentage only in Angola, but even there the situation hardly warranted the assertion, in the widest sense of the word, that Portuguese was actually spoken there. In the centre of this picture Cape Verde, a special case of acculturation and literary bilingualism, involving the Portuguese language on the one hand and, on the other, although on a more modest scale, a pronounced and promising literary upsurge of the local dialect.

The literature of Portuguese expression in Angola and Mozambique was written by whites, mulattos and half a dozen blacks. In São Tomé and Príncipe this literature was virtually restricted to seven mulatto poets and three prose writers, one of whom was a European and another of mixed European and São Tomé parentage. In Guinea there were one or two indigenous poets while the remainder of the literature had been contributed by the very few Portuguese authors settled there or by Cape Verdeans like Fausto Duarte.

Since literature in Cape Verde enjoys considerable popular support, one could not possibly conceive of any political hypothesis that might counteract the development of a literature in Portuguese, which is already institutionalized, whatever the political future may hold in store. On the other hand all African liberation movements had decided from the outset to accept Portuguese as their official language. They used it not only as a medium to implement their literacy campaign (the case of Guinea is especially relevant here) but also to carry out their political propaganda both written and broadcast. Thus everything suggests that whatever treatment the indigenous languages will receive in the future—and it is bound to be extremely considerate—Portuguese will remain the official language, the language of contact among various ethnic groups, assisted in this function by the Creole dialect in Guinea-Bissau or in the Cape Verdean archipelago.

At the same time the various indigenous languages will receive more intensive attention for educational purposes than they have ever enjoyed before. To a large extent, writers in the new countries still choose Portuguese as their means of expression. But there is much likelihood that the situation that already obtains in Cape Verde will in time become generalized, creative writing in the African languages co-existing with lusophone literature. A case might of course be made for the notion that Portuguese will be superseded by the local languages, as African preference goes to the latter. But will this really be the case? In actual fact in the anglophone or francophone countries English and French have continued to serve as instruments of literary expression on a large scale

[82] The last paragraphs of Dr. Ferreira's essay first appeared as part of an enquiry carried out by *Colóquio/Letras*, No. 21 (1974). They are here printed in Willfried Feuser's translation, as published in the Nigerian journal *Kiábara*, 1, 1 (1978), 73–76. [Ed.]

since independence. There is no reason why the same should not happen with Portuguese. A language which used to be spoken by only two countries—Portugal and Brazil—is now going to be spoken by a larger number of nations with more than one hundred and twenty million citizens. It will become a truly international language capable of attracting the attention of the whole world, even at the level of international assemblies and organizations, and African writers will be tempted to use it for various reasons, not least among which will be the desire to reach an audience not limited just to their own national territory.

As regards literary expression, it must be observed that Portuguese is undergoing substantial transformations in the various former colonies: it has been possible for a new language to take shape in Cape Verde, and to some extent in Guinea. In São Tomé and Príncipe the Forro dialect has emerged, while in the *musseques* of Luanda and in the *caniço* of Maputo intensive dialectal processes are taking place which are sometimes —inappropriately, it would seem—referred to as "pequeño-português" in the Mozambican capital. This phenomenon is reflected in the literary language, which is characterized by a linguistic hybridism evident not only in the phonetic structure but also in the morphology, bringing about syntactic innovations and involving a constant and irreversible disintegration of the standard language. This distortion, which first began in oral form, has spread to the written language, whose hard and clear-cut outlines will become blurred until a malleable and completely transformed instrument emerges. In the last few decades this trend has been responsible for some original works which have undoubtedly brought enrichment to literature in Portuguese.

In Africa, the Portuguese language is passing through a restructuring whose outcome cannot yet be foreseen. The phenomenon which has been taking place in parts of Angola and Mozambique might conceivably be brought to an end by a more vigorous penetration of standard grammatical Portuguese through the school system and the growth of literacy. It is more likely, however, that the process of hybridization with the African mother tongues may become intensified and consecrated in oral, literary, and even official usage. For the literary fate of the Portuguese language in Africa will depend in the first place on its use as a spoken language in the former colonies, and in the second place on the cultural measures and political decisions that will be taken by the governments of the new African countries with regard to the use and teaching of the language.

(Translated from the Portuguese by
Lorie Ishimatsu and Willfried Feuser)

Editor's Note

Dr. Ferreira's reluctance to advertise himself should not be allowed to distort history by obscuring his own role in the development of Cape Verdean literature. A Portuguese with extensive experience of Portugal's overseas empire, where he spent large parts of his life (Cape Verde, 1941–1947; Goa, 1949–1953; Angola, 1965–1967), Manuel Ferreira (b. 1917) identified with the archipelago, although his extensive research has made him a leading scholar in Luso-African literature in general. He was associated with the *Certeza* group, and with his first creative work, *Morna: Contos de Cabo Verde* (Leiria,

1948), he contributed decisively, along with Manuel Lopes and Baltasar Lopes, to the emergence of narrative prose of Cape Verdean inspiration. His next collection of Cape Verdean tales, *Morabeza* (Lisbon: Agência-Geral do Ultramar, 1958) was reprinted in part in the Imbondeiro series (1961). His *Hora di bai* (Time to leave; Coimbra: Vértice, 1962), coming five years after Manuel Lopes' *Chuva braba,* was the second piece of Cape Verdean fiction that truly deserved to be called a novel; many of its characters are "personifications of aspects of the Cape Verdean ethos or caricatures of certain attitudes fostered in an accultured society."[83] An exacting artist, Ferreira is for ever revising and rewriting his short stories, which were collected as *Terra trazida* (The land brought in me; Lisbon: Plátano, 1972) the year after he had published his most ambitious novel, *Voz de Prisão* (A voice from prison; Porto: Inova, 1971). While *Hora di bai* had been allowed to appear during the heyday of the Casa dos Estudantes do Império, these last two works could only reach publication thanks to the modicum of "liberalization" that characterized the last few years before the Portuguese revolution. While *Voz de prisão* is a highly sophisticated novel both in style and structure, it also illustrates such empathy with the island culture that the Cape Verdean poet Arnaldo França (b. 1925) declared it was difficult to detect any element in it which would show evidence of a foreign observer's viewpoint ("detectar qualquer segmento que se afigure de uma óptica de observação estrangeira").[84] This was not surprising for the author of *A Aventura crioula, ou Cabo Verde: uma síntese cultural e étnica* (Lisbon: Plátano, 1967; 2nd, enlarged ed. 1973), the success of which had testified to Ferreira's intimate knowledge of this hybrid island world. More significant however—both of Ferreira's deep familiarity with island culture and of the latest trends in the evolution of Cape Verde writing—was the experimental idiom of the book, "a linguistic tour de force that combines standard Portuguese and creole to effect a synthetic language" in such a way that "the tension of standard Portuguese juxtaposed with creole, often in the same phrase, accompanies the novel's structural tension which pits the Cape Verdean against himself, in terms of the islands' perennial problems, and against the rest of the world because of Cape Verde's mythology."[85] While nobody thinks of defining Albert Camus as an Algerian writer, or Elspeth Huxley as a Kenyan novelist, it is one of the pecularities of racial relationships in the Portuguese-speaking world that Manuel Ferreira has been described by Arnaldo França as "um ficcionista cabo-verdiano," in the same way as other Portuguese writers such as Castro Soromenho or Luandino Vieira enjoy unquestioned status as representatives of Angolan literature. Indeed, several of Ferreira's books are prescribed reading in Cape Verdean schools.

[83] Hamilton, op. cit., p. 351.

[84] From a review in *Raizes,* N° 3 (1977), 77–80.

[85] Hamilton, op. cit., p. 353. See also Maria Luisa Nunes, "The Question of Cape Verdean Identity as Seen Through the Works of Manuel Ferreira," (unpubl. paper read at the 5th Convention of the Cape Verdean Federation, April 1978); Maria Lúcia Lepecki, "Manuel Ferreira: tempo cabo-verdiano," in her *Meridianos do texto* (Lisbon: Assirio e Alvim, 1979), pp. 97–103; and Fernando J. B. Marthinho, "Manuel Ferreira, *Voz de prisão*", *África,* 7 (1980), 264–268.

Lewis Nkosi

2. SOUTH AFRICA: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

Tyranny and the "literature of protest" are dialectically linked. All countries have known periods of social upheaval and political turbulence during which writers and artists, acting as the conscience of the nation, have protested vigorously against oppression and social injustice. In the normal course of events such periods are reasonably short. After moments of conflict there usually follow epochs of peace and tranquillity during which the artistic genius is devoted to the celebration of national pride and achievement, and the link between tyranny and protest in the arts is thus temporarily dissolved.

In South Africa that link has never been broken. Tyranny has been a marked feature of political life, together with the literature such oppression engenders, roughly since the founding of the modern South African state in 1652; the victims have been both colonial settlers and colonized blacks, the former having been used mainly as instruments of colonial exploitation and imperialist expansion while the latter were the very targets of that exploitation. Thus from the very inception of the South African state "protest literature" has been a major component of public life. Both in its oral and in its written form, this literature has been obliged to reveal to us the brutal face of its origins, the roots to which it is indissolubly linked: political tyranny and oppression. Black literature in particular, especially in the European languages, has relentlessly sought to expose the conditions of its own existence: conquest, exploitation, and racial discrimination of which, by its very definition, it is a symptom.

The point needs some insisting upon. South African literature has always been a literature of protest and social commitment in whose mirror the nation hopes to catch glimpses of its own face even if only to reject or denounce later what it sees there as an outrage or falsification. Among white authors those denounced more frequently by the representatives of authority—Gordimer, Paton, Jacobson, Brink and Breytenbach—are also the ones who remind the white public more frequently of the "many things" to which the latter has closed its mind. Not surprisingly, since the beginning of modern studies of African Literature "protest writing" in Africa has become associated almost exclusively with the literary production of black South Africans. White writers may write angry poems and drama against the state but their works are never described as "protest". Similarly in the United States writers from Tom Paine to Allen Ginsberg may write pamphlets and poems which are essentially "protest" but their works may never be categorized as such. Only those literary works which have been produced by blacks have

been designated as "protest". Consequently, in the logic of racism, "protest literature" has sometimes been wrongly assumed to be inferior simply because it is produced by black writers.

There are other reasons, of course, why "protest literature," especially that literature which throughout the black world has fiercely denounced colonialism and racial oppression, should be considered less than accomplished as an art form. In modern times European criticism has become prejudiced against politically inspired art, with a pragmatic message; but that this should be so is not entirely the fault of such criticism; all too often politically committed artists have supposed, quite erroneously, that it is sufficient merely to have a grievance against someone to produce a work of art. Protest literature only fails to live up to its own ambitions when it makes its 'message' a pretext for all other failures: shallow characterization, insufficient attention to language, and an incompetent handling of artistic form in general. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that where literature is concerned no message can be greater than the form in which it is delivered simply because, to use Walter Benjamin's formulation of the matter, "the tendency of a work of literature can be politically correct only if it is also correct in the literary sense."[86]

The genesis of black 'protest literature' in South Africa can be traced to the years between the two world wars; specifically, it can be traced to the two Zulu poets, Herbert I. E. Dhlomo (1903–1956) and Benedict Wallet Vilakazi (1906–1947). Although Vilakazi's verse was to be translated into various languages, including English and Russian, it was originally written in Zulu, and, consequently, a major portion of his work falls outside this survey. All the same, a quick, very cursory glance at some of the verse which appeared in English translation, principally poems like "Tell Me", "Because" and "On the Gold Mines", is extremely instructive. In these poems Vilakazi took up the cause of the newly urbanized African Worker, the severely exploited mine labourer, in verse which showed in its content if not in its style, a major break with previous African poetry.

Before Vilakazi most African verse, inspired as it was by religious Christian sentiment and a lofty desire for moral uplift, had shown a meek inclination to avoid painful subjects such as politics, but for the first time Vilakazi brings to African verse an acute

[86] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London; New Left Books, 1973) p. 86. For more information about black writing in South Africa since World War II, see especially the relevant chapters in Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image* (London: Faber, 1962, rev. ed. 1974) and in Vladimír Klíma, *South African Prose Writing* (Prague: Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1971). See also S. P. Kartouzov, "Literature of Protest in the South African Republic," in F. M. Breskina *et al.*, *Literatura stran Afriki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pp. 147–177, and "Some Problems of Modern Prose in the S.A.R.," in *Essays on African Culture/Essais d'histoire de la culture africaine*, ed. M. A. Korostovtsev (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), pp. 138–154; Lewis Nkosi, "South Africa: Literature of Protest," in *A Handbook of African Affairs*, ed. Helen Kitchen (New York: Praeger, 1964), pp. 275–284, and "Fiction by Black South Africans," *Black Orpheus*, No. 19 (March 1966), 48–54; Donald Burness, "Six Responses to Apartheid," *Présence Africaine*, No. 76 (1970), 82–95; John Povey, "'Non-European' Writing in South Africa," *Review of National Literatures*, 2, 2 (1972), 66–80; Christophe Dailly, "Ecrivains noirs sud-africains et apartheid," *West African Journal of Modern Languages*, 2 (1976), 55–66; E. O. Apronti, "The Tyranny of Time: The Theme of Time in the Artistic Consciousness of South African Writers," *African Literature Today*, 8 (1976), 106–114; Detlev Theodor Reichel, *Schriftsteller gegen Apartheid* (Berlin: Herrmann, 1977).

sense of social conflict, deliberately spelled out in class terms, a fact which may account for his popularity with the left. Nevertheless, for all its worthy sentiment a poem like "Because", in which a highly educated university professor assumes the *persona* of a mine worker, obliged to adopt a tone of offended naïveté, gave to Vilakazi's protest message a stilted, if not a patronizing sound. In contrast, his poem "On the Gold Mines" uses a more straightforward approach, with a distinctness of voice which helped to sharpen the 'protest' message while improving on the diction—at any rate, in its English translation. This description of a white foreman is typical of the poem's chilling accuracy, which somehow manages to slough off the naïve sentimentality of the first:

> Call across the distances, old man —
> Where you were forged is far away from here,
> You were smelted in the furnace blaze
> And rising from the ashes you were shipped
> So we saw you cross the waters of the sea.
> Then a steam train hauled you overland,
> Puffing it slid you here at last to Goli
> What a wail you raised, and there came in view
> All the rock-rabbits bobbing up beside the line.[87]

Another Zulu poet, Herbert I. E. Dhlomo, who was also a playwright and an assiduous commentator on culture and politics, did not have to face problems of translation. He wrote directly in English. In *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) reputed to be the first African play in English, Dhlomo had seemed no more radical than many pioneering African poets who had served apprenticeship under missionary guidance. For his dramatic material he had reworked the story of the millennial movement in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, led by a young Xhosa woman who prophesied the end of white rule if the Xhosas under Chief Sarili would slaughter all their cattle stock and destroy their crops. The cattle-killing tragedy of 1857 culminated in mass starvation, large-scale death and witch-hunt hysteria. In what appeared to be a conflict between the forces of progress and the powers of darkness, Dhlomo clearly sided with missionary endeavour and the innovations of European statecraft.

As Hugh, one of the white characters in the play, puts it: "Nongqawuse, the source of this drama, may accomplish in a short time, by means of an expensive method, what in the ordinary course of events would have taken generations of Christianity and education and administrative wisdom to do."[88] He reasons that: "This great cattle-killing drama...will prepare the Xhosa national soil-soul for the early propagation of the message of the missionary, the blessings of medical science, the law and order of the administrator, and the light of education." Nothing in the rest of the author's text would cause us to suppose that his own views were at variance with those of Hugh, his creation.

[87] Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, "Ezinkomponi" in *Amal' ezulu* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1945), p. 41. An English rendering of Vilakazi's complete poems appeared under the title *Zulu Horizons* in 1962 (Cape Town: H. Timmins), a new edition of which was issued in 1973 (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press.)

[88] H. I. E. Dhlomo, *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1935), p. 23.

This period of unquestioning submission to Western ideas and influence was not to last long. In the following years, with his sharply polemical essays and the publication in 1941 of his long poem, *Valley of a Thousand Hills,* Dhlomo gave to South African "protest poetry" its most extended single work. The poem's ambitious scope, its combination of a "nature" theme familiar to lovers of traditional English verse with a spirited protest at the defeat and humiliation of Zulu power, were crucial in ensuring for the author wider attention than had hitherto been accorded to a work by an African writer.

Judged by modern standards, and placed alongside such modern practitioners of the art of verse in South Africa as Dennis Brutus, the late Arthur Nortje or even a more tradition-conscious poet such as Mazisi Kunene, Dhlomo's verse sounds "poetical" in a strained, old-fashioned way, too much beholden to an outmoded English diction and metre: words like "yore," "writ," "ambrosial" and "beauteous," words which had become the stock-in-trade of post-Romantic English verse, occur throughout the poem. Further the frequent references to classical European mythology and a certain clumsy inversion of syntax—mannerisms which were, incidentally, equally typical of the early West African poets in English—generated an atmosphere which smacked of a synthetic literary style, depriving the poem of an authentic African voice.

Whatever its failures *Valley of a Thousand Hills* remains an important contribution to Anglo-African poetry of the pioneering school; in its subject-matter if not in its technique, in its tone of protest and its unrestrained nationalist feeling, it charts a new course for African verse in English which was increasingly to reject white missionary tutelage in favour of a new African identity whose political consequences were soon to become obvious.

Occasionally, through intensity of feeling and sincerity of emotion, Dhlomo does manage to attain impressive heights of lyrical power. A sense of loss, genuine pain at the impoverishment and decline of a once-powerful nation, counterbalanced only by admiration for the natural beauty of the land, constitute the nodal points of tension in the poem:

> A bird
> Sung song was never heard before by men
> Around the Valley of a Thousand Hills!
> In mingled joy and pain heard I and cried:
> "From whence you come, pain, beauty, love and joy
> Have mingled out into a bloom of song!
> But here on earth Man's Soul remains the toy
> Of inharmonious processes which long
> Have raged; here where our youth and joys are mocked
> By want and tears; where, like the dead, foul dust
> Shuts tight our door, where age, deemed wise, is rocked
> By scourge and fear and hate! here where we must
> Deceive and fawn, serve shams, and crawl like worms a place
> To find, and die to live! Where crafty eyes
> Of gain and power, devour devoid of grace!
> Not like thy song do men here fall...then rise!....[89]

[89] Id., *Valley of a Thousand Hills* (Durban: The Knox Publishing Company, 1941), pp. 11–12.

Important as the contribution of these two Zulu poets may have been in the development of black protest writing in South Africa, it is to the next generations of writers, beginning with Peter Abrahams (b. 1919) and Ezekiel Mphahlele (b. 1919) through Alex La Guma (b. 1925), James Matthews (b. 1929) and Richard Rive (b. 1931), to Can Themba (1923–1969), Bloke Modisane (b. 1923), Arthur Maimane (b. 1932) and Nat Nakasa (1937–1965), that we have to look for the most significant expression of the theme of racial conflict in fiction and autobiography. It is in their stories and novels, too, that we can hear, more consistently than ever before, voices raised in constant demand for the amelioration of the condition of black life in the country. These writers, who reached maturity in the 40s and 50s, were still possessed of a hope, however extravagant that hope must now seem to have been, of some likelihood of a peaceful change which could be brought about through domestic and international pressure. This optimism, which finally collapsed with the first shots fired at the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, is reflected not so much in the theme of racial conciliation, as in the very prose style—in the exuberance, wit and humour, which often showed a surprising lack of bitterness.

From the very beginning, in stories and sketches collected under the title *Dark Testament* (1942) and in his three novels—*Song of the City* (1945), *Mine Boy* (1946) and *The Path of Thunder* (1948)—Peter Abrahams' overriding concern with the theme of racial conflict was counterbalanced by the vision of a possible conciliation through integration. In opposition to the tyrannical demands of the tribe, individual worth—as exemplified by the choice of whom to love in *The Path of Thunder*—is made the standard bearer of a new ethic, thanks to which, when it came to be enthroned, as the writer hoped, as the ideology of the state, race and colour would cease to matter; but this optimistic vision of a bright future is, in turn, continually subverted by a cycle of racial hatred and violence in which all of Abrahams' characters are constantly immersed even against their wishes. Young Mako probably speaks for the author in *The Path of Thunder* when he says of the two star-crossed lovers, the coloured Lanny Schwartz and the white girl, Sarie Villiers: "They loved. That is all they did....And now there are the guns... We must *do* something.... What are we to do?"[90] Urbanization, a major theme in both *Song of the City* and *Mine Boy,* is sometimes approved of by the author precisely in the expectation that it may act as an agency of change and for releasing the individual from the social control of the tribal community into the larger society.

In many of these novels the processes of urbanization or modernism as such are treated with a certain ambiguity. At the core, there is a sort of double vision: the vitality of the city can be counterbalanced by Xuma's nostalgia for a rural peace in a novel like *Mine Boy;* and in *Song of the City* by Dick Nduli's dream of idyllic union with Mnandi, his country bride. But it is the vortex of urban protest politics, of labour unrest and strikes, and, finally, the emergence of a new proletariat which fully engage Abrahams

[90] Peter Abrahams, *The Path of Thunder* (New York: Harper, 1948; London: Faber, 1952), p. 261. On the author, see especially Michael Wade, *Peter Abrahams* (London: Evans, 1972) and Kolawole Ogungbesan, "Peter Abrahams: A Selected Bibliography," *World Literature Written in English,* 13 (1974), 184–190. See also the latter critic's own essays on several Abrahams novels: "Peter Abrahams' *The Path of Thunder:* The Hope Next Time," *Re: Arts and Letters,* 6, 2 (1972), 15–27; "Peter Abrahams' *Wild Conquest:* In the Beginning Was Conflict," *Studies in Black Literature,* 4, 2 (1973), 11–20; and "The Politics of *This Island Now*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 8, 1 (1973), 33–41.

as a novelist. However, it is fair to say that throughout the political turbulence enacted and re-enacted in Abrahams' fiction, from his prophetic novel *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956) to his most recent South African novel, *A Night of Their Own* (1965), it is the vision of racial conciliation achieved through "love" which is offered again and again, with almost stubborn insistence, as the antidote: "Can a man betray love and friendship, the gods we worship, and still be good?"[91] Inevitably, Abrahams' vision of a "good society" is clotted with a sticky sentimentality evident in some sketches of *Dark Testament*—"Brother Jew," for example—and in the rather contrived scene recording the death of Gubuza and Paul van As near the end of *Wild Conquest*[92]. It is perhaps indicative of the unrealistic nature of treating "love" as a solution to political problems that a descendant of Paul van As, the good voortrekker of *Wild Conquest* who had died mumbling some portentous liberal sentiment, appears in *A Night of Their Own* as a bureaucrat with State Security, hunting down revolutionaries with total remorselessness and singleness of purpose despite his frequently declared "love" for a coloured woman!

Peter Abrahams explained the influences which have shaped his work and personality in his autobiography, *Tell Freedom* (1954), his most accomplished work so far. His missionary education by the Anglicans is, without any doubt, the most significant; but there are other influences at work among which must be mentioned his reading of black American poets and novelists of the Harlem renaissance: "I read everyone of the books on the shelf marked: American Negro Literature. I became a nationalist, a colour nationalist, through the writings of men and women who lived a world away from me." Finally, there was Abrahams' brush with the Marxist left in the South Africa of the 30s: "Marxism," he wrote in *Tell Freedom,* "had the impact of a miraculous revelation." Again: "And only by the Marxian themes of economics and imperialism had the racialism of the land made sense."[93] This influence deeply affected the author's early work, especially the stories and sketches in *Dark Testament,* but later it was to wane somewhat and a standard Western-type liberalism became his main yardstick for judging African societies and politics. This change in outlook quickly becomes evident in *A Wreath for Udomo* and even in sections of *A Night of Their Own;* fear of, and, therefore, a certain antipathy for, revolutionary violence, have imposed a mild form of conservatism on Abrahams' work which is responsible for making a hero like Richard Nkosi sound like an outsider in his own society. He is the character who most resembles Abrahams himself, who left South Africa in 1939 and settled in Jamaica in 1955: during his brief visits to his native country in the 40s and 50s, he often sounded like the detached liberal observer that he had become. Nevertheless, despite the changes which living abroad has produced in his work, Abrahams' contribution to black "protest" literature in South Africa is undeniable and his continuing influence on younger writers in Africa generally has been enormous.[94]

Mphahlele's struggle to become a writer bears certain similarities with that of

[91] P. Abrahams, *A Night of Their Own* (London; Faber, 1965).
[92] Id., *Wild Conquest* (London: Faber, 1951), p. 354.
[93] Id., *Tell Freedom* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), pp. 244–245.
[94] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan novelist, has admitted being deeply influenced by Abrahams' early work.

Abrahams. Born coincidentally in the same year both writers became engaged at an early age, against immense odds and crippling poverty, in the same fierce struggle to obtain an education through missionary schools, with the assistance of sympathetic individual whites; but the differences in their respective upbringings were also striking. If Abrahams is truly the child of the city, very much at home in the ferocious glitter and meretricious glamour of city life, Mphahlele's imagination has always seemed to bear the shape of his thirteen years of country upbringing; and this has been so even if we keep in mind the fact that he was actually born in an urban area.

Pretoria, where Mphahlele was born, is a much smaller city than Abrahams' corrupt, brassy Johannesburg. As a result Abrahams is at home in the cross-currents of many cultures and peoples in a way that Mphahlele, even after years of wanderings around the world, seems distinctly incapable of ever becoming. Equally it must be said that Mphahlele is more in touch with the indigenous African roots in a way that Abrahams, a Coloured writer reared in the twilight world of Johannesburg city slums, can never hope to be. Naturally, these differences have consequences for their writing. Whatever its other virtues, Mphahlele's style has none of the colour, sharpness and animated liveliness of Abrahams' prose, but at its best it has the steadiness and solidity of a writer who stands securely on his roots.

Indeed, Mphahlele's contribution to black protest writing has been a controlled reflective voice contrasting with the manic frenzy, the violent imagery and the gay, ferocious rhythms which younger writers were introducing at the same time. In 1947 Mphahlele published *Man Must Live*, a collection of five stories which *Trek*, a literary journal, praised for not giving us "economic or political theories about human beings, but real people giving and taking, hurting and sacrificing", while the left-wing *Guardian* complained that "the author of these stories has had the gods of his fathers exorcised by missionaries. He has forgotten that he is an African."[95] How Mphahlele has come to regard these early attempts can be gathered from his reluctance to see them reprinted: "It was a clumsy piece of writing," he has said.[96]

In his next collection, *The Living and Dead* (1961), printed in Nigeria where the writer had sought the safety of exile in 1957, the stories are not entirely successful in establishing a sturdy narrative assurance and authority; thematically, too much is at stake, and the urgent need to expose the evil system of *apartheid*, which is the primary object of all "protest" writing in South Africa, takes precedence over the requirements of stylistic control. The title story suffers, among other failures, from faulty construction, too many awkward transitions and somewhat contrived coincidences. "We'll Have Dinner at Eight" gives us no more than an extremely sketchy characterization of the pivotal personage of Miss Pringle; and even such an illuminating piece as his ironically titled "The Master of Doornvlei" presents us with a white master whose almost total

[95] Quoted in Ezekiel Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (Berlin: Seven Seas Books, 1962), p. 164. See Henning Abrahamsen, "A Schematic Analysis of Ezekiel Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*," *Bulletin of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*, 11 (1972), 23–31. On the writer, see Ursula Barnett, *Ezekiel Mphahlele* (Boston: Twayne, 1976).

[96] Interview in *African Writers Talking*, ed. Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse (London; Heinemann Educational, 1972), p. 106.

weakness in the face of a brazen challenge by one of his black workers is all but unbelievable. Compared with Abrahams' handling of white characters, Mphahlele's whites are nothing more than caricatures, two-dimensional cardboard pieces which fail to provide worthy targets for attack because they can scarcely establish their own existence. The need to satirize is very often stronger than the need to characterize. Not surprisingly, it is "Mrs Plum," a story in which the author himself deliberately chooses satire as his vehicle of social criticism, which neatly achieves what we take to be the author's intention of exposing the essentially superficial nature of the white liberal vision faced with the enormity of an evil system like apartheid.

Mphahlele's control only becomes more assured when he explores African characters and their motives for doing what they do, which usually comes from their dominant will to survive under adverse social conditions. In stories like "Mrs Plum" and "In Corner B" he goes further; he experiments with recitative modes of story-telling taken from the African oral tradition while using the narrative "I" which is quite familiar to modern fiction readers. But it is in this narrative technique more than in the inventiveness of a story like "The Suitcase", that Mphahlele achieves an almost perfect balance and formal control, in the construction, which is all the more astonishing when we read the story against the background of his later fiction: for example, his long, belated and rather loose first novel, *The Wanderers* (1970).[97]

About South Africa, this novel adds very little that had not already appeared in his splendid autobiography *Down Second Avenue* (1959). Indeed, Mphahlele seems to have given up the cool objectivity of his short stories for a prolonged bout of self-justification and self-worship which does nothing to enhance the quality of this turgidly voluminous prose-work. The novel has two narrators. One is Timi, a staff writer on *Bongo*, which stands for *Drum*, the magazine of which Mphahlele had been fiction editor before he left the country. An obviously autobiographical character, Timi first tells the story of his life in South Africa; he recounts his frustrations as a journalist with serious literary pretensions, forced to eke out a living by writing vapid, trivial stories for his journal; later, his white liberal editor, Steve Cartwright, takes up the story and retells it from his own perspective, but the two perspectives are really one. Cartwright's own reflections on the South African situation, on the activities of the journal he edits and those who work in it, only reinforce Timi's perceptions of his own moral worth and the moral worthlessness of nearly everyone else. The novel is also about the pain of exile, the increasing feeling of "marginality" which exile imposes on those forced to exchange domestic persecution for the strangeness of alien societies. For Timi, the hero of this novel, it matters little that these "alien" societies also happen to be African.

In *The African Image* (1962), Mphahlele recalled that "the appearance of *Drum* magazine on the South African scene in 1950 and the broadening of the scope of the

[97] On this novel, see G. M. Nkondo, "Apartheid and Alienation: Mphahlele's *The Wanderers*," *Africa Today*, 20, 4 (1973), 59–70.

weeklies—all produced almost exclusively for non-white readership"[98] provided welcome opportunities for publication: they led to the emergence of a number of gifted writers such as Nat Nakasa and Can Themba, whose work was not to be printed in book form until many years later. At that time, one American critic observed, "the short story was the only literary form attempted by non-white writers in South Africa, and only a few possibilities of this form were explored. Writers either churned out sensational, melodramatic fiction for *Drum* and other pulp magazines or else wrote protest literature for liberal and communist publications."[99] This last trend soon came to an end following the tightening of the apartheid policy, the requirements of the new education acts and an increasingly stringent censorship which has provided almost a hundred definitions of what is officially undesirable in literature:[100] a large number of non-white writers and would-be writers were forced into exile.

This led to a new phase in the history of black writing in South Africa, as the new generation of authors began to seek publication abroad in the early sixties. Among many of those new writers, as was the case with Abrahams and even more with Mphahlele, the need to bear witness before the world created a pronounced tendency toward factuality: toward reportage, the memoir and autobiography. Not surprisingly some of the best writing as well as the merely banal share this quality of the documentary. *Drawn in Colour* (1960) and *The Ochre People* (1963) by Noni Jabavu (b. 1919), a member of a well-known family of Xhosa intellectuals, *Road to Ghana* (1960) by Alfred Hutchinson (b. 1924), *Blame Me on History* (1963) by Bloke Modisane, and some of the journalism of Can Themba and Nat Nakasa later collected in *The Will to Die* (1972) and *The World of Nat Nakasa* (1975) respectively—all are vivid testimonials of life under apartheid, the will not to die but to survive, or at the very least, to die laughing. Not surprisingly, this documentary, often autobiographical character spilled over into prose fiction, for, as Mphahlele had movingly put it, the black writer "lives inside violence, breathes it, feeds on it, whether it be vindictive or wanton. Robbery, murder, thuggery sum up his environment, where Negro fights against his own kind as well as against whites and even turns his violence on himself."[101] His writing, feeding on his experience, cannot but be imbued with this ubiquitous violence, which is of course the result of the institutional violence built into the *apartheid* system itself. One of the first novels to have been produced after those of Peter Abrahams, Richard Rive's *Emergency* (1963), was an impassioned and compassionate account of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. Rive, who had already published a collection of stories, *African Songs* (1963) in Berlin, later

[98] E. Mphahlele, *The African Image*, rev. ed. (London: Faber, 1974), p. 223. See also Bernth Lindfors, "Post-War Literature in English by African Writers from South Africa: A Study of the Effects of Environment upon Literature," *Phylon*, 27, 1 (1965), 50–62, and especially "A Preliminary Checklist of English Short Fiction by non-Europeans in South Africa," *African Studies Bulletin*, 12, 3 (1969), 275–291. Concerning *Drum*, see Don Dodson, "The Four Modes of *Drum:* Popular Fiction and Social Control in South Africa," *African Studies Review*, 17 (1974), 317–343.

[99] Bernth Lindfors, "Form and Technique in the Novels of Richard Rive and Alex La Guma," in *New African Literature and the Arts*, ed. Joseph Okpaku (New York: Crowell, 1970), I, pp. 42–51; reprinted from *Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts*, I (1966).

[100] See Nadine Gordimer, "Writers in South Africa: The New Black Poets," in *Exile and Tradition: Studies in African and Caribbean Literature*, ed. Rowland Smith (London: Longman, 1976), pp. 132–151. This essay was first printed in the *Dalhousie Review*, 53 (1973–74), 645–664.

[101] *The African Image*, p. 224.

became increasingly absorbed in academic research, literary criticism and teaching. His most recent work to gain recognition was a radio play, *Make Like Slaves* which won the B.B.C. African Play Competition in 1973: a sharply written if a rather superficial study of the white liberals' patronizing attitude toward blacks.[102]

Those who like to describe literature in terms of "schools" used to put Rive in a group of Coloured writers centered around Cape Town, which also included James Matthews and Peter Clarke (b. 1929). The latter, whose short stories and poems appeared under the pseudonym of Peter E. Kumalo, has dropped into complete obscurity; Matthews has continued to write poetry, identifying more and more with the Black Consciousness movement, but has published no stories worthy of attention. The reason for their comparative artistic failure is that it is difficult for a non-white writer in South Africa to achieve the degree of detachment that is necessary for maintaining full control over the shaping of his material. To a large extent, therefore, South African fiction, black and Coloured, seems to be determined by politics. Of the Cape Town writers, the one who best succeeds in marrying art and politics is Alex La Guma.[103] His stories first trickled into publications such as *New Age, Fighting Talk* and *Drum* magazine during the early 50s; more than thirteen years after the first publication (in Nigeria) of his novella *A Walk in the Night* (1962) La Guma has produced three good novels but no work which can match the nearly perfect style of that first book, its accuracy of physical observation or the economy of its language. In *And a Threefold Cord* (1964) and *The Stone Country* (1967), both of them published in Berlin, there are passages of succinct power, of greatly concentrated emotion, but on the whole the choice of material and its treatment do not lift us beyond an increasing feeling of *déjà vu;* by the time we get to *In the Fog of the Season's End* (1972) the deft characterization which was the most startling feature of *A Walk in the Night* has increasingly given way to clichés in which La Guma struggles valiantly with the portraiture of an underground leader like Elias

[102] Some of Rive's recent work, creative and critical, has been collected in his *Selected Writings: Stories, Essays, Plays* (Johannesburg: Donker, 1977). This is the place to point out that while only very few plays by South African non-whites have ever reached print, the best-known dramatist is Lewis Nkosi (b. 1935) himself, whose *The Rhythm of Violence* (1964) deals with the tragic theme of inter-racial love in the context of racial prejudice and institutional oppression. Written in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre when the writer was not yet thirty, "the play is strident, staccato, and at times catches the anger and feeling of helpless rebellion of the blacks and their white allies, but the dialogue seems contrived and unconvincing"; it is characteristic of the works of this period that "the white racists are not depicted as totally without humanity, but as persons trapped in a racist world" (Donald E. Herdeck, *African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing, 1300–1973* [Washington: Black Orpheus Press, 1973], p. 290). Lewis Nkosi, however, is better known for his essays, especially for his literary criticism, some of which has been gathered in *Home and Exile* (London: Longman, 1965) and in *The Transplanted Heart: Essays on South Africa* (Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiope, 1975). [Ed.]

[103] La Guma has received considerable critical attention in the course of the last few years. Apart from Lewis Nkosi, "Alex La Guma—The Man and His Work," *South Africa: Information and Analysis,* 59 (1968), 1–8, see notably: J. M. Coetzee, "Alex La Guma and the Responsibility of the South African Writer," *Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts,* No. 9/10 (1971), 5–11; J. Okpure Obuke, "The Structure of Commitment: A Study of Alex la Guma," *Ba Shiru,* 5, 1 (1973), 14–20; David Rabkin, "La Guma and Reality in South Africa," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 8, 1 (1973), 54–62; J. M. Coetzee, "Man's Fate in the Novels of Alex La Guma," *Studies in Black Literature* 5, 1 (1974), 16–23; Samuel O. Asein, "The Revolutionary Vision in Alex La Guma's Novels," *Black Images,* 3, 2 (1974), 17–27; see also Chris L. Wanjala, "The Face of Injustice: Alex La Guma's Fiction" in his collection *Standpoints on African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973), pp. 305–22. The first book-length study, however, was produced in Russian: S. P. Kartuzov, *Alex La Guma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978).

Tekwane; but despite the mass of details with which he provides us, the man's character remains shadowy and elusive.[104] As for Beukes, the underground organizer and hero of this novel, he has already appeared in different guises before: as George Adams in *The Stone Country* or Charlie Pauls in *And A Threefold Cord.*

In reading La Guma's latest fiction a formula begins to emerge: minor characters, hustlers, surly frustrated cons and self-deceivers continuously appear and reappear, orchestrated against men of serious political commitment. Of South African society he writes always to expose what he has accurately described as "the grim face of an executioner hidden behind a holiday mask". Despite the tendency to repeat himself, he can still come up with a character like Tommy in *In the Fog of the Season's End,* both vividly and affectionately drawn, in whom La Guma reveals a sympathetic understanding of the plight of ordinary people.

While Alex La Guma is the only survivor of the brief flowering of the novel in the early sixties, towards the end of the decade prose fiction was restored to its initial importance by several non-white novelists, especially Bessie Head (b. 1937), a Coloured teacher who lives in Botswana, Enver Carim, a Coloured writer who lives in Britain, and Arthur Maimane, a journalist who spent several years in East Africa and in Ghana before settling in London.

After some short pieces which began appearing in *The New African* and such journals as *The New Statesman,* all of them distinguished by an almost painfully fragile poetic sensibility, Bessie Head published her first full-length novel, *When Rain Clouds Gather* in 1969. Even when some of the novel's shortcomings are fully acknowledged, this is on all counts a creditable first performance by an unknown novelist. In Britain it was unhesitatingly acclaimed by the reviewers; but ironically enough, in the specialist journals of African culture and social criticism there was very little mention of it. To this day Bessie Head remains virtually unknown in certain African literary circles.[105]

This bleak, attentive study of a small community of a mere four hundred people, situated in a dusty, arid Botswana village, a people trying to improve its agricultural techniques in food production but mercilessly torn by petty conflict and self-seeking ambition, contains an admirable range of characters. There is Makhaya Maseko, the black South African exile in "search of a peace of mind"; his white counterpart, Gilbert Balfour, the expatriate Englishman who struggles heroically to organize the self-help cooperative farms on a scientific basis; Sekoto, the benevolent local chief, who loved "fast cars, good food, and pretty girls... and gave the impression of waddling like a duck when he walked"; there is Matenge, his wickedly malevolent brother "with his long gloomy, melancholy, suspicious face and his ceaseless intrigues", and numerous other character studies—Pauline is just one of them—who are drawn with an exquisitely sure

[104] See Leonard Kibera, "A Critical Appreciation of Alex La Guma's *In the Fog of the Season's End,*" *Busara,* 8, 1 (1970), 59–66.

[105] See Arthur Ravenscroft, "The Novels of Bessie Head," in *Aspects of South African Literature,* ed. Christopher Heywood (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976), pp. 174–186, and Femi Ojo-Ade, "Bessie Head's Alienated Heroine: Victim or Villain?", *Ba Shiru,* 8, 2 (1977), 13–22.

touch and amazing self-confidence, by a novelist who is not after all a native of the country.

When Rain Clouds Gather was soon followed by another novel, titled *Maru* (1971), in which the same type of community was depicted; poor in resources, rich in malice, but not incapable of responding humanly to suffering when good leadership is given. This time the centrifugal forces of hate, love and ambition revolve around a young unmarried school teacher, Margaret Cadmore, offspring of a Masarwa (Bushman) woman who had given birth to the child "on the skirts of a remote village," and "wore the same Masarwa ankle-length, loose shift dress which smelt strongly of urine and the smoke of outdoor fires. She had died during the night but the child was still alive and crying feebly when a passerby noticed the corpse." This child is brought up by an eccentric English school teacher, the wife of a missionary, who provides for her a wholesome environment of love and protection; all the same, in a community where the Masarwa are still owned as slaves, the little girl cannot be unaware of her status as a social outcast. "There was no one in later life who did not hesitate to tell her that she was a Bushman, mixed breed, low breed or bastard." Having equipped her with a good education the Cadmores return to England, young Margaret becomes a school teacher, and is immediately plunged into a more abrasive atmosphere of unruly pupils who torment her by asking such questions as "Since when is a Bushy a teacher?", and a school principal who bluntly proclaims: "Either the Masarwa teacher goes or I go." The parallel with South Africa becomes unavoidable: this is a society which practises racial discrimination against an ethnic minority defined by physical features. "Who could absorb the Masarwa, who hardly looked African, but Chinese?"[106]

With its delicacy of feeling and subtle evocation of character, above all, its proper sense of place, this is as nearly perfect a piece of writing as one is ever likely to find in contemporary African literature. If this is so, such a conclusion makes even more surprising the disastrous failure of Bessie Head's third novel, *A Question of Power* (1977), with its unassimilated use of religious mysticism and classical symbols. Although we can grasp the mental suffering, the unyielding subjectivity of the writing limits our sympathies.

Bessie Head is a very exceptional case indeed: with the other novelists who appeared in the early seventies, we are brought back to the South African experience in its specificity, to the documentary trend and the autobiographical inspiration. In *Golden City* (1970), Enver Carim has, in fact, given us more a memoir than a novel; the place and people are all too identifiable, but what is surprising is that a black writer so irrevocably estranged from his native city should record its brutality with such a burst of affectionate lyricism. The novel or memoir tells of the author's last few days in Johannesburg, "making the rounds" of farewell parties, "kissing and jiving and wondering if it really were possible to stay away from Jozie forever."[107] Enver Carim writes like a prodigal son. To the last breath of his nearly breathless narrative he is a spendthrift for whom words are no object. Taking over a theme made popular by Richard Rive in

[106] Bessie Head, *Maru* (London: Gollancz, 1971), pp. 12, 15–16, 108.
[107] Enver Carim, *Golden City* (Berlin: Seven Seas Books, 1970), p. 12.

Emergency, Carim extends it by making revolutionary warfare his subject-matter. A guerilla war has started in the major cities of South Africa; a group of African urban guerillas, aided by their white left-wing comrades, attack Johannesburg, seize white hostages, but defeat comes in the wake of a counter-attack by security forces. The novel is at once a study of the relationship between the black urban guerillas and their white hostages, between the various tendencies represented by the guerillas themselves, and between the various elements of the left. A sub-theme of sexual violence and mutual desire between black and white, a complex of psychological factors which constitutes the underside of the country's obsession with race, ring through the novel. It is an overheated book which leans too hard on melodrama, but there are also some cameo scenes in which the immutable tragedy of South African society is presented in terms of characters and interaction of these representative fictional figures.

In both of Carim's books politics as "lived" reality is never far away from his considerations. "A vast waste drags everywhere," as the author puts it. And if the prose sometimes strikes the reader as too grandiloquent, it is only fair to say that Carim's singular lack of caution is also what frees his imagination, what endows his enterprise with its essential poetic vision. Even some of the melodrama which at crucial moments affects the plot of *A Dream Deferred* (1973) like a malady, is the consequence of this untrammelled imagination. The author piles on agony upon agony—murder, rape, looting; a certain amount of voyeurism, even good old-fashioned pornography, are sometimes smuggled in to enliven the plot.[108]

Of all the novels published since the 1960s the one which best exemplifies "protest" writing in its raw and most militant form is D. M. Zwelonke's *Robben Island* (1973). This is as far away as we are likely to get from "art for art's sake". A former inmate of South Africa's notorious island prison, Robben Island, which is currently holding more than 250 political prisoners, Zwelonke has joined the ever-expanding community of South African exiles now living abroad; but the authority of this book comes from the suffocating intimacy with which he re-enacts for us the daily brutality and the physical squalor of political prison life. There is very little in the book which owes its existence to purely aesthetic considerations. If, as Macaulay once put it, "the sure sign of decline in art is the frequent occurrence, not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty", Zwelonke shows us how extreme anguish can be turned into viable art in which artistic effect has no autonomous claim on our response separate from the claims of truth.[109]

In his first novel, *Victims* (1976), another *Drum* writer, Arthur Maimane, gives us more than a piece of autobiography: although the events he narrates have been made uncomfortably familiar by South African fiction, the moral perspective he imposes upon them throws on everything a new, vivid, sometimes lurid, light. During a "pass raid" a humiliated African rapes a white woman, married to a sterile husband; the woman then insists on keeping her coloured baby when it is born, despite all the social consequences such a choice entails: these details and many others are used by the author to

[108] For a more detailed discussion of this novel, see Lewis Nkosi, "Sex and Politics in Southern African Literature" in *Sheffield Papers on Literature and Society,* ed. Christopher Heywood I (1976), 1–12. [Ed.]

[109] On this and other literary works of similar inspiration, see C. J. Driver, "The View from Makana Island: Some Recent Prison Books from South Africa," *Journal of South African Studies,* 2 (1975), 109–119.

highlight the inhuman system of apartheid in which all persons finally become "victims". It does not detract from its other considerable qualities to point out that the novel demands too much from our credulity when we are asked to accept that in spite of the private and social pressures of South African society a white woman would opt to keep a baby who is the product of such sexual violence. All the same, what the novel loses on the swings it gains on the roundabouts, as they say; when Maimane describes the mixed black and white parties, the township battles to survive under the apartheid system, and the simple gaiety and verve of South African black life, he shows us exactly what South African fiction gains, apart from what it loses, by being so constantly plunged into the minutiae of journalistic fact.

This connection between life and art—which is the basis of all "protest writing"—has become most obvious in South Africa where painting, sculpture, music and literature cannot, even if they wished, breathe a pure air free from the smell of gunpowder. In the early 60s the only black South African poets who had already begun to make names for themselves were Dennis Brutus (b. 1924), Mazisi Kunene (b. 1930) and, later on, the late Arthur Nortje (1942–1970), perhaps the most talented of the poets who left the country. Kunene, a Zulu poet born in Durban, Natal, still writes in his own native language before translating into English; for this reason his *Zulu Poems* (1970) have to be read in the original Zulu to be truly appreciated. Suffice it to say that whatever his debt to the oral "praise poetry" tradition[110] Kunene's verse is just as marked by the anger and frustration about the plight of the black people under the apartheid regime as that of the other poets who seem to be more modern than he. Based as these poems are on the gnomic utterances of the oral tradition, some of the symbolism may be difficult to penetrate; but there is always something to extract from lines such as these:

> We are one with those who wander everywhere.
> A man enters and marks down our generation
> And tells us how suddenly summer has come
> And makes us sing though our hearts are bleeding[111]

Dennis Brutus was the first South African poet to acquire a reputation abroad both for his writing and for his opposition to South Africa's race laws, having once been imprisoned and then shot while attempting to escape. In its cramped violence and crushed tenderness Brutus' first collection, *Sirens, Knuckles, Boots* (1963), published in Nigeria under the Mbari imprint re-enacted the blistering, harshly enclosed quality of life under apartheid with considerable effect.

After *Letters to Martha,* (1968) which was mostly about his experiences in jail, Brutus continued to produce verse at an alarming rate—*Poems from Algiers* (1970), *Thoughts Abroad* (1970), *China Poems* (1975), etc.—and the quality declined in direct proportion to the growth of what increasingly looked like a hasty output. In exile, far

[110] Mazisi Kunene, "South African Oral Tradition", in *Aspects of South African Literature,* ed. Heywood pp. 24–41.

[111] Mazisi Kunene, *Zulu Poems* (London: Deutsch, 1970), p. 31.

away from South Africa, the rough energy which had animated his verse, seemed to flag; the poems about exile are repetitive in theme and too mechanical in their execution; so that on the whole they only serve to inform us about the places Brutus has visited and people he has encountered without conveying any enduring emotional power.[112]

Brutus' resorting to poetry was exceptional in the early sixties, when Mphahlele observed that the short story was "often used as a short-cut to prose meaning", and had "become the most common medium in African literary activity, barring the large volume of vernacular literature being produced for school use."[113] In the course of the decade, all the writers who had then emerged, being identified with the anti-apartheid movement were banned and/or exiled, with the result—as Richard Rive pointed out—that "a major area of South African literature was, by a stroke of the official pen, erased from the national scene" and that "the writers of the Seventies were to start from scratch without receiving any momentum from the Protest wave which preceded them." This is probably one of the reasons why the new writers, born in the early 1940s, turned to poetry rather than the short story as their chosen medium, so that "after the long hiatus of almost a decade, creativity by blacks in literature remanifested itself in 1971 with the publication of Mtshali's *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*."[114] First published in Johannesburg, this collection of poems made quite a stir for although it is not exempt—as Nadine Gordimer put it in her introduction—from "the grandiose invocation, 'literary' image, trite phrase," it nevertheless exhibited "the colloquial tone, the ironic humour, the shackle of vivid, concrete, regional—personal image, the liberation of imagination that makes the creative writer freeman of the world."[115]

With the emergence of Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali (b. 1940), then, it seemed as if the South African blacks might have to look, in the future, to the writers still living in South Africa for the emotional vigour which all too often gets blunted by long sojourn abroad. Nearly forty years after the fierce Paris manifestoes which launched the Negritude movement, a Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa is once again spawning a whole generation of artists and poets, whose outlook has been shaped by the intensest kind of repression. Poets like Oswald Mtshali, Mongane Wally Serote, Sipho Sepamla, Njabulo Ndelele and Pascual Guala sometimes manage to achieve a

[112] As South Africa's best-known non-white poet, Dennis Brutus elicits a critical response the mixed character of which is exemplified in numerous essays, such as Bahadur Tejani, "Can the Prisoner Make a Poet? A Critical Discussion of *Letters to Martha and Other Poems from a South African Prison* by Dennis Brutus," *African Literature Today*, 6 (1973), 130–144; Edwin Thumboo, "Dennis Brutus: Apartheid and the Troubadour," *Joliso*, 2, 2 (1974), 31–46; Bernth Lindfors, "Dennis Brutus and his Critics," *West African Journal of Modern Languages* 2 (1976), 137–144, and "Dialectical Development in the Poetry of Dennis Brutus," in *The Commonwealth Writer Overseas: Themes of Exile and Expatriation*, ed. Alastair Niven (Brussels: Didier, 1976), pp. 219–229; Romanus N. Egudu, "Pictures of Pain: The Poetry of Dennis Brutus," in *Aspects of South African Literature*, ed. Heywood pp. 131–144; and Bede M. Ssensalo, "The Autobiographical Nature of the Poetry of Dennis Brutus," *Ufahamu*, 7, 2 (1977), 130–141.

[113] Mphahlele, *The African Image*, p. 223.

[114] Richard Rive, "Black Poets of the Seventies," *English in Africa* 4, 1 (1977), 47–54.

[115] Oswald M. Mtshali, *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. ix-x. An extensive review was published by John Povey in *Ufahamu*, 4, 1 (1973), 150–158. See also Ursula A. Barnett, "Interview with Oswald Joseph [sic] Mtshali", *World Literature Written in English*, 12 (1973), 27–35, and *Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, South African Poet: A Bibliography*, comp. G. Goldstein (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1974). For a detailed discussion of Mtshali and the poets of his generation, see Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre, *Les Guetteurs de l'aube: Poésie et apartheid* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires, 1979).

bitter concentration in their imagery, which derives from the immediacy of the experience with which they are dealing. Their verse benefits from the fact that they are writing from inside the country.[116]

Of this group the most accomplished lyrical expression is to be found in the work of Mongane Wally Serote (b. 1944). His first collection *Yakhal' nkomo* (1972), shows a poet in the process of learning his craft, still uncertain, but already displaying an unusually fertile imagination for producing the freshest image. Then came another collection, *Tsetlo* (1974), and a long poem, *No Baby Must Weep* (1976). The latter work is seriously flawed; but *Tsetlo,* though still uneven, is evidence of an astounding gift of great lyrical virtuosity which cannot fail to remind the reader of the lyrical purity of the Russian poet, Alexander Blok. The conception of what Serote's work is about is clearly mapped in one poem:

> I am the seed of this earth
> ready with my roots to spread deep into reality
> I've been a looked after
> black seed; by black saints and prophets
> by Sobukwe Mandela Sisulu.[117]

If the tradition of English verse seems too inward and too reticent to allow for the same explosive use of imagery as the African francophone and lusophone poets could allow themselves, Arthur Nortje has shown, at any rate, how the demands of a political situation can compel even the English language toward extreme rhetorical fervour. A poem like "Questions and Answers" acts as a touchstone for a new kind of sensibility capable of uniting the most personal elements in the poet's vision with a deep concern for public issues. What constitutes a major difference between Nortje's poetry and other types of "protest" verse is its rebellious self-assurance, its malevolent compulsion toward aggression. Its tone is harsh and unforgiving:

> I will not slip across the border
> patrolled by men with leashed Alsatians
> snarling along the barbed wire fences
> looking for a disturber of something or other:
> I am no guerrilla
> I will fall out of the sky as the Ministers gape from their front porch
> and in broad daylight perpetrate atrocities
> on the daughters of the boss...[118]

[116] Their work appeared in anthologies published locally, such as *Cry Rage,* comp. James Matthews and Gladys Thomas (Johannesburg: Spro-cas Publications, 1972); *To Whom It May Concern,* ed. Robert Royston (Johannesburg: Donker, 1973), or *A World of Their Own: Southern African Poets of the Seventies,* ed. Stephen Gray (Johannesburg: Donker, 1976). Some of this recent South African poetry has been made available in French in *Poètes de l'Afrique du Sud,* ed. Florence Vaillant (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1975).

[117] Mongane Wally Serote, *Tsetlo* (Johannesburg: Donker, 1974), p. 34.

[118] Arthur Nortje's "Questions and Answers" is included in his posthumous collection *Dead Roots* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1973). On this poet, see a special issue of a periodical published in Grahamstown, South Africa, *New Coin Poetry,* 9, 3/4 (1973), and Charles Dameron, "Arthur Nortje: Craftsman for His Muse," in *Aspects of South African Literature,* ed. Heywood, pp. 155–162.

Black South African writing has always primarily been a literature of "protest" and is likely to remain so until the political conditions which have created it have been removed. Compared to the literature produced in other parts of Africa "protest" writing in South Africa has many faults but also many strengths: one of its faults has always been its seeming one-dimensionality which makes it appear to exist entirely on the level of politics; by that very token, compared to writing in other parts of the continent, black South African literature has always maintained a close relationship between itself and social developments. Persecution and the banning of many of those opposed to the South African regime has meant that a number of important black South African writers now live in exile, where they continue to write about their own homeland; at the same time this also means that the younger writers are to a larger extent cut off from the literary tradition of the 50s.[119] Finally, inside South Africa itself, perhaps because of the facility with which verse can mask a political message in metaphor, and thus escape prosecution, since the end of the 1960s there has been a major shift from prose writing to poetry.

[119] According to the *Sunday Times* of September 3, 1978, the number of banned books in South Africa grew from 800 in the late 1960s to more than 2000 in 1977. In 1974 the Publications Act was amended to make possession of "undesirable" books, as well as distribution, an offence. Originally, it was allegedly intended to prohibit pornography but, 81% of the books banned for possession are in the "political" categories. *Boston University Africana Libraries Newsletter* N° 21 (February 1979).

PART THREE

BLACK POWER

The events that occurred both in Africa and among blacks outside Africa during the post-war decade made it clear that the days of imperial Europe were numbered. Not only were considerable and influential segments of European opinion increasingly hostile to the very notion of colonial power, but even among those groups that were in favour of, and benefited most by, colonial exploitation, opinion was bitterly divided between those who were determined—it hardly matters whether for reasons of national pride or for personal financial gain—to preserve the petrified institutional forms of the system, and, on the other hand, those who were in favour of "neo-colonialism," a new form of power structure, less obtrusive, acting perhaps through corrupt native politicians, freed from the social obligations imposed by parliamentary opinion at home. The African élite, more impatient to obtain its share of the power and the glory, skilfully took advantage of those divisions, as well as of the doubts entertained by Western intellectuals about the moral value of their own civilization, and of the revaluation of black culture that had developed throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The élite was of course not the only section of the black population to be concerned: a number of events, of which the Mau Mau rebellion was the most cruelly representative, showed that the masses too were growing impatient with the subordinate socio-economic status that was awarded them on a continent dominated by the white man. Though the birth of an articulate black consciousness may seem in retrospect to have been a necessary prelude to the establishment of black power in Africa, negritude was only one end of a spectrum of anti-colonial attitudes, at the other end of which stood Mau Mau violence.

On the whole, the achievement of independence was a swift, though gradual, process, which was completed by the mid-seventies, except in Southern Africa. If signposts are necessary, it can be said to have started in 1957, when the Gold Coast became independent Ghana under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. The new country's status as a self-governing dominion was only one of the many face-saving devices that were imagined during the late fifties and early sixties to maintain the semblance of some sort of link and alliance between the European states and their former colonial possessions. Another such device was the famous "loi-cadre" of 1957, which allowed each of the colonies of French West Africa the right to secede from the French empire provided some common institutions—a common currency, a common market—were preserved. A very similar law was vainly promulgated in 1972 by the Portuguese

authorities who had already shrewdly labeled their colonies "provinces" in 1954, a brilliant example of policy by rhetoric which was imitated by Spain in 1960. A case might be made for the notion that the setting up of Bantustans in South Africa and the introduction of a dual power structure in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in the late seventies were yet other forms of an attempt on the part of the dominant whites to keep the substance of power while giving away part or even all of its semblance.

The year 1960 was of course crucial in the establishment of formal independence. While Ghana, which had heralded the movement, was shedding the mild yoke of the Queen of England to become a Republic, French Guinea's "No" vote at the 1958 referendum had inaugurated the dissolution of the "Communauté": in 1959, the Federation of Mali was created, which included Senegal, Sudan (now Mali), Upper Volta and Dahomey (now Benin), only to fall to pieces the following year. By the end of 1960, all the former colonies of French Africa had achieved formal independence, although the majority of them retained close links with the former colonizer through a common currency guaranteed by France, through continued military presence—there were more French than any other non-African troops in black Africa except, for some time, the Cubans—and through close and intense "cooperation" in the educational field. By the end of 1960, too, the tragedy of the Belgian Congo, a huge and wealthy country without a competent leadership, was being played out. Also in 1960 the Italian and British segments of Somalia were finally united in an independent republic endowed with an exceptional degree of ethnic homogeneousness. Meanwhile the decolonization of British West Africa was going on apace as the example of Ghana was followed by Nigeria (1960) and Sierra Leone (1961), the Gambia following early in 1965. By then, the process had also started in British East Africa, where the presence of a large population of white settlers in Kenya raised painful problems: Tanganyika (1961) was followed by Uganda (1962), Kenya (1963) and Zanzibar (1963), the latter soon joining Tanganyika to form Tanzania (1964). Similar difficulties had postponed the granting of independence to Zambia and Malawi (1964), which had been part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland for a decade. Independence was also granted to the so-called High Commission territories enclaved in South Africa: Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) and Botswana (formerly Bechuanaland) in 1966 and Swaziland in 1968. Finally, while Spanish Guinea had become independent as Equatorial Guinea in 1968, as a result of the Portuguese revolution of 1974 the Portuguese "provinces" of Africa became in their turn five independent states: Cape Verde, São Tomé e Principe, Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique.

There is no necessary correspondence between political and literary developments. The idea that the imperial era was coming to its close had been acknowledged and accepted in the United Kingdom as soon as India was granted Dominion status in 1947; the French did not reach that stage until they had suffered their traumatic defeat at Dien Bien Phu (1954), thus losing Indochina; in Belgium, as late as 1957, a thirty-year plan for making the Congo independent was considered unconscionably daring, radical and even utopian. Nevertheless, it was in French that European-language writing in black Africa first reached the threshold of significance. The obvious parallel here is with India, where English writing blossomed during the forties and fifties, among the generation that

was leading the successful political struggle for independence. Born in Paris, the ideology of negritude played a decisive role in defining and spreading among black men everywhere a common sense of worthiness and a common demand for acknowledged dignity, thus providing the psycho-cultural background which gave the movement for emancipation its intellectual foundations and its inner coherence. It was likewise responsible for the tremendous outburst of creative writing that turned the fifties into a true golden age in francophone Africa, and consequently for the leading role that French was to play in the diffusion of European-language writing throughout the black continent.

The supremacy of French, however, was not to last long. During the decade that followed the achievement of independence, creative writing by Africans in the language suffered a notable decline from which it was not to emerge until the late sixties. But meanwhile, the quality and the quantity of such literature as had been produced in French acted as a challenge and a stimulus in the new giant of Africa, Nigeria, where it bolstered various local trends that had been tentatively at work. While the Gold Coast had been more prolific in English writing than Nigeria during the first half of the century, and while the first center of anglophone production during the second half of the nineteenth century had been Sierra Leone, those countries now followed in the wake of Nigeria, the undisputed literary leader of British Africa. For Nigeria was not a source of inspiration for West Africa only. In various ways, the successful example of Nigerian imaginative literature in English encouraged emulation in East Africa, where Makerere College in Uganda performed the seminal intellectual role played by the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. By the late seventies, Kenya had become the most important economic and intellectual source of creative writing in English throughout the territories that had formerly been part of British East and Central Africa. Several factors contributed to Kenya's literary supremacy at this time: Tanzania's policy of concentrating on the promotion of Swahili resulted in the decline of English writing there, while in Uganda Idi Amin's regime drove many of the country's writers to silence or to exile in Kenya, where they made their own contribution to their host country's literary life. And over and above all, Kenya's development had a momentum of its own, carrying the country forward.

CHAPTER VIII

FRENCH

In the autumn of 1947, the first issue of *Présence Africaine* reached the Paris bookstalls. After some congratulatory messages by such "men of letters" as André Gide and Jean-Paul Sartre, by such africanists as Th. Monod, Marcel Griaule, and Georges Balandier, and a letter from the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier to the journal's founder and editor, Alioune Diop, it contained two poems by Léopold Senghor and Bernard Dadié, two short stories by Bernard Dadié and Birago Diop, a play by Amadou Cissé Dia and the first instalment of Abdoulaye' Sadji's novel, *Nini*. This, and Senghor's *Anthology* which was published in 1948, inaugurated what may well be called the golden decade of francophone writing in sub-Saharan Africa, the historical importance of which was brilliantly confirmed ten years later when the first international conference of black writers and artists met in Paris in 1956.

The literary wealth and diversity of this fairly brief flowering did not reside only in the fact that those black writers had gained full mastery over the language of their colonial masters, and that they had assimilated the techniques of literary genres such as formal drama and the novel, which were entirely alien to their own tradition. From a historical point of view, it is probably more important to realize that the fifties saw the simultaneous emergence of two generations, each with a different training, interests and aspirations.

The older contributors to *Présence Africaine* belonged to a generation born during the first two decades of the century. They had been the first citizens of France's African empire to have been privileged to receive European university training, although Sadji, Dadié and Dia constituted a sort of link with the locally educated segment of this group. While they were exceedingly proud of their French education, they were also aware of the hybrid personality with which it had endowed them. As Alioune Diop (1910–1980) put it,

> Ni blancs, ni jaunes, ni noirs, incapables de revenir entièrement à nos traditions d'origine ou de nous assimiler à l'Europe, nous avions le sentiment de constituer une race nouvelle, mentalement métissée, mais qui ne s'était pas fait connaître dans son originalité et n'avait guère pris conscience de celle-ci.[1]

[1] Alioune Diop, "Niam n'goura," *Présence Africaine*, No. 1 (1947), p. 8.

Diop was referring to the early 1940s, and to the discussions that had taken place among overseas students in Paris during the war. The concept of negritude pointed one way out of their puzzlement, and the creative writers of this generation were among those who agreed with Senghor that cultural self-assertion was a pre-requisite for political self-assertion. To a significant extent, this consensus was due to another important fact: the majority of those writers were Senegalese, i.e. they came from an area where the French had been present for several centuries, where the inhabitants of the main cities —Dakar, Saint-Louis, Rufisque, Gorée—had enjoyed a slightly privileged status unknown in other parts of French Africa.

Throughout the fifties, the writers of this first generation concentrated—as artists —on the fundamental task of describing and extolling the alleged African values of negritude, either in lyrical terms[2] or in narrative prose. In the latter case, their main ambition was to commit to writing and to the French language, and thus to publicize, the beloved narratives of their oral tradition: the folk tales, the heroic legends; sometimes they did this at such length that the outcome could be regarded as genuine novels.

At the same time, however, younger men, born in the late twenties, were also gaining access to the literary scene. Their outlook was entirely different. They took the achievements of their elders for granted. They were more decidedly impatient with colonial rule, which was coming to its end anyhow. While a number of them still paid lip service to negritude and the assertion of African values, they were more interested in political reality and in the wrenching of power from the white man. Anti-colonialism was their main source of inspiration, and while their elders were excelling in poetry and the tale, the new generation achieved success and fame through the novel.[3]

For a variety of reasons, an abrupt decline—both in quantity and in quality—oc-

[2] For general studies of African poetry in French, see notably: P. Guberina, "Structure de la poésie noire d'expression française," *Présence Africaine,* N. S., No. 5 (December 1955–January 1956), 52–78; N. M. Garrett, "French Poets of African Descent," *College Language Association Journal,* 5 (1961), 41–43; Renée Tillot, "La poésie africaine d'expression française" in *Actes du Colloque sur la Littérature africaine d'expression française* (Dakar: Faculté des Lettres, 1965), pp. 197–209; Mahanta Fall, "Sens et portée de la poésie africaine d'expression française," ibid., pp. 211–218; Armand Guibert, "Les poètes de la négritude. Thèmes et techniques," ibid., pp. 219–226; Janheinz Jahn, "Rythmes et style dans la poésie africaine," ibid., pp. 227–237, translated as "Rhythm and Style in African Poetry" in *African Literature and the Universities,* ed. G. Moore (Ibadan: University Press, 1965), pp. 51–55; Thomas Mélone, "New Voices in African Poetry in French," *African Forum,* 1,4 (1966), 65–74; Roger Mercier, *La Poésie des noirs, 1930–1966* (Paris: Institut Pédagogique National, 1967); Clive Wake, "The Personal and the Public: African Poetry in French," *Review of National Literatures,* 2,2 (1971), 104–123. Several early anthologies also had substantial and useful introductions: Clive Wake, *An Anthology of African and Malagasy Poetry in French* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); N. R. Shapiro, *Négritude: Black Poetry from Africa and the Caribbean* (New York: October House, 1970); John Reed and Clive Wake, *French African Verse* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1972).

[3] General essays on the African novel in French are too numerous to be listed exhaustively. Some of the more substantial ones are: Jean Mayer, "Le roman en Afrique noire francophone et l'aventure d'une race," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan,* 1 (1965), 5–14; Roger Mercier, "La littérature d'expression française en Afrique noire. Préliminaires d'une analyse" in *Actes du Colloque sur la Littérature africaine d'expression française* (Dakar: Faculté des Lettres, 1965), pp. 25–43; Victor P. Bol, "Les formes du roman africain", ibid., pp. 133–138; Francis Fouet, "Le thème de l'amour chez les romanciers négro-africaines d'expression française," ibid., pp. 139–159; Monique Battestini, "L'angoisse chez les romanciers africains", ibid., pp. 161–175; E. Hättich, "Atheistische und nihilistische Tendenzen bei neo-afrikanischen Autoren französischer Sprache," *Speculum,* 16 (1965), 256–262; Edris Makward, "Négritude and the New African Novel in French," *Ibadan,* 22 (1966), 37–45; Judith Gleason, "The African Novel in French," *African Forum,* 1,4 (1966), 75–92; A. C. Brench, *The Novelists' Inheritance in French Africa: Writers from Senegal to Cameroun* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) and "The Novelist's Background in French Colonial Africa," *African Forum,* 3,1 (1967), 34–41; Jean Mayer, "Le roman en Afrique noire francophone: Tendances et structures," *Etudes*

curred in the flow of the literary output in French after independence. A large number of the more gifted writers were called upon to occupy important political, diplomatic and administrative posts, and thus gave up creative writing. But there were more fundamental factors at work.

For one thing, the disturbances that attended the early years of the newly independent countries, the civil wars, the military coups, the prevailing political and economic corruption, all these things dealt a severe blow to the negritude ideology, which had been one major source of inspiration for French writing: it became obvious that the African's mind did have strong rational aptitudes that could be most efficiently devoted to the gratification of his crudely individualistic and materialistic urges!

On the other hand, accession to political independence had destroyed the cogency of anti-colonialism as a literary theme in the eyes of the most original and successful writers. Obviously, it was necessary to discover new themes and new approaches. For example, instead of romantically glorifying an abstract concept of negritude, it would have been desirable to explore and analyse the actual predicament of ordinary people in the new African society. Or again, instead of vociferating against a colonial system that was now extinct, it would have been equally desirable to investigate the new power relationships that controlled the social-political structure of the new nations. But this is just what those French-trained intellectuals could not do, for the very simple reason that their education had completely alienated them from the common people, their language and their concrete problems. In fact, it was in English that the new themes that were called for emerged in the late fifties and early sixties.

Nevertheless, one important development did occur in French writing during the sixties. As Paris publishers were apparently becoming more and more reluctant to print African works, the need for local publishing began to make itself felt. Not surprisingly, this phenomenon first appeared in the former Belgian colony, which, at the time and

françaises, 3,2 (1967), 169–195; Bernard Mouralis, *Individu et collectivité dans le roman négro-africain d'expression française* (Abidjan: Université, 1969), F. M. Breskina, "The Collision of Epochs as a Theme in West Africa's Fiction (Cameroun, the Ivory Coast, the Mali Republic and Senegal)," *Africa in Soviet Studies Annual, 1968* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), pp. 56–67; Hubert de Leusse, *Afrique et Occident; Heurs et malheurs d'une rencontre. Les romanciers du pays noir* (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1971); Ngal Mbwil a Mpaang, *Tendances actuelles de la littérature africaine d'expression française*, (Lubumbashi; Editions du Mont Noir, 1972); Mineke Schipper de Leeuw, *Le Blanc et l'Occident au miroir du roman négro-africain de langue française* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), also published as *Le Blanc vu d'Afrique* (Yaunde: CLE, 1973); Jingiri J. Achiriga, *La Révolte des romanciers noirs* (Ottawa: Editions Naaman, 1973); F. I. Case, "La bourgeoisie africaine dans la litterature de l'Afrique occidentale," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 7,2 (1973), 257–266; M. Schipper de Leeuw, "L'Occident et l'Africain occidentalisé, thème du roman négro-africain de langue française," *Civilisations*, 23/24, No. 3/4 (1973–74), 289–304; Mohamadou Kane, "Sur les 'formes traditionnelles' du roman africain," *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 48 (1974), 536–568; Michael Dash, "Marvellous Realism—The Way Out of Negritude," *Black Images*, 3,1 (1974), 80–95; Jocelyn-Robert Duclos, "Bibliographie du roman africain d'expression française," *Présence Francophone*, No. 10 (1975), 145–152; Gérard D. Lezou; "Aspects de la colonisation dans le roman africain d'expression française," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan* (Série D: Lettres), 8 (1975), 247–261; Gerald Moore, "The Nature of Being in Contemporary Francophone African Literature" in *Neo-African Literature and Culture*, ed. Lindfors and Schild (Wiesbaden: Heymann, 1976), pp. 70–81; Alphamoye Sanfo, "La mère dans le roman guinéen, malien et sénégalais," *West African Journal of Modern Languages*, 2 (1976), 95–107; Frederic Michelman, "The West African Novel since 1911." *Yale French Studies*, 53 (1976), 29–44; Gerald Moore, "Colonial Portraits in a Changing Frame," ibid., 45–63; Ngandu Nkashama, "Le roman africain moderne: itinéraire vers la folie," *Présence francophone*, No. 15 (1977), 77–92; Albert Gérard, *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar–Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977). Of particular interest is I. D. Nikiforova's *Afrikanskij Roman. Genesis i problemy tipologii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), which deals chiefly with the novel in French, both from Black Africa and from North Africa.

until 1971, was still called "Congo": the young Congolese writers could not avail themselves of the French connection which had been so useful to their colleagues from "la Communauté"; the publishing business in the French-speaking part of Belgium offered as few openings to Congolese as it did to native writers; and the Congo already had a tradition, however minuscule and didactic, of local publishing. Far more significant, however, was the foundation of the Centre de Littérature Evangélique in Yaounde in 1963. Funded by Dutch and German Protestant institutions, the Centre enabled Cameroon to shake off the tutelage of French publishers, and also to offer a welcome outlet to writers from other French-language countries.

It cannot be said that the bulk of the C.L.E. literary output was of very high quality; it served, however, as a training ground or a launching pad for a new generation of gifted writers, most of whom were born in the years preceding World War II. After the lull of the sixties, this generation came to the fore at the end of the decade and brought about a genuine literary renascence. While a definite renewal of lyrical poetry was taking place as the (by now old-fashioned) negritude myth was abandoned, and while drama was at last emerging from its own prehistory, the most important genre, the novel, began to free itself from the obsolete moulds of nineteenth-century French realism, from the anti-colonial rantings which history had outgrown, and even from the academic shackles of the French language: as novelists—including some of the previous generation, like Mongo Beti—began to direct their critical acumen towards the structures of the newly independent societies, Yambo Ouologuem was turning to the narrative devices that had been characteristic of the old Muslim chronicles, and Ahmadou Kourouma was even trying to bend the French language to the rendering of Malinke idioms and syntax.

Thus modern French writing from Africa reached its third and so far latest phase. It is significant, however, that Paris was no longer the single publishing centre. While a proportion of the new literature of the late sixties was printed in Paris, either by Présence Africaine, or by such older publishing houses as Albin Michel or Le Seuil, much significant work appeared under the imprint of the Nouvelles Editions Africaines with their two bases in Senegal and the Ivory Coast.

One evolutionary trend that has characterized the development of French writing since it made a start soon after the war ought to be kept in mind. For obvious historical reasons, Senegal remained for a number of years the most active centre of literary production. And although Senegalese writers were soon joined by colleagues from other parts of francophone Africa and from Madagascar, the whole output had a kind of uniformity and homogeneousness in theme and style which were probably due, at least in part, to the powerful influence of a common educational training based on French methods and ideals, not to mention the rigidity of the language itself in the hands of foreigners. But while the amount of creative writing produced in Zaïre and in most of the former French colonies is too slight to warrant using the phrase "national literature", it seems clear that in the course of the last few years the pressures of history and of political diversification have begun to create in some of the new countries, a sense of nationhood which had been obliterated by the common allegiance of their leadership to French culture. This sense of nationhood is bound to be reflected in literature and, conversely, literature is bound to make it stronger and more articulate. Whereas, then,

there has always been a clear difference between the forms English writing took in, say, West Africa and East Africa, and indeed, between literary trends in Ghana and Nigeria, or in Kenya and Uganda, the process of national self-assertion as well as the spirit of social criticism, seemed to be making a start in some of the former French colonies other than Senegal—Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, the Congo Republic—in the course of the seventies.

1. THE FIRST POST-WAR GENERATION

CLIVE WAKE

L. S. SENGHOR AND LYRICAL POETRY

Unlike other parts of what was then the French empire, French-speaking Africa (excluding Madagascar) possessed no tradition of lyric poetry before World War II. Some might say it was fortunate to be spared the feeble imitation of European classical models which passed for poetry in other parts of Africa and the Caribbean before the mid-forties. Be that as it may, lyric poetry emerged quite suddenly in French Africa, already speaking the language of the independence movement, and expressed in a style familiar to contemporary French poetry. It was entirely relevant, both in ideological and aesthetic terms. Its ideological relevance was so appropriate that it has, by the same token, dated very quickly with the changing political and social circumstances, especially since independence. Stylistically, it has dated less noticeably, except in the case of Senghor, who chose to follow in the wake of Saint-John Perse and Paul Claudel. The grandeur of their quasi-biblical rhetoric has become meaningless in the spiritually fragmented Western world with which most African states have come to be associated since independence, while the spirit of protest, aiming at different targets, has remained as relevant and as alive as ever.

The undisputed initiator of modern African writing, Léopold Sédar Senghor (b. 1906),[4] was the son of a well-to-do Serer planter of Senegal. His native town, Joal, had

[4] Senghor's poetry, as distinct from his theories about negritude and African socialism, has given rise to a vast amount of commentary which belongs properly to journalism and to praise poetry in prose and is thus devoid of any scholarly value. Apart from the more general works on Senghor, which have been listed elsewhere, a few essays are of special interest in this connection: Aimé Patri, "Deux poètes en langue française: A. Césaire et L. S. Senghor," *Présence Africaine*, No. 3 (1948), 378–387; Ulli Beier, "The Theme of the Ancestors in Senghor's Poetry," *Black Orpheus*, No. 5 (May 1959), 15–17; Lamine Diakhate, "Le mythe dans la poésie populaire du Sénégal et sa présence dans l'œuvre de Léopold Sédar Senghor et de Birago Diop," *Présence Africaine*, No. 39 (1961), 59–68; Armand Guibert, Introduction to *Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Paris: Seghers, 1961), and *Léopold Sédar Senghor, l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962); Gerald Moore, "Léopold Sédar Senghor: Assimilation or Negritude?" in *Seven African Writers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 1–17. J. Rial, "Glossaire pour servir à la lecture de L. S. Senghor," *Problèmes sociaux congolais*, No. 69 (June 1965), 27–70; H. de Leusse, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, l'Africain* (Paris: Hatier, 1967); S. Okechukwu Mezu, *Léopold Sédar Senghor et la défense et illustration de la civilisation noire* (Paris: Didier, 1968); Roger Mercier, "L'imagination dans la poésie de Léopold Sédar Senghor," *Literature East and West*, 12,1 (1968), 35–55; Abiola Irele, "Leopold Sedar Senghor as Poet," *Odù*, No. 1 (April 1969), 3–27; A. Chemain, "L'image de la femme noire dans les vers de L. S. Senghor: mythe et réalité," *Bulletin de l'enseignement supérieur du Bénin*, No. 13 (1970), 57–99; Barthélemy Kotchy, "L'œuvre de Senghor," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan*, Série D (Lettres), 4 (1971), 153–161; Munkului di Deni, "Introduction à une lecture de l'œuvre poétique de L. S. Senghor," *Lectures Africaines*, 1,2 (1972–73), 5–45; Julia di Stefano Pappageorge,

been a Portuguese post in the sixteenth century, and the poet's name is probably of Portuguese origin. He attended Catholic mission schools before completing his secondary education at the state *lycée* in Dakar. He had first contemplated entering priesthood, but by 1928, when he was awarded one of the first scholarships in France for higher education granted to African students, his ambition was to become a teacher and a writer. While studying at the renowned Lycée Louis-le-Grand—where he was a friend of Georges Pompidou—and at the Sorbonne—where he obtained his *licence ès lettres* in 1934,—he became involved in some of the various black intellectual movements in Paris and contributed his share to the elaboration of the concept of negritude.

The politics of negritude are now frequently, if not generally, considered to be reactionary, or at the very least outmoded. Insofar as it is an extension and, indeed, a fulfilment of his concept of negritude, Senghor's poetry, too, is increasingly regarded as old-fashioned. Yet, although as time passes it must inevitably be replaced in the affections of poetry readers by the styles and themes suited to the contemporary sensibility, it will continue to be appreciated—because there can be no doubt about its value as poetry, as distinct from protest and vindication—at least for so long as there is a society which can respond to poetry based on the projection of personal experience: paradoxically, in view of the negritude concept of art as a social activity with social ends, Senghor's poetry acquires its dynamism from the poet's own contact with an alien and alienating world.

One must, however, begin any account of Senghor's place in the history of modern African literature in the European languages with the inseparable association of art and politics, for it is this association which, far outweighing considerations of art and personal experience alone, was responsible for Senghor's celebrity as a poet. Any black poet writing in the late nineteen-forties would have attracted attention, whether his themes were overtly political or not; but a poet of the calibre of Senghor—whose work reflected, both directly and indirectly, his actual involvement in political leadership and was projected through the powerful romantic appeal of the politico-aesthetic creed of negritude—could not fail to attract the attention it did at such a crucial moment in the history of colonialism.

Negritude preceded poetry in Senghor's public career, even though he was already writing (but not publishing) poetry in the thirties, when negritude came into existence. Those were the days of Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, which inspired one of his most famous poems. At the time, Senghor was teaching in French *lycées* (1935–1939). At the

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"Senghor Re-evaluated," *African Literature Today*, 6 (1973), 54–67; S. Okechukwu Mezu, *The Poetry of L. S. Senghor* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1973); P. Ansah, "Senghor's Poetic Method," *Odù*, 11 (1975), 3–44; John Reed, "Léopold Sédar Senghor," in *A Celebration of Black and African Writing*, ed. Bruce King and Kolawole Ogungbesan (Zaria and London: Oxford and Ahmadu Bello University Presses, 1975), pp. 102–111; Vladimír Klíma, "Politics and Poetry: The Subjects of Senghor," *Dissertationes Orientales*, No. 36 (1976), 46–81; Jean Derive, "La poésie sacrée chez Claudel et Senghor," *Revue de Littérature et d'esthétique négro-africaines*, 1 (1977), 67–81; Daniel Whitman, "Surrealism as Colonialism," *Ba Shiru*, 9,1/2 (1978), 18–37. Several collections and/or translations also have substantial introductions; so, for example, John Reed and Clive Wake, Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Selected Poems* (London, Oxford University Press, 1964) and Senghor's *Prose and Poetry* (ibid., 1965; reprinted Heinemann Educational, 1976); C. Williamson, Senghor's *Selected Poems/Poésies choisies* (London: Collings, 1976); and Abiola Irele, *Selected Poems of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977).

outbreak of the war, he joined the French army and was a prisoner of war in Germany from 1940 to 1942. After he was released on account of illness, he returned to high school teaching. In 1944, he was appointed to the Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer. Then it was that he published a few articles on African linguistics. But in January 1944 General de Gaulle had convened a conference of French politicians and high colonial officials at Brazzaville. Under the influence of Félix Eboué, a black Guyanese who was governor-general of French Equatorial Africa, the conference agreed that some form of colonial representation should be devised even though any prospects of self-government were excluded. In 1946, Senghor was one of the two representatives of Senegal returned to the Constituent Assembly in Paris. But immediately after the war, coinciding with the launching of the active struggle against colonial rule, Senghor had published his first volume of poetry, *Chants d'Ombre* (1945).[5]

In this collection, all the main elements of Senghor's concept of negritude are to be found, dominated, not surprisingly, by the theme of nostalgia. Combining his personal nostalgia for the lost innocence of childhood with a hankering after the lost paradise of African culture, he blends the personal and the public, the self and the community, in a way which is basic, not only thematically, but in the most vital way, to all of Senghor's poetry—even though it will generally be the public aspect that will attract the attention of both the reader and the critic. The poem "Le Retour de l'enfant prodigue" and the volume as a whole parallel the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* which Aimé Césaire had published in a little magazine, *Volontés*, in 1939, but which was to be printed in book form with an introduction by the master of French surrealism, André Breton, in 1947. In their separate poems, both poets—writing from the common starting point of their experience as student 'exiles' in Paris in the thirties—contemplate their homeland, from Europe and from the inside, and reflect on the role they ought to play in its future. It is the typical situation of the black colonial intellectual of the time. The image each has of his present and future roles is indicative of their different personalities on the one hand, but more obviously, also, of fundamental differences between an Africa that is still close to its cultural roots and a people who have been culturally undermined and even destroyed by slavery. Senghor's experience of colonialism makes him conciliatory towards Europe, and it encourages him to see himself as the poet-ambassador, as the priest-king of tradition, and the political leader of the present and future. He has mastered the white man's cultural weapons and is not only proud of his ability to use them but aware of the authority it gives him in the African community; he feels superior to his own people, and thereby set apart from them. Césaire, on the other hand, quickly renounces the sense of superiority over his fellow West Indians implanted in him by the cultural assimilation he has undergone in Europe; by an act of self-renunciation which amounts to a kind of spiritual purification, he identifies himself with the deprived everywhere in the world, whatever their colour, and he is able to participate, mentally at this stage, in a common revolutionary re-assertion of their inherent and indestructible

[5] See Thomas Melone, "Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Chants d'ombre:* propédeutique à la négritude," in *Mélanges Africains*, ed. T. Melone (Yaunde: Equipe de Recherches en Littérature Africaine comparée, n.d.), pp. 15–64.

human dignity. It is not difficult to see from this comparison why Senghor's poetry has suffered with time, while Césaire's has retained its relevance in the Third World, which, with independence, has become increasingly conscious of man's injustice to man.

Senghor's next volume, *Hosties noires* (1948), is largely inspired by his experience of the war in Europe, which made many of his generation deeply aware of the irony of Europe's quest for freedom while holding on to its colonies. The army and prisoner-of-war camp confronted Senghor, also, with the bare facts of white racialism, making it one of the leading themes of this volume. It is, too, the one volume in which, by force of circumstances, Senghor identifies as an equal with fellow black men and expresses unequivocal anger at the practice and effects of racialism: from the loneliness of romantic introspection he passes to an awareness of his solidarity with his own people and he is overjoyed by the new sense of cummunity he feels with them. No trace is left of the epicurean enjoyment of both worlds which had appeared briefly in the earlier collection. A new immediacy in Senghor's consciousness of colonial oppression underscores the contradiction between his love for France and the demands of African freedom. Nevertheless the poet's syncretic trend, bolstered by his Christian feeling, emerges in the last poem, "Prière de Paix" (1945), where he asks the Lord to forgive France in the name of her suffering during the war, for the harm she did to colonial peoples everywhere. By the end of the volume, then, he has recovered the tone of reconciliation which is more natural to him. Reconciliation is something for which his whole personality craves, and it is perhaps because he is obliged, in this volume, to work against this urge that it comes out, finally, as the least successful, because the least convincing, of all his collections. And one needs to stress that the reconciliation Senghor seeks is not so much that of white with black, of himself with his people or even with Europe, as the resolving of the emotional and intellectual tensions of his private world, so that any reconciliation of tensions within the external world is an extension of his will to order his personal universe.

In his first two collections, Senghor had expressed, by 1948, the essentials of his poetic message of negritude—the confrontation of cultures of equal dignity and the reconciliation which resolves it, the preferred stance of theory and distance interrupted, briefly, by a period of contact with the raw realities of racialism and human interaction. In *Chants pour Naëtt* (1950), later republished as "Chants pour Signare" in *Nocturnes* (1960), the poet contemplates the Africa of his imagination, restored to him as the woman he loves, in a series of short, finely wrought poems. A Nigerian scholar, however, S. Okechukwu Mezu, claiming that *Chants pour Naëtt* should be linked with Senghor's divorce from the daughter of Félix Eboué and with his second marriage, to a Frenchwoman, thinks that the whole sequence expresses the writer's determination to resist both the call of his black blood and the demands of the Catholic church.[6] The ambiguity of this collection should probably be ascribed to the complexities and contradictions in the predicament of the writer, who was torn between the claims of private life and the demands of his incipient political career, between his admiration for French culture and

[6] S. O. Mezu, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, et la défense et illustration de la civilisation noire*, p. 135. See also John Reed and Clive Wake, Introduction to Senghor's *Nocturnes* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1972).

his determination to fight for the freedom of Africa, between his nostalgia for the land of his fathers and the need to lead the struggle in Europe.

By 1950, Senghor had become deeply immersed in political activity. He had left the French Socialist party and its Senegalese section led by Lamine Gueye. He had also withdrawn from Houphouet-Boigny's *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*. He had become the leader of a group of colonial deputies known as the *Indépendants d'Outre-Mer* and in Senegal he had founded, together with Mamadou Dia, the *Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais*. In 1955, he was given a post as secretary of state in Edgar Faure's government. The consequences of these options and the new problems they raised emerged in *Ethiopiques* (1956), where the self-assurance of the poet and the political leader mirrors Senghor's political success both in Senegal and in France and, above all, the extent to which he has at the same time achieved the integration of his private world.[7] Although they are followed by a few short poems, casually entitled "D'autres chants" and tagged on as if left over from *Chants pour Naëtt*, it is the series called "Epîtres à la Princesse" (composed 1953) which provides the true culmination of this volume. These poems represent a metaphorical dialogue between the prince-poet and Europe (symbolized by the Princess), in which the poet asserts, with all the assurance he now possesses, the equal dignity of the two cultures. A different aspect of the poet-ruler's dual allegiance is illustrated in "Chaka," a dramatic poem in which Senghor makes exceedingly free use of Mofolo's novel and turns the Zulu conqueror into a poet and a lover driven to sacrifice his love and his art for the sake of his nation's greatness.[8] Characteristically, throughout the "play" a "white voice" is heard reminding Chaka of the Christian values of love, meekness and humanity. In the writer's interpretation, the tragedy of the Zulu hero is due to historical circumstances which prevent him from attempting the reconciliation of antagonistic impulses for which Senghor has ever been striving, in his poetry, in his abstract thinking and in his political activity. One of the clearest, albeit rather simplistic, poetic utterances of this synthesis is the third stanza of "New York": after offering his own view of the cold, metallic greatness of Manhattan and of the noisy, smelly liveliness of Harlem, the poet advises the city to abolish its dichotomy, to

> let the black blood flow into your blood
> cleaning the rust from your steel articulations,
> like an oil of life
> Giving your bridges the curve of the hills, the
> liana's suppleness.

[7] See Siegfried Jüttner, "Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Ethiopiques*," in *Die moderne französische Lyrik: Interpretationen*, ed. Walter Pabst (Berlin, Schmidt, 1976), pp. 275–294.

[8] Shaka (sometimes spelt Chaka or Tshaka; ca. 1787–1828) was an important warrior-leader in South Africa, and the founder of the Zulu nation. He ruled over the greater part of present-day Natal, once known as Zululand. Thomas Mofolo (1876–1948) from Lesotho was one of the founders of creative writing in the Southern Sotho language. Shaka's life story gave him the subject of a novel, *Chaka*, which was written around 1910 but not printed until 1925. It was soon translated into English (London: Oxford University Press, 1931) and later into French (Paris: Gallimard, 1940). It was this translation which inspired a number of francophone writers. On Mofolo's *Chaka*, see Gérard, *Four African Literatures*, pp. 116–131. On the Chaka motif in modern African writing, see Nyembwe Tshikumambila, "Le personnage de Chaka: Du portrait épique de Mofolo au mythe poétique de Senghor," *Zaïre-Afrique*, No. 87 (1974), 405–420, and especially the relevant chapter in Donald Burness, *Shaka, King of the Zulus, in African Literature* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1976), pp. 25–41.

See, the ancient times come again, unity is
rediscovered the reconciliation of the Lion
the Bull and the Tree
The idea is linked to the act the ear to the
heart the sign to the sense.

This is the achievement of negritude on the verge of independence, but also the revelation of its fundamental weakness—the expression of cultural equality in the cultural terms of the erstwhile dominant culture.

This irony is even more manifest, in the year following independence, in *Nocturnes* (1961). This volume includes Senghor's five elegies, reminiscent in style and in the preoccupation with the nature of poetry, of Paul Claudel's *Cinq Grandes Odes*. They were written during the years that witnessed the poet's swift ascension to power: his election to the French Chamber of Deputies (1956), the victory of his party at the elections for the Senegalese Territorial Assembly (1957), the union of the Republic of Senegal and the Sudanese Republic into the Mali Federation (1959), which proclaimed its full independence in June 1960, only to fall apart in August, and the election of Senghor as the first president of the Republic of Senegal in September 1960. In brief, the odes in *Nocturnes* summed up Senghor's poetic career, and indirectly his political career as well, at the moment of political success. Now the unchallenged leader of his nation and a statesman commanding worldwide respect, Senghor remained true to the nostalgic *Sehnsucht* that seems to be the mainspring of his lyrical inspiration. Not until he had reached supreme power in his country could he realize, as he put it in "Elégie de minuit," that

The splendour of honours
is like a Sahara
An immense void, without erg or hamada without grass,
without the flicker of an eyelash, or the
flicker of a heart.

This was a new aspect of the romantic principle that is basic to his poetry. When in France, he had yearned for the negritude of Africa; when in Senegal, he had fondly recalled the high culture of Paris. In the "Elégie des circoncis," he remembers how many times, in growing older, he had wept "for the transparent nights of childhood." And now that the poet-politician had become a statesman, the leader of a young nation on its way to modernization, he started feeling dubious about the book learning that is the fountainhead of modern civilization, —

I pace among my books that gaze at me from
the bottoms of
their eyes

and he felt, more acutely than ever before, the need to root his political action in the traditional wisdom and mores of his people:

Master of the Initiates, I know I need
your wisdom to break the cypher of things
To learn my office as father, as *lamarch*
To measure exactly the field of my duties,
to share out the harvest forgetting
neither worker nor orphan.

Such a passage illustrates in a new way Senghor's need and ability to outgrow his nostalgic awareness of contrarieties and to reach out for syncretic modes of being. The last poem in *Nocturnes,* "Elégie des eaux," is perhaps his most accomplished formulation of this creed. Based on the elemental qualities of fire and water, night and day, experience and innocence, life and death, poetry and action, which are central to the whole of Senghor's œuvre, the poem resolves these antagonisms in two ways. First, water is the mighty agent, the instrument of the biological cycle which turns death into life and cleanses everything. But the last stanza of the elegy calls upon the African belief in the ability of the witch doctor to bring about fertilizing rains after the curse of drought through the sheer incantatory power of his magic word. Describing himself as "Master of Language" by the grace of God, the poet sees in the "power of speech" with which he has been endowed the source of the charisma that enables him, as statesman, to unleash the life-giving rains, that is, symbolically, to bring renewed life to his people and to mankind.

The peculiar quality in the elegies, then, is that they remain deeply rooted in the poet's personal experience, that they aim at defining and solving his personal dilemmas. The genuinely lyrical tone is the first element of continuity throughout Senghor's poetic career. Another is his unfailing ability to express through the poetic medium of imagery and rhythmic sound the same outlook which he also formulated in rational, abstract terms; indeed, one may doubt whether it is at all possible to understand Senghor's conception of negritude without recourse to his poetry, which supplies the deeply felt, imaginative connotations without which negritude is just another piece of desiccated theorizing. A third constant feature in Senghor's thought and poetry is the coalescence of his perception of duality and estrangement with his hankering for unity and syncretic harmony. In the five elegies collected in *Nocturnes,* Senghor seems to have reached the end of his quest for reconciliation. He has come full circle from his earlier self-centred romanticism to an all-embracing humanism which envisages the solidarity of all men, with each nation making its contribution in its own special way to what he calls in his essays *La Civilisation de l'universel.* Thereafter, the poet Senghor was more or less silent for some twelve years, as if he recognized that Africa now needed new voices. In 1972 he published *Lettres d'hivernage,* a collection of short poems similar in mood, style and themes to *Chants pour Naëtt,* although a little less rhetorical, less self-dramatizing. These poems are more reserved, more restrained, than anything he had written before. They are poems written in the calm that follows the struggle for the achievement of personal integration; they are poems which, to quote the phrase he uses to define *hivernage,* reflect "the summer and the beginning of autumn."[9]

[9] See Hubert de Leusse, *Des "Poèmes" aux "Lettres d'hivernage": Senghor* (Paris: Hatier, 1975).

Not winter yet, then. And indeed, at the close of the decade, in *Elégies majeures* (1979), Senghor returns to the form he had adopted in *Nocturnes* to express his ideas on art and on the African artist's creative role. Long poems in previous volumes—one thinks of 'Le retour de l'enfant prodigue' and the 'Epîtres à la Princesse'—were perhaps early expressions of a liking for this form. Senghor uses the elegy as it is understood in classical literature, as a medium for serious meditation on a variety of major themes; they include death (popularly regarded as the theme most appropriate to the elegy), but never as an excuse for sadness, let alone despair. Three of the *Elégies majeures* are about men who have died, but these, like the others, are a celebration, not a lament—a celebration of achievement, reconciliation, love and hope. The 'trompettes d'argent' mentioned in the first line of the first elegy epitomize the general tone of the volume as a whole, as does indeed the consecration of this first poem to the refreshing, life-bringing *alizés*. The three men who have died—two internationally famous, Martin Luther King and Georges Pompidou—and one who made his mark, a deep one, on a small part of the world, the French *coopérant* Jean-Marie—are seen as men of reconciliation, as builders of the "Civilisation de l'Universel." This is a volume that is much more outward-turning than any of the previous ones, especially when one compares these new elegies with the earlier art-centred ones of *Nocturnes*. In keeping with the evolution of Senghor's thinking on Negritude, it is much more universal in its preoccupations, and therefore more truly a culmination of Senghor's poetry than either of the previous two collections, which some had been tempted to consider the final work of an ageing and perhaps tiring poet. Above all, the pervasive tone of celebration, in spite of the human failures and tragedies evoked by the poet, is in keeping with the powerful sense of achievement and continuing vitality, of ordering and binding together (at all levels, in all spheres) that emerges from a reading of the prose of *La Poésie de l'action* (1980), a very revealing and a most significant self-portrait.

Throughout his career as a poet, Senghor has developed a range of themes and a style that have changed little except in emphasis. The style is the most crucial element, for it is through it that the poet has projected the desired image of himself around a framework of themes and ideas. Senghor has sought an identity through poetry, and it is through style that he has effectively created it. Identity implies a fundamental quality of stability, and so Senghor's poetic practice has changed little in its essentials from *Chants d'ombre* to *Elégies majeures;* phrases, images, techniques of this last volume reflect those of earlier volumes. Senghor's work as a whole is a dignified ritual celebrating order, his poems are like the processions he evokes so often. He has an ability to metamorphose men into heroes, objects into sacred vessels or tokens, by placing them in a historical or cosmic context, and above all by his own special mastery of language: his impressive command of the mythifying power of words, his manipulation of syntax, his word-play, his use of rhythm and sound effects and his remarkable capacity for thinking metaphorically (his belief in the African sense of analogy certainly applies to him) are so consistent, right up to and including the *Elégies majeures,* that his poetry is almost a hieroglyphic language of his own creation (appropriately, for someone who so admires Ancient Egypt), giving total expression, as language does, to one poet's view of himself and his culture.

In most essential respects, Senghor has not been either an original thinker or an original poet, although what he has created cannot be ascribed to anyone but him. In both respects, he has been one of those men who use their creative talent to draw together for the purposes of their own time and their own situation the ideas and the techniques of other thinkers and writers of their own day or of an earlier generation. His intellectual debt to Teilhard de Chardin, Marx, Frobenius and Gobineau, his poetic debt to Claudel and Saint-John Perse, to Baudelaire and to Hugo, and to the deep-seated trend in modern French poetry away from intellectualism and the artificiality of conventional form, have been noted by critics and in some cases acknowledged by Senghor himself. The rhetoric of his poetry grew out of his need to reconcile Africa with what he saw to be its destiny and, above all, to reconcile himself with life and with the world. It was his ability to draw on common, often popular ideas more current perhaps in Europe than in Africa that gave his conception of negritude its appeal—here again, in the final analysis, perhaps more to Westerners than to Africans. Ultimately, the rhetoric of a poetry centred, almost secretly, on the poet himself, and its assertion of a concept of personal leadership and a reconciliation with a popularly discredited Western culture which seemed to resemble compromise with some of its most dubious values, quickly dated a poetry constrained by goals imposed by history and has resulted, since the achievement of independence, in its often passionate rejection by a new generation of African intellectuals suspicious of the ambiguities of their elder's attitudes.

The two African poets most closely associated with Senghor in the heyday of negritude were Birago Diop, Senegalese like himself, and the Malagasy poet, dramatist and politician, Jacques Rabemananjara. Birago Diop (b. 1906) is best known for his folk tales but he contributed to the early impact of negritude chiefly through one poem, " Souffles," originally published in Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache* (1948). Anthologized *ad nauseam,* it became one of the key statements of negritude through its treatment of the theme of the ancestors and their continuing presence in the world of the living. Diop eventually published a collection of poems entitled *Leurres et Lueurs* (1960), but he had already said all he had to say in verse form in this one poem. Although his subject matter was entirely African, like most locally educated writers he was strongly influenced by French school-curriculum poetry, most notably romanticism and the neo-classical Parnasse. The provincial atmosphere of the university of Toulouse, which he attended from 1929 to 1933, did little to awaken him to the allurements of surrealism. Indeed Diop was one of the few African poets who never rejected with contempt the shackles of classical metre and rhyme. This loyalty, however, does not detract from the fact that the mostly conventional versification and the stilted sentiments of the new poems in *Leurres et Lueurs,* with the exception of two or three echoing "Souffles", contributed little if anything further to African poetry.

Birago Diop's poetry is essentially descriptive, often in an elegiac or idyllic way, and remains loyal to the classical forms of the old French tradition. That of Ousmane Socé (1911–1974), who is likewise better known for his prose fiction, is of a more speculative kind; it avails itself of modern freedom in both rhythm and stanza form and of the writer's cosmopolitan experience to project a Moslem view of Senghor's *civilisation de*

l'universel. It did not appear in book form until 1956, when *Rythmes du khalam* was appended to the second edition of his novel, *Mirages de Paris.* Socé's poetry evokes, rather prosaically (as he himself confesses in the "Avant-propos de l'Auteur"), his nostalgia, while in Paris, for Africa and things African.

Next to Senghor, Jacques Rabemananjara (b. 1913) was the most prolific writer of the negritude generation.[10] Actually, he may be entitled to precedence over the three Senegalese poets since his first volume of verse, *Sur les marches du soir,* was printed in 1942, three years before Senghor's *Chants d'ombre,* albeit by a very minor publisher, and in all likelihood at the author's cost. Unlike Rabearivelo, Rabemananjara is not of Merina origin but belongs to the north-eastern Betsimisaraka. Already before World War II, he had displayed active concern with cultural and political matters by founding the *Revue des Jeunes de Madagascar* (1935), which was soon banned by the colonial authorities because of its outspoken nationalistic proclivities. In 1939, he left for Paris, where he attended courses in administration and was befriended by Senghor and other members of the negritude group.

For a long time, however, Rabemananjara's creative writing remained centred on his native island. *Sur les marches du soir* bewailed in classical alexandrines the exile of Queen Ranavalona III, banished by the French in 1897. It was followed by the first modern Malagasy drama in French, *Les Dieux malgaches* (1947); this play in academic rhymed verse reverts to the pre-colonial past and deals with the coup that ousted King Radama II in 1863. Two reasons are given for the conspiracy engineered by Prime Minister Raharo (better known to historians as Rainivoninahitriniony): one is that the king wanted to marry his mistress, a Sakalava slave girl; the other is that Radama had tried to reintroduce European influence, which his mother Ranavalona had almost completely eliminated. In view of this, it may seem strange that the playwright's sympathy should go to the young king, who, in historical fact, was known as a debauchee. This attitude should probably be taken to reflect both Rabemananjara's assimilation of French culture and his determination to counteract tribal divisions in favour of a modern nationalistic outlook. The drama focuses on the issue of the divine right of kings and at the end the populace comment sadly on the passivity of the gods, who have done nothing to punish the murderers of Radama. The playwright does not seem to be aware of the historical background of the story: in actual fact, the Prime Minister was a member of a powerful Hova family, whose business interests were threatened by the privileges that Radama was willing to grant to European traders! Rabemananjara's purpose seems to have been to glorify loyalty to king and country in very rhetorical poetry, and to bewail, albeit with ineffectual melancholy, the injustice of history and the inertia of the gods.

By the time *Les Dieux malgaches* reached print, Rabemananjara had been elected one of Madagascar's first deputies to the French Constituent Assembly. The election of 1947 led to an uprising that was repressed with the utmost brutality by the French authorities. The poet was one of the Malagasy leaders who, although they had urged

[10] See Eliane Boucquey de Schutter, *Jacques Rabemananjara* (Paris: Seghers, 1964), and especially M. Kadima-Nzuji, *Jacques Rabemananjara: L'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1981).

calm on the rioters, were arrested and sentenced to hard labour for life. In a way, however, physical imprisonment in a local penitentiary meant inner freedom, as Rabemananjara found himself released both from loyalty to France and from the conventions of the academic style. *Antsa* (1948), the title of which means a praise poem for the sovereign, shows how the crushing of the rebellion had dissipated whatever confidence he may have entertained in French benevolence and good faith; he proclaimed his contempt for the oppressors in halting blank verse that transposes into French some of the rhythms and prosody of ancient Malagasy poetry.[11]

Like Senghor, then, Rabemananjara was deeply involved in politics, although he suffered a combination of violence, success and failure that Senghor never knew. While the act of literary composition is not for him, as it is for Senghor, a means towards achieving personal integration, his work reflects his political involvement. Nevertheless, although he was not granted amnesty until 1956, just in time to attend the first Conference of Black Writers and Artists, his later collections of poetry—*Rites Millénaires* (1955), *Lamba* (1956), and *Antidote* (1961),—revert to his earlier, more subdued and probably more congenial, inspiration: in gorgeous imagery, with grandiose, sometimes orotund, oratory, they utter his strangely sensuous and even carnal love for his native island, its natural beauty, its graceful ancient customs and its historical greatness. The influence of Senghor's poetry and of negritude rhetoric is palpable, but it is characteristic of the Malagasy culture and outlook that Rabemananjara, unlike most French-speaking African poets, was more attracted to Racine than to Corneille, to Jean Giraudoux than to Victor Hugo, and to Rilke than to Alexandre Dumas. His lyric poetry is too diffuse, it lacks the vigour and discipline of Senghor's, and it constantly echoes the French and the black models he has read (the French Romantics, Verlaine, Senghor, Césaire), but it has moments of true lyric intensity which are surprisingly lacking in bitterness when one considers his experiences in French colonial prisons.

The law of amnesty that had been promulgated in 1956 had simply commuted Rabemananjara's hard-labour sentence to banishment for life in France. This, however, enabled him to renew his old links with black intellectuals in Paris, and in particular, to work with Alioune Diop on *Présence Africaine*. Largely determined, like Senghor's, by the turn of political events, the Malagasy writer's evolution from the bitter anticolonialism of *Antsa* towards more positive hopefulness was evidenced in his second poetic drama, *Les Boutriers de l'aurore* (1957), a pseudo-historical play which deals with the landing of the first Indonesian immigrants on the island in such a way as to symbolize a successful fusion of different cultures: the parallel with Senghor's *civilisation de l'universel* and Socé's earlier *métissage des civilisations* is revealing.

When Madagascar became fully independent in June 1960, Rabemananjara returned to his beloved island, where he held ministerial office until the military coup of 1972. Apart from *Antidote*, the only creative work he published while in power was *Agapes des dieux* (1962) a third drama based on a favourite native legend. Whereas *Les*

[11] See Mukala Kadima-Nzuji, "Une proposition poétique: *Antsa* de Jacques Rabemananjara," *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 38 (1975), 22–30, and "Introduction à une lecture de *Antsa* de Jacques Rabemananjara," *Présence Africaine*, 99/100 (1976), 244–258.

Boutriers de l'aurore had evidenced the Malagasy intellectual's deep sense that his is a hybrid culture, made up of African and Indonesian elements harmoniously woven together into a syncretic whole, *Agapes des Dieux* is a love story illustrating another aspect of Malagasy identity: an interest in romantic love and an elegiac view of fate and death which do not often appear in black writing of the continent. Both plays, however, reveal even more literally than Senghor's poetry the irony inherent in negritude, in that they are part of an attempt to establish an equal, parallel culture by imitation. In his latest collection of poetry, *Les Ordalies* (1972), Rabemananjara seems to have put negritude and politics aside, to concentrate on a purely private love; his use of the most enduring of the conventional poetic forms, the sonnet, gives his lyricism the discipline it formerly lacked, but unfortunately his language is artificial and literary.

Next to Senghor, perhaps the most remarkable writer of this generation is Bernard Dadié (b. 1916) from the Ivory Coast.[12] His versatility has enabled him to contribute in a significant way to nearly all the main branches of literary endeavour. As the author of *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi,* he was the most gifted of the budding playwrights at William-Ponty in the thirties. *Légendes africaines* (1954) and *Le Pagne noir* (1955) make available in French a number of African folk tales. With *Climbié* (1956) he contributed his share to the autobiographical novel. He created a form of chronicle which is illustrated in *Un Nègre à Paris* (1959), *Patron de New York* (1964) and *La Ville où nul ne meurt* (1968). And in the early seventies, he turned his attention back to drama, and has since been instrumental in launching the late revival of play-writing in French-speaking Africa. His early work was hardly affected by negritude as he had never left Africa by the time he published his first collection of poetry, *Afrique debout!* (1950). This was later followed by *La Ronde des jours* (1956) upon which his reputation as a poet mainly rests, and by *Hommes de tous les continents* (1967), which contains poems written between 1943 and 1965. Simplicity and concision are the essential qualities of Dadié's poetic style. His chief preoccupations are the absurdity of racial prejudice and the oneness of humanity. His poetry does not have behind it the force of an ideology, like Senghor's. Although he was active in Houphouet-Boigny's *Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire,* and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after the Treichville riots of 1949, there is nothing revolutionary about his lyrical inspiration, which is based on the observation of the essential characteristics of human behaviour and draws its imagery from everyday reality at its most universal (colour, leaves, hands, etc.). Although rhythmically rather different, his poetry reminds one of Eluard's poetry at its simplest and most direct, and has the same kind of popular appeal. Many African writers are, not surprisingly, given the nature of the colonial enterprise and its inherent contradictions, imbued with the ironic spirit (Senghor is one of the most striking exceptions, partly because he is too absorbed in his own predicament, and partly because he is reluctant to accept, and wants desperately to reconcile, the conflicting elements that are

[12] See Bernard Magnier, "Bio-bibliographie de Bernard Binlin Dadié," *Présence Francophone,* 13 (1976), 49–62. Some general information about the writer will be found in M. and S. Battestini and Roger Mercier, *Bernard Dadié, écrivain ivoirien* (Paris: Nathan, 1964), and C. Quillateau, *Bernard Binlin Dadié, l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967).

the source of irony). This same ironic quality runs through all of Dadié's work, including his poetry, and gives it its vitality, but it is always tempered by his belief that men must be reconciled with men (not cultures with cultures, as Senghor would have it). In this sense, he is much closer in spirit to the universality and grass-roots appeal of Césaire, and his poetry gave a less intellectual, less theoretical, more truly lyrical dimension to the emerging poetry of French-speaking Africa.

While Bernard Dadié was the youngest of the poets born before or during the war, the oldest was Fily Dabo Sissoko (1897–1964) from the erstwhile Sudan, later renamed Mali. This William-Ponty alumnus who was elected to represent his country at the French National Assembly, where he stayed from 1945 to 1958, was a prolific and uncommonly precocious writer: one piece in his *Feux de brousse* is dated, no doubt mistakenly, 1910! He did not reach print until 1953, when his *Crayons et portraits* was printed in Mulhouse. This was followed by *Harmakhis: poèmes du terroir africain* (1955)[13] whose subtitle sums up very effectively the essential characteristic of Sissoko's work. A traditionalist who, unlike contemporaries such as Birago Diop, never really left his homeland, and was never subjected to the same extent to the assimilationist pressures of French education, Sissoko evokes in his half-a-dozen or so volumes, mostly in a form of poetic prose, the traditional wisdom and techniques of the *griots* and the daily life of a people whose closeness to their natural environment and the supernatural had not yet, in his childhood and youth, been fundamentally disturbed by colonialism. His work is without the philosophical or ideological pretensions of traditionalists of the negritude school, but he was nevertheless very conscious of the impact colonialism would ultimately have on his African heritage.[14] At its best, in volumes like *Sagesse noire* (1955), *Crayons et portraits* (1953), *Poèmes de l'Afrique noire* (1963), and especially *La Savane rouge* (1962), Sissoko's style achieves its poetic effect through a combination of concision, simplicity and the accurate perception of realistic and, especially, characteristic detail, whether it be expressed in the form of proverbs, memoirs or descriptions of people and nature. He seems to have admired the seventeenth-century French moralists, La Bruyère in particular; if it is from them he learnt his art, he learnt it well; but the less definable poetic sensibility so evident in his work must surely spring from his love of his "terroir africain," and especially Mali. In his literary practice, he shows supreme indifference to the categories and precepts of Western literature and to its techniques which he hardly tried to master: his only novel, *La Passion de Djimé* (1956) has been rightly criticized by Dorothy Blair on the grounds that it is nothing but a slight "story of intrigue and passion," with a totally unsatisfactory structure, "the economy of the narrative verging on the incoherent."[15] Sissoko's proper medium was a poetic prose divided, like the Bible or the Koran, into verses of unequal length; it could be adapted with equal ease, as in the Arabic tradition of Sudanic Africa, to lyrical and idyllic, or to descriptive purposes; it could also be used for narration: this was exemplified in *La Savane rouge,*

[13] This collection was reprinted, together with two previously unpublished collections, *Feux de brousse* and *Fleurs et chardons*, in *Poèmes de l'Afrique noire* (Paris: Debresse-poésie, 1963).

[14] See *Coups de Sagaie: Controverses sur l'union française* (Paris: La Tour du Guet, 1957).

[15] Dorothy Blair, *African Literature in French* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), pp. 200–1.

an intriguing autobiographical work which is in many respects redolent of vernacular praise poetry, as well as of the devices characteristic of the traditional epic and historical narrative in pre-colonial Mali.[16]

NYEMBWE TSHIKUMAMBILA

FROM FOLKTALE TO SHORT STORY

In the late twenties, when the first African students lucky enough to receive government scholarships arrived in Paris, or even in less glamorous provincial university towns, they were quick to perceive that a number of African culture traits, mainly connected with music and the plastic arts, had for some time been fashionable in the French intellectual milieu. Nor were literary circles immune. Well-known writers had shown genuine concern for black Africa, though with varying degrees of seriousness: André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1927) and *Retour du Tchad* (1928) and Paul Morand's *A.O.F.: Paris-Tombouctou* (1928) and *Magie Noire* (1928) had just reached the book-stalls when Senghor, and other gifted young Senegalese students such as Birago Diop or Ousmane Socé, came to France. More important, it was impossible for them to be blind to the existence of the African folktale as a specific trend in the broad stream of French literature.

In France, as in England or Germany, the genre had first appeared in the beginning of the nineteenth century as a by-product of travellers' reports. Whereas a man like Silvain Golbéry (1742–1822) in his *Fragmens d'un voyage en Afrique* (1802) had freely expressed a wide range of racial prejudices, describing black people as idle children fond of meaningless stories, more enlightened spirits like the Abbé Henri Grégoire (1750–1831) in *De la littérature des Nègres* (1808) had countered this trend on philosophical grounds, while other travellers, less prone to denigrate anything alien, had done their best with the means at their disposal to collect, translate and publish some of the folktales which were as important a part of Africa's creative art as the novel was becoming of Europe's. The earliest example seems to have been Baron Jacques Henri Roger's *Fables sénégalaises* (1828), which contained forty three Wolof tales... turned into French verse! From then on, scholars, linguists, administrators, missionaries issued collections of such tales in growing numbers as the Western powers began to cast increasingly covetous glances in the direction of African wealth.[17]

Although France was never able to boast such a monument as the twelve volumes of Leo Frobenius' *Atlantis. Volksmärchen und Volksdichtungen Afrikas* (Jena, 1921–1928), her contribution was by no means negligible, including as it did the *Contes soudanais* (1905) of Charles Monteil (b. 1871), the various collections issued by Maurice

[16] See Edmond Sere de Rivières, "A propos de *La savane rouge*", *France-Eurafrique*, No. 183 (April 1967), 40–44.

[17] On European collections of African tales, see Veronika Görög, "Bibliographie analytique sur la littérature orale de l'Afrique noire," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 8 (1968), 453–501. For a convenient survey, see Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Delafosse (1870–1926) in the course of the first three decades of this century, and above all the recently reprinted *Essai sur la littérature merveilleuse des Noirs, suivi de contes indigènes de l'Ouest-Africain français* (Paris: Leroux, 1913–1916; re-issued 1972) of F. V. Equilbecq (1872–1917). Interest in the native lore of Africa received a powerful stimulus as jazz music and African art became more and more fashionable throughout those years. The acme was reached when Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961), a popular though minor writer, issued his *Anthologie nègre* (1921) which immediately became a best-seller. Culled from a cosmopolitan variety of earlier European sources, the tales were classified under such headings as "cosmogonic legends," "magic," "evolution and civilization," "imaginary science," "marvellous tales," "anecdotes," "fables," "poetry and songs," etc. This book brought to a climax a movement of recognition which had been making slow headway for more than a century.[18] Linguists and anthropologists were already aware that African societies, though without a written literature, were not without culture. A wider public was now being made to accept that non-literate civilizations could exist, endowed with an oral art rich in historical, philosophical and aesthetic traditions. On the other hand, black students in France, among whom the *Anthologie nègre* was highly popular, realized that here was an opening through which it was possible to graft one of the most cherished of their own literary traditions onto the trunk of French prose fiction, somewhat in the way surrealism was offering an opportunity for expressing their African sensibility in French poetry.

This was all the more desirable as—from an African view-point which had not yet found voice at the time—those collections were open to considerable criticism. Many—such as *Contes d'Afrique* (1927) by the Belgian Olivier de Bouveignes (1889–1966), or, almost twenty years later, *Contes de la brousse fauve* (1945) by the Frenchman René Guillot (1900–1969)—were just romanticized versions of African tales, often intended for children, and distorted by the period's taste for cheap exoticism. In fact, they were usually mere literary exercises based on earlier publications. These latter had been the work of missionaries, especially Protestant missionaries who were particularly concerned with enabling African populations to read the Bible in their own languages. But while laying the foundations of literacy and ultimately of written literature in African languages, they were also striving to preserve and popularize African lore. If Eugène Casalis (1812–1891) of the Mission Evangélique de Paris found it sufficient in his *Etudes sur la langue séchouana* (Paris, 1841), to provide French versions of what were in fact Sotho tales, at the end of the century a Swiss missionary working in Angola, Héli Chatelain (1859–1908) in his *Folk-Tales of Angola* (Boston, 1894) gave the original Kimbundu versions as well as English translations. This more scholarly outlook was also characteristic of the considerable output of such Belgian Catholic missionaries in present-day Zaïre as Pierre Colle in *Les Baluba* (Brussels, 1913), an example which was to be followed by later Belgian missionary scholars like Gustaaf Hulstaert (b. 1900) or Albert J. De Rop (1912–1980). While French Catholic missionaries do not seem to have been very active in the field, French linguists and anthropolo-

[18] Jahn's unfavourable verdict on the *Anthologie nègre* has been decisively confirmed recently in the Belgian scholar Martin Steins' *Blaise Cendrars: bilans nègres* (Paris: Archives des Lettres Modernes, 1977).

gists also realized the need, in the interests of research, to print the original vernacular versions of their texts, following the example given by Maurice Delafosse in the handbooks on Agni, Hausa and Fon which he published at the turn of the century.

But even such bilingual publications, ornamented with erudite introductions and learned linguistic and ethnographical notes, were far from satisfactory. This was largely due to the enormous difficulties encountered in the course of compilation. The first obstacle was the natives' mistrust of European investigators: the African could not understand why white men, usually aloof, sceptical and contemptuous of local traditions should suddenly become interested in them. Even when some African villager felt convinced of the sincerity and harmlessness of the white researcher, he could only supply him with fragmentary samples of the local treasury of folktales, let alone the praise poems which could not be understood without detailed knowledge of the tribe's history, or the myths and prayers, which it would have been sacrilegious to reveal to an alien observer. There is also some doubt about the knowledge and literary talent of the native informants: seldom did the European researcher get hold of the best story-teller in the village; in many cases, he had to rely on some individual whom he had met by chance during his field-work or who had been selected by the colonial authorities, or even simply on his boy-servant, some office-clerk or even schoolchildren. Thirdly, it is essential to remember that until the advent of the tape-recorder, the European researcher received the tales under artificial conditions: not only was he obliged to interrupt the story-teller frequently in order to take his notes, but the story-teller himself, in the absence of his usual audience, was often embarrassed and eager to make the interview as short as possible; he only summarized the sequence of events, overlooking motivation, dispensing with mimicry, skipping all the details that gave the story its liveliness and true interest. Nor did early anthropologists ask for more than this: folklore studies were chiefly preoccupied with subject-matter, content analysis and the tracing of plot patterns capable of leading to conclusions relevant to the then central problems of filiation and borrowing, of classification, and of the connection between folktales and the so-called "primitive" mentality.

Another type of problem arose from the very process of recording oral art in writing. At best, the white scholar would try hard to produce a verbatim record of the story as told by his informant. This produced an unattractive text, often difficult, sometimes meaningless or at any rate unintelligible, and certainly deprived of the immense entertainment value of traditional art. Very often, too, the white scholar tried to adapt the recorded oral narrative to the requirements of written art. Far from prefacing the tale with a vivid account of the societal context which is typical of traditional narrative art in Africa, he was content to relate the plot of the story in such a sketchy manner as to eliminate the exuberance which was essential to the tale as originally narrated. When not only recording but translation as well was involved, the situation was even worse as certain formal qualities, characteristic of the original linguistic medium disappeared. Most African languages are tonal, and the musical effects of tone variation are inevitably lost in translations into European languages. The expressive sonorities to which Africans are especially sensitive because of their implicit connotations with regard to objects and actions, are likewise obliterated. African lan-

guages usually have a very rich concrete vocabulary for which the only lexical equivalent in European languages is clumsy paraphrases. The categories of morphology and syntax do not cover the same semantic fields in African as in European languages, and the fact that the cultural taxonomies of material and mental categories do not coincide creates problems which can only be solved by resorting to the awkward unaesthetic device of abundant footnotes. Even though more direct observation became possible in the 1960s as the tape-recorder made it possible to abandon the clumsy interrogative method in favour of the recording of actual performances during the traditional evening gatherings of a whole village, this auditory method failed to register a number of visual elements, the gestures, the mimicry, which are so important for the African community's appraisal of a story-teller's talents.

Not all white researchers were as aware of the limitations inherent in their activities as was Fr. de Zeltner, who wrote with commendable modesty in the preface to his collection of West African tales:

> Quant à la manière dont j'ai recueilli ces contes, je n'ignore pas que j'encours deux graves reproches. En premier lieu, j'ai eu le tort grave de n'en point prendre le texte indigène. Le kassonké et le sarakolé, qui furent les dialectes de mes premiers informateurs, sont d'une réelle difficulté, et la connaissance imparfaite que j'en avais m'exposait à rapporter un texte inutilisable. De plus, j'ai constamment eu recours à un interprète, et c'est là un second défaut. J'espère toutefois l'avoir compensé par le soin avec lequel j'ai recoupé tous les récits, les redites que j'ai imposées aux conteurs et surtout l'habitude que j'avais du français particulier parlé par chacun de mes interprètes.[19]

It is unthinkable that the early African students in France should have remained unaware of the enormous distortions which a highly sophisticated art, esteemed and beloved from time immemorial, suffered in the course of translation into European languages. It is therefore necessary to say a few words about the reality of African oral art, even though the first duty of any honest scholar is to proclaim the extreme variety and complexity of the field and to acknowledge the ignorance of the scholarly community in spite of the extensive and intensive field research that has been carried out during the last few decades. One is therefore obliged to have recourse to oversimplification, as there is not even an accepted general typology not only of oral art in general, but even simply of oral narrative. Indeed, it is known that each ethnic group has its own typology based on its own aesthetic criteria. Exploration of this huge field has barely begun, and much more needs to be known before any detailed taxonomy can be agreed upon.

Oral art in Africa can be distinguished from ordinary oral messages by the fact that it is rooted in tradition. Yet there is no uniformity in the influence of tradition: in some genres, this influence is limited to subject matter, in others, it extends to both content and form. Hence the difference between fixed and free forms of oral art.

Fixed forms include formulae, proverbs, mottoes, genealogical lists and songs, which are transmitted verbatim from one generation to another. They also include some

[19] F. de Zeltner, *Contes du Sénégal et du Niger* (Paris: Leroux, 1913), pp. 2–3.

genres which are of a narrative character, such as praise poems and many initiation myths. The art of the performer rests largely in his absolute fidelity to the model which he had been taught, and is characterized, as a result, by the use of archaic language. Fixed art frequently resorts to a number of poetic procedures presumably designed to make accurate memorizing easier, such as rhythm, tonal quality, regularity in the number of syllables. In contrast, the only element that claims to be traditional in free oral art is the subject-matter, the story, the narrative pattern. Although the narrator may resort to set formulae, form and style remain free of all constraints. The tale can take on a variety of forms. All that is expected of the narrator, as far as loyalty to tradition is concerned, is that he remember the plot, the pattern of action, the main theme of the story. Indeed, he is expected to make highly individual use of those elements, narrating the story in his own way, making the most of his own gifts, taking into account the response of a particular audience at a particular performance, in order to achieve an effect of his own devising.

As we try to classify narrative forms, it is well to remember Senghor's warning that "à l'intérieur même des genres, les murs des classifications se révèlent poreux."[20] It may be useful, however, to establish a tentative distinction between the two most important aspects of free oral narration, tales and legends. It seems advisable to reserve the word "legend" for stories which are felt to have (and in some cases may demonstrably have) some connection with truth. Mythical tales have affinities with religion; epic tales, with history. The narrative substance thus leads as it were a double existence: on ceremonial occasions, it appears under the fixed form of a myth or epic; but on other, more informal occasions, it takes on the free form of a legend. As to the folktale proper, whereas its content is transmitted by tradition, its form is always free; and although its purpose is usually to carry over from one generation to another the moral standards of the group and the wisdom or knowledge that results from the accumulated experience of the ancestors, its variety is limitless. In a general way, it is designed for entertainment as well as instruction, but the distinctions often made between animal fables, tales of the marvellous (where the supernatural predominates) and stories dealing with human beings, are artificial ones with no real scientific foundation.

The folktale is by no means a dead genre in Black Africa. In fact, every new group experience, every new phase in the history of any given society gives rise to new tales. From a semantic viewpoint, a folktale can be said to exist only from the moment when a story, invented by some particular individual, is appreciated and repeated to a new audience. It thus spreads literally by word of mouth, and once it is fairly well known, what matters is the manner in which each story-teller re-creates it for the benefit of his own audience. Every successful narrator makes use not only of his talent and originality in employing the narrative techniques at his disposal. He also uses his own character and temperament. There is thus an element of specialization as one teller of tales will prefer stories with a strong moralizing bent; another will indulge his comic gifts by selecting

[20] See Senghor's "Préface" to Birago Diop, *Les Nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1958), pp. 8–9.

humorous and satirical tales; yet another will display his abilities in a more pathetic vein, though this is less frequent.

The composition and mood of the audience also exert considerable influence on the performance. If the audience consists mainly of children, the narrator will tend to select light or frivolous stories with high entertainment value. If he addresses mostly older people, his discourse is likely to be more subtle, dealing with more earnest, perhaps even esoteric, matters.

It is important to note that story-telling is a societal activity which usually takes place in the evening, around the fire or by moonlight, for the entertainment of the village people when they have finished their daily business. Incidentally, in many African societies, telling tales in daytime is forbidden, which accounts in part for the failure of European collectors, since narrators willing to disobey this rule are likely to limit their story to the bare facts. But in a traditional village community, the occasion creates a congenial atmosphere: both the narrator and his audience have plenty of time, the human warmth of the gathering encourages the story-teller to elaborate details, intersperse funny anecdotes, indulge in abundant mimicry. Or conversely, the darkness of night helps him conjure up the supernatural beings and events in his story, while the audible presence of animals roaming in the dark around the village seems to give life to the characters in animal fables.

In non-literate societies, each recitation is therefore a genuine performance, the technique of which is not entirely dissimilar from those well-known to practitioners of the oral art—pop-singers, politicians—in the Western world. But the narrator must be constantly aware that his is not a one-man show; nor is he a preacher addressing a passive audience from his pulpit. Audience participation is essential and is usually secured by an exchange of questions and answers designed to establish contact between the speaker and his hearers. Formulas vary from tribe to tribe but they all come back to the same pattern, the narrator beginning with "Here comes a story," to which the audience answer "We are listening." But it is chiefly in the course of the narration that audience response is important. Part of this is, as it were, ritualized: tales are often interspersed with lyrics, or at any rate, sung passages, and after the narrator has sung the couplet the audience take up the refrain in chorus; in the case of proverbs, frequently cited in oral narrative because they hold in concentrated form the accumulated wisdom of the community, the narrator will only utter the first few words, the audience completing the proverb in unison. The most important form of audience involvement is in spontaneous reactions, murmurs, laughter, sighs, cries of astonishment, which the story-teller can evoke if he makes skilful use of the various devices at his disposal. He has to be a good actor, a talented comedian. He must master such play-acting techniques as voice modulation, facial and gestural mimicry. He must know when to lower or raise his voice, when to accelerate or slacken the rhythm of his sentences. He must be able to imitate sounds of all sorts, especially animal cries. His gestures must conjure up animal shapes and behaviour. Above all, perhaps, he must be able to make characters come to life through their speech, like a puppeteer. In animal fables, the narrator is expected to make each character speak in accordance with the feelings and temperament that are traditionally ascribed to it, and also with the kind of diction and pronunciation

which it is supposed to use in the popular imagination: in West Africa the hyena snuffles; among the Bushmen, the tortoise is supposed to turn all clicks and initial consonants into labials.

As well as by the narrator's individual talent, it is thus clear that an oral performance is also shaped by certain clearly defined conventions. These are usually connected with the criteria by which the group audience appraises and evaluates a man's use of the language. In Africa as elsewhere, oral societies are extremely sensitive to expertise in speech-making. The oral performer must have mastered the entire arsenal of poetic methods, the formulas used for transitions or (like Homeric epithets) for ornament, the set comparisons and metaphors, above all the proverbs and maxims. He must be able to apply them all not mechanically, but with discrimination, in harmony with each particular context.

Bringing all these skills into play, the oral narrative performance is a sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk,* more elaborate, more "artistic" and more entertaining than the skeletal versions offered by European-language translations. All Africans who have had a modicum of genuine contact with traditional modes of living are aware of this. We may therefore legitimately suppose—although only further research will establish this point—that African intellectuals in France in the 1930s had a twofold purpose in view. One was to become part of a European literary "tradition" that had become inordinately fashionable in the course of the decade between the end of World War I and their arrival in the country. Their second aim, not unconnected with the negritude spirit, was to demonstrate that African oral narrative was vastly more diversified, more sophisticated and more intelligent than could be perceived through the feeble, often childish, European-language versions then in existence. This latter purpose accounts for the two main directions which French adaptations of oral art took in the hands of the first generation of African writers: while those young intellectuals tried to translate many of the animal fables and satirical stories because of their entertainment value and because the genre was already largely familiar to the European audience, they also provided French versions of many historical and even mythical legends, in an effort to counter the view, still popular among average uneducated westerners, that the black man had no history, no past and no religious thought in any recognizable sense.

If we disregard the notorious and undoubtedly apocryphal collection ascribed to Badibanga, which has all the features and defects of the European tradition, the trend was started during World War II, when Ousmane Socé appended some of his *Contes et légendes d'Afrique noire* to the second edition of his novel *Karim* (1942), which had first been published in 1935. Further tales were added for the third edition of the novel (1948) but the collection did not appear independently in book form until 1962. Some of Socé's stories are simple moral tales: "Penda" is a warning to marriageable girls not to be too exacting in their choice of a husband; "L'histoire de l'homme qui avait la passion des cerises" illustrates the unexpected unpleasant consequences of an apparently negligible weakness. Socé, however, was mainly concerned with using his medium to correct European misconceptions about Africa's past. In gathering his material, he relied in part on the oral traditions transmitted by West African *griots,* but he was also helped by the

research carried out by African scholars, usually primary school-teachers educated at the William-Ponty school. But whereas William-Ponty drama had mostly accepted the average European image of an African history peopled by barbaric warriors, gory despots and cunning traitors, Socé's stories extolled the mighty heroes and the religious leaders who had created the old West African empires from Ghana to Macina. The most outstanding figure was El Hadj Omar, the Tukolor Muslim conqueror from Futa Toro, whose religious fervour and conquering spirit had built up a large empire in the decades preceding the French invasion.

It is interesting to note that Socé also took a few steps in the direction of the modern-type short story in two tales concerned, like his *Karim,* with the socio-cultural changes wrought by westernization in the traditional way of life: "Tanor, le dernier Samba-Linguère" illustrates the disintegration of the old aristocratic class, whose ancient power and prestige are undermined by the new standards inherent in the emergent money economy; and "Sara Ba" exemplifies the disruptive influence of Western individualism upon traditional morality especially with regard to marriage customs: the heroine leaves the husband chosen by her family in order to live with her lover.

Socé's concern to effect a reappraisal of Africa's history was not new: it had been exemplified at inordinate length in Paul Hazoumé's *Doguicimi* (1938); and an acute sense of the past greatness of Benin (at the time, Dahomey) had also imbued some of the William-Ponty productions. Socé's example was soon followed by Maximilien Quenum (b. 1911) who was the author of *Au pays des Fons; Us et coutumes du Dahomey* (Paris, 1938). His *Trois légendes africaines* (Rochefort, 1946) deals with the migration of the Ivory Coast Baule from their ancient capital Kumasi in present-day Ghana, with the thirteenth-century wars of Sundiata of Mali, and with the establishment of the royal family on the throne of Abomey in Benin.

It was however Socé's fellow Senegalese Birago Diop (b. 1906) who was responsible for providing the most adequate written French versions of African oral art in his three volumes: *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* (1947), *Les Nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* (1958) and *Contes et lavanes* (1963).[21] The peculiar quality of his work results from the fact that he managed to provide, in written French, a satisfactory equivalent of the living realities of the oral performances of the best *griots*. In his introduction to his first volume, the Senegalese writer asserted that in this new medium he was merely giving shape to

[21] Birago Diop is one of the few francophone writers to have been the subject of serious, scholarly, book-length studies, both by Mohamadou Kane: *Les Contes d'Amadou Coumba: Du conte traditionnel au conte moderne d'expression française* (Dakar: Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 1968) and *Birago Diop: L'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971). Valuable autobiographical information is available in Birago Diop, "Tous contes faits," *Awa* (Dakar), Nos 7 and 8, (n.d.) and *La Plume raboutée* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1978). For a primary bibliography, see James M. Purcell, "Birago Diop: A Checklist of the Contes and Poems," *Studies in Black Literature*, 4,1 (1973), 25–27. Critical discussions include: Roger Mercier, "Un conteur d'Afrique noire: Birago Diop," *Etudes Françaises*, 4,2 (1968), 119–149 and "Les contes sénégalais de Birago Diop," in *Actes du Ve Congrès de l'Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée, Belgrade, 1967*, ed. Nikola Banašević (Amsterdam: Swerts and Zeitlinger, 1969), pp. 527–536; Edris Makward, "Birago Diop, Storyteller from Senegal," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 16 (1969), 357–374; Mohamadou Kane, "La littérature africaine à l'Université," *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l'Université de Dakar*, 2 (1972), 19–38 and Nyembwe Tshikumambila, "La satire des marabouts et autres personnalités de l'Islam dans les contes de Birago Diop," *Lectures Africaines* (Lubumbashi), 1,2 (1972–73), 68–80.

traditional stories as told by Amadou Koumba N'Gom, a famed story-teller from the then French Sudan (now Mali), where Diop had started his career as a veterinary surgeon in 1934 after completing his studies at the University of Toulouse. In fact, Diop's tales orginate from a much wider area. They include Bambara stories from Mali, Wolof stories from Senegal, Mossi stories from the Upper Volta. While the immediate sources for some of them may be found in earlier collections by French administrators and scholars, they are all genuinely rooted in the oral tradition. And in reshaping his material creatively, in compliance with the requirements both of the written medium and of the French language, Diop managed to remain completely loyal to the basic function of the folktale, which is to hand on the wisdom and the moral code of the society in an entertaining vein of sly humor.

More than half of Birago Diop's total output in prose fiction is made up of animal fables. The majority of these center on Bouki-the-hyena, the protagonist in one of the principal cycles of the Sudanic area. Almost all the stories start with Bouki ravenously hungry; this is of course a frequent experience in the savannah, but Bouki's need is also a metaphor for, and sometimes explicitly connected with, such human needs as the desire for knowledge, the love of riches, lust for fame, etc. In order to satisfy his need Bouki is always devising some ill-advised stratagem which ultimately fails and leads to his discomfiture. The purpose is of course educational: in the earthy, earth-bound world of Diop's stories, a man's main social virtue is to be aware of his own limitations and to keep his ambition within its proper bounds. Bouki's failure is simply the right punishment for his clumsiness, his naiveté, his absent-mindedness, his lack of forethought, his intellectual blindness, all of which are the result of stupidity combined with pretentiousness. Likewise, the tales of the hare cycle remind the mighty that physical power can be defeated by the cunning of the weak: Leuk plays a role similar to that of Reynard the Fox in European folklore. This function of the hare cycle is preserved in Diop's Leuk stories as it is in *La Belle histoire de Leuk-le-Lièvre* (1953), which was written jointly by Abdoulaye Sadji and Léopold Senghor.

In his successful attempt to preserve, in a different form, the high aesthetic value of the oral tale, Diop did away with the stereotyped formulae that would have been boring and redundant in writing. For the usual "Once upon a time" he substituted introductions of his own: in aetiological or pseudo-scientific tales, he usually begins by describing the phenomenon whose origin the story purports to explain; elsewhere, a closely argued moral observation constitutes the prologue. In many cases, the writer first expatiates upon the circumstances that account for the launching of the plot, so as to inform the non-African reader of the cultural background with which a traditional audience would be fully familiar. It is Birago Diop's special merit that he presents anthropological comments in such a way that their inherent didacticism does not strike the reader as obtrusive.

While resorting to such stock labels as "l'Hyène aux reins fléchis," "le Singe aux fesses nues et aux mains sales," or "le Serpent maigre comme une liane," which are frequent in oral art and are used as the equivalent of Homeric epithets, Diop—in contrast with his French predecessor Charles Perrault's attachment to third-person narrative and indirect style—makes abundant use of dialogue as does the traditional

griot, often reporting the action entirely through dialogue, accompanied by stage directions indicating the way the animal is supposed to speak: "nasilla Bouki-l'Hyène" or "rugit Bour-le-Lion."

Mention has already been made of the importance of the songs with which African oral narratives are interspersed, turning them into what the Cameroonian scholar Eno Belinga has called *chantefables* after such works as the medieval *Aucassin et Nicolette*.[22] This aspect is usually ignored by European "translators" who remain content with such rudimentary indications that the Western reader is unable to grasp the scope and function of the lyric for the original African audience: not only does it promote audience participation; it also has genuine poetic value because of its rhythm, its frequent use of onomatopoeia, its musical correspondences with the tone of the story, tragic or comic, pathetic or sententious. The lyric may also contribute to the progress of the action: its function is often similar to that of the soliloquy on the Western stage, or of the inner monologue in modern fiction; messages carried by birds are often conveyed through song. It is not the least of Birago Diop's merits that he managed to remain true, even in an alien linguistic medium, to the subtlety and the complexity of the *griots'* art, often providing the original Wolof song alongside its French rendering. As Roland Colin put it,

> Birago Diop est un grand artiste, grand traducteur aussi, mais sans ombre de trahison. Les contes d'Amadou Koumba nous révèlent la fine fleur des griots wolofs, et il a su trouver avec bonheur l'expression française qui rend la succulence et le soleil des paroles nègres. Il a rendu ces contes audibles au lecteur européen le moins averti de l'âme noire, en lui ciselant toutes les finesses de l'émotion et de la sensation africaine des êtres et des choses.[23]

Birago Diop's mildly satirical vision did not seek utterance in the gentle humour of the animal fables alone. Alongside the twenty-odd animal stories in his three volumes, there are a dozen narratives dealing with human beings. But whereas a Muslim writer like Ousmane Socé had severely criticized the parasitism of the *griots* in his *Karim*, Birago Diop, in his greater sympathy for the more ancient, animistic tradition of the peasant class, aimed his satirical irony at the village *marabouts*, their false bigotry, their hypocrisy, their fake learning and their shameless exploitation of peasant superstitiousness.

Bush life as depicted in most of Diop's stories is almost untouched by the European impact. Yet, one of the best tales focuses on the theme of acculturation. Published in Diop's first collection, "Sarzan" is the story of an African N.C.O. who comes back to his village and endeavours to introduce his own concept of Western civilization; faced with the obdurate passiveness of the villagers who are quite satisfied with the way things have always been, he fails and goes mad. While the theme is handled in the vein of the folktale, "Sarzan"—a dramatized version of which was produced in 1954 by Lamine

[22] S. M. Eno Belinga, *Découverte des chantefables Beti-Bulu-Fang du Cameroun* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970).

[23] Roland Colin, *Les Contes noirs de l'Ouest-africain, témoins majeurs d'un humanisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1957), p. 40.

Diakhate—should probably be regarded as a short story in the Western sense because of its topical subject-matter and of its unobtrusive relevance to specific social and cultural problems raised by the intrusion of Europe.

Birago Diop's most gifted rival in the fifties was Bernard Dadié (b. 1916) from the Ivory Coast. His first significant work was a collection of *Légendes Africaines* (1954), one of which relates the semi-historical story of the Baule queen Pokou, who sacrificed her own child to ensure the success of her people's migration which she was leading: this episode had already inspired Maximilien Quenum in the forties and the Ivoirian William-Ponty students in the thirties; it was later to be brought to the stage again in *Abra Pokou* by Eugène Dervain (b. 1928), a Martinican writer who had acquired Ivoirian citizenship, and by Charles Nokan (b. 1936) in *Abraha Pokou* (1971). Yet Dadié is better known as a story-teller on account of his *Le Pagne noir* (1955), which was reprinted in 1971.[24] The title story is a tale of the supernatural, centring on an orphan girl who is harassed by her stepmother; when the latter sends her to wash some dirty linen, no well is willing to wash the loincloth, and the girl's dead mother appears to give her the immaculate piece of cloth that was used for her burial; the moral of the tale is, of course, as the step-mother learns to her dismay, that orphan children remain under the watchful protection of their dead parents. Of the sixteen stories that are gathered in *Le Pagne noir*, ten are connected with the Ananse cycle, which is a favourite in the forest zone all along the Guinea coast. As a folktale character, the spider Ananse resembles the hyena of the savannah area: an hypocritical, unscrupulous rascal whose clumsily contrived schemes usually end in failure and frustration.

Apart from Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié, few of the francophone writers of Africa have shown sufficient ability to produce satisfactory equivalents of the folktale proper. An example is *A la belle étoile* (1962) by Benjamin Matip (b. 1932) from Cameroon. Some of the tales in his collection are traditional stories faithfully adapted into French: one such is the tale of the boa who set out to eat his human benefactor but had to pay dearly for his ingratitude at the hands of the tortoise. In general, however, this committed writer changes the original meaning of traditional tales so as to make them illustrate, often with ill-advised magniloquence, political ideas borrowed from the West, as in "Le drapeau du sourire."

In fact, the rôle of the folktale *stricto sensu* dwindled in the written literature of francophone Africa. None of the later authors, whose work was often published by the Centre de Littérature Evangélique in Cameroon, really succeeded in creating written equivalents in French of the total impact of oral art: they reverted to the earlier, European, tradition of merely sketching out the bare outline of the plot of a tale. It is significant that half of the Congolese poet Tchicaya U Tam'si's *Légendes africaines* (1968) was borrowed from earlier anthologies by Frobenius and Cendrars!

This does not mean that modern authors abandoned traditional art as a source of

[24] See especially Merle Hodge, "The Folktales of Bernard Dadié," *Black Images*, 3,3 (1974), 57–63, and Wyatt MacGaffey, "The Black Loincloth and the Son of Nzambi Mpungu," *Research in African Literatures*, 5 (1974), 23–30.

inspiration. But whereas from the early sixties Nigerian anglophone writers showed a vivid interest in the religious myths of their respective tribes, especially the Yoruba, francophone writers were more attracted to historical (or semi- or pseudohistorical) legends. This resulted in a number of written works which are often difficult to classify, whether as short novels, long short stories, or as scholarly studies. To this type of writing, which followed in the wake of Hazoumé's *Doguicimi* and of much William-Ponty drama, belongs Abdoulaye Sadji's *Tounka* (Dakar, 1952), which the author inappropriately described as a "nouvelle" although it is a traditional story relating to the migration of the Lebu people of Senegal towards the sea. Several similar, slightly later, works, such as *La Légende de M'Pfounou Ma Mazono* (1959) by Jean Malonga (b. 1907) from the Congo or *Crépuscule des temps anciens* (1962) by Nazi Boni (1912–1969) from Upper Volta, can be regarded as short novels, unlike *Au Tchad sous les étoiles* (1962), a collection by a considerably younger writer, Joseph Brahim Seid (b. 1927) from Chad. This work contains a few animal fables and a number of marvellous stories reminiscent of the Arabian nights, but the greater interest attaches to legends dealing with the historical past of the little Sudanic kingdoms of Bagirmi and Wadday which had managed to retain a measure of independence on the outskirts of the mightier empires of Bornu and Kanem. Although stylistically Seid's collection is somewhat superior to Matip's, its aesthetic value as written literature is limited, and the same verdict also applies to the many volumes of tales and legends that were to be published in the ensuing decades by francophone authors with antiquarian interests, and often for an audience of children.

This deterioration in aesthetic quality is due, no doubt, to insufficient command of the French language, but also to the intrinsic properties of a genre whose hybrid character was very conspicuous in *Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue* (1960) by Djibril Tamsir Niane (b. 1932), a Guinean writer of the younger generation who fled his country in the seventies to acquire Senegalese citizenship. While a French historian like Robert Cornevin could claim that this book

> reste un travail remarquable d'un historien formé aux disciplines occidentales et qui utilise admirablement les traditions orales,[25]

another French scholar, Robert Pageard, observes:

> la littérature soundjatesque était déjà abondante, mais n'avait su, comme D. T. Niane, reproduire l'autorité, la superbe, la fertilité imaginative du griot ni choisir comme lui les tournures et les détails qui rendent le héros et le narrateur également présents dans le livre.[26]

The story of Sundiata, the thirteenth-century Mande-speaking ruler of the ancient Mali empire is purportedly narrated by a griot who first introduces himself, explains his

[25] Robert Cornevin, *Littératures d'Afrique noire d'expression française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), p. 230.

[26] Robert Pageard, "Soundiata Keita et la tradition orale," *Présence Africaine*, 36 (1961), p. 51.

function as story-teller and guardian of the traditions, and claims the full attention of his audience for the momentous matters which he is going to relate. Next comes the report of Sundiata's mythical birth as the son of a minor Sudanic ruler and of a hunchback girl who had once been a buffalo. Sundiata's childhood and youth are marked by a number of strange occurrences which the *griot,* i.e. Niane, duly recounts with little concern for verisimilitude. It is also the griot's function to praise the lineage of the ruler to whose generosity he owes his livelihood. As a result, Niane's story shows nothing even remotely resembling scholarly detachment: it is a panegyric tale, designed to inspire sympathy for the hero when he is denied his legitimate birthright, contempt for his enemies who are described as usurpers, indolent rulers, unscrupulous tyrants, or murderous and licentious despots, and boundless admiration for Sundiata's courage, his physical and moral strength, his determination to liberate his people and to establish peace, justice and prosperity among his subjects.

Niane's later historical works establish beyond the shadow of a doubt his reputation as a genuine scholar. But his *Soundjata* belongs to a different category. It reflects the conception of history as a form of the literary art, which prevailed from Sallust to Michelet. In this respect, it is in fact a prose epic (as acknowledged in the subtitle), the only piece of French narrative prose derived from traditional art which can stand comparison with Birago Diop's tales, although mention must also be made of the felicitous use of the Sundiata legend in the last novel by a Guinean contemporary of Niane's, Camara Laye's *Le Maître de la parole* (1978).

This epic conception of history is bound to lose ground as African intellectuals become more and more imbued with modern ideas about historical objectivity and rigorous standards of scholarship. In all likelihood, the narrative tradition itself will die as a source of inspiration as transistor radios and television sets gradually penetrate the remotest bush villages. Two orientations now dominate the transposition of oral to written art: one is the kind of romantic antiquarian interest which prompted the Grimm brothers, Hans Christian Andersen and the whole of the *Märchen* tradition; the other is the pedagogic desire to join *utile dulci* and to teach children moral truths in a pleasant way, which was exemplified by Charles Perrault's *Contes de ma mère l'oye* and was recently the overt purpose of Madiya Nzuji's *Lenga* (Lubumbashi, 1976).

All this, however, does not mean that the traditional forms are no longer alive and productive. As pointed out earlier, new stories go on being invented, which take into account recent events and the present-day conditions of African society. Some remain unpublished and are spread orally, sometimes with the powerful help of the modern mass media. Others are composed in writing with a view to publication in print: inevitably they have to conform in style and form to the conventions of printed literature. Largely for this reason they should perhaps be called "short stories" rather than tales, as the conventions of written art are different from those of oral art. In this respect, Sadji's *Tounka* should not have been called a *nouvelle* (short story), but a *conte* (tale), and some of Birago Diop's *Contes* should be described as *nouvelles:* this is exemplified in "Sarzan", already mentioned, or in the later "Sa Dagga" (in his *Contes et lavanes*) which relates the comic misfortunes of a *griot* who was unable to adapt himself to the demands of

modern life. An easy transition from the traditional tale to the modern short story has thus been effected and a number of younger writers soon addressed themselves to the latter genre, taking their inspiration from real experiences and the vital problems of the people surrounding them.

The most talented of the francophone short-story writers is Sembène Ousmane (b. 1923), whose *Voltaïque* (1962),[27] however, still has links with the oral tradition; the title story is an aetiological tale taking place in the days of slave-raiding; it claims that the origin of tattooing and scarifications is to be found in the people's attempts to disfigure their own bodies and thus make themselves unattractive to slave traders. Likewise, "La mère," centres on a woman's heroic opposition to a lustful tyrant who claims his *droit du seigneur* over the prettiest girls in his kingdom. But in the main, the stories in *Voltaïque*, like Sembène's earlier novels, focus on such social problems as the condition of the African workers ("Chaïbe"), the attempts to organize African trade unions ("Prise de conscience"), the shameless exploitation of the poor by hypocritical *marabouts* ("Mahmoud Fall", "Communauté"), polygamous marriage and the solitariness of women ("Ses trois jours", "Souleymane"), the transfer of African maid-servants to Europe by former settlers ("La Noire de ..."), etc. Sembène, however, was chiefly known as the novelist of *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and other pieces of prose fiction that were to become highly influential in the late seventies.

It would be idle to list the many collections of tales and short stories that were published, from the mid-sixties onwards by the only two African francophone publishing houses in existence, C.L.E. in Cameroon and Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines in Dakar-Abidjan. One writer deserves to be singled out, however, because he has successfully combined the modern-type short story with the old-fashioned folktale by narrating events which take place in modern Africa, yet are deeply influenced by traditional beliefs. This is Jacques-Mariel Nzouankeu (b. 1938) a lawyer from Cameroon, whose play *L'Agent spécial* had been printed in *Abbia* (1964) before the publication of his collection of short stories entitled *Le Souffle des ancêtres* (1965). The title story relates how a newly-married girl is destroyed by the gods because they are jealous of her beauty and happiness. "La parole de Mouankoun" concerns the ritual murder of a young student on the order of a soothsayer. Although Nzouankeu, who gave up creative writing after this first book, showed some talent in sustaining a sense of dramatic tension until the tragic ending of each of his four tales, nevertheless it is true, as Dorothy Blair observes, that their interest "resides less in the literary performance than in the intention to resuscitate a mythology which he feels still has relevance for the people of independent Cameroon. The fact that this book has been found to justify a reprint in 1971 indicates that he is not entirely wrong."[28]

While, then, the literary exploitation in French of Africa's oral tradition had its heyday in the fifties with Birago Diop and Bernard Dadié, and while collections of tales have been produced since in considerable numbers by less gifted writers as a matter of

[27] See Y. S. Boafo, "*Voltaïque* d'Ousmane Sembène: Commentaires et observations," *Présence francophone*, 15 (1977), 11–30.

[28] Dorothy Blair, *African Literature in French* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), p. 68.

pious duty to the culture of the past, it seems that the genre is doomed to extinction as the traditional way of life itself disappears, as the art of oratory grows neglected, and as writers whose childhood was spent in remote villages are superseded by representatives of the new urban society. Oral narrative is bound to vanish as a major art form, and so is its translation into European languages. Already in the mid-sixties, the modern-type short story was beginning to take its place as the African writers' favourite form of brief fiction. But the history of modern literature shows that, leaving aside such exceptional figures as Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, or Ernest Hemingway, the short story is clearly a minor genre, widely practised by younger writers as part of their training to become full-grown novelists. A typical example is Henri Lopès (b. 1937) from the Congo Republic of whose stories in *Tribaliques* (1971) it could legitimately be said that they deal with

> tous les problèmes actuels de l'Afrique: la main-d'œuvre noire émigrée en Europe, l'hypocrisie politique, réflexions sur la colonisation le néo-colonialisme, l'injustice sociale et le non-respect de la dignité humaine, les dessous inquiétants de l'ambition politique.[29]

Five years later, Lopès was to play his role in the renascence of the francophone novel in the seventies with *La Nouvelle romance* (1976).

Bernard Dadié was ten years younger than Birago Diop, but both were older men as compared with the new generation of writers, who emerged simultaneously. Among their own contemporaries, few were able to excel in extended fiction the way these two did in the traditional tale. It was left to the young generation to turn the late fifties into a golden age for the African novel in French.

(Translated from the French by Françoise Contant)

ADELE KING

THE GROWTH OF THE NOVEL

While between the two world wars the early, locally educated literati from France's African empire, and especially from West Africa, A. M. Diagne, Bakary Diallo, Massyla Diop, Hazoumé, Couchoro, Abdoulaye Sadji and, to some extent, Ousmane Socé—had been primarily attracted to the novel, after World War II the impact of Senghor's personality and of the negritude ideology was driving members of the older generation in two different directions: lyrical poetry and the folk tale. The fact that the fifties were a period of blossoming for the francophone novel is due to a younger generation. Nevertheless, a few representatives of Senghor's generation did publish novels in Paris in the years following the war. It is noteworthy that none of them came

[29] Patrick Mérand and Séwanou Dabla, *Guide de littérature africaine* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979), p. 86.

from Senegal or had received the kind of higher education by which Senghor, Socé and Birago Diop had been able to benefit. With the exception of Bernard Dadié, these writers are mostly of historical and sociological interest as they do not have the competence in handling the novel genre which is evident in the younger authors. Their fiction, which often seems confused in purpose and technically crude, attempts to work oral tradition and ethnological material into the novel form. Perhaps influenced by the desire to portray African society for Europe, or to defend African customs, the novelists often intrude on their stories to comment or even to bring in extraneous material. They do not make a distinction between imaginative fiction and didactic writing, often using simplified characters and events for a moral purpose. Bernard Dadié, unquestionably the best prose writer of this generation, succeeds by imaginatively using a narrative voice that implies a more sophisticated point of view towards the subject-matter of his books.

The oldest of these writers, Jean Malonga (b. 1907) from the Congo had received a modicum of education at a Catholic mission school in Brazzaville; like many African writers of his generation, he was involved in politics, and from 1946 to 1951 was a member of the French National Assembly. *Cœur d'Aryenne* was written in the Congo during 1947–48, but not published until 1954, when it appeared in a Présence Africaine collection, *Trois écrivains noirs*. This also included, *Nini, mulâtresse du Sénégal,* which Malonga's Senegalese contemporary Sadji had first published serially in the earliest issues of *Présence Africaine* (1947), and *Ville cruelle,* which a young Cameroonian writer, Alexandre Biyidi (b. 1932) had written under the pseudonym of Eza Boto, which he was later to relinquish in favour of "Mongo Beti." The collection thus forms a kind of link between the older and the younger generations. As to what may be called the "modern" African novel in French, it had been inaugurated the previous year by a young Guinean writer named Camara Laye (1928–1980).

In stark contrast with Camara's *L'Enfant noir, Cœur d'Aryenne* can be considered the earliest of the protest novels against colonialism and Malonga himself can be regarded as one of the very few writers of his generation who illustrate the more radical trends that had been developing in doomed competition with negritude during the decades preceding and following the war.[30] Unfortunately, the novel is so poorly executed and so confused in purpose that it is primarily of interest as a historical document in the development of prose fiction in French. It is the melodramatic story of a love affair between a young Congolese, Mambeké, and a French girl, Solange Morax. Her family runs a plantation in Mossaka; Mambeké is the son of their cook. While they are children Mambeké saves Solange from an alligator in the river. Later, as adolescents, they meet in Brazzaville and fall in love, knowing full well that their society would disapprove. Mambeké is sent to France to study; he returns to Mossaka to become director of the local school. Solange becomes pregnant but is afraid to tell her father. When the latter returns from a hunting trip, he discovers his newly-born mulatto grandson and attempts to kill him. Protecting her baby, Solange accidentally

[30] See Mathieu Mounikou, "Jean Malonga, écrivain congolais," *Présence Africaine,* No. 73 (1970), 172–188.

kills her father; she then commits suicide. Mambeké is going to kill himself when his sister persuades him to live for the child.

As a love story, a protest against colonialism, a demonstration of the failure of racial mixing, *Cœur d'Aryenne* is not convincing. The characterization is too simple. Mambeké works doggedly to support himself as a student, is always at the top of the class (having when he was a child learned perfect French in three months by Solange's secret tutoring!), and becomes director of the school at the age of seventeen.[31] He is strong and pure of heart; even his taste in decorating his apartment is "exquisite". Solange is beautiful, charming, without any trace of racism. Although pure she gives herself to Mambeké, who because of his great and noble love accepts her advances.

With a few exceptions the Europeans are totally evil and the Africans are unbelievably good. Solange's father, Roch Morax, is an extreme example of a cynic, a racist, and a libertine. He throws Mambeké a few pieces of sugar for saving Solange's life and tells him never to come near her again. Roch continually beats and humiliates Mambeké's father and forces Mambeké's mother to become his mistress. He later makes most of the young girls of the village sleep with him and has numerous bastard children, for whom he takes no responsibility. The old French priest is a drunken racist who condones Roch's behaviour. The police chief in Brazzaville is a sadistic bigot; he has Mambeké tortured after finding that Solange has, at her own insistence, visited him at his uncle's home. On the other hand, Marie-Rose, Solange's mother, is an extremely gentle and saintly woman, whose death is precipitated by the discovery of her husband's misdeeds. Mambeké's relatives are all strong, noble, and intelligent.

Technically the novel is crude. Authorial interventions are common: "One might think this is pure fiction intentionally embellished. But, alas, it is reality itself" (p. 184).[32] Conversation is stilted and artificial. After a few months in France, Mambeké lectures Roch Morax: "Your philosophy will lead you inevitably...towards a spiritual menopause already announced by the surrealism of your writers" (p. 258).

Malonga wants to reconcile modern materialism with an African sense of the spirituality of life. The conclusion of the novel, however, seems confused. With the suicide of Solange, Franco-African co-operation seems doomed. In spite of Malonga's declared love of France and his plea for young Frenchmen to come to Africa to help in the great work of fraternization (p. 282), the effect of the novel is to show the evil done by Europeans in Africa and the hopelessness of a Senghorian mulattoism.

Before the appearance of *Cœur d'Aryenne,* Malonga had published three legends in Congolese periodicals: "La Légende de Lafoulakari," "Bandouzi et l'avenir" and "Nia ma Badi, le garde." His second work to be printed in France, *La Légende de M'pfoumou Ma Mazono* (1954),[33] is a curious mixture of legend, moral tale, ethnological record of tribal customs, criticism of African traditions, and a utopian vision combining African

[31] If we are to believe the biographical notice in Jahn's *Who's Who in African Literature,* Malonga attended school only from 1917 to 1920, when he became employed "by the administration as scribe and interpreter"; in 1921, aged 14, he was chosen "to become Headmaster of the school in Mbamou" (p. 205).

[32] Jean Malonga, *Cœur d'Aryenne* in *Trois écrivains noirs* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1954), pp. 161–285. Page references in the text are to this edition. On *Cœur d'Aryenne,* see the relevant chapter in A. C. Brench, *The Novelists' Inheritance in French Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 75–83.

[33] The book was reissued in a pocket edition in 1973.

community feeling with European democratic humanism. The story begins with the arranged marriage of Hakoula, at the age of eleven, to Bitouala, her uncle. When her husband kills a slave discovered in her bed, she flees and is led to a remote paradise by the spirit of her grandmother. There she gives birth to Bitouala's son, later named Ma Mazono. When he is fourteen he meets some escaped slaves; after forcing his mother to tell him about her past, he resolves to create a new society in which slaves will be free, child marriages will not be allowed, and traditions will not become rigid. He gathers a group of escaped slaves, who build a new city, N'Tsangou, where all wealth is held in common, misery is unknown, and laws are firm but liberal. *La Légende de M'pfoumou Ma Mazono* is somewhat more successful as literature than *Cœur d'Aryenne*. Malonga's ideal of a just society is defined more coherently; Africans are shown as good and bad; there are no foreign villains. Malonga condemns slavery, disregard for women, and praises those values of bravery, solidarity and respect for the gods which he sees as the essence of traditional African society.

For a long time, Malonga remained the only creative writer to have emerged from the French Congo, or indeed from the whole of what was called French Equatorial Africa, a colonial federation that included the Congo, Gabon, Tchad and Oubangui-Chari (later gloriously transformed into the Central African Empire). All the other novelists of this generation came from the similar federation which France had set up in Western Africa in the mid-thirties. None of their work evinces anything like the same degree of anti-colonial resentment that rages in Malonga's first novel. On the contrary, like some of the short story writers who adapted local folk tales—and like Malonga himself in his second novel—their central tendency was to combine ethnological material with a criticism of some African traditions along the lines inculcated by the educational system. Indeed, the next novelist of this generation to have appeared on the French literary scene, David Ananou (b. 1917) from Togo shows himself surprisingly well disposed towards Christianity and European civilization. His only novel, *Le Fils du fétiche* (1955), might be seen as a late development of the missionary-influenced literature that started with early black South African writers.

Le Fils du fétiche is essentially the story of the customs of Ananou's people, the Ewe, in Togo. It is an attempt to describe traditional culture within the skeletal frame of a story about a few village people who pass through the major events of birth, marriage and death. The book has many weaknesses: unconvincing interior monologues, too many overt intrusions of the author's voice. There is, however, a clear story line and a definite attempt at characterization. The birth of Dansou, the central character, in keeping with a convention frequently found in *griots'* tales, occupies a considerable portion of the narrative. His father, discontented with his two wives, divorces them to take a new wife, who, after trying many traditional remedies for her sterility, is treated by a European doctor in Lomé and is able to conceive Dansou. As his parents regard the doctor as a priest, the birth of the hero is seen as miraculous. Dansou grows up without much parental supervision and rejects the opportunity to go to school, marries and becomes the lucky father of twins, and then is suddenly converted to Christianity and takes the name of Paul.

More important for Ananou than the story is the portrait of the society. It is a society largely ruled by fear of plots and curses, in which rituals play a greater role than moral conscience. As a Christian, Ananou often makes unfavourable judgements of this culture. He is especially bitter about the power of the fetish priests, who are well paid for their services and turn the unpredictability of life to their own advantage. He states in his introduction that "the black man is neither better nor worse than the other sons of Adam. What sometimes makes other regard him as a savage is only his lack of appropriate culture and education" (p. 9).[34] We note the underlying assumption that another culture would be more "appropriate." There is no trace of anti-colonialism in the book, no suggestion that the European presence, which has "accomplished great work in Africa," is in any way to be condemned. Considering the date of its publication, in the midst of the political agitation of the 1950s, its attitudes are very conservative. Ananou says he is addressing a double audience: Europeans will understand African culture; Africans will see that some of their practices are indefensible and need to be changed. *Le Fils du fétiche* has been sharply attacked by African critics for its condemnation of traditional values.[35] While Ananou's explicit statements and the hero's sudden conversion to Christianity undoubtedly weaken the novel, it can be argued that the author does not paint an unsympathetic picture of traditional life. He shows, for example, the value of many rituals in preserving harmony and peace. What is portrayed is less simplistic than the didactic judgements of the author.

The most important novel produced by this generation was written by Bernard Dadié, of the Ivory Coast, who had already gained some fame with his poems and tales. His *Climbié* (1956)[36] is an autobiography transformed into an autobiographical novel by selection of material and by the relationship of the implied narrator to the main character, whose experiences are seen as typical of his generation. It is perhaps significant that Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir,* written about the same time as *Climbié* but published three years earlier, uses similar methods; it is arguable that autobiography, in recording personal growth within a changing society, was a more successful basis for the early African novel than tales of traditional life. Dadié, however, is less concerned than Laye with his own experience and emotions, and more with observations of life in Dakar and Abidjan.

The novel recounts Climbié's life from his early childhood through his schooling in Abidjan and at Gorée, his life as a clerk in Dakar, and after his return to Abidjan, his involvement in politics, which leads to a period of imprisonment. Rather than a sustained narrative, it consists of a series of incidents with long gaps in the chronological sequence. *Climbié* records Dadié's observations of life around him during a moment of

[34] David Ananou, *Le Fils du fétiche* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1955). Quoted from the second edition of 1971.

[35] See for example, Yves-Emmanuel Dogbe, "Critique littéraire et tendances critiques des littératures africaines," *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* No. 50 (1978), 15–20.

[36] This novel was reprinted together with the stories of *Légendes africaines* and the poems of *La Ronde des jours* in Bernard Dadié, *Légendes et poèmes* (Paris: Seghers, 1966), reprinted 1973.

flux, when those of his generation moved beyond traditional society to roles in the modern world. One of Climbié's uncles had served in France in the army, and could have become a clerk in Abidjan, but he chooses to return to farming, a life of hardship and independence. For Climbié and his friends, in spite of the attractions of the uncle's choice, the world has changed too much. *Climbié* describes the great thirst for education, the desire to master the French language, and the struggle to fulfil financial responsibilities to the extended family while living in a new urban society. This generation is unwilling to lose all ties to the past and yet wants to assimilate as much as possible of universal culture.

If the book is of value as a record of the experience of Dadié's generation, confronted by the tensions of two cultures, it also has many moments of purely literary excellence. Cameo scenes of life at school, an amusing anecdote about a European sleight-of-hand artist who seems like a real sorcerer to the audience in Abidjan, a description of an early morning walk through Dakar, each shows Dadié's skill as a careful and often poetic observer of nature and society.

Climbié is built around a few moral themes which are brought to a resolution in the final pages. Although Climbié often seems a passive character (the name means "some other day"), one who, as Ezekiel Mphahlele has suggested, grows like a plant,[37] he gradually absorbs a way of looking at the world, which is only stated clearly towards the end of the book, when he becomes a political journalist. The story is told in the third person, but the observations of the implied narrator throughout are those of Climbié himself. He looks with gentle irony on his childhood impressions, becomes more mature and realistic after living in Dakar, then makes a commitment to an ideal of brotherhood for all men, and works for justice and for understanding. In comparison with other writings of this period, *Climbié* is exceptional in its evenness of tone, its willingness to see good and bad in men of all races. It avoids the simplified and confused politics of *Cœur d'Aryenne* and the nostalgia for a lost past common to its generation.

Dadié has also written three travel books[38]—*Un Nègre à Paris, Patron de New York* and *La Ville où nul ne meurt: Rome*—which share with *Climbié* a gentle satiric glance at the customs and manners of various peoples and a search for striking images to convey a sense of place. If the traveller, now writing in the first person, is portrayed as rather naïve, if he sometimes makes judgements based on very limited information, even gets facts wrong occasionally, we feel that he, like Climbié, is being gently mocked by the author. In other words the "I" of the travel books, like Climbié, is a semi-fictional character, not the author himself. What emerges from a subtle interplay between the author and his persona is a humorous satire both on the countries being observed and on the supposedly naïve African observer. The tone reveals an amiable, modest, wise and honest author behind these creations. He makes fun of himself and of all human behaviour, wanting to show that beneath external differences all men are, for example, attracted to women, whose charms know no nationality; all men facing strange food,

[37] Quoted in the Foreword to Karen C. Chapman's translation of *Climbié* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1971), p. ix.

[38] See on these Janis A. Mayes, "Bernard Dadié and the Aesthetics of the Chronique: An Affirmation of Cultural Identity," *Présence Africaine*, No. 101/102 (1977), 102–118.

strange customs, strange languages, have the same pride in wanting to appear sophisticated; all men have the same fear of death. Surely, the traveller decides, God made us of different colours so that we would study each other and learn to know ourselves.

Each of the books presents some historical account of the city visited: history as a series of often unverifiable tales about clans opposing one another, tales which sound like African oral legends. Dadié's purpose in comparing African and European history is ostensibly to explain Europe to the African reader, but ultimately to make the European reader see that beneath the surface his culture is similar to others. In the first of those travelogues Dadié expresses the hope that each nation will forget about monuments to its victories and see history as man's "long fight to leave the shadows and slowly to rid himself of those forces that oblige him to treat his fellow men as enemies."[39]

Un Nègre à Paris (1959) is written as a letter to a friend in Africa; it begins with the excitement of receiving an air ticket to Paris and ends with the return flight to Dakar. Dadié occasionally uses African terminology in describing Paris: their "chief" is called "president". This assumed naïvety is often used to satirize the French, as when, after describing the difficulties between Catholics and Protestants, Dadié concludes: "this quarrel has the name of a saint: Bartholomew. No one has been able to tell me what side he was on" (p. 86). Occasionally Dadié mentions the racial prejudice he encounters, but seldom with any overt bitterness. He hopes that Parisians' natural love of liberty will bring the era of colonialism to a satisfactory conclusion. If he criticizes the materialism and the tensions of French culture, he loves Paris, "the second country of every man" (p. 171).

Patron de New York (1964) is somewhat less successful. Dadié considers both Europe and Africa as part of the Old World, in contrast to which America is strange and vulgar. His targets are the usual stereotypes: materialism, naïvety, frustrated and aggressive American women, refusal to face death, dependence on machines. Despite his satiric observation that because the Statue of Liberty is in New York harbour liberty has not yet settled on American soil, Dadié sees the American black as beginning to be given his place in society. The United States will, partly perhaps through inter-racial sexual encounters, become the country of United Colours.

La Ville où nul ne meurt: Rome (1968) begins on the airplane from Paris where, seated next to a rabbi, the narrator thinks of the Nazi massacre of the Jews, and of his own Catholicism. He then compares modern Israel, where even educated men till the soil, with modern Africa, which has no "stupid demand for paper qualifications." Suddenly and humorously comes the flash of the satiric knife: "because our leaders know they may happen to give important posts to their relatives who have no qualifications" (p. 44). Satire is directed against all human weakness, in all cultures. In Rome the narrator finds a living symbol of the presence of God beyond the tensions of human history; after seeing the Pope, he realizes that "the past, the present and eternity are linked together" (p. 209). This vision transcends his satire on the dehumanization of men and women in modern Rome and his mockery of Italian materialism, symbolized by the Banco di Santo Spirito.

[39] Bernard Dadié, *Un Nègre à Paris* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959), p. 207. Page references are to the 1976 edition.

It is Dadié's ability to love all his fellows while remaining conscious of their shortcomings, supported by a light satiric touch and a gently ironic style, that gives his prose lasting value.

The most skilful prose writer of his generation, with the exception of Birago Diop, Dadié is certainly the most prolific of all francophone African creative authors, and the one who can boast the most diversified output. Indeed, the majority of the "novelists" among his contemporaries, did not write more than one book of fiction (in Malonga's case, two). Their work is usually marred by a disastrous confusion between fiction, didacticism, moral commentary, history and legend, which is perhaps best illustrated in *Les Grandes eaux noires* (1959) by Ibrahim Issa (b. 1922) from Niger. This is an imaginative speculation on what might have been the early history of the people of the southern Sahara. The action takes place in 182 B.C., at the end of the Punic wars. Issa considers the possibility that seven Roman soldiers came as far as the kingdom of Barbe-Blanche, a ruler along the Niger River. Barbe-Blanche secretly releases them from prison so that his people cannot kill them as hostages, but they are found by a search party of Romans, who then destroy Barbe-Blanche's kingdom. This story is frequently interrupted by the author's comments on many subjects, some very tangentially related to his narrative. Issa is less interested in producing a coherent narrative than in speculating about possible contacts between civilizations in the past, lamenting the lack of written records, and reflecting on God's destruction of individuals and cultures.

Issa praises the culture of Barbe-Blanche's kingdom and depicts him as a humane ruler. He deplores Europeans taking the treasures of the past from Africa, and suggests that European culture is of no importance to Africa. At the same time, many of his points of reference and his images are drawn from European culture: Dante, Homer, even William Tell. Issa is also resolutely modern in many of his attitudes, believing in a single God unknown to Barbe-Blanche, preaching religious tolerance, scoffing at the supposed powers of ancient priests and soothsayers whose predictions he feels only succeeded by pure coincidence.

Les Grandes eaux noires is unfortunately poorly written and edited, with simple errors of language, and an awkward style: "God has other fish to fry" ("Dieu a d'autres chats a fouetter").[40] The book is of some interest as a portrayal of the tensions within the author himself, now rejecting European culture, now relying on it to establish his views. This attempt to portray an early meeting between Africans and Europeans is more a record of what recent contact between the two cultures has produced.

The last novelist of this generation to have emerged in Paris was Nazi Boni (1912–1969), a teacher, journalist and politician from Upper Volta, who was already fifty by the time his first and only novel, *Crépuscule des temps anciens,* reached publication. Although published in 1962, it is similar to the works of the pre-independence period that have been discussed so far in its use of ethnological material to show the value of traditional society; Boni states, however, that his intended audience is primarily his

[40] Ibrahim Issa, *Les Grandes eaux noires* (Paris: Editions du Scorpion, 1959), p. 83.

fellow Africans, who continue to attack the colonial past rather than build a new Africa on the basis of their authentic traditions. *Crépuscule* is partly a chronicle (with footnotes providing dates and documentation) of the history of the Bwawa people in Bwamu (where Boni himself, as a child, was one of the first to receive a Western education). A description of the social customs and beliefs of the Bwawa, *Crépuscule* is at times an ethnological study. A major theme is the dignity and stability of the world view of the Bwawa. They have a well-ordered society that permits them to face natural disasters, to ensure a continuity of power from one generation to the next. They are tragically defeated by the French, after heroic resistance, at a moment when their society has been weakened by poor harvests and epidemics, but also by personal quarrels and lack of respect for traditional moral principles. Nazi Boni shows us both the ideal type of Bwawa society and some of the internal dissensions that helped to undermine it. *Crépuscule* might therefore be compared to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Boni's book is not, however, a novel as such. The plot is interspersed with sociological description; most of the action consists of typical communal functions rather than particularized events. *Crépuscule* begins with a description of the Bwamu and of its legendary origins. It then quickly moves to the beginning of the twentieth century and portrays the typical village life Boni would have known as a child, just before the French invasion in 1916. A stylized story of love and jealousy is set against this background. Térhé, a brave warrior, loves the beautiful Hakanni, but cannot marry her because two of their great-grandparents were cousins. When she becomes pregnant, they take a blood oath to die together. Her uncle, Lowan, jealous of Térhé's reputation for valour, which has eclipsed the renown of his own son—a warrior whose ferocity and love of killing know no bounds—determines to kill Térhé. The white men arrive in force. One Bwawa advises yielding to them; for this profanation of the sacred soil, the tribe fights him; in this battle they violate their principle never to kill an enemy who comes asking for peace. The society quickly loses its strength as a result, just at the moment when Lowan succeeds in poisoning Térhé. Hakanni waits for death to overtake her at the tomb of her beloved.

Boni's style and sense of structure are not those of a novelist. The typical folk tales included in *Crépuscule* come closest to narrative art. The richness of the ethnological detail is perhaps impossible to blend with the story. Rather than judge it as a failed novel, however, one should see *Crépuscule* as a successful presentation of the validity of a traditional society, without reference to another cultural tradition. The poetic story of Térhé and Hakanni, whose tragedy parallels the decline of the tribe, also has epic dignity.[41]

Like Dadié, whose talents he did not have, and unlike Malonga, whose anti-colonialism he did not share, Nazi Boni was a William-Ponty graduate, and this may help account for his amateurish (although no doubt deeply felt) interest in the customs and history of his people. The school's most obvious contribution to the growth of French writing in West Africa had been the constitution of formal drama, based on student

[41] It is worth noting that Boni's novel was reprinted by Présence Africaine in 1976.

assignments to collect legends, folk tales and historical traditions. It is a matter for speculation that in spite of a few local developments this trend did not really give birth to any significant play-writing activity in France. Even Bernard Dadié did not turn back to it until the early seventies. In fact, only one playwright emerged among the contemporaries of Senghor, Dadié and Birago Diop. This was Amadou Cissé Dia (b. 1915) from Senegal, whose play, *La Mort du Damel,* was printed in the first issue of *Présence Africaine* in 1947. It is a pageant rather than a play, a series of scenes in which various warriors explain their views on the conflict that had arisen between the Damel and his son as a result of Faidherbe's conquests in the Senegambia in the 1850s and 60s. Humiliated by his father's defeat, the son kills him. Although lacking the structure of a modern play, *La Mort du Damel* does attempt to develop the psychological motivations of the characters.

Les Derniers jours de Lat Dior (1965), Dia's second published play, performed at the Dakar festival in 1966, is a more substantial drama dealing with the same period of Senegambian history. Lat Dior, a powerful traditional ruler, has suffered many betrayals by his allies and seeks the advice of a holy man, the Saint-Marabout Bamba, who counsels humility. Just before a messenger from Faidherbe arrives to arrange peace, however, Dior has a dream in which he foresees his coming defeat; he decides to go forth to die with dignity, so that "one day our country will finally know true peace, peace with a rediscovered honour."[42] Faidherbe and Dior are both portrayed as honourable; each is endowed with a vision of the Senegambia which their weak advisors do not appreciate. Tragically they cannot understand each other. Faidherbe admires the black leader's courage but is baffled by the announcement that Dior's horse cannot accept the building of a railway.

Technically *Les Derniers jours de Lat Dior* is a dramatized epic, a series of tableaux with musical accompaniments and a festival of drums. Faidherbe and Dior do not meet on stage, and the tension is more often between conceptions of man's destiny than between characters. Perhaps the most effective scene is that between Dior and Bamba; Dior speaks of his desire to save the country from infidel invaders; Bamba replies only in verses drawn from the Koran, opposing his religious fatalism to Dior's heroic vision. Although the characterization is rigid and the language too rhetorical, the tragic conflict with its lack of easy resolution is reminiscent of Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë.* Amadou Cissé Dia perhaps sees himself in the role defined in the opening scene: "The griot is he who magnifies the past in order to enrich a future shining with glory" (p. 17). Even in post-colonial Senegal, emphasis on a heroic past is an assertion of cultural dignity.

As we try to summarize the admittedly minor contribution of this early generation to the African novel, it is clear that despite their frequent clumsiness, they have something in common with the African theorists of negritude. Their major purpose was to describe African culture as worthy to take its place among world cultures; such cultural

[42] Amadou Cissé Dia, *La Mort du Damel et les derniers jours de Lat Dior* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965), pp. 97–98.

emancipation Senghor felt must precede political freedom. Dadié's approach is to insist on the similarity of historical legends, the universality of human emotions. Issa, Boni, Dia and Malonga's *Légende* try to show the value of traditional culture, while admitting that it has some weaknesses. Even as he criticizes many traditional beliefs, Ananou attempts to portray his characters so that the non-African reader will see their essential humanity. In this defence of Africa, certain considerations recur. Most of the writers devote some time to a description of village life, a major subject for Ananou and Boni. Issa, Malonga and Dia describe life in the past and convey the grandeur of former African empires. These writers wish to show the dignity, the devotion to the common good, and the harmony with nature which were supposed to characterize traditional society. Dadié, avoiding didacticism, lets an amused, ironic perception of colonial society, European and African, speak for itself about human dignity.

Frequently, African religious beliefs are shown as compatible with imported religions, or as an equally valid approach to the divine. With the exception of Ananou, all plead for religious tolerance, for the recognition of many paths to God. When matters of belief in the world of spirits are raised, however, scepticism inspired by Western education is often evident—in Issa's equation of an evil demon with the malarial mosquito, in Malonga's suggestion that Hakoula may have crossed a river on stones rather than on the backs of magically summoned hippopotamuses, in Boni's description of the chemical preparation of poisons to cast an evil spell, as well as in Ananou's direct attack on traditional priests, to whom he always refers as "charlatans."

It is striking how often these writers define African culture in relation to that of France. Ananou's attack on superstition needs the support of Christianity. Issa must praise African grilled worms by comparing them favourably to Parisian cooking. Boni brings in verification from French observers to strengthen his history of Swamu. Dia shows Faidherbe praising Lat Dior. Even Malonga shows Europeans praising the wisdom and bravery of Mambeké, who wants his library of European classics brought to the village when he returns. To some extent, of course, the continual references to French culture can be explained by the audience whom this generation could reasonably expect, but such references also show how often the writers themselves felt that, to be valid, an observation or judgement needed to be confirmed by a European. Because they had been educated long before independence, their perspective was conditioned by Western assumptions. In his travel books Dadié reverses this perspective, judging Europe through African eyes; while often admiring French culture, he mocks naïve acceptance of French values. He can, we feel, praise France simply, because he sees his own culture whole and not reflected back to him by Europe.

In none of these authors is the French presence in Africa directly attacked. Issa shifts blame to the British—as Hazoumé had done before him. Ananou stresses what Europe has to teach Africa. Dadié is optimistic that the French will grant liberty at the right moment. Even Malonga, in spite of his bitterness towards colonial injustice and his attack on the hypocrisy of "l'union française" does not, in 1954, speak of independence, and, perhaps significantly, has the hero of *Cœur d'Aryenne* love a Frenchwoman. If literature was used in the political struggle, for this generation its method was indirect; in some cases we cannot be certain that a political goal is clear in the minds of the writers.

Either they felt unable to speak out freely, or had been born too early to think in terms of independence, or were still enamoured of French culture. (Ironically, the most pro-French of this group is Ananou, the only one who has never been to Europe.)

In spite of weaknesses in form and style, of an inability either to master the European novel or to find a satisfactory new form of prose fiction, these writers are all of interest for the way in which they show, even in their confusions, an important moment in the cultural development of modern, francophone black Africa. Boni's work, especially, gives a worthwhile picture of his society. Dadié is clearly a writer of greater talent than the others; this is a matter partly of his prose style, partly of his confident sense of his own identity. This confidence perhaps inspired him to reject the ethnological study of village life, or the attempt to copy the European novel, and to turn instead to a more personal and gently ironic method.

CLIVE WAKE

LYRICAL POETRY,

No doubt to a large extent encouraged by the achievements of the older generation, but perhaps more under the influence of the growing impetus of the anti-colonial movement, lyrical poetry flourished in French-speaking Africa in the fifties and sixties. If quantity were the criterion, this could be described as a golden age of poetry, and the sections that follow could easily become a triumphant catalogue of names and titles. The urge to protest, to join the verbal attack on colonialism, was the driving force, not, for the most part, any innate poetic ability or concern for mastery of the poet's craft. The vast majority of the poets of this period have already begun to pass into oblivion, their protest made and the circumstances that provoked it becoming increasingly remote. An historical account of this period must necessarily select the few works where protest is combined with formal competence and something of the true poet's creative vitality. The most outstanding poet to emerge from this generation is Tchicaya U Tam'si, but because of the difficulty of his work, akin in this respect to that of Aimé Césaire after the *Cahier*, he is probably little read outside the narrow world of the academically trained and the specialists. Unlike Senghor and Césaire, he has exerted scarcely any influence on his own or the younger generation. The most influential poet of this period was, in fact, a man who died after publishing only one volume containing fewer than twenty poems: David Diop. His *Coups de pilon* was to prove a source of inspiration not only to poets, but to everyone actively involved in the struggle for autonomy and independence in French-speaking Africa. In aesthetic terms, he cannot be regarded as a major poet by any stretch of the imagination, although his work reveals a better than average technical and linguistic competence. His influence is probably due to a combination of factors—his qualities as a protest poet, his ability to highlight crucial aspects of the colonial situation, the fact that he published when he did and that he adopted a style popularized by many modern French poets, and last, but not by any means least, his untimely and dramatic death in 1960, which gave him something of the status of a tragic hero.

David Diop was born in Bordeaux of a Senegalese father and a Cameroonian mother. These origins symbolically reflect the nature of French-speaking African poetry of the period—born out of French culture, it belongs to the whole of francophone Africa, not to the country of which the individual poet is a citizen. There is, in other words, little for the most part to distinguish the poetic production of one territory from another. This is largely because the preoccupation with colonialism was a common one

—its image was the same everywhere, and it had to be attacked through the medium of its own language and cultural assumptions. There were, however, occasional differences of emphasis. The preoccupation with orthodox negritude was on the whole confined to Senegal and this is where one finds most emphasis on African as opposed to French culture. The poets of Sékou Touré's Guinea tended to be more militant than those of the Ivory Coast after Houphouet-Boigny's break with Communist militancy in the early fifties and his subsequent policy of co-operation with France.

There are possibly two other factors influencing, or at the very least reinforcing, the absence of regional distinguishing features in this period. The first is cultural and the second political. The same French education was dispensed throughout French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa to all of those who managed to find places in the schools, and in addition it was imposed upon the children from the very earliest age, in their most formative years (unlike British Africa, where primary education was in the vernacular). Only the most gifted and determined writers could hope to overcome this deeply implanted cultural influence, and even those who tried—Senghor, Tchicaya U Tam'si—were far from successful. The political factor derives from the way the French organized their West and Central African territories into two vast contiguous federations, which in turn led to the creation of a major African political party, the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (R.D.A.), which dominated every territory in the two Federations, except for Senghor's Senegal. This unity disappeared overnight with independence, but must have exerted its own kind of influence on the minds of writers while it lasted.

The styles of this period also showed little variation, with one or two notable exceptions which will be mentioned in the following pages. The preferred form was that of free verse, with lines of varying length, mostly short, based on statement or enumeration, and on repetition, especially of the beginnings of lines, techniques commonly found in French poetry from Apollinaire to Eluard. They are deceptively simple to use, and can therefore give the poorest practitioner the impression he is writing poetry, but they are only really effective when handled by a master. This is not, therefore, a period of technical innovation, not even in the case of Tchicaya U Tam'si, in spite of the individuality of his poetry.

This younger generation, then, produced a few good poets and only one major poet, beside whom the great army of protesting poetasters pales into insignificance. But its importance does not lie here. A people displaced within their own land had found a common voice and cried out, albeit in the language of the conqueror, bringing down the walls of the colonial citadel. This was, for the most part, all they intended. The often mediocre aesthetic value of their achievement should not make us forget the authenticity of the feeling that prompted them to lyrical expression. But although the granting of political independence was bound to obliterate the relevance of anti-colonialist poetry, this should not obliterate the important historical fact that a larger number of writers coming from a larger number of countries came to join Senegal and West Africa in the task of creating an African literature in French.

The poets of Senegal are inevitably overshadowed by Senghor, whose achievement is so clearly superior in every way. Much of the poetry written by Senghor's compatriots

tends to reflect the preoccupations of negritude, an essentially Senegalese phenomenon, none more so than that of Lamine Diakhate (b. 1928), whose work rarely frees itself, even at its best, from the influence of Senghorian rhythms, language and themes. The first version of *La Joie d'un continent* (1954), later expanded considerably as the title poem of *Primordiale du sixième jour* (1963), does however have a firmness of expression and a lyrical quality which are also to be found, here and there, in the later collection *Temps de mémoire* (1967). The elements of negritude's cultural preoccupations are present also in a volume published in the late sixties by Lamine Niang (b. 1923) entitled *Négristique* (1968), with a preface by Senghor, who meditates on Niang's preference for the term *négristique* to that of *négritude*. There is, overall, an insubstantial quality to the ideas of Diakhate and Niang, which makes of them purveyors of negritude, rather than creative bearers of a vital ideal or tradition. To the same generation belongs Annette Mbaye (b. 1926), the first female author of Senegal, who published two slender collections of poetry in the mid-sixties, but should be regarded primarily as a journalist.

Next to Senghor, probably the most celebrated and influential Senegalese poet is David Diop (1927–1960), less an exponent of negritude than a straightforward protest poet. Because of his origins, it is difficult, of course, to place Diop in a national context; he belongs, like the impact of his poetry, more properly to all-Africa. Yet there is a preoccupation with culture in his poetry which justifies his association with the land of negritude, as does the fact that five of his poems were first published in the Senegalese section of Senghor's historic *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre* (1948). His popularity —the word is more appropriate than any other more literary description—started there, and was merely confirmed when his one and only volume of poems, *Coups de pilon* (1956), was published shortly before his death in an air crash. The appeal of Diop's poetry lay, as it still does, on the one hand, in the passionate directness, simplicity and universality of his protest, and on the other in the vivid precision of his imagery and his style, with a touch of satire which enabled him to avoid the oversimplification, and consequent dullness, of most contemporary African polemical poetry. Born and educated in France, where he lived until he became a teacher in Dakar in 1957, with French as his mother-tongue, he felt more completely alienated from Africa than poets like Senghor and Birago Diop could possibly be. Hence, presumably, a sense of universality which is quite different from Senghor's: where the elder poet looked forward to a hybrid, planetary civilization, David Diop was keenly aware of the worldwide effects of the colonial scourge; his poetry is packed with allusions to white supremacy and to the fight against it not only in Africa, but also in America and in Asia. Hence also the uncompromising aggressiveness and the harshly negative attitude evinced in his poetry: in his deep commitment to the destruction of white power, he could only reject the white man and his civilization, lock, stock and barrel; his business was not to frame imaginative long-term plans for cultural cross-fertilization, but to spark resentment and stir hatred with a view to immediate action. This accounts for the extensive influence of his inspiration and rhetoric, which made itself felt in francophone poetry long after the French colonies had become independent: in poems dealing with the survival of colonialism in Southern and in Portuguese Africa.

Despite Senghor's overwhelming stature, *Coups de pilon* was enough "to establish

David Diop as the most interesting and talented African poet of the fifties,... the spokesman of a new age, the age for whom Senghor must appear a figure too deeply committed to the idea of a French community,... the Mayakovsky of the African Revolution."[43] Poets all over French-speaking Africa sought to imitate the short, vivid poems of Diop. This was evident even in Senegal, where Diop's most noteworthy successor is perhaps Malick Fall (b. 1920), better known for his novel *La Plaie*. His volume *Reliefs* (1964) has passed almost unnoticed, perhaps indicative of changing preoccupations; but these short, succinct, often skillful protest poems are reminiscent of the best achievements of David Diop and, at times, of one of the latter's own masters, Léon Damas. There are indications that by the late sixties Diop's influence was gaining ground among younger poets, born towards the beginning of the war: in *Présence* (1966), Amadou Wade (b. 1923) handles the themes of colonial violence, liberty and independence; but these are expressed in a vague, general vocabulary, too lightweight to have much impact, despite a competent sense of form. And Assane Diallo (b. 1938), who writes mainly in Fula, managed to combine the themes of political protest and of cultural negritude in *Leyd'am* (My land, 1967): the style owes something to David Diop, but it has its own vigour and intensity of emotion, and a rather richer and more varied range of imagery.

Apart from Senegal, two other West African countries had generated a rivulet of creative writing in French published in Paris by the middle of the century: these were Dahomey and the Ivory Coast. In the year following Dadié's *Afrique debout!*, a slightly younger fellow-citizen of his, Anoma Kanie (b. 1920), published *Les Eaux du Comoë* (1951), a collection of first-person poems dealing mostly with love, although they include some very mild protest poetry. They reveal a fairly mature command of technique—the usual short-line free-verse poem, for the most part—but there are a few rhyming poems and, what is most interesting, one or two poems written in *petit-nègre*. They all have a pleasant lyrical quality, without any specially striking inventiveness.

Kanie's poetry was to prove fairly typical of Ivory Coast lyrical poets, whose themes were generally more varied than elsewhere—they wrote about nature and love in the midst of times that seemed to demand protest only; even their protest poetry was much less aggressive than in most other parts of Africa, and the generation that followed Dadié lacked his irony, gentle as it was. The poetry of Maurice Kone (b. 1932) was even more obviously self-centred than Kanie's. An early volume, *La Guirlande des verbes* (1961), shows little awareness of current social and political realities, and contains poems about nature and love written in uncomplicated, if competent, free verse. *Au Seuil du crépuscule* (1965) is, however, alert to the contemporary crisis of Africa, largely perhaps because

[43] Gerald Moore, *Seven African Writers* (Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 18, 21. For further information on David Diop, see R. Summers, "La pertinence de la poésie de David Diop pour les jeunes Noirs aux Etats-Unis," *Présence Africaine*, No. 75 (1970), 91–96; Simon Mpondo, "David Mandessi Diop: An Assessment," ibid., 97–107; Paul Ansah, "Commitment and Poetry: The Case of David Diop," *Re: Arts and Letters*, 6, 2 (1972), 28–47; James M. Purcell, "David Diop (1927–1960): A Checklist," *Studies in Black Literature*, 4, 1 (1973), 27; Richard L. Brodesky, "Poetry and History in David Diop's *Coup de pilon*," *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 39, 4 (1974), 121–25; Samuel Adeoya Ojo, "David Diop: The Voice of Protest and Revolt (1927–60)." *Présence Africaine*, No. 103 (1977), 19–42; Barthélemy Kotchy, "Explication du poème 'Rama-Kam'," *Revue de Littérature et d'Esthétique Négro-Africaines*, 1 (1977), 45–53.

the poet is more mature and therefore more aware of himself and his inescapable ties with reality. A recent volume, *Poèmes verlainiens* (1969), is trivial and fails to build on the earlier promise. Bertin N'Guessan-Gbohourou (1935–1974), in *À l'ombre du tam-tam* (1964), writes poems about African rural life and its pleasures, and about a visit to France he obviously enjoyed. Verse rather than poetry, its only political implications are support for Houphouet-Boigny's leadership and friendship, especially cultural, with Europe: he dreams of visiting Athens, "le berceau/De la civilisation.../M'agenouiller enfin/Sur le tombeau d'Homère."

Joseph M. Bognini (b. 1936) is undoubtedly the most interesting of the Eburnean poets,[44] even though he has published only one, fairly substantial, volume, *Le Dur appel de l'espoir* (1961). He writes as an African very conscious of Africa, but he is able to combine with this, and rather more effectively and impressively than Kanie or Kone, personal insights into the universal experience of living in a world surrounded by nature and impelled by the emotions of love, joy, fear and the awareness of human mortality. The style blends simplicity and complexity of expression and imagery, which demands that one approach this poetry with particular alertness and seriousness.

Although Dahomey (now Benin) used to be known as the Latin Quarter of Africa and had produced one of the first African novelists in French, Paul Hazoumé, it did not generate much by way of poetry. Its first appearance in this field was a slight, 16-page collection of poems, *Un Nègre raconte* (1954) by Paulin Joachim (b. 1931) who was at the time secretary to the French surrealist poet Philippe Soupault. From 1956 he was chiefly active as a journalist; some of his essays were later gathered in *Editorial africaine* (1967). Simultaneously, he was writing more mature poetry which appeared in his second collection, *Anti-grâce* (1967): it is vigorous in its celebration of independence, and there is no hint of sentimentality, but it still harks back to the colonial period with anger. The language and style are forceful and often subtle in an individual and creative way:

> j'appelle anti-grâce
> d'abord l'offrande de la vie
> comme un conflit permanent à élucider
> dans cette contrée en partage où il ne se passe rien
> où nul chemin n'escalade une montagne
> où le soleil même ne remonte plus jamais du creux
> de la mer.

The only other Dahomean poet to emerge during that period was Richard G. Dogbeh-David (b. 1932) whose first collection, *Les Eaux du Mono* (1963), written when he was a student, is clearly influenced by David Diop, recently dead, but the protest poems are blended with love poems and poems about Dahomey. The technique is the familiar one of repetition and enumeration, and the sentiments tend to be too general to give this collection a distinctive quality. The same characteristics are found in his next two collections, *Rives mortelles* (1964) and *Cap Liberté* (1969). The latter is concerned

[44] Few of those poets have called the critics' attention. On Bognini, see Ellen C. Kennedy, "Four African Poets," *African Forum*, 2, 1 (1966), 103–107.

more with the need for a common effort to make independence work, and the heavily didactic tone leaves no room for the spontaneity of the early, youthful volume.

Cameroon was probably the only country outside West Africa and Madagascar, that could boast of a tradition, however tiny, of European-language writing and of local publication. As a mandate territory where Christianity and the accompanying educational modernization had first been introduced by Protestant missionaries, its élite was more interested in local culture and languages than was the case in most other parts of France's African empire. Although throughout the fifties Cameroon was best known for its novelists, it has not lacked poets, even if they have made less of an impression.[45] The power of the local, vernacular inspiration, bolstered perhaps by negritude and the revaluation of tradition, was apparent in the works of Elolongué Epanya Yondo (b. 1930), whose *Chants haoussas* (1952) was followed by *Kamerun! Kamerun!* (1960), a bilingual collection of poems presented in French and Dualla, the author's mother-tongue.

His contemporary François Sengat-Kuo (b. 1931) was for a long time better known, under the pseudonym Francesco Ndintsouna, as the author of a striking volume of simple, often finely wrought poems, characterized by a perceptively ironic tone: *Fleurs de latérite* (1954). A more recent collection, entitled *Collier de Cauris* (1970), celebrates the advent of independence and the contributions of some of its heroes—contemporary and historical; it also hails the black man's fight for recognition and emancipation in South Africa, Angola and the United States; technically, it is a more ambitious work, more rhetorical and more intense in mood, although one or two of the poems are very reminiscent, in their simplicity and directness, of the earlier volume.

In some respects, the most interesting of the Cameroonian poets is Jean-Paul-Nyunaï (b. 1932). *La Nuit de ma vie* (1961) and *Piments sang* (1963) contain poems written in the early fifties, and show a development of style from a tightly controlled, very evocative simplicity to a rather more complex structure, imagery and language very reminiscent of Césaire, whom Nyunaï must have been reading and enjoying at the time —the Césaire of *Les Armes miraculeuses,* not of the *Cahier*. The earlier poetry deals with the universal experience of existence, only indirectly with colonial themes, but in his later work his anti-colonialist anger is much more in evidence, which perhaps explains the attraction of Césaire.

The intriguing specifity of Cameroon is also illustrated by the fact that it produced one of the very few African Catholic priests who have chosen to express their faith in lyrical terms: the poetry of Engelbert Mveng (b. 1930)—who is better known as a historian—was first published in English translation under the title *Take Up Your Cross: Meditations on the Way of the Cross* (1963); other poems of his reached print in the original French in Dakar as *Lève-toi amie, viens* (1966). The following year, Cameroon could also boast the second (after Annette Mbaye from Senegal) female poet in francophone Africa, thanks to *Poèmes sauvages et lamentations* (1967) by Jeanne Ngo Mai (b. 1933); while this collection inevitably contained a few of those political outpourings denunciating white oppression or praising black unity, which most African poets as-

[45] Patrice Kayo, "Brève histoire de la poésie camerounaise," *Présence Africaine*, No. 93 (1975), 200–207.

sumed to be part of their appointed duty, her poetry was more genuinely lyrical, more personal and more intimate, less hectic and esoteric, couched in more conservative syntax, than was the case with most of Africa's poetry in French at the time.

Of the colonies that had no published experience of literary composition in French, Guinea might have been expected to exhibit particular originality as—under the leadership of Sékou Touré, himself a prolific author of doctrinal treatises and political pamphlets—it was the only territory to reject the proposal for limited autonomy at the famous referendum of 1958. And indeed, the first Guinean publication, *Poèmes africaines* (1950) by Keita Fodeba (1921–1969) was so vehemently anti-colonialistic that it was banned throughout French Africa. In France, however, the writer acquired real fame not in his capacity as a poet, but as the organizer of the Ballets Africains. His literary work includes songs in his own language, Malinke, but these do not seem ever to have reached print. When Guinea became an independent republic, Keita Fodeba was appointed Minister of the Interior, and occupied several cabinet posts until he was accused of plotting against Sékou Touré, and assassinated in prison. Meanwhile, his *Poèmes africaines* had been reissued as part of a larger collection of prose and verse, *Aube africaine* (1965). The simplicity and brevity of the narrative give these "prose poems" their evocative quality, but the text is in fact the least important. The book owes its origin to the author's work as a choreographer, and, beyond this, to his experience as a William-Ponty student: the poems are essentially scenarios based on folk tales and everyday village life, intended to be dramatized in music, song, mime and dance. They start from one side (and Senghor from the other) of what Senghor sees as the most complete expression of poetry in Africa: the combination of words *(la parole)*, music and dance.

While Keita Fodeba's career and fate are unfortunately rather typical of what can happen in independent Africa, it is equally significant that *Vers la liberté* (1961), the only collection of verse of his contemporary Mamadou Traoré,—who also signs himself somewhat confusingly Ray Autra (b. 1916)—should have reached print in Peking: it is an attack on colonialism and all its works in the most outspoken, often violent, and bitter language. There is little real poetic skill here, and the verse is carried entirely by the force of the poet's anger—not a very reliable way of establishing a reputation as a poet, as opposed to that of polemicist.

By the late sixties, two younger Guinean poets had emerged: Condetto Nenekhaly-Camara (1930–1972) and Conté Saidou. The poems in the former's *Lagunes* (1956) draw their inspiration from negritude and recall the preoccupations of Senghor's generation: they celebrate African life and the African tradition, they criticize angrily the destructiveness of colonialism and evoke the black Diaspora. Nenekhaly held a number of important posts in independent Guinea and did not return to creative writing until a couple of years before his death, when he participated in the sudden growth of francophone drama in the early seventies. As to Conté Saidou, his only volume of verse, *Au fil de la liberté* (1966), showed him to be a very competent craftsman, with a sound sense of structure and rhythm; he has clearly been an apt pupil of Césaire, David Diop and Dadié. But he also has the true poet's sensibility, with a sensitivity to language and

metaphor rare amongst protest works. He sums up his idea of poetry—and, by implication, his achievement—in one of his poems:

> Pour chanter la souffrance et la colère
> La voix ne suffit pas le cœur est nécessaire.

It was thanks to this generation of poets, born around 1930, that several of the new states did make an appearance on the francophone literary scene, even though they often had only one representative on stage.

In 1957, Jibuti—which was not to become independent, it is true, until 1977, after being known in succession as the Côte Française des Somalis, and, from 1967, the Territoire des Afars et des Issas—produced its first and so far only writer in French, Somali poet William J. F. Syad (b. 1930). His *Khamsine* is a slim volume of poems which pass rather like the wind of the desert that gives it its title

> Comme
> le *Khamsine*
> du désert
> Tu as passé
> dans ma vie.

The poems are mostly on the theme of love, but the lover could be Africa as much as a woman, and the tenderly lyrical poems that celebrate her are more often than not also reflections on good and evil, the passing of time, the eternal, with a more specifically religious basis. In other words, Syad sees the world through the eyes of his religion, Islam.

The same year saw the publication of Togo's first volume of French verse, *Courage,* by Toussaint Viderot Mensah (b. c. 1935). This 90-page collection was later incorporated into a bulkier book of short poems, whose somewhat cumbersome title, *Courage si tu veux vivre et t'épanouir, fils de la grande Afrique* (1960), conveys the essential themes of the volume. Mensah is preoccupied by the apparent hopelessness of the black man's condition—

> Pauvre noir, pauvre de toi et de moi.
> Pauvres, nous sommes pauvres et sans loi —

but the love poems in the same volume present a more optimistic outlook. Mensah's work impresses by its lyrical simplicity, which almost verges on prose. His fondness for unusual titles was also evidenced in a novel which appeared simultaneously, *Pour toi nègre, mon frère... "Un homme comme les autres".*

The year 1960 was marked by the emergence of the Central African Republic with a poet who was to prove more prolific and tenacious: Pierre Bamboté (b. 1932). His first printed work, *La Poésie est dans l'histoire* (1960), was a gesture of protest against slavery and colonialism, consisting of a single poem written in short lines which swell into long lines and prose paragraphs, and decrease, and swell again, to convey the rising and falling emotion of the poet embittered by Africa's suffering in history:

Je suis un Bandia très en pointe dans l'amertume;
ayant bu chaque génération ce miel noir de bouche
amère.

There is an authenticity about the emotion, the evocation of Africa and the language of this poem, which is carried over into Bamboté's later poetry. *Chant funèbre pour un héros d'Afrique* (1962) is a funeral dirge in honour of the recently assassinated Patrice Lumumba, based largely, and very effectively, on the forms and language of the traditional funeral dirges of his country. *Le Grand etat central* (1965) recalls the life of the past rulers of central Africa, while *Les Deux oiseaux de l'Oubangui* (1968) is a modern African verse tale of unhappy love. Bamboté's is one of the most distinctive styles of this period. By the late seventies, he had sought shelter in Quebec.

Next came Mauritius, the small Indian Ocean island named after Maurits van Nassau by the Dutch who first occupied it towards the end of the seventeenth century. It was baptized Ile de France by the Compagnie française des Indes which captured it in 1715 and imported African slaves for its sugar-cane plantations. Although it was taken by the British during the Napoleonic wars and recovered its former name, local leadership was in the hands of a French-speaking creole upper class which brought in cheap manpower from India after the abolition of slavery in 1831. Historical circumstances thus account for the bizarre fact that this country, which became independent in 1968, but chose to remain within the British Commonwealth, produced a very gifted francophone writer, Edouard J. Maunick (b. 1931). Like another island poet, Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Maunick is very conscious of the vast sea around and the sea is one of the major symbols of his poetry (*Les Manèges de la mer,* 1964; *Mascaret,* 1966; and *Fusillez-moi,* 1970):

la mer la mer toujours me racontera debout m'ayant arraché
à la solitude
j'étais soi-disant victime à genoux mis au ban de l'universel
banni de l'immense.
mes yeux étaient cloués au nombril d'une île chassée de
l'Afrique par une guerre tellurique
des pans de mer m'exilèrent de l'équateur une lame de mer
trancha les amarres
je tournai le dos pour faire face à la terre frappé de
dérive bruyant de damnation
j'affûtai les mots à crier à redoubler de cris à contrarier
le chant de vivre
mais la mer revint sur ses pas du plus loin-profond des
crevasses
des déserts d'algues vives
me remit debout d'un grand coup de mascaret me replanta
volte-face à l'horizon

There is intense pain in Maunick's poetry, the pain of colonialism and of his own mixed ancestry. Like all the truly significant poetry from French-speaking Africa, it reflects the poet's personal as well as the universal agony of the black man. The intensity of the

poetry is created by a charged, concentrated language and style which ought not to be called surrealist simply because they are difficult; they are modern, derived from contemporary French poetry, but turned inwards towards the poet's isolation and solitude, and outwards towards the Africa of his slave ancestry from which he is separated by the sea.[46]

Mention must also be made of Mali on account of Siriman Cissoko (b. 1934): his *Ressac de nous-mêmes* (1967) is a love poem inspired by Senghor but, in spite of the clear influence of the older poet, it is not without an individual lyrical quality.

Sub-Saharan Africa thus produced a sizeable amount of French verse during the years 1955–1965. Admittedly, much of this abundant output was of slight literary value. Anticolonialism, negritude and nationalistic fervour were its usual ingredients. Several of those writers availed themselves all too readily of the facilities provided by surrealism to conceal their limited command of the French language. At any rate, none of the poets that have been mentioned so far could hope to approach the stature and originality of Senghor, or even of Dadié. In fact, the best lyrical poet of this generation came from the Congo, soon after this country had generated in 1954, the first openly anti-colonial novel, Jean Malonga's *Cœur d'Aryenne*. Already in the three volumes which he published at the end of the decade—*Le Mauvais sang* (1955), *Feu de brousse* (1957), and *A Triche-cœur* (1958)—it was clear that the poetry of Tchicaya U Tam'si (b. 1931)[47] was characterized by its creative vigour, which was itself the product of genuine poetic talent and a passionate anger at the human condition. Except perhaps for his latest volume, Tchicaya U Tam'si's poetry expresses, in its style and in its themes, the torment and anguish of a man who feels his imagination, as well as his life, has been colonized by an aggressive, alien culture. At the same time, there is a more universal, existential anguish behind the sardonic irony that eats away at the world projected by this poetry. The colonial condition intensifies the poet's awareness of the human condition, for the particular situation is merely an expression of the overall human one. In this way, Tchicaya U Tam'si is able to identify, at least implicitly through the direct influences evident in his first volume, with his soul brother, Arthur Rimbaud, another poet who

[46] Because of the peculiar situation of Mauritius and its writers, special interest attaches to *Edouard Maunick: A Black Mauritian Poet Speaks* (Pasadena: California Institute of Technology, 1971).

[47] Tchicaya is practically alone—with his Senegalese contemporary David Diop—among the poets of the post-Senghorian generation, to have received serious critical attention. The first important notice was a paper read by the British scholar Gerald Moore at a conference held in Dakar in March 1963: "Surréalisme et négritude dans la poésie de Tchicaya U Tam'si," *Actes du Colloque sur la Littérature africaine d'expression française* (Dakar: Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines, 1965), pp. 239–249. An English version of this important essay was published as "Surrealism on the River Congo: Surrealism and Négritude in the Poetry of Tchicaya U Tam'si" in *Black Orpheus*, No. 13 (November 1963), 5–12, later reprinted in *African Literature and the Universities*, ed. Gerald Moore (Ibadan: University Press, 1965), pp. 41–50, and in *Introduction to African Literature*, ed. Ulli Beier (London: Longmans, 1967), pp. 100–109; see also Moore's "Introduction" to his translation of Tchicaya's *Selected Poems* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1970); André Cnockaert, "Tchicaya U Tam'si ou 'le temps de renaître'," *Zaïre-Afrique*, No. 67 (1972), 415–423; Arlette Chemain, "Image féminine et révolte dans l'œuvre poétique de Tchicaya U Tam'si," *Annales de l'Ecole des Lettres* (Lomé), 1 (1972), 97–128; Thomas R. Knipp, "Negritude and Negation: The Poetry of Tchicaya U Tam'si," *Books Abroad*, 48 (1974), 311–315; G. Ngal, "Introduction à une lecture d'*Epitomé* de Tchicaya U Tam'si," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 9, 3 (1975), 523–530; and Clive Wake, "Tchicaya U Tam'si," in *A Celebration of Black and African Writing*, ed. King and Ogungbesan (1975), pp. 124–138.

felt crippled by the colonizing effect of religion and society. But, whereas Rimbaud sought to create other worlds with the aid of the imagination, Tchicaya U Tam'si remains firmly rooted in the realities of his own time, and does battle with them.

The themes of Tchicaya's poetry are all related to the colonial situation—in particular, the reaction against the feeling of racial and cultural inferiority inflicted by colonial conquest and education, and against the ambivalence of a Christianity which preached love and yet seemed to foster contempt for other cultures. The essentially cultural revolt of the early volumes reached its apex in *Epitomé* (1962), with its vehement attack on the way Christianity subverts and destroys the cultural values that create a people's and an individual's identity. Written in the shadow of Lumumba's death in 1961, *Le Ventre* (1964) deals more with the problem of leadership, already underlying the anguish of the early volumes, for like Senghor (but less successful in his resolution of the problem) Tchicaya is greatly concerned about the apparently irreconcilable contradiction between action and meditation, politics and poetry. *Arc musical* (1970) suggests that the poet has reconciled himself to his vocation and overcome his sense of guilt at not being a politician.

All of Tchicaya's collections, and with increasing skill, are conceived as units, in which individual poems are parts of a greater whole. They are held together by a complex set of recurring images and symbols, words and phrases, which are not simply repeated, but meditated upon and developed in a truly dynamic, organic way, both within each volume and from one volume to the next. It is his imaginative control of language which makes Tchicaya's poetry as vital as it is. Although the techniques are often reminiscent of surrealism, the poetry is itself not surrealist, for once the reader has found the keys, he can enter the here and now of African experience and, beyond that, of human experience. On the other hand, while Senghor had used some of the surrealistic procedures in order to express with greater freedom an inspiration which is basically romantic, Tchicaya has captured the very spirit of surrealism in its attempt to flash on to the written page the raw images that surge from the depths of the subconscious mind, or rather, perhaps from the body's own organic self-knowledge. The obscurity of his poetry is reinforced by the technique of syntactic juxtaposition, which according to Senghor, is a legacy of genuine African oral poetry. Close analysis reveals the recurrence of image clusters which contain the key to his poetry: his sensitiveness to black suffering is conveyed through Christ-images of crucifixion; his attachment to Africa, through arborescent images of roots, sap and foliage; his rejection of Western intellectualism and West-inspired ideologies, through the very carnality of the imagery. But what distinguishes Tchicaya from most earlier French-speaking African poets is that his African identity does not appear to him as an end in itself: it is an emblem of man's condition. And underneath his preoccupation with suffering, there is what he himself called "a kind of black humor, an inner grin, a sort of chuckle"—a welcome change from the self-conscious earnestness of most African poetry in French.

It is difficult to pass from the powerful rhetoric of Tchicaya U Tam'si's poetry to the gentle, rather flimsy verses of his fellow countryman Martial Sinda (b. 1935). *Premier chant du départ* (1955) deals with the sufferings brought by colonialism, with the poet's love of Africa and his "jeune Congolaise," in a wistful, almost sentimental

way: it expresses a passing mood, not a mind in conflict with its environment. In this, —and also in the fact that his first collection had no follow-up, thus intimating a sort of poetic impotence—Sinda was more typical than Tchicaya of a generation which grew in quantity under the shadow of its illustrious elders (many of the younger poets' works were graced with a preface by Senghor), but whose rhetoric was seldom informed by any real experience or any deep meditation. Although their abundant output testifies to the spreading of the lyrical urge or itch throughout French-speaking Africa, the essence of the younger generation's contribution to French writing of the fifties and early sixties did not lie in their lyrical effusions, but in their narrative prose, in the fact that they were responsible for the creation of the modern African novel.

P. NGANDU NKASHAMA

THE GOLDEN YEARS OF THE NOVEL

An interesting feature of the dozen years or so that witnessed the first flowering of francophone writing and thus the inauguration of black Africa's modern literature was the disparity between the two generations of writers that were concurrently active throughout the period. Whereas the elder generation had produced the continent's first major lyrical poet in the person of Senghor, among the many younger poets only two names were of real interest: Tchicaya U Tam'si and David Diop, most of whose unpublished poems were unfortunately destroyed in the airplane crash that killed him. On the other hand, while the elder writers' attachment to traditional art took the form of French adaptations of folk tales which deserve a highly honourable place in a European literary trend derived from Macpherson, the Grimms and Andersen, the younger writers' prose fiction turned away from this type of inspiration: it undoubtedly seemed to them antiquarian, unduly exotic, and unrelated to the problems of the emergent nations; the trend was only perpetuated by a few minor writers such as Joseph Brahim Seid (b. 1927) from Tchad in *Au Tchad sous les étoiles* (1962) or Benjamin Matip (b. 1932) from Cameroon in *A la belle étoile* (1968); even Tchicaya's *Légendes africaines* (1968), a mere collection of folk tales, was perforce deprived of the originality of his poetry. But on the other hand, while most of the elder writers were rather awkward in handling the technique of extended prose fiction, the main achievement of the younger writers resided in the creation of a sizable body of novels, most of which appeared in Paris under the imprint of recognized publishing firms.

Inevitably, a number of well-meaning but second-rate novelists managed to have their works published, often by minor, and sometimes local publishers. Like the novelists of the previous generation, they had seldom been privileged with the kind of European higher education that could have taught them the rudiments of novel writing or given them sufficient mastery over the French language. Intellectual confusion over the important social and political issues they were dealing with was not compensated for by any craftsmanlike control over the technique of imaginative fiction. Very often, their works did not appear until the end of the period under review, in the years immediately

following independence, at a time when their more gifted contemporaries had either become silent, for a variety of reasons, or had turned, like Sembène Ousmane, to other media; public interest in African writing in France was on the wane anyhow.

One example is Emile Cissé (1932–1974), who was executed in a prison camp in his native Guinea; in his *Faralako, roman d'un petit village africaine* (1958) which was printed in Rennes, the usual romantic-ethnographical picture of rural life is strangely combined with a twofold condemnation: of the West's mechanical civilization and of Africa's traditional superstitions. In *Les Inutiles* (1960) published in Dakar, Sidiki Dembele (b. 1921) from Mali inveighs against those African intellectuals who choose to enjoy the material comforts of life in Europe rather than put their exceptional skills at the service of their mother country and fellow-citizens; Dembele was also the author of a play in the William-Ponty tradition of historical drama, *Le Chant du Madhi* (1965).[48] When Mamadou Gologo (b. 1924), another Malian, published *Le Rescapé de l'Ethylos* (1963), he had already had a very slim, 27-page collection of verse printed in Moscow under the title *Mon cœur est un volcan* (1961). His rather nondescript prose narrative is a lengthy autobiographical tale; composed in the early fifties, it combined the strident anti-colonialism that had become both commonplace and irrelevant by the time the book appeared, and the sanctimoniousness of a temperance tract, as the main purpose of the author's confession was to explain how he had been rescued from alcoholism. *Vers de nouveaux horizons* (1965) by Denis Oussou-Essui (b. 1934) from the Ivory Coast, described for the umpteenth time the puzzling contradictions of urban life, which is both magnetically attractive and tragically deceptive; more than twelve years later, the author's second novel, *La Souche calcinée* (1973), printed in Yaunde, focused on a topic which had already been dealt with by Ousmane Socé almost forty years earlier: the African student's urge to go to Paris!

The first African novel in French to gain extensive critical acclaim appeared in 1953, almost at the same time as the English-language novels of Peter Abrahams from South Africa and of Amos Tutuola from Nigeria were making their first international impact. This was *L'Enfant noir* by Camara Laye[49] from Guinea, a work clearly linked

[48] This play was first printed in *Le Théâtre populaire en Côte d'Ivoire*, ed. F. J. Amon d'Aby (Abidjan, 1965): from 1954 to 1959, Dembele lived in the Ivory Coast, where he was active as a trade union leader. On Dembele, see Richard Bonneau, "*Les Inutiles*, roman de Sidiki Dembele," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 44 (1977), 17–23, and Maurice A. Lubin, "Un autre écrivain du Mali: Sidiki Dembélé," *Présence Francophone*, No. 15 (1977), 71–76.

[49] Actually, the writer's "first" (Muslim) name is Laye, which in Guinean usage comes *after* the surname: contrary to European custom, he should therefore be indexed under C, (see Jean Fontvieille, "Le nom des écrivains d'Afrique noire: Essai de catalographie," in *The Bibliography of Africa*, ed. J. D. Pearson and Ruth Jones [London: Cass, 1970], 155–192, especially pp. 175 and 192.) It will become increasingly necessary to take the peculiarities of African onomastics into account. In the seventies, the Zairian government decided to africanize people's names and to replace their "Christian" *prénoms* by their genuine, authentic African *postnoms:* Valentin Yves Mudimbe became Mudimbe Vumbi Yoka, Philippe Elébé became Elébé Lisembe, etc. James Ngugi gave the example in East Africa when he gave up his Christian name and had himself called Ngugi wa Thiong'o, using his father's name as his patronymic in compliance with local onomastics. Okot p'Bitek should likewise be listed as Okot, Taban lo Liyong as Taban, etc. [Ed.] On Camara, see R. Mercier and M. and S. Battestini, *Camara Laye* (Paris: Nathan, 1964); Christophe Gudijiga, "Quatre thèmes de l'œuvre de Camara Laye," *Congo-Afrique*, 6, 2 (1966), 139–148; A. C. Brench, "Camara Laye: Idealist and Mystic," *African Literature Today*, 2 (1969), 11–31; Eric Sellin, "Alienation in Camara Laye," *Pan-African Journal*, 4, 4 (1971), 455–472; Halina H. Bobrowska, "Camara Laye—Powieściopisarz gwinejski", *Kultura i Spoleczeństwo*,

to negritude because of the vein of nostalgic reminiscence which inspired it as it was inspiring much of the lyrical poetry of the older generation. With serene objectivity, Camara Laye looked back on his childhood as a continuous inevitable process of alienation from the quiet stable society of his native village in Upper Guinea. The rupture begins unobtrusively as the child attends the local school while staying in the family, still closely related to the ancient customs, the magic beliefs, the strange powers of his mother who has nothing to fear from crocodiles, and the little black snake which is the familiar spirit of his father's smithy. Yet, modern schooling in the village is only a first step that will lead to further estrangement as the boy leaves his family to attend technical school in Conakry, and, later, when he leaves his country for France. With a dispassionate objectivity that may be the result of Moslem fatalism, Camara (Laye being the author's "first" name) shows himself to have been driven by outside, impersonal, undefinable forces beyond his control. While his picture of traditional village society is slightly idealized, he never attacks the colonial system: increasing alienation is viewed as an inescapable part of inner growth in the new Africa.

Camara Laye's next novel, *Le Regard du roi* (1954) is so to speak a mirror image of *L'Enfant noir*, as it deals with a white man's gradual absorption into African society.[50] Clarence, the impoverished hero, is an outcast from white circles, and seeks help and prosperity from the local black ruler. The structure of the novel, then, is that of an apparently meaningless—kafkaesque is the usual epithet—quest story, yet with a peculiar twist. For the long, stultifying wandering of Clarence and his guides through the dark, hallucinatory forest, is symbolic of a puzzled consciousness seeking communion with the hidden forces of the universe, regretting the past, abhorring the present, and somehow hopelessly hoping for future fulfilment. What Clarence ultimately finds is not what he originally sought. His exotic odyssey in search of the king is the occasion for an inner conversion skilfully conveyed through graded transformations and symbolic imagery: he must first shed his proud old, white self, be divested of his Western aggressiveness, and submit to deep humiliation so as to be initiated into African fatalism and acceptance. The novel has a strong spatial structure, the southward direction of this shabby pilgrim's progress proposing of course a reverse of the usual African aspiration to the northern world of Europe and to the material benefits of its "superior" civilization. It is only when Clarence has reached the nadir of degradation, when he is left in the utter nakedness of his bare humanity, that he is ready to become engulfed in the radiance of the king.

2 (1973), 140–149; Jacqueline Leiner, "Interview avec Camara Laye," *Présence Francophone*, No. 10 (1975), 153–167; Adele King, "Camara Laye" in *A Celebration of Black and African Writing*, ed. King and Ogungbesan (1975), pp. 112–123; Judith Cochrane, "Camara Laye: Visionary and Critic," *ACLALS Bulletin*, 4, 3 (1975), 37–45, and "The Role of Mystery in the Works of Camara Laye," *Literary Half-Yearly*, 18, 2 (1977), 121–133. The first book-length study: Adele King, *The Writings of Camara Laye* (London: Heinemann, n. d. [1981]). On Laye's first novel, see Claude-André Tabart, "*L'Enfant noir*, un chef-d'œuvre de la littérature africaine." *Etudes* (December 1971), 713–724.

[50] Paul Edwards and Kenneth Ramchand, "An African Sentimentalist: Camara Laye's *The African Child*," *African Literature Today*, 4 (1970), 37–43; Harold Scheub, "Symbolism in Camara Laye's *Le Regard du roi*," *Ba Shiru* (Spring 1970), 24–36; Robert H. Fraser, "The Debate on Human Rights in Camara Laye's *Le Regard du roi*," *Asemka*, 1 (1974), 16–27; J. Sterk, "Stylistic Patterns in *Le Regard du roi*," *Ba Shiru*, 5,2 (1975), 57–66. See also Albert Gérard's "Introduction" to James Kirkup's translation, *The Radiance of the King* (New York: Collier Books, 1971).

Le Regard du roi is a genuine masterpiece whose intricate symbolism reaches out beyond the mere problem of racial relationships to the human need for integrity and integration. It is admirably written and constructed. Camara Laye's last novel, *Dramouss* (1966), therefore, was all the more of a shock.[51] Badly composed, slovenly written, it is once more overwhelmingly autobiographical, dealing with more recent years in the author's life and experience as the protagonist, after a long stay in France, comes back to his native village and to his family, and meets his future wife. In the meantime, however, Guinea has become independent, a one-party state has been established, dishonest and demagogic propaganda leads to the systematic debasement of the "popular masses", oppressive authority and uncontrolled violence create a frightening atmosphere of insecurity, with the result that the hero is overwhelmed by disappointment. For all its shortcomings, *Dramouss* is symptomatic of a vein that was almost new in French writing, even though it had been profusely illustrated in West African literature in English: the critique—albeit veiled and oblique—of the new African societies, their rulers, and their allegedly "revolutionary" and "socialist" ideologies. Some faint hope is symbolically conveyed through the medium of a "magic ball" which a tutelary genius, Dramouss, gives to the jailed protagonist, so that he may destroy the "Giant". Timid and indirect though such criticism was, it nevertheless could not be tolerated by the régime, which may be the reason why the book remained in manuscript for several years and was not printed until the author had left his native country for the safety of exile in Senegal, in 1964.

Both Camara's first and his latest novels are illustrative of an important tendency in the African novel: the writer's need to come to terms with his own personal experience, to record his own moral, intellectual and emotional evolution, a need whose literary fulfilment seems to him justified by his conviction that his subjective odyssey has more than anecdotal character, that it is indeed exemplary and representative of his people in general and at least of the élite to which he belongs. The first step is of course the imaginative rediscovery of what Senghor had felicitously called "le royaume d'enfance". *L'Enfant noir* was the first and remains the most accomplished prose version of the idyllic view which, in blending the innocent happiness of childhood with the alleged harmony of village life, was one of the central tenets of negritude. In all autobiographical or semi-autobiographical stories, the school is the alien element that first upsets the balance of the African child, ushering in a new, in many respects traumatic and frustrating, phase. Western education and literacy are a cause for divisiveness, as the child's nostalgia for the past combines with the newly acquired admiration for Western civilization. *L'Enfant noir* thus set a pattern which was imitated, with more or less originality and talent, by a number of African writers, simply because it answered their needs, preoccupations and experience. It is noteworthy, however, that Camara did not dwell on the third phase: the educational experience abroad, usually in Paris, which had been central to Socé's hero in *Mirages de Paris*, and was again to be so important for Hamidou Kane's Samba Diallo in *L'Aventure ambiguë*.

[51] See, however, C. Tunji Adebayo, "Reintegration and Restoration: A Reading of Camara Laye's *Dramouss*," *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association*, 7, 1/2 (1975), 30–42.

Although *L'Enfant noir* represented a fundamental stream in the African novel —whether it be expressed through first-person or third-person narrative—it was bitterly taken to task when it appeared because it was utterly free from any militant trait. It did not contain the slightest trace of the anti-colonial militancy which had been stirred, in black intellectual circles, by Aimé Césaire's extraordinarily influential *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950, revised editions 1955 and 1958). In 1955, an article derisively entitled "Afrique noire, littérature rose", made the highly Césairian claim that "la première réalité de l'Afrique Noire...sa seule réalité profonde, c'est la colonisation et ce qui s'ensuit...Ecrire sur l'Afrique Noire, c'est prendre parti pour ou contre la colonisation."[52] The author of this essay, who signed himself A. B., was later to review *L'Enfant noir* in mercilessly critical terms, most unfavourably comparing Laye and his book with Richard Wright and his *Black Boy*.[53] A. B. was a Cameroonian student named Alexandre Biyidi (b. 1932), who had already published, under the pseudonym of Eza Boto, a short story whose protagonist was a young Cameroonian terrorist fighting with the Mau Mau rebels in Kenya.[54] His first novel, *Ville cruelle*, first appeared in *Trois écrivains noirs* (1954), together with Malonga's *Cœur d'Aryenne*. Those two pieces of fiction signalled the literary emergence of the explicitly anti-colonialist strain which had received decisive encouragement from Césaire's *Discours*.

Eza Boto offered a far more complex picture of colonialism than did his Congolese elder. The story of Banda, a village orphan who tries to escape both the misery of rural life and the tyranny of his uncles by trying his luck in the city, also contains a deeper imaginative analysis of socio-economic realities than did the parallel tale of Sadji's *Maimouna*, an early version of which had been printed in Dakar in the previous year. *Ville cruelle* further materializes the literary prototype of the colonial city, already adumbrated in Ousmane Socé's novels of the thirties: Tanga is a dichotomized town, with its beautifully landscaped European quarters on the one hand, and on the other the African slums, where violence and insecurity prevail. For the black man, the attractions of the city are a mirage: for he remains subjected to oppression, not from the village elders, but from the colonial administration; he is further exploited by the cheating Levantine traders who buy his cocoa. While *Ville cruelle* contains many of the lineaments that were to become commonplace in the African novel of the decade, its dark picture of oppression and exploitation and of the terrible dualities of city life nevertheless has room for a ray of hope: the irrepressible energy of Banda, his zest for life, the indomitable will to live which he shares with many of his generation. This does not find expression in heroic deeds, but in little day-to-day acts of resistance (cheating, stealing, getting away with it), which, together with a bit of luck, ultimately enable Banda to overcome the regressive authority of his uncles and marry the girl he wants.[55]

[52] A[lexandre] B[iyidi], "Afrique noire, littérature rose," *Présence Africaine*, N. S., No. 1/2, (1955), 133–145. The last four pages of this essay contain an extremely acerbic critique of *Le regard du roi*, which had just been published.

[53] *Présence Africaine*, No. 16 (1957), 419–20.

[54] Eza Boto, "Sans haine et sans amour," *Présence Africaine*, No. 14 (1953), 213–220.

[55] On this early novel, see Henri Moukoko Gobina, "La cruauté de la ville et le destin du héros dans *Ville Cruelle*," in *Mélanges Africains*, ed. Thomas Melone (Yaunde: Editions Pédagogiques, n.d. [1972]), pp. 111–127; Arlette Chemain: "*Ville Cruelle:* situation œdipienne, mère castratrice," *Présence Francophone*, No. 13 (1976), 21–47.

Although it echoed the preoccupations of most young African intellectuals of the fifties and anticipated the themes of a vast number of later African novels, *Ville cruelle* was by no means a distinguished piece of writing, and Biyidi found it advisable to change his pen-name for his next novel. From Eza Boto, he became Mongo Beti (meaning "son of the Beti", an important tribe in southern Cameroon),[56] a name which was soon made famous by *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956), where the writer hit his true vein—that of rollicking humor and truly Swiftian irony.[57] The story is told by Denis, Father Drumont's young houseboy, who is wrapped in devoted admiration for the priest and understands neither the significance of the outward events he relates, nor the inner change that Father Drumont experiences. The structure of the plot is based on the priest's inspection tour through a number of parishes in the bush: the trip is symbolic of his growing awareness that he has completely failed in his mission to convert pagans to Christianity. This is connected with the symbolism of the road which is being built with compulsory labour by the local natives and is therefore an example of colonial ruthlessness and an allegory of the intrusion of Western civilization in its more material form. It is highly characteristic, however, that Beti's satire should also strike at his African characters: he has little sympathy with the polygamous chief, the wily sorcerers and their credulous victims, or the ignorant, authoritarian elders. Those who have adapted to the new order fare no better: Denis the narrator is immature and starry-eyed in his sincerity; at the other extreme stands one of the catechists, who has turned the *sixa* —where young girls and women are supposed to receive preparation for Christian marriage—into a profitable brothel. Yet Mongo Beti's sense of comedy prompts him to sympathize with the catechist's cynicism, for it is one of the ways in which old Africa manages to survive the destructive impact of the West, and indeed turn it to its own advantage. Nor is Father Drumont a mere butt for irreverent irony: he is a pathetic figure as well, and Mongo Beti at any rate pretends to sympathize with the Christian ideal which the priest has failed to realize. While the purpose of the book is in part to underscore the inner contradictions of white colonialism—state and church (or the administrator and the missionary) working hand in hand to destroy the African's identity, even though the priest is brought to realize that such methods are contrary to the spirit of his own gospel—it has lost little of its relevance at a time when African priests in their turn are raising even more vehement questions about the nature of their Christian duty towards the peasant and urban masses which "independence" has often plunged into even deeper poverty.

[56] For general discussions of Mongo Beti, see: Roger Mercier and Simone Battestini, *Mongo Beti* (Paris: Nathan, 1964); Thomas Melone, "Mongo Beti et la terre camerounaise," *Annales de La Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Yaoundé*, 1,1 (1969), 87–118, and *Mongo Beti, l'homme et le destin* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971); Willy A. Umezinwa, "Révolte et création artistique dans l'œuvre de Mongo Beti," *Présence Francophone*, No. 10 (1975), 36–48; Robert P. Smith, Jr., "Mongo Beti: The Novelist looks at Independence and the status of the African Woman," *CLA Journal*, 19, 3 (1976), 301–311; Yves Benot, "Mongo Beti ou le réalisme contre les colonialismes," *Nouvelle Critique*, 93 (1976), 28–32; Gerald H. Storzer, "Abstraction and Orphanhood in the Novels of Mongo Beti," *Présence Francophone*, No. 15 (1977) 93–112.

[57] See Kwabena Britwum, "Irony as the Paradox of Idealism in Mongo Beti's *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*," *Re: Arts and Letters*, 6, 2 (1972), 48–68; Fernando Lambert, "Narrative Perspectives in Mongo Beti's *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*," *Yale French Studies*, 53 (1976), 78–91; Albert Gérard, *Études de littérature africaine* (Dakar: N.E.A., 1977), pp. 133–152.

While *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* was set in the colonial context of the 1930s, the action of Mongo Beti's next novel, *Mission terminée* (1957),[58] takes place in the 1950s. The central character, accordingly, is no longer a herald of white power but an African student, Jean Medza. Jean has just failed his high school finals, but he is hailed by the villagers as a model of learning and wisdom. The irony of the situation is further compounded by Jean's engaging awareness that his newly-won prestige rests on very shaky foundations. Indeed, while the village youth had hoped he would tell them the white man's secrets and so help them abolish the tyranny of the older generation, the cunning elders manage to use him for their own purpose: he is sent to Kala in order to retrieve his elderly cousin Niam's errant young wife, and so to crush the woman's self-assertive spirit to the benefit of clan discipline. With typical irony, it is in the course of this mission for the enforcement of conformity that Medza achieves his own self-liberation. As he envies the spontaneous freedom of the Kala people, especially in sexual matters, he realizes that "in all likelihood I should never have" this freedom which was "the most precious possession I could acquire", for, "without being aware of it, I was no more than a sacrifice on the altar of Progress and Civilisation...I was paying a terrible price for...having gone to school at the decree of my all-powerful father" (p. 87).[59] The school—"a kind of giant ogre, swallowing young boys, digesting them slowly, vomiting them up again sucked dry of all their youthful essence, mere skeletons" (p. 87)—and traditional parental authority in Medza's clan are thus seen to co-operate in crushing the young man's vitality. Nor is Kala a truly valid model for the new Africa: Medza had first felt contempt for the Kala people as upcountry bushmen; he had then re-appraised their customs in the light of his own yearning; but in the end, they are no more than "quintessential caricatures of the 'colonised' African," to whom he owes a debt of gratitude because they enabled him to discover that "the tragedy which our nation is suffering today is that of a man left to his own devices in a world which does not belong to him, which he has not made and does not understand. It is the tragedy of a man bereft of any intellectual compass, a man walking blindly through the dark in some hostile city like New York. Who will tell him that he can only cross Fifth Avenue by the pedestrian crossing, or teach him how to interpret the traffic signs?" (p. 213)—an apposite image for Africa's puzzlement.

Le Roi miraculé (1958) took Beti's readers back in time to the 1940s. The hero is an aged local potentate, whose impending death provides Father Le Guen with an opportunity to baptize him and to make him renounce polygamy. This disrupts the orderly balance of traditional society in which polygamy is a useful procedure for arranging political alliances and thus maintaining peace and stability. The missionary is ultimately

[58] Eustace Palmer, "Mongo Beti's *Mission to Kala:* An Interpretation," *African Literature Today*, No. 3 (1969), 27–43; M. Mulokozi, *"Mission to Kala," Umma*, 3, 2 (1973), 26–34; Charles N. Davis, "Whose Mission to Kala? A Study of Problems of Translation," *Ba Shiru*, 4, 2 (1973) 25–33; Erika Rauch, "The Central Male–Female Relationship in *The River Between* and *Mission to Kala*," *Busara*, 7, 1 (1975), 42–54; Charles E. Nnolim, "The Journey Motif: Vehicle of Form, Structure and Meanings in Mongo Beti's *Mission to Kala*," *Journal of Black Studies*, 7 (1976), 181–194; Eustace Palmer, "Mongo Beti's *Mission to Kala:* The Revolt Against the Father," *Ba Shiru*, 9, 1/2 (1978), 4–16. See also Bernth Lindfors "Introduction" to Peter Green's translation, *Mission to Kala* (New York: Collier Books, 1971).

[59] Page references are to Green's translation.

defeated, not only by the recovery of the old king, who eagerly returns to his objectionable habits, but also by the village youth, who are in league against him, using shrewdness, insolence and even violence to thwart his projects, and finally by the colonial official from whom he vainly seeks help and to whom Father Le Guen is little better than a Red agitator, irresponsibly wreaking havoc among a well-behaved, peace-loving and contented population. Significantly—but somewhat implausibly—Beti has introduced into this tale of the forties two students who offer some comments on the wider implications of the events described. Bitama, an adherent of negritude and an active member of the Popular Progressive Party, is often assumed to be the author's spokesman. Yet, as Thomas Cassirer pointed out, "it is Kris who voices Mongo Beti's analysis of the conflict of generations and who neatly punctures Bitama's glorification of African tradition by drawing his attention to the ridiculous behavior of the village elders."[60]

Once the veil of comedy is lifted, it appears that Mongo Beti's vision of Africa in the late fifties was one of considerable pessimism. Independence might have been expected to rid the continent of the sillier brand of colonial officials, and of the vain endeavours of well-meaning but ill-advised missionaries. But the writer obviously had little confidence in the abilities of half-baked intellectuals like Jean Medza, or in the determination of an illiterate population to shed their ancestral superstitions, habits and power structures. Even better-educated students like Bitama and Kris in *Le Roi miraculé* are divided between their knowledge of Africa's backwardness and their anxious desire to assign some sort of value to African cultures. When Beti returned to Africa in 1959, he was jailed for his sympathy with the *Union des Populations Camerounaises*. This radical offshoot of Houphouet-Boigny's *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* had maintained close links with the French Communist Party; it had been banned in 1956 and had launched a large-scale rebellion against the French in 1957. On his return to France, where he has been living ever since, Mongo Beti expressed the hope that a younger generation led by highly trained intellectuals would sweep away the "illiterate, obscurantist oligarchy" that had come to power with the help of the French colonial authorities. This expectation failed to materialize, and Mongo Beti remained in silent exile until 1974 when he published a venomous satirical pamphlet aimed at President Ahidjo's regime, *Main basse sur le Cameroun*. While this was banned in France, the author's creative activity in the intervening years resulted in the simultaneous publication of two novels: *Remember Ruben* and *Perpétue, et l'habitude du malheur*.

With these new works, Mongo Beti joined the development that had emerged in the late sixties, ushering in a period of mature self-criticism in African literature in French: with the granting of independence, anti-colonialism had lost its thematic relevance, and a number of creative writers had turned their attention towards the critique of the abuses of black power itself. Side by side with the common man, now oppressed and exploited by black potentates, a new hero appeared: the militant fighter who manfully resists the despotism of the new privileged classes. *Remember Ruben*[61] thus focuses on the memory

[60] Thomas Cassirer, "The Dilemma of Leadership as Tragi-Comedy in the Novels of Mongo Beti," *L'Esprit Créateur*, 10, 3 (1973), p. 232.

[61] Eloise A. Brière, "*Remember Ruben:* étude spatio-temporelle," *Présence Francophone*, No. 15 (1977), 31–46.

of the historic figure of Ruben Um Nyobé, the nationalist leader who had been the first secretary general of the Union des Populations Camerounaises. In this book Mongo Beti seems to have lost the capacity for keeping his distance which is essential to irony and humour, but through the skilful use of symbolic techniques (the river standing for tradition and the road for Western innovation as in *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*) and varied narrative devices (such as the use of a collective narrator in the first part of the novel), he tries to provide an imaginative account of the history of the Essazam, the clan in which *Le Roi miraculé* was located. *Perpétue*,[62] on the other hand is undoubtedly a present-day story in which the writer denounces with fiery indignation—and unfortunately a generous share of bathos—the *via dolorosa* which the Cameroonian people, he claims, are now treading under a dictatorship which is thoroughly inefficient except in its ability to hold on to its power.

Whether under colonial rule or after the achievement of independence, Mongo Beti has thus maintained his balanced critical stance, both with regard to the powers that be, and with regard to degenerating traditions. The career of his contemporary and fellow-citizen Ferdinand Oyono (b. 1929) was entirely different, even though their works share several important features.[63] Oyono's first two novels—*Une Vie de boy* (1956) and *Le Vieux nègre et la médaille* (1956)—appeared in the same year as Beti's *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*. His third and so far last novel, *Chemin d'Europe* (1960) was published two years after Beti's *Le Roi miraculé*. Both writers exhibit the same qualities of riotous humour and biting satire in their depiction of the workings of the colonial system. While Beti shows little respect for regressive traditional institutions, Oyono prefers to stigmatize the silly naïveté which makes ordinary Africans (a house-servant, a bemedalled war veteran, an eager student) an easy prey for European exploitation. This difference can perhaps be explained by the fact that Oyono, unlike Mongo Beti, does not seem to have been attracted to political activism: both in *Une Vie de boy*[64] and in *Le Vieux nègre et la médaille*, the story is based on the African protagonist's traumatic discovery that his image of the white man was false and his confidence in him misplaced. The underlying thesis in those first two novels is the impossibility of genuine communication between black and white: when the hollowness of the white man's claim to superiority is exploded —a revelation which is often symbolized by the discovery that the white man is uncircumcised, and therefore not an adult—Oyono's black heroes run away or withdraw in contemptuous disillusionment.

The hero of *Chemin d'Europe* belongs to a different type: Aki Barnabas is a literate

[62] Kouamé Kouamé, "Panorama socio-politique de *Perpétue*," *Revue de Littérature et d'Esthétique Négro-Africaines*, 1 (1977), 101–118; Laure Hesbois, "*Perpétue et l'habitude du malheur*, ou Mongo Béti et la révolution avortée," *Présence Francophone*, No. 14 (1977), 57–71.

[63] See Gerald Moore, "Ferdinand Oyono et la tragi-comédie coloniale," *Présence Africaine*, No. 46 (1963), 221–233; R. Mercier and S. Battestini, *Ferdinand Oyono* (Paris: Nathan, 1964); Douglas Alexander, "Le tragique dans les romans de Ferdinand Oyono," *Présence Francophone*, No. 7 (1973), 24–30; Russel Linneman, "The Anticolonialism of Ferdinand Oyono," *Yale French Studies*, 53 (1976), 64–77; A. U. Ohaegbu, "L'univers romanesque de Ferdinand Oyono," *Nsukka Studies in African Literature*, 1 (1978), 80–90.

[64] See Edris Makward's "Introduction" to John Reed's translation, *Boy!* (New York: Collier, 1970); C. Wondji, "Approche socio-historique d'un roman africain: *Une vie de boy* de Ferdinand Oyono," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan*, série D, 7 (1974), 105–124; Raymond O. Elaho, "La *Jalousie* d'Alain Robbe-Grillet et *Une Vie de boy* de Ferdinand Oyono," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 42 (1976), 13–19; Kwabena Britwum, "Regard, mémoire, témoignage, ou l'œil du sorcier dans *Une Vie de boy* de Ferdinand Oyono," *Présence Francophone*, No. 14 (1977), 37–42; and Jean Chevrier: *Ferdinand Oyono, Une Vie de boy* (Paris: Hatier, 1977).

young man, who has spent several years in a seminary because his family hope to turn him into the first black pope! Expelled from school on account of his "friendship" with a mulatto from Gabon, Aki feels nothing but hatred for the Europeans: naïveté is a privilege of the elderly. Henceforth, his sole purpose is to leave Africa for Europe where he presumably hopes to fare better. The issue of this quest remains shrouded in ambiguous uncertainty, but the function of the various episodes in the story is once more to show up, with often bawdy talent, the brutality of the colonial system and the greed and lewdness of individual Europeans. *Chemin d'Europe* was published in the very year when Cameroon became an independent country. This picaresque story provided abundant confirmation of the writer's gift for comic satire. Nevertheless, it has remained to this day the last novel of Ferdinand Oyono, who has had a highly successful career in his country's diplomatic service, and may have thought it wiser to muzzle his undoubted talent for dangerously offensive irony.

Yet a third Cameroonian novelist emerged in Paris in 1956: this was Benjamin Matip (b. 1932), whose only novel, *Afrique, nous t'ignorons* is a rather clumsy story purporting to illustrate the revolt of African youth in the thirties, against both exploitation by the white man and the traditional authoritarianism of ignorant elders. Matip's message is conveyed chiefly through the inner thought process of one of the village elders: Guimous, who has no real confidence in any white man or, indeed, in any of the black notables. But he merely voices part of Matip's outlook: as the story goes on, it becomes clear that old Guimous himself is guilty of bribing the wealthy French trader who buys the produce of his plantations. While the first part of the novel seems to indicate the author's sympathy with the village youth, who hope that the coming war will be an occasion for them to get rid of all authority, whether European or traditional, the latter part contains Guimous's explanations of the "wisdom of the ancestors", as he feebly laments that time-honoured traditions are fast sinking into oblivion.

The richly deserved success of Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono during the late fifties, created among students of African literature, a perceptible sense that here—as, to a lesser degree, in Matip's novel and, later, in Ikelle-Matiba's narrative, which was composed in 1955 although it was not printed until 1963—was the embryo of a distinctive Cameroonian national literature, different from that of West Africa, and in particular of Senegal. Prose fiction predominated over lyrical poetry; it seemed to be, therefore, in closer touch with the realities in the life of the ordinary African. It was not only virulently opposed to colonialism but also vehemently anticlerical—an attitude whose sole other representative at the time was David Diop.[65] In the present stage of

[65] The awareness of a Cameroonian identity at work in creative writing first emerged in Ulli Beier, "The Novel in the French Cameroons," *Black Orpheus*, 2 (January 1958), 42–52; it was elaborated in Basile-Juléat Fouda, *et al., Littérature camerounaise* (Yaoundé: Club camerounais du livre, 1961), but found fullest expression in the socialist countries: V. V. Ivacheva, "Proza Kamerouna" in *Literatura stran Afriki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), pp. 75–144; Vladimír Klíma, "Trojhvězdí kamerunského románu," *Nový Orient* (Prague), 6 (1967); Jarmila Ortová, "Literární život současného Kamerunu," ibid., 9 (1970), culminating in J. Ortová, *Etude sur le roman au Cameroun* (Prague: Academia, 1971). Western and African scholars followed suit as shown in Jacques Rial, *Littérature camerounaise de langue française* (Lausanne: Payot, 1972); Edaly Gassama, "Aperçu sur la littérature camerounaise d'expression française," *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines, Université de Dakar*, 5 (1975), 39–63; and Wilbeforce A. Umezinwa, *La Religion dans la littérature africaine: Etude sur Mongo Beti, Benjamin Matip et Ferdinand Oyono* (Kinshasa: Presses Universitaires du Zaïre, 1975). See also Thérèse Baratte-Eno Belinga, *Ecrivains, cinéastes et artistes camerounais* (Yaoundé: CEPER, 1978).

our knowledge, it is of course difficult to account for the differentiating process which distinguished Cameroon from the fairly homogeneous corpus of African francophone writing. In all likelihood, considerable importance should be given to the fact that almost all francophone writers of Cameroon, including most of those that were to emerge after 1960, belong to the Fang tribe: an ethno-psychological approach based on the study of Fang culture, which spreads over southern Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, would certainly yield interesting results. Secondly, Cameroon had a peculiar colonial history: it was first occupied by the Germans, whose rule the Cameroonians seem to recall—as appears from Ikelle-Matiba's *Cette Afrique-là*—with uncommon vividness; after the German defeat, the country was administered under a League of Nations mandate and became after World War II a United Nations trusteeship: the French authorities did not have the freedom they enjoyed in other colonies but had to submit to some (admittedly very mild) form of international control. Nor was Cameroon ever part of either of the two large federations of A.E.F. and A.O.F., which must have given Cameroonians a sense of being somehow different. Further, while until World War II educational activity in the French empire was mostly in the hands of Catholic missionaries, in Cameroon American Protestant missionaries had taken the place of the *Basler Missionsgesellschaft,* and after the war a non-denominational *lycée* was established in Yaounde; by 1947, scholarships had been awarded to 24 Cameroonians for further study in France; in 1958, they were more than 1100.[66] This combination of factors helps to account for the Cameroonian writers' addiction to prose fiction, their bitingly satirical outspokenness, and also the sheer volume of their output: as Jarmila Ortová underscored, between 1954 and 1960, eight novels had been published in French by Cameroonians as against fifteen from all the rest of French Africa. The ensuing years were also to demonstrate Cameroon's advance in respect to local publishing: by 1966, Robert Pageard was able to emphasize "l'avance qu'a prise la littérature camerounaise dans l'ensemble des pays francophones d'Afrique noire."[67]

The year 1956, which saw the emergence of the first three Cameroonian novelists and the resulting consolidation of anti-colonialism as a major theme was a year of rejoicing for francophone writing in Africa. For while the elder writer Bernard Dadié's *Climbié* brought the Ivory Coast's first contribution to the novel, the year also witnessed the publication of *Le Docker noir,* the first novel of a rather exceptional Senegalese author, Sembène Ousmane (b. 1923).[68] Unlike most other Senegalese writers, who had

[66] Further data can be found in Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963).

[67] Robert Pageard, *Littérature négro-africaine. Le mouvement littéraire contemporain dans l'Afrique noire d'expression française* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1966), p. 67.

[68] Mbelolo ya Mpiku, "Un romancier né *ex nihilo:* Ousmane Sembène," *Présence Francophone,* 1 (1970), 174–190; Jean-Pierre Jacquemin, "Sembène Ousmane, écrivain public," *Lecture Africaines* (Lubumbashi), 1, 2 (1972–73), 82–98; Nicole Medjigbodo, "Sembène Ousmane: Témoin de son peuple," *Le Français au Nigéria,* 7, 3 (1972), 23–30; Janine Hauser, "Naissance d'une littérature sociale en Afrique: L'exemple de Sembène Ousmane," *Annales de l'Ecole des Lettres. Université du Bénin* (Lomé), 1 (1973), 145–154; Eustace Palmer. "Vox Populi, Vox Sembene: A Preliminary Look at the Art of Ousmane Sembene," *Ba Shiru,* 5, 1 (1973), 3–13; Vere W. Knight, "The Writer in the Post-Colonial Situation: Sembène Ousmane," *Black Images,* 3, 3 (1974), 47–56; Martin T. Bestman, "Sembène Ousmane" in *A Celebration of Black and African Writing,* ed. King and Ogungbesan (1975), pp. 139–149; Ambroise Kom, "Chester Himes et Sembène Ousmane: Un même message

been educated at the William-Ponty school, like Abdoulaye Sadji or Amadou Cissé Dia, or in French universities like Senghor, Birago Diop or Ousmane Socé, Sembène could by no stretch of imagination be reckoned as belonging to his country's intellectual élite. Born in a fishing village in the Casamance, he had no academic schooling. After elementary school, he received some vocational training and worked as a plumber, a brick-layer and a mechanic. He enlisted during World War II and afterwards worked in Marseille as a longshoreman. His real education came from the trade unions. Of the many African writers with Marxist leanings, he is probably the only one who has had first-hand experience of European working-class life, and who is aware of the practical problems involved in the building up of socialism. *Le Docker noir*, however, was conceived entirely in terms of racial struggle; the plot lacks plausibility; the characters are neatly divided into good blacks and evil whites; the style is atrocious; the author's sole purpose was to provide a "realistic" picture of the conditions prevailing among the black proletariat in France's harbours in order to stimulate the hatred of capitalistic and colonial oppression and so to make a militant contribution towards the emancipation of Africa. Paradoxically, while the main story of the book deals with a proletarian black writer whose novel is stolen by a Frenchwoman and published under her own name, there is little likelihood that *Le Docker noir* would ever have reached print if it had not been written by an African. Its recent reissue in pocket-book form suggests that the way in which the present economic crisis affects the vast immigrant proletariat which has been imported into France and most other countries of Western Europe as cheap manpower, has once again created a readership for what is undoubtedly an important social document.

Le Docker noir is also significant for the history of African literature in French. For while it is sorely lacking in the literary qualities which gave aesthetic distinction to and ensured the success of, Beti's and Oyono's early works, it was the very first novel from Senegal, and indeed from the whole of West Africa, to join the as yet minuscule stream of protest fiction inaugurated two years earlier by the Congolese Jean Malonga. With Sembène's second novel, *O pays, mon beau peuple!* (1957),[69] the stylistic improvement was so startling that this new author was clearly destined to become one of Africa's most important protest writers in French. Focusing on a young African who comes home with his French wife and tries to organize a peasants' co-operative society to undermine the monopoly of European companies, the book has a twofold theme. One is interracial marriage: the hero, Oumar, has to face the puzzlement and to overcome the hostility of his kin over his marriage to a white woman, while the latter can only try to eschew the contempt and hatred of the local white community. The other theme is social: it is connected with the need for Africans to unite and organize if they are to resist and

aux peuples noirs," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 42 (1976), 20–30; Roger Mercier, "Fonction du héros dans les œuvres narratives d'Ousmane Sembène", in *Neo-African Literature and Culture*, ed. Lindfors and Schild (1976), 95–105; Kester Echenim, "Sembène Ousmane et le mythe du peuple messianique," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 46 (1977), 51–59.

[69] N. D. Rolenka, "The Literature of Fighting Africa: Sembène Ousmane's *O pays, mon beau peuple!*," *Transactions of the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute*, 245 (1966), 159–181; Monique Elungu, "Manuel et Faye, deux héros du développement dans la littérature négro-africaine," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 46 (1977), 60–69.

overcome colonial/capitalistic exploitation. This was new: there was something sadly negative in the irony, the satire and the ribaldry of the Cameroonian novelists; similar to the sorry fate that awaits their protagonists, the story of Oumar Faye also ends in death: but he is murdered because of his success in arousing the consciousness of his fellow-citizens. It was the first time that an African novelist was defining in concrete terms the attitudes and actions that might free the continent from its abject subjection to foreign power and interests.

It is very likely that Sembène's second novel owes a considerable debt to the Haitian writer Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* which had been printed in Paris some ten years earlier.[70] But it is useful for budding writers to have models, and the Senegalese novelist's choice on this occasion is undoubtedly significant: he was coming to a more purely Marxist attitude, viewing the problem of Africa in terms not of race relations, but of a class struggle between the exploiters and the underprivileged. His masterpiece, *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960),[71] is a vast and admirably constructed prose epic dealing with the strike which paralysed the Dakar–Niger railway from 10 October 1947 to 19 March 1948. In its way, this was the most mature and satisfying novel to have come from black Africa. Sembène does not go in for the primitive exotic allurements of negritude. He accepts the African situation as it is, feels no nostalgia for the tribal past and thinks only in terms of the future, how to ensure material improvement and economic independence for his fellow Africans. The strike provided him with an apposite topic on the basis of which he could outgrow the melodramatic personal rebellion of *Le docker noir* and the slightly utopian idealism of *O pays, mon beau peuple!:* the late forties had been a painful period in the history of the French empire, as France, newly freed from German rule, was trying to re-assert her own control over her overseas possessions, and to coerce increasingly unwilling populations into total obedience. Arising spontaneously from popular revulsion against unbearable working conditions, the strike was thus a genuine historical example of purposeful collective action. But Sembène's talent, now at its peak, turned it into yet something else: for the initial claim for better pay and better working conditions turns under his pen into a genuine epic which critics have not hesitated to compare with some of the more successful committed novels of Zola, Malraux and Aragon. Sembène's characters do not indulge in regressive action prompted by some negritudinous hankering after irrelevant traditions: they are simply workers and workers' wives, who reject their assigned role of submissive victims of capitalistic industrialization; they thus become, both as individuals and as a group, social symbols rising in anger for more control over their own destinies.

As Senegal's independence, acquired in the very year when *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* was published, did not bring Sembène the kind of rewards that a number of African authors were to reap in silent enjoyment, he became virtually the only major writer whose artistic activity did not suddenly come to a stop in the early sixties. His next volume, *Voltaïque* (1962) contains short stories which are not traditional folk tales, but

[70] On this point see Victor O. Aire, "Affinités électives ou imitation: *Gouverneurs de la rosée* et *O pays, mon beau peuple!*," *Présence Francophone*, No. 15 (1977), 3–10.

[71] J.-P. Gourdeau, "Le didactisme révolutionnaire des *Bouts de bois de Dieu* de Sembène Ousmane," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan*, Série D, 8 (1975), 185–201.

focus on the manifold problems of adjustment facing the modern African.[72] While some of these stories deal with the theme of colonialism, especially in connection with the situation of the migrant worker in France, most of them are concerned with criticizing various aspects of African society: the enslavement of wives in polygamous households, the hypocrisy of traditional authorities, the corruption of the new political leaders, and the crazy superstitions characteristic of debased Islam in some West African societies. These tales were a clear indication and a warning that Sembène did not intend either to devote his talent to the praise of negritude, or to remain sheepishly silent about such undesirable developments as might occur in independent Africa. His non-élitist concern with the fate of ordinary African people in the modern world, whether they were ruled by white masters or black leaders, was not likely to abate.

Meanwhile, however, the Senegalese novelist had started work on a monumental trilogy about the transition from colonialism to independence. There is little doubt that the epic proportions of his latest novel had provided him with a congenial model for which he felt the events he was witnessing would offer even more appropriate scope than a strike in Senegal. Only one volume actually reached print, *L'Harmattan* (1964), which centers on the 1958 referendum when Guinea under the leadership of Sékou Touré, was the only colony to vote against continued association with France. The action of *L'Harmattan* takes place in an unnamed country, among a Marxist group who vainly try to prevent the victory of those whom they (and Sembène) regard as lackeys of neo-colonialism. The distinguishing feature of *L'Harmattan* is that besides the collective violence inherent in the colonial institution, it also has room for the private violence to which it is bound to lead as families are torn apart by the allegiance of their members to antagonistic causes. This violence takes on the form of the conflict that pits Koéboghi, a polygamous Christian, against his daughter, Tioumbé, who is the most influential leader of the Marxist opposition party. Tioumbé epitomizes Sembène's idea of the important role that woman is to play in the making of the new Africa: a role that had already been fully documented in several unforgettable female characters of *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu.*[73]

By the time he was finishing *L'Harmattan*—and surely it is not necessary to expatiate on the historical reasons why the contemplated trilogy was never completed—Sembène had become acutely aware of the African writer's perennial dilemma: resorting to a European language cuts him off from his own people who are largely illiterate and ignorant of the foreign medium. He wanted to convey his message in a manner that would be really accessible to the "popular masses," and he embarked on a highly successful film-making career, producing works in which constant use is made of Senegal's main vernacular, Wolof: *Borrom Sarrett* (1963) and *Niaye* (1964), soon to be

[72] Y. S. Boafe, "*Voltaïque* d'Ousmane Sembène. Commentaires et observations," *Présence Francophone*, No. 15 (1977), 11–30.

[73] This peculiar feature of Sembène's work has already aroused considerable scholarly interest: Jarmila Ortová, "Les femmes dans l'œuvre littéraire d'Ousmane Sembène," *Présence Africaine*, No. 71 (1969), 69–77; Carrie D. Moore, "The Role of Women in the Works of Sembene Ousmane," *Pan-African Journal*, 5 (1972), 263–276; R. Arada Essomna, *La Femme vue par Sembène Ousmane dans ses cinq premiers romans* (Yaunde: Departement de Littérature africaine comparée, 1974); S. Lee, "The Awakening of the Self in the Heroines of Sembène Ousmane," *Critique* (Atlanta), 17, 2 (1975), 17–25.

followed by *La Noire de...* (1965), *Le Mandat* (1967), *Emitaï* (1971), *Xala* (1973), and several others. Although film-making was undoubtedly a more efficient way of achieving the purpose that Sembène had set himself—"to show Africans some of the deplorable conditions under which they themselves live... It is, after all, the Africans who will ultimately bring about change in Africa—not the Americans or the French or the Russians or the Chinese"[74]—his career as a film director was closely interwoven with that of a writer: *La Noire de ...* had first appeared as a short story in *Voltaïques,* and in 1965, Présence Africaine issued *Véhi-Ciosane ou Blanche-genèse, suivi du Mandat,*[75] two lengthy short stories which, like many of those in *Voltaïques,* concentrate on problems of everyday life in Africa, irrespective of racial or colonial issues. "Vehi Ciosane" is the written version of *Niaye;* a tragic tale of incest and parricide, it illustrates the disintegration of the traditional moral order as the colonial regime undermines the caste system and brings defilement to the old West African aristocracy. "Le Mandat," on the other hand, though not without pathos, brings out the comedy of a fundamentally similar corruption, exemplified in the cheating that seems to have been built into modern African bureaucracy.

After the dynamic phase of eager militancy that had preceded independence and had found its last formulation in *L'Harmattan,* Sembène Ousmane was the first among the truly significant francophone writers to voice his dismay and bitter disappointment with the turn things were taking in the new African society. While *Vehi Ciosane* illustrated the deliquescence of the pre-colonial ruling caste, *Le Mandat* showed that the ordinary person, who had always been at the centre of Sembène's preoccupations, remained as much as ever a powerless prey for those who were endowed with even the smallest fragment of official authority. Hence a new pessimism, whose nadir was reached in both the film and the novel entitled *Xala* (1973), although both represent a peak in Sembène's artistic achievement. Significantly, the Wolof title refers to the "impotence" which strikes the elderly El Hadji Abdou Kader Bèye on the eve of his third marriage, to an attractive young girl; this is a bawdy symbol of the inability of the wealthy bourgeoisie to rule satisfactorily over the new Africa. In a highly entertaining caricature of Ousmane Socé's "métissage des cultures", Sembène has his protagonist turn with equal, and equally vain, faith and hope, to sorcerers and psychiatrists alike: another comic symbol, this time of the puzzlement that afflicts a society which has lost its roots and its ideological coherence and is therefore steeped in contradictions. In his despair, El Hadji finally decides to follow his chauffeur's advice and to consult a holy man who lives in a remote place in the bush. Dorothy Blair has made an interesting point about this trip: "As they travel over rough country roads, forced eventually to abandon the Mercedes for a farm-cart, Abdou Kader Bèye is travelling symbolically back to his origins, and to the time when he was a humble primary school teacher, and is more and

[74] Interview with Guy Flatley, printed in the *New York Times;* 9 November 1969; see also his interview with Guy Hennebelle, "Ousmane Sembène: 'Pour moi, le cinéma est un moyen d'action politique mais...'," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* No. 7. (1969), 74–82.

[75] For a discussion of social problems in those two tales, see Halina Hanna Bobrowska, "Zagadnienia społeczne u utworach Sembène Ousmane'a," *Przegląd Socjologiczny,* 23 (1969), 350–369; See also Franca Marcato, "Introduction à la lecture d'un récit africain d'expression française: *Le Mandat* d'Ousmane Sembène," *Présence Francophone,* No. 14 (1977), 73–87.

more dependent on his chauffeur. But still he does not realize the moral lesson of his humiliations";[76] but it is curious that she should have missed the parallel with the quest motif in *Le Regard du roi:* like Camara's Clarence, Sembène's El Hadji must reach the utmost depth of humiliation, connected, in both cases, with sexuality. For the holy man's prescription is that he must stand naked in his gorgeous villa and allow the beggars of the city to come and spit three times on the failing instrument of his manhood: the beggar as initiator and mystagogue, it will be remembered, is another significant motif in Laye's novel. But whereas the Guinean writer had managed to convey that humiliation would bring salvation to his hero, Sembène Ousmane offers no such promise of future healing: Bèye's debasement is simply the deserved reward of his own corruption and pretentiousness.

During the early fifties at the University of Montpellier, a medical student from Mali (which at the time was still the French Sudan), Seydou Badian Kouyaté (b. 1928), wrote a 150-page novel which was published in Avignon under the title *Sous l'orage. Première partie* (1957). No second part ever materialized, and the book was reissued in Paris as *Sous l'orage (Kany)* (1963), after its author had gained recognition as the first significant African playwright in French, with *La Mort de Chaka.*[77]

At first glance, *Sous l'orage* is a plea for modernism. Kany, a young school girl, wishes her father, Benja, to allow her to continue her studies and later to marry her school friend, Samou. Benja, however, has planned for Kany to become the third wife of a well-to-do merchant. Eventually, after the intervention of Benja's elder brother, a hunter living in a traditional village, and several notables in the town, Benja relents and allows Kany to follow her own desires. The novel is, however, filled with descriptions of traditional culture, and suggests that modern youth in the cities easily becomes decadent. Its message is one of understanding between the generations, with only those changes from tradition that are consonant with human dignity. As one of the young men says: "les vieux ne sont pas vos rivaux, mais vos aînés, vos pères. Avez-vous essayé de réfléchir à cela? Ce sont des hommes qui vous ont donné le jour et qui, dans l'ordre normal des choses, devraient vous guider...Aujourd'hui...les vieux sont au désarroi et vous, vous les décevez, car ce qu'ils attendaient de vous, c'était des gestes de consolation, une initiation prudente et sage au système qui s'impose à eux."[78] If most of Badian's characters are didactic spokesmen for the author's point of view, the descriptions of communal life in the village, of the peace of a harmonious family compound, of the sense of kinship with the world of nature also contribute to show the value of traditional life.

In its advocacy of Kany's right to choose her own husband, and in its depiction of the sufferings of her mother, rejected by Benja in favour of his younger wives, *Sous l'orage* attacks one aspect of traditional life, the treatment of women, which was a

[76] Dorothy S. Blair, *African Literature in French* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), p. 272. See also Adrien Huannou, "*Xala:* Une satire caustique de la société bourgeoise sénégalaise," *Présence Africaine,* 103 (1977), 145–157; Martin Bestman, "L'univers de *Xala,*" *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* No. 48, (1978), 39–48.

[77] On the writer, see R. Mercier, S. and M. Battestini, *Seydou Badian, écrivain malien* (Paris: Nathan, 1968).

[78] Seydou Badian, *Sous l'orage (Kany),* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), pp. 143–44. A new edition of the novel was published in 1972.

favourite target of reformers and was soon to be tackled most aggressively in *Tante Bella* (1959) by the Cameroonian writer Joseph Owono (b. 1921); it is a theme to which Badian was to return in his later work.[79] We should note, however, that Badian is not advocating equality, but a more dignified role for woman as man's helper. While on the surface *Sous l'orage* seems comparable to Oyônô-Mbia's play of the early sixties, *Trois prétendants, un mari*, Benja is not greedily looking only for a large bride price, but rather for a continuation of family stability. Like Oyônô-Mbia, however, Badian avoids a final confrontation between the young and the old: Kany is ultimately allowed both to marry Samou and to retain her place in the family. The tragic conflict of generations soon to be found in Achebe's novels for example, is missing and with it the power of a fully realized work.

Although it avoids the melodrama which sometimes mars Badian's later work, *Sous l'orage* suffers from its overt didacticism, and from too much direct description of what the characters must be thinking. *La Mort de Chaka* (1962) shows similar weaknesses. Issues are stated, not fully dramatized. The play is a pageant of ideas rather than a conflict of characters. Within these limitations, however, it does succeed in presenting the tension between those who are with Chaka in his desire to consolidate the Zulu kingdom and those who oppose the necessary violence that goes with the search for glory. By giving Chaka's enemies the first arguments and delaying Chaka's entrance until the third of the five scenes of the play, Badian allows us to sympathize with both sides, although, finally, we admire Chaka for his dedication to a cause. Just before he is killed by his enemies, Chaka predicts the coming of the white man and a long period of suffering in southern Africa, but says his people shall triumph because "nous avons su nous oublier les uns et les autres, pour un ensemble que nous avons jugé au-dessus de chacun de nous."[80]

While *La Mort de Chaka* continues the essential theme of community versus the individual, it is likely that Badian was attracted to the Reverend Ellenberger's French translation of Thomas Mofolo's Sotho masterpiece in the same way as Senghor had been: in anticipation of the ends v. means problem which he was bound to encounter as an active politician. He held ministerial rank in independent Mali for several years (1960–1966), during which time, like many other francophone authors, he gave up creative writing altogether. When a military coup overthrew President Modibo Keita in 1968, Badian, who had by then resumed his activities as a medical practitioner in Bamako, was arrested and imprisoned for several years. In prison he returned to imaginative writing and produced his next novel, *Le Sang des masques* (1976).

This is a much denser, more fully fictional presentation of Badian's central themes. It is set clearly within an African context, with few references to the white man, except as the colonial oppressor. The first section tells of life in the village where Nandi comes to love Bakari, the young man she chooses to be her protector. Bakari, home after learning to be a car mechanic in the city, must re-establish his status in the village through a trial of strength with the village bully. Parallel to this plot is the overthrow of a feared elder who has overstepped the bounds of society, by the priest of the sacred

[79] On this point, see Kabongo Nkanza, "L'émancipation de la femme africaine vue à travers *Sous l'orage* de Seydou Badian," *Présence Francophone*, No. 14 (1977), 89–95.

[80] Seydou Badian, *La Mort de Chaka* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1961), p. 57.

wood. Life in the village is thus presented in a more realistic fashion than in *Sous l'orage*, where it often seems idyllic. Those who conquer, however, are those who uphold the traditional order of society.

After Nandi's marriage to Amadou, who works as a clerk in the city, the novel describes the sufferings that the latter's degenerate city life imposes on his dutiful wife. Anxious to prove himself a lover of sophisticated city women, Amadou wastes his money, borrows all Nandi's jewellery to pawn, beats and humiliates her, and eventually relegates her to a poor quarter when he takes a second wife, Maïmouna. Ultimately, Amadou is deserted by Maïmouna; he is involved in bribery with Ali, a merchant who soon gets caught and arrested; he himself is in despair because he feels threatened with imprisonment; Bakari decides to save Nandi's reputation, for she will be blamed if her husband's dishonesty is exposed; he kills Ali and then commits suicide. Such an inordinately melodramatic plot contains too many incidents and characters, but in the portrayal of Nandi, Badian shows a true novelist's empathy for his character. The spokesman for the author, Souley, who criticizes the degenerate life in the city, is a rather weak young man, incapable of following his own principles, thus enabling Badian to avoid the perils of unmitigated didacticism.

The vindication of Nandi and Bakari, that is, the triumph of tradition, reaches its apex in a rather esoteric episode for which Badian does not even try to give the usual ethnographical explanations for the benefit of the non-African reader: before killing Ali, Bakari takes Nandi's husband out to pray to the traditional deities because he wants to make sure that "l'être primordial vivait encore en Amadou."[81] It is only after the latter has prayed, that Bakari makes the sacrifice of his own life. The mystic significance of blood and the ritual function of the masks is everywhere in evidence in this novel, which celebrates "l'unité fondamentale des morts et des vivants ... tous liés dans l'argile ancestrale par les fibres de la joie et de la souffrance ... comme des grains de sable soudés dans le sang".[82] The poetic imagery seems to be designed to convey Badian's own return to traditional religion—an attachment which some will no doubt regard as regressive, and which becomes even more evident in his following novel, *Noces sacrées* (1977).

In this strange tale of the power of African gods, Badian proposes a justification of traditional religion and a rejection of Christianity. The story is told from the perspective of an African doctor, called upon to help a European businessman, Besnier, who has fallen under the power of N'Tomo, a traditional deity. Besnier had bought the figure of the god in an attempt to prove to Soret, another European, that it has neither value nor power. Instead, having purchased a god, he finds himself possessed by it, unable to work, increasingly prone to feverish visions. Medical treatment in Europe proves ineffective and he returns to Africa with his fiancée in order to restore the god to his followers and find peace. Although initially rejecting Besnier's story and sceptical of the power of N'Tomo, the African doctor, who has rejected traditional society as a result of his French education, manages to arrange the return of the god's image through a

[81] Id., *Le Sang des masques* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1976), p. 242.
[82] Ibid., p. 143.

traditional priest. The final scene in a remote village is a ceremony in which Besnier becomes a follower of N'Tomo and finds that Soret is now a leader of the cult. The doctor and Besnier's fiancée are also possessed by the religion. It is unclear exactly what will happen after the ceremonial ritual with which the novel ends. It is implied that Besnier has taken a native woman of the cult as a ritual lover and that the doctor and Besnier's fiancée will also be united.

The reason why Badian set his story within a small European community, to which the doctor is the only African to have access, resides presumably in his intention to define and "demonstrate" the worth of African tradition by showing its effects on Europeans. By the time the tale comes to an end, most Europeans, including an elderly priest, have become, if not followers of the African religion, at least believers in the reality of its power. This means that the defence of Africa in *Noces sacrées* is too abstract, too willed, too much a reply to Europe, rather than a self-contained and self-sufficient portrayal of African beliefs. The narrative technique itself is of considerable weakness: much is related indirectly, through stories told the African doctor by the main characters, or even told to the latter by yet other characters and then relayed to the doctor in scenes which thus become flashbacks within flashbacks! Nor is there any attempt to give an individual voice to any of the narrators, so that everything is reported in the same, rather stilted literary style. Finally, the central figure, Tiémoko-Massa who is the priest of N'Tomo, is claimed to have impressive dignity, but since he is seen only through the doctor's eyes and the doctor is unable to understand him, such a bald assertion of almost supernatural power does not succeed in convincing the reader of the values which the novel clearly wants to inculcate.

In spite of those shortcomings, Seydou Badian has come to hold a peculiar place in the renewal of the novel that was the distinguishing feature of francophone literature from the late sixties onwards. After the predominance of anti-colonialism and the obsession with the culture clash that were characteristic of the fifties, Mongo Beti followed some of the younger writers in dedicating his formidable critical powers to the portrayal of the newly independent societies, a direction in which Ousmane Sembène had led them all. Others, like Kourouma or Ouologuem, were mainly concerned with shaping the alien language and genre to suit their African themes and attitudes. But while Seydou Badian remained highly conventional, and at times regrettably clumsy, in his handling of narrative techniques, none went quite as far as he did in the revaluation of traditional Africa.

The year of independence, which was celebrated by the publication of two important novels, Sembène's *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* and Oyono's *Chemin d'Europe,* also witnessed the emergence of a new novelist from the Ivory Coast, Ake Loba (b. 1927), whose *Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir* (1960) returns to the "been-to" story which had been inaugurated twenty years earlier in Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris.* The hero is a twenty-year old boy who is sent by his father, a well-to-do farmer, to junior high school in France. Kocoumbo is a youthful idealist, who evinces almost superhuman courage and obstinacy as he is faced with the harsh problems, cultural and financial, which have been the lot of many African students abroad. But in the second half of the book, Ake

Loba dwells with remarkable outspokenness on the degradation and demoralization to which a number of them are exposed; France and the French are described in a not unfriendly fashion; but many of Kocoumbo's fellow Africans go under, because they have not received a suitable intellectual preparation for higher studies in France, because of their own pretentiousness, their taste for expensive, ostentatious display, and because of the corroding effect of Western ideas upon the beliefs and standards, whether tribal or Christian, which they had brought with them. The symbolic significance of Kocoumbo's odyssey is enhanced by the title and its transparent allusion to the periodical of the early thirties that was commonly supposed to have been the cradle of negritude. And indeed, the collective sacrifice made by the whole family in order to send one of their sons to Europe and the "divinités de l'instruction," leads the young man, as it had led his Senegalese predecessor, to the discovery that the impatiently awaited glitter of Paris is but a "mirage." And like his Muslim follower from Senegal in Hamidou Kane's novel, he is in fact the protagonist of an "aventure ambiguë"; while education equips him to become a leader of his people, it also convinces him that "tout africain qui veut faire quelque chose de positif doit commencer par détruire toutes les vieilles croyances qui consistent à créer le merveilleux là où il n'y a que phénomène naturel." While Kocoumbo is frightened at the egoistic individualism which European education and experience foster in the minds of the Africans, Ake Loba establishes no necessary link between the sense of human brotherhood and the backward superstitions with which it happens to be associated in the traditional world.

When independence came, the writer entered his country's diplomatic service and was subsequently attached to its embassies in Bonn and in Rome before reaching ministerial rank in the late sixties: Kocoumbo's attempt to operate a selective synthesis between what Europe had taught him and the more dignified values of Africa, and thus to overcome the crude antagonism between tradition and innovation which often underlies the African novel, was undoubtedly congenial to President Houphouet-Boigny's way of envisaging the future in his country. This became even clearer when, after ten years' absorption in his diplomatic and political activities, Ake Loba returned to prose fiction with *Les Fils de Kouretcha* (1970), which gained the Houphouet-Boigny prize. This was the first novel in French to deal in concrete imaginative terms with the social and psychological problems raised by the need for industrialization in a newly independent country. Although the plot is not as clear as it might be and the characters of the French experts never really come alive, Ake Loba has succeeded in conveying the complexity of the issue through the manifold attitudes of the African *dramatis personae*. There is an unholy alliance between Moussa Dombyia, the witch-doctor, and Pierre Dam'no, who hopes to make use of tribal superstitions in order to restore the power he formerly enjoyed as a clerk in the service of the colonial administration. The disruption within the tribal order is sketchily illustrated in a conflict between the legitimate chief and the village head appointed by the government. The villagers themselves are torn between their ancient fears and prejudices and the allurement of the wages offered to those who work on a dam. The heaviest responsibility rests with the *préfet*, Tougon, a character that had already appeared in *Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir*. It is his duty to see that the dam is built without bloodshed, that the consent of the local people is obtained by persuasion

rather than coercion. A thoroughly westernized civil servant, he manages to obtain the cooperation of the Old Man, the undisputed leader of the Sons of Kouretcha, who, in his deep wisdom, acknowledges and accepts the country's need for change, even though he is aware of the loss that "economic development" is bound to entail. With laudable skill, Loba has exemplified the balance of gain and loss in the character of Tougon, who, for all his success in accomplishing his appointed mission, fails in his marriage because he tries to convert his wife to the European way of life although her education has made her completely subservient to traditional customs.

Anthony Brench has criticized *Kocoumbo* with regard to both narrative technique and character depiction.[83] But the main reason why Ake Loba's later works—which, significantly, were printed in Brussels, not in Paris—failed to attract much attention probably lies in the very moderation of his outlook, in his careful balancing of the pros and the cons, in contrast with the shrill anti-colonialism that had become fashionable since the mid-fifties. It was perhaps in order to join—somewhat belatedly—this mainstream of francophone fiction that he wrote *Les Dépossédés,* which was printed serially in the Abidjan daily *Fraternité-Matin* before it appeared in book form in Belgium (1973). This fictional autobiography of a sixty-year old man has a title which contains more than a suggestion of anti-colonialism, since it deals with those who have been dispossessed of their land and their freedom; mention is made of the more glaring abuses of the colonial system, especially forced labour, arbitrary imprisonment, physical brutality and general indifference to the natives' living conditions in the new towns. At the same time, however, it appears that the excesses inherent in such power relationships were taken for granted by the average, almost illiterate African; the elderly narrator expatiates on his gratitude to the white men, who taught him the gospel of hard work, the sense of organization and (of all things!) "justice and plain-speaking." In fact, the whole tale is a paean in praise of the city of Abidjan, and old Païs' life story an occasion for recounting the growth of this bustling, prosperous modern metropolis, itself an image of the swift economic growth of the Ivory Coast. Ake Loba's constant ambivalence—a reflection of the African intellectual's predicament—finds explicit utterance when the French police chief exclaims that the real dispossessed ones in the country are the white men!

The 1958 referendum, which granted home rule to most of France's African colonies and independence to Guinea, was clear evidence that total decolonization was just round the corner. By then, Olympe Bhêly-Quénum (b. 1928) from Dahomey had already been working for two years on his first novel, *Un Piège sans fin* (1960), which he claimed had been written in order to counter the by now prevailing anti-colonial inspiration and to demonstrate that it was possible for an African to write a non-political novel: this, he thought, was the only way to arouse truly universal interest as the skin colour of his protagonists was immaterial: "Je voyais dans l'histoire de mon héros un fait qui était au delà de l'individuel, puisque n'importe quel homme, blanc, jaune ou noir, aurait pu, ou pourrait être, victime du même sort qu' Ahouna. Je voyais en lui un

[83] See Brench, *The Novelists' Inheritance in French Africa,* (1967), pp. 91–98, and Richard Bonneau, "*Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir* d'Aké Loba," *Afrique Artistique et Littéraire,* No. 42. (1976), 61–66.

parangon de l'effort infini—mais sans héroïsme—auquel se livrent chaque jour tous les hommes amoureux de vivre simplement. Mais j'y voyais également cette chute perpétuelle inhérente à la condition humaine, et dont je ne crois guère qu'il faille nécessairement être chrétien pour être conscient."[84]

The story of Ahouna's fate falls into two parts: the first part is a report made by a Dahomean scientist named Houénou (another way of transliterating the author's own name, Quénum) of Ahanou's own first-person reminiscences of the happy years of his life as a pastoral poet and musician before he became a murderer in consequence of his wife's irrational jealousy. In the second part, the tribulations of Ahanou are recounted in the third person by Houanou himself as Ahanou is imprisoned by the colonial authorities, escapes with the deceitful help of one of his victim's kinsmen, is captured by the latter and burnt alive in punishment for his deed.

The book was hailed in some African circles as the first African novel that was not marred by obsessive preoccupation with such specifically African problems as the struggle against colonialism and the culture clash. The colonial background is presented as merely incidental, one aspect among others of the general malignity of fate. *Un piège sans fin* could be construed as one of the first fruits of Senghor's "civilisation de l'universel." Indeed the poet Paulin Joachim, a fellow-citizen of the author's, went so far as to claim, somewhat hyperbolically, that the book might help change the face of the world![85] But it is true that there is something tragic in a very Greek sense in Ahouna's fate: poisoned by his wife's motiveless jealousy, he is driven to a murder which is his tragic fault and the origin of his tragic punishment. But whereas in Greek tragedy the ultimate origin of the tragic process is a curse inflicted by the gods in punishment of human hubris, the hero's crime in *Un Piège sans fin* appears to be fortuitous, meaningless, part of some absurd fatality "inhérente à la condition humaine."

Nevertheless, while the evils of the colonial system are not entirely absent from the tale—with its allusions to the use of African troops during World War I, and especially to the inhuman forced-labour policy, and with its racialist white characters—part of the oppressive atmosphere of the second half results from the author's literary use of what might be described as a Dahomean tradition of cruelty which had been abundantly exemplified more than twenty years earlier in Hazoumé's *Doguicimi:* it is significant that when Ahouna is arrested by police inspector Vauquier's men, he is fastened on to a cross in compliance with local custom. His death, too is a ritual murder designed to pacify his victim's soul and to appease the gods and the ancestors, even though one of the clan elders claims that the soul of the victim, his daughter-in-law, is "contre toute vengeance", that the ancestors will join the evil spirits and contribute to the destruction of the village, and that in order to have the blessing of the gods it is necessary to stop "cette course vertigineuse vers le néant." Since these words of wisdom and moderation, rooted in a different interpretation of traditional beliefs and customs, go unheeded, it is not unlikely that the "endless snare" of the title and the source of the tragic fate that awaits

[84] Quoted in R. Mercier and S. Battestini, *Olympe Bhêly-Quénum* (Paris: Nathan, 1964), p. 15. The only essay of some importance to have been devoted to this writer is R. Chemain, "Vision du monde et structure de l'imaginaire dans l'œuvre d'Olympe Bhêly-Quénum," *Annales de l'Université de Brazzaville*, 9 (1973), 23–48.

[85] Quoted in Blair, *African Literature in French*, p. 252.

the protagonist and a number of other, minor, characters, is this blindness which drives man away from the path of reason, tolerance and forgiveness.

The indictment of superstition which was only latent in *Un Piège sans fin* came very much to the fore in Bhêly-Quénum's second novel, *Le Chant du lac* (1965). The earlier tale was characterized by a form of incoherence which was at the same time part of its alluring poetic mystery. But the message of *Le Chant du lac* is embarrassingly obvious: "L'africain renoncerait les [sic] multiples dieux pour lesquels il s'épuise et se ruine, s'il percevait leurs secrets ou ceux dont les grands prêtres les entourent."[86] Indeed, while the former novel had made efficient poetic use of the supernatural element in tribal society—rituals and magic—the writer's main purpose now seems to be to demonstrate the falsity of a favourite West African belief: the cult of water snakes regarded as blood-thirsty aquatic deities. In the first part of the story, a group of students returning from France expatiate on their country's need for progress and on the necessity to free it from such harmful, paralysing superstitions as the myth of the water gods; these ophidian deities are supposed to have been lovers destroyed by their parents' hostility to their union; the price for this intransigence must now be paid by the villagers in the form of human sacrifices. The actual destruction of the snakes is effected by a woman, her children and her oarsman, who manage to escape from the fatal whirlpool to which the wind has driven them while crossing the lake.

In this recognition and acceptance of Africa's need to abolish her belief in venerable, cherished myths, Bhêly-Quénum's second novel was clearly anticipating Ake Loba's *Les Fils de Kouretcha*. But although the work contained several passages of considerable poetic power, its slight bulk and faulty structure heralded a decline which was confirmed by the author's third book, *Liaison d'un été* (1968). Printed by the firm SAGEREP which the author himself had founded to publish his own journal, *L'Afrique actuelle* (1965–1968), this book is just a collection of short stories written over the preceding two decades. The latest of these, "Les brigands" (written 1963), deals with gangsterism in urban centres, yet succeeds in evoking the magic that was the best feature of the earlier works. "La reine aux bras d'or," shows how a humble but beautiful woman triumphs over the jealousy of her co-wives and becomes a queen through full compliance with the standards of traditional society. The title story, composed in 1959, is Bhêly-Quénum's own contribution to the well-worn motif that has inspired a large proportion of African fiction in French, from Socé's *Mirages de Paris* to Ake Loba's *Kocoumbo:* the story of the exiled black student who falls in love with a European girl. Apparently, then, Olympe Bhêly-Quénum gave up writing in the mid-sixties: Jahn's *Bibliography* of 1971 mentioned three more novels that were allegedly in manuscript form, but these never materialized. This was a great disappointment because Olympe Bhêly-Quénum had aroused high expectations. He handled the French language with uncommon ease and had proved to be a master at creating an atmosphere that ranged from the weird and uncanny to the idyllic. It is true that his narrative technique is exceedingly faulty: both *Un Piège sans fin* and *Le Chant du lac* consistently mishandle the point of view, lack psychological plausibility and introduce sub-plots and secondary themes of far from obvious relevance.

[86] Olympe Bhêly-Quénum, *Le Chant du lac* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965), p. 128.

Yet Bhêly-Quénum had perhaps deeper insight and originality than most African novelists of his generation: he was not concerned with anti-colonial protest or with the exaltation of traditional attitudes, but with the mystery, the strange beauty and the cruelty of ancestral beliefs which had to be overcome if Africa was to join the modern world.

While rejecting all involvement in the political struggle, Olympe Bhêly-Quénum could not evade the fundamental problem with which Africa was faced on the eve of independence: the tragic contradiction between the demands of the modern world and her attachment to customs, values and ideals, the more positive aspects of which had been summarized in the negritude concept. But there is considerable variety in the cultures of traditional Africa. Whereas several francophone writers born into animistic societies had sought to solve the African dilemma in terms of some sort of accommodation between modern standards of behaviour and cherished, though irrational, beliefs, Muslim authors were bound to see things in a different light: for Islam was as much a world religion as Christianity. Whereas Ousmane Socé and Birago Diop when dealing with that theme, chose to concentrate on some of the debased forms which Islam had taken on in black Africa, in 1961 at last a Senegalese writer, Sheikh Hamidou Kane (b. 1928), published a novel, *L'Aventure ambiguë* in which full justice was done to the philosophical depths of Muslim thought.[87]

Like his hero, Samba Diallo, Hamidou Kane—who belongs to the austerely Islamic Toucouleur society—received the traditional Koranic education; he did not attend the modern French school until he was about twelve; he later studied in Dakar and finally graduated from the Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer in Paris. *L'Aventure ambiguë* is largely autobiographical and focuses on the issue of traditional v. modern education. The pathetic urgency of this problem is conveyed to the heart and mind of the reader with unprecedented poignancy. For while few writers with an animistic background are genuinely convinced of the virtues of their traditional education, even though they may look back to their childhood with unfeigned nostalgia, Islam is a world religion with an uncontrovertibly high intellectual and moral tradition of its own. A large part of Kane's novel is taken up with the debate that arises in the family of the protagonist as to whether he should be sent to the French school at all. They are fully aware of what

[87] Among the vast number of critical essays that have been devoted to this, Hamidou Kane's only novel, mention should be made of the following: Albert Gérard, "Cheikh Hamidou Kane: *L'Aventure ambiguë*," *La Revue Nouvelle* 34, 2 (1961), 441–450, reprinted in his *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar–Abidjan, 1977); F. Eboussi, "*L'Aventure ambiguë* de Cheikh Hamidou Kane. Quelques instants d'entretien avec Cheikh Hamidou Kane," *Abbia*, No. 6 (1964), 207–215; R. Mercier and S. Battestini, *Cheikh Hamidou Kane* (Paris: Nathan, 1964); François-Xavier Rwamakuba, *"L'Aventure ambiguë," Congo-Afrique*, 6, 10 (1966), 502–515; Paul de Meester de Ravesten, "Valeurs chrétiennes dans *l'Aventure ambiguë* de Cheikh Hamidou Kane," *Revue du Clergé Africain*, March 1968, pp. 158–173; Abiola Irele, "Faith and Exile: Cheikh Hamidou Kane and the Theme of Alienation," *Le Français au Nigéria*, 7, 3 (1972), 15–20; Raymond N. Okafor, "Cheikh Hamidou Kane: A la recherche d'une certaine synthèse. L'acculturation dans *L'Aventure ambiguë*," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan*, Série D, 5 (1972), 195–217; Thomas Melone, "Analyse et pluralité: Cheikh Hamidou Kane et la folie," *Diogène*, No. 80 (1972), 8–49, and Papa Gueye N'Diaye's rejoinder in "Thomas Melone et *L'Aventure ambiguë*, ou les excentricités d'une critique," *Présence Africaine*, No. 89 (1974), 243–263; Hassan El Nouty, "La polysémie de *L'Aventure ambiguë*," *Revue de Littérature comparée*, 48 (1974), 475–487; and Sœur Marie Céleste, "Le prophétisme chez Cheikh Hamidou Kane," *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 46 (1977), 36–50.

is involved: the attraction and the technical and scientific superiority of Western civilization are likely to destroy the identity—both Moslem and African—of Samba, who is destined to become a leader of his people, and therefore a model that all will strive to imitate. Yet they also realize that their society will simply disappear as an active element in the modern world unless it somehow adapts itself to the new-fangled ideas and ideals. Their misgivings are justified as Samba pursues his studies in France, is submitted to the corroding influences of Western thought, and comes very near to losing his religious faith. But he is fully conscious of the process of alienation that has set in, and when his father calls him back home, he willingly complies in the hope of restoring the vital relation with his own spiritual and communal roots. The novel ends in tragedy: the village idiot—who stands for the blind, unthinking forces of ossified tradition—kills Samba in the belief that he has become an infidel, and therefore unworthy of taking up the leadership of his people.

This dénouement is typical of an insight shared by some of Africa's best novelists, in whose works the confrontation of old and new, of dignified tradition and powerful innovation, the individual hero's attempt at fusing the two so as to ensure the survival of his society in the modern world, all develop in anguish and end in tragedy. This imaginative insight is in stark contradiction with the abstract optimism of negritude ideology. In many cases, unfortunately, history has already proved the disastrous validity of the more tragic view.

Whereas francophone creative writing was pioneered during the dozen years following the war by older men like Senghor or Birago Diop in poetry and the short story, the generation of writers born mostly between 1925 and 1930 was thus responsible for the creation of the modern African novel. This was the first generation of intellectuals in French Africa to have benefited in any significant numbers by the very best that the French educational system could offer, and this accounts for the fairly high quality of their literary writing, even though Paulin Joachim from Benin objected to their inclusion in a series unassumingly entitled "les classiques du monde", claiming that "c'est un crime contre l'esprit que de vouloir détrôner Balzac et Flaubert par de piètres faiseurs de livres négro-africains, à seule fin d'exploiter le nationalisme, il est vrai exacerbé, des nouvelles nations nègres."[88] It is true that the African novelists of the fifties relied too much either on their own experience of traditional life, to which they looked back with romantic nostalgia, or on the evils of the colonial system, the death of which they were trying to precipitate. In this, however, they deserved no contempt. For they had had their formative years during World War II, with its pitiless exploitation of the black populations in the name of "l'effort de guerre", with the enrolment of thousands who were sent far away to their deaths in a foreign conflict that was of no immediate concern to them. The majority of them, therefore, were in open rebellion against what Césaire in his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* had called the "collectif ravalement à la bête" which had been the fate of their underprivileged brethren. Their education made them articulately conscious of the debasement to which their fathers had been submitted.

[88] Paulin Joachim, *Editorial africain* (Strasbourg: Imprimerie des Dernières Nouvelles, 1967), p. 138.

Their prose fiction was symptomatic of their puzzlement as they were faced with the rival claims of two antagonistic sets of values: those of the Western world, whose superior efficiency and power were not to be doubted, and those of the traditional culture to which they could not but remain deeply attached, even though its tenets were often demonstrably false, or at any rate irrational.

When independence came, it was those two generations of French-educated intellectuals that inherited most of the powers relinquished by the white man. Almost overnight, writers became statesmen, politicians, ministers, diplomats, high civil servants, etc. Yet it was not simply an overdose of hard work and heavy responsibilities that dried up their literary inspiration. Albert Gérard has suggested several reasons for the crisis that all but annihilated French writing at a time—the early years of independence—when English literature was rapidly soaring: negritude had been the fountainhead of the whole movement; it had inspired a tremendous amount of lyrical poetry; it had prompted many to record and adapt the folk tales and historical legends of their country; it had played an important role in the novel, much of which concentrated on autobiography and idyllic childhood memories of village life; but the Congo tragedy, followed by many tumultuous events throughout the continent exposed the utopian character of the negritude ideology: now that black men were in power, with abundant money within their reach, gone were the sense of brotherhood and the simple attachment to nature which had been the basic aspects of negritude. The other main source of inspiration, anti-colonialism, had also lost its relevance; nor could it be replaced by some form of literary rebellion against neo-colonialism for, as Gérard points out, "plus subtil, plus discret, plus insidieux, le néo-colonialisme économique et culturel se prêtait mal à la transmutation littéraire; à cause de ses liens étroits avec les nouvelles structures politiques mises en place lors de l'accession à l'autonomie, les écrivains pouvaient difficilement le critiquer, sous peine de se heurter à l'hostilité de régimes dont l'orientation est volontiers, et peut-être nécessairement, autoritaire."[89] Renewal might conceivably have been sought in closer attention to the everyday problems of the common man in the new societies: this is exactly what Sembène Ousmane set out to do in his films; but most of the other writers with their European education were out of touch with the common people, whose language they sometimes no longer understood, even though it was their own mother-tongue.

But there was yet another reason for the barrenness that characterized the early years of independence: the centripetal drive characteristic of French culture, French literature and French publishing. Most of the writers that have been mentioned so far had spent large parts of their lives in Paris, or at any rate, in France. Their works had been printed by reputable Paris publishers such as Plon, Stock, Laffont, Julliard, Seghers, the Editions du Seuil, with Présence Africaine as a last resort. The late fifties and early sixties witnessed a new wave of what Apollinaire had called, almost half a century earlier, *mélanophilie* or even *mélanomanie*. Indeed, it is inconceivable that such awkward pieces of writing as *Force-Bonté*, or *Le Docker noir*, or even *Karim*, should ever have been printed if Africa had not been, in a way, fashionable, with Paris publishers

[89] Gérard, *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone*, p. 65.

"discovering" African writers the way exotic explorers map out *terras incognitas* and discover unknown animal or vegetable species.

Paris publishers' interest in prospecting African resources seems to have vanished with independence. Few new writers were published in France during the early sixties; even fewer were of any distinction; and it may be presumed that most works were printed at author's cost. The Ivory Coast, which supplied many young poets, also produced several exceptionally undistinguished novels. Before Oussou-Essui, already mentioned, a playwright and a poet had tried their hands at prose fiction: Raphaël Atta Koffi (b. 1942) with *Les Dernières paroles de Koimé* (1961), and Maurice Kone (b. 1942) with *Le Jeune homme de Bouaké* (1963); neither work added much to the African novel in French. Besides Jean Ikelle-Matiba (1936–1984) and his *Cette Afrique-là!* (1963), a biographical narrative that goes back to German times, Cameroon contributed *Sur la terre en passant* (1966) in which François Borgia Marie Evembé (b. 1938) narrated in tiresome anatomical detail the agony and death of an otherwise wholly uninteresting hero. Togolese writer Frank Sydol (1939–1975) published *Qui donc est mon prochain?* (1966), a complicated, oratorical, tediously edifying and not very coherent novel of Christian inspiration.

The only new writer deserving of serious attention to have appeared after Hamidou Kane was Charles Nokan (b. 1937) from the Ivory Coast. His first book, *Le Soleil noir point* (1962), was written in 1959, while he was a student at the University of Poitiers. After recounting the experiences of a black student in France, it described the life of a group of idealistic young men and women eager to work for the emancipation and the happiness of their nation. Nokan did not aim at re-writing Ake Loba's realistic novel, *Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir: Le Soleil noir point* is not a continuous narrative but a juxtaposition of short vignettes and sketches consisting of dialogues, descriptions, letters, excerpts from diaries, dreams or prose poems. This loose structure evidenced the author's determination to experiment outside the conventions of the traditional French novel, which writers of earlier generations had dutifully striven to observe. It also brought ideological innovations. French political novels from Africa had hitherto been concerned mainly with the struggle for freedom. By the time Nokan started writing *Le Soleil noir point,* the *loi-cadre* of 1956 had given a measure of self-government to black African territories and De Gaulle's constitution of 1958 had provided for a quasi-federal relationship between France and her former colonies. Houphouët-Boigny—who, like Nokan, was born in Yamoussoukro in the central Ivory Coast—had assumed undisputed political leadership of his country, and by the time the book was printed, he had been President of the young republic for two years. Already in the fifties Nigerian writers had voiced their disappointment with the introduction of the outward trappings of parliamentary democracy in Africa. *Le Soleil noir point* echoed—for the very first time in French creative writing—the opinion of many radical African students, in whose view independence had merely meant the transfer of power from white colonial exploiters to an equally corrupt and self-seeking bunch of black bourgeois exploiters.

This was further elaborated, with the same pointillistic technique, in *Violent était le vent* (1966), which appeared in the same year as *Dramouss,* where Camara Laye expressed his disillusionment with the Sékou Touré regime in Guinea. In the preface, Nokan claimed that his book obeyed the rules of Baule aesthetics, the mixture of prose

and poetry being supposed to create an effect in some way similar to that of the combination of dance and song in African rituals. The fact is that the cumulative effect of Nokan's vignettes is to produce a subtle picture of three phases in recent African history: the colonial regime, in which forced labour figured prominently, but which also gave the hero, Kossia, the chance to acquire learning and to define his ideals in Europe; the struggle for independence, dominated by the impressive figure of Kotiboh, whose demagoguery is in the service of his own lust for power; the disappointment of independence, when the dictatorship of Kotiboh leads to the exploitation of the common people by a new African bourgeoisie, while an efficient spying system thwarts the aspirations and efforts of true revolutionaries. Nokan's next work, *Les Malheurs de Tchako* (1968), was a short lachrymose drama about the plight and frustration of another of those idealistic young heroes, who are so strongly and disquietingly reminiscent of early European Romanticism. Whereas this mediocre play was one of the premonitory symptoms of the revival of drama in French that was to occur in the seventies, Nokan's main contribution so far remains the fact that *Le Soleil noir point* initiated the trend of political criticism in francophone creative writing.

While those minor works were published in Paris, feeble efforts were being made within what Senghor, in another fit of lexical inventiveness was to dub "la francophonie", to undermine the dictatorial supremacy of Paris as the sole publishing centre for French-language writing. One consequence of this trend was the emergence of French Canada as a significant book producer; a by-product was the publication of two African works of unequal importance. In 1963, Jacques Kuoh-Moukouri (b. 1909) from Cameroon published a predominantly autobiographical tale, *Doigts noirs. Je fus écrivain interprète au Cameroun,* recounting his own career from his beginnings as an interpreter to the awakening of his political consciousness and the eve of his country's independence. It was likewise in Montreal that Ahmadou Kourouma from the Ivory Coast first published *Les Soleils des indépendances* (1968); but this remarkable novel, which was reissued in Paris two years later, heralded the renewal of francophone fiction in the late sixties. In fact, however, the most important and significant development of the decade was the emergence and rapid growth of publishing activities on African soil.

(Adapted from the French by Albert Gérard)

3. THE EMERGENCE OF LOCAL PUBLISHING

Throughout British Africa, Protestant missionaries in their zeal to propagate the word of God had done much to reduce African languages to writing, to translate the Bible and other edifying works, to disseminate them and, for that purpose, to establish local presses. The process began in the nineteenth century, and it was strengthened during the second quarter of the twentieth when official initiative created a number of Literature Bureaux with a view to encouraging African authorship, often in co-operation with British publishers such as Nelson, Macmillan, Longman or the Oxford University Press: a huge potential market was about to be uncovered.

The situation was entirely different in the French colonies. This was due to the Paris-centered cultural attitudes and policy which had been for a long time a fundamental characteristic of French society, and which has been increasingly regarded as oppressive by many French provinces—Brittany, Alsace, Aquitaine, Occitanie, etc—as well as by other French-speaking countries such as Switzerland, Belgium and above all Québec. One significant result of what one may perhaps call this "luteciocentricity" was the almost total absence of local publishing in French Africa.[90] When the new African countries became independent, they did not have the printing substructures which Protestant missionaries had created in British territories with a view to publishing vernacular writings. There were only four exceptions: Madagascar which had had local printing presses before the French conquest; Togo and Cameroon, which had been German colonies in earlier days and where Christianity and the accompanying intellectual and technological paraphernalia had been introduced by Protestant missionaries; and the Belgian Congo, which stood outside the sphere of French influence anyhow, and

[90] It is significant that at the International Conference on Publishing and Book Development which was held at the University of Ife (Nigeria) in December 1973, only one out of more than twenty papers dealt with publishing in French. See *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*, ed. E. Oluwasanmi et al. (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1975). For further information concerning publishing in anglophone Africa see the following essays in the *African Book Publishing Record:* Anon., "Company Profiles," 1 (1975), 17–23, 135–41, 211–15; 2 (1976), 15–23, 104–8; Abiola Irele, "The Ethiope Experience," 1 (1975), 27–33; Julian Rea, "Aspects of African Publishing, 1945–74," 1 (1975), 145–149; Geoffrey J. Williams, "The Zambian Publishing Scene: A Commentary," 3 (1977), 15–21; Henry Chakava, "Publishing in a Multilingual Situation: the Kenya case," 3 (1977), 83–90; Elizabeth Paren, "The Multinational Publishing Firm in Africa: The Macmillan Perspective," 4 (1978), 15–17; Steve S. Mwiyeriwa, "Printing Presses and Publishing Houses in Malawi," 4 (1978), 87–97; Eva-Maria McLean Rathgeber, "Nigeria's University Presses: Problems and Prospects," 5 (1979), 13–17.

where, as mentioned earlier, small-scale efforts had been made towards the setting up of a modest publishing industry.

Whereas, therefore, publishing activity in anglophone Africa could develop from its pre-independence nucleus and from the long standing interest of British publishers in supplying reading-matter to the African audience, francophone authors were wholly dependent on Paris publishers to have their works printed and distributed, even inside Africa. It was therefore a major step forward towards cultural independence when, in the sixties, a beginning was made with local publishing on a significant scale.

Nor was it just by chance that this occurred almost simultaneously in the Congo —whose official name became Zaïre in 1971—and in Cameroon. As a former Belgian colony, the Congo could not avail itself of the advantages which the French connection offered to other newly independent francophone countries; the country and its authors suffered as much and more than Belgium and its writers from never having been part of the metropolitan Hexagon and its dependencies. In fact, before 1960, only one piece of Congolese writing, Bolamba's *Esanzo,* had been issued in Paris, although Zaïre is the largest country in the world to use French as its official language. While some Congolese works appeared in Belgium, after independence the need was felt to expand and diversify such printing activities as had been started locally, and also to create new outlets for younger writers. This was done on a remarkably modest budget and with no display of overweening ambition. But beginning in the mid-sixties, Zaïre managed to print a substantial proportion of its admittedly small literary output.

The first important centre of francophone publishing in Africa, however, was Cameroon, for the reasons that have already been adduced, and presumably also because part of the country had been under British administration so that Cameroonians were aware of publishing developments in British Africa and especially in Nigeria. In the early seventies, the example of Zaïre and Cameroon was to encourage another major development: the foundation of the Nouvelles Editions Africaines in Dakar and Abidjan. But the growth of local publishing has had so far two significant consequences: one is that locally published books are inevitably designed for a local audience, whose interests differ widely from those of the European and westernized readers, for whom creative writing published in France is inevitably designed; the other is that the prestige of France, and of Paris, has not abated, so that the most gifted writers consider local publication as just a preliminary step towards the glory and the royalties that can only be obtained in Europe!

MUKALA KADIMA-NZUJI

CONGO/ZAÏRE

Creative writing in French began in Belgian Africa immediately after the Second World War. With the sole exception of Bolamba's poetry, which was so sorely misunderstood by Senghor, it showed little originality. At the same time, however, another mode of

writing[91] emerged which was far more closely connected with the awakening of a political consciousness among Zaïrian intellectuals. A variety of factors such as the decolonization process which had begun as far back as 1944 in French and British territories, growing urbanization and proletarianization resulting from industrial growth, impatience with institutionalized segregation, the development of the school system with its attendant increase in the *évolué* class, favoured the swift development of this political awareness which found its first fully coherent expression in two important documents of the mid-fifties.

One was the *Manifeste* issued on July 1st, 1956 by a group of *évolués* who had launched their own journal, *Conscience Africaine,* around 1953. While the *Manifeste* caused considerable stir among Africans and Europeans alike because it questioned Belgian policy from a large variety of viewpoints, political, economic and social, it regarded total emancipation as the end-product of an evolution that should extend over a period of thirty years: during this period existing institutions were to become gradually more representative, and they were to be given increasing powers of decision and control. The *Manifeste* rejected the concept of a "Belgian-Congolese federation" as a pre-condition for Zaïrian political emancipation without prior consultation of the Zaïrian people themselves. *Conscience Africaine* further condemned in no uncertain terms the introduction of Belgian political parties into Zaïre.

On 23 August 1956, the allegedly cultural Association des Bakongo (ABAKO)[92] published its own counter-manifesto. Although ABAKO agreed with *Conscience Africaine* in voicing reservations about the future institutional relations between Zaïre and Belgium, and putting forward claims for immediate social and economic reforms, there was disagreement on several basic points: determinedly hostile to the thirty years' delay proposed by *Conscience Africaine,* ABAKO demanded immediate independence ("une émancipation pour aujourd'hui"); its *Manifeste* held that the creation of African branches of the Belgian political parties would encourage rapid progress. It rejected unambiguously any idea of a Belgian-Congolese community along the lines that were to be temporarily adopted at the end of the decade for the Communauté française; instead, it advocated the constitution of a federal state to unite the numerous ethnic groups of the country ("fédération congolaise à base ethnique"). With its strong radicalization of the *Conscience Africaine* ideas, the ABAKO manifesto provided a clear indication that the Zaïrian élite had reached a significant degree of political awareness.

[91] Recent studies of the modern literature of Zaïre include: Pius Ngandu, "Naissance de l'édition littéraire au Zaïre," *Culture Française,* 21, 3 (1972), 34–39; Mussongela Kiban' Kumu, "Les écrivains zaïrois s'en vont en guerre," *L'Ecrivain Africain,* No. 22 (1972), 3–12; Malubungi Lungenyi-Lunwe, "Langues et littératures zaïroises: Aspects actuels de la recherche," *Zaïre-Afrique,* 83 (1974), 163–171; Jeannick Odier, "Bilan de la littérature zaïroise depuis l'indépendance," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* No. 35 (1975), 30–34; Bujitu Kabongo, *Pour mieux comprendre la littérature au Zaïre* (Kinshasa: Grue couronnée, 1975); two essays by P. Ngandu Nkashama, "La littérature zaïroise: Problématique d'une écriture," *Zaïre-Afrique,* 116 (1977), 379–385, and "Problématique de la littérature zaïroise," *Présence Francophone,* No. 17 (1978), 79–88; Elébé Lisembe, "La littérature en Afrique centrale: Zaïre, Congo, Gabon," *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch,* 29, 2 (1979), 196–205 and Mukala Kadima-Nzuji, *La Littérature zaïroise de langue française* (Paris: Karthala, 1984).

[92] According to its statutes of 1952, the complete title was "Association pour le perfectionnement et l'unification de la langue Kikongo." For more information, see *ABAKO 1950–1960: Documents* (Brussels: C. R. I. S. P., 1962), p. 13.

This was even more clearly evidenced, though in different ways, in the writings of Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Kanza and Mabika Kalanda.

Although it was only published in 1961—and in considerably abridged form—*Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?* by Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961) was written in 1956.[93] While the printed work offers only a fragmentary view of the political ideas of the first Prime Minister of the country, it contains the core principles of his future political actions. According to the author, it is based on enquiries among people of all classes and all opinions, whose views, classified according to their nature, are presented with comments and reflections by the author. The book covers various areas of paramount importance in African society at the time: the problems connected with the democratization of the system and the africanization of the civil service, the abolition of racial discrimination on the labour market, judicial and political equality, peasant migration to towns, basic education, the issues raised by land ownership and European settlement, alcoholism in urban areas, etc.

In lectures delivered from 1956 onwards although they were not printed until 1959 as *Propos d'un Congolais naïf,* Thomas Kanza (b. 1933), the first university graduate in the country, was expatiating on the theme of the likely transformation of the colonial system in the Africa of the future.[94] Kanza had an eventful political career in the early sixties. When independence came, he left his post in Belgium, where he had been working for the Common Market, and was appointed as representative of his country first at the United Nations, and later (1962) in London. When Moïse Tshombe from Katanga (now Shaba) became Prime Minister of the Congo in 1964, Kanza was recalled but soon disagreed with Tshombe and joined the rebel forces of Pierre Mulele. After the movement was crushed and Mobutu Sese Seko seized power, Kanza left the country for exile first in Europe and then in the United States. His contribution to Zaïrian literature consists of a largely autobiographical novel, *Sans rancune* (1965) which, not unlike Bakary Diallo's *Force-Bonté* some forty years earlier, emphasizes the puzzling contradictions in the behaviour of Europeans (in this case the Belgians) in their own country and in their African colonies.[95]

What matters in the present context, however, is that in 1956, the very year when both the *Conscience Africaine* and the ABAKO manifestoes were demanding complete political emancipation, both Lumumba and Kanza were still dreaming of a "communauté belgo-congolaise". For the former, "l'immatriculation devrait être considérée comme la dernière étape d'intégration",[96] for the latter,

[93] Patrice Lumumba, *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1961), p. 1.

[94] Thomas Kanza's first published works were slender pamphlets: *Congo, pays de deux évolués* (Léopoldville: Actualités Africaines, 1956), *Propos d'un Congolais naïf: Discours sur la vocation coloniale dans l'Afrique de demain* (Brussels: Les Amis de Présence africaine, 1959); *Le Congo à la veille de son indépendance, ou Propos d'un Congolais désillusionné* (Ibid., 1959), and also *Tôt ou Tard...* (Brussels: Le livre africain, [1959?]. After independence, he published other political essays such as *Congo 196?* (Brussels: Remarques congolaises, 1962), *Eloge de la révolution* (Ibid., 1965) and later *Conflict in the Congo: The Rise and Fall of Lumumba* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), the French original of which (Paris: Maspero) was confiscated by the French authorities (see notice in Jahn, *Who's Who in African Literature,* pp. 165–166).

[95] Thomas Kanza, *Sans rancune* (London: Scotland [1965]).

[96] Lumumba, op. cit., p. 72.

le Congo, qui aura été le pays des Noirs, deviendra celui de Noirs et Blancs en attendant d'être le pays des hommes évolués: la patrie des Noirs évolués mais aussi celle des Blancs évolués car même parmi les Blancs, il y en a qui doivent encore évoluer dans la conception de la coexistence et collaboration avec leurs concitoyens les Congolais.[97]

Obviously, Lumumba and Kanza were defending the interests of the *évolué* class, to which they both belonged, even though the latter had benefited by a considerably more advanced education than the former. It was a class that had been created to cater for the needs of the colonial administration and business; it was cut off from the mass of the population; it was feverishly craving for ever more complete assimilation. Both writers were thus contributing—albeit perhaps unconsciously—to the widening of the gap that separated the élite from the people. In 1958, Lumumba changed his political views and joined those who demanded immediate independence. As to Thomas Kanza, he went on toying with the notion of a Belgian-Congolese community until independence actually came.

The writings of Mabika Kalanda (b. 1932) had a different tone and expressed different views. In *Baluba et Lulua: Une ethnie à la recherche d'un nouvel équilibre* (Brussels: Remarques congolaises, 1959), he set out to define the deeper causes of the tribal conflict that was setting these two antagonistic ethnic groups against each other on the eve of independence. As Jacques Ceulemans was later to point out, his central preoccupation was "de fournir à ceux que les passions avaient égarés, des éléments de leur propre situation, basés sur la recherche objective et approfondie, tendant à détruire les divergences créées artificiellement par l'intervention étrangère."[98] Even more important, however, was a thoughtful political essay which Kalanda wrote in 1964–1965, *La remise en question, base de la décolonisation mentale* (Brussels: Remarques Africaines, 1967). This book made a decisive impression on the new generation of Zaïrian intellectuals which emerged after 1965. Its purpose was twofold. First, Kalanda daringly questioned a number of principles and prejudices that had been bequeathed either by the ancestors, or by the colonial system. Second, he endeavoured to define the conditions for a transformation of the black man's mentality which would nevertheless preserve the essentials of his African authenticity. This implied a critique of the metaphysical foundations of the African's world view, while by emphasizing the individual's role in the determination of his own fate, Kalanda was entering, to a limited extent, the ways of historical materialism.

In spite of the difficulties that attended the emergence of an independent state in Zaïre, the early sixties were thus a period of rapid intellectual growth which was inevitably echoed in the field of creative writing. Three main factors account for the literary upheaval that took place in the mid-sixties.

In the first place, it must be remembered that prior to the Second World War, the

[97] Kanza, *Congo, pays de deux évolués*, p. 29.

[98] Jacques Ceulemans, Preface to Mabika Kalanda, *La remise en question, base de la décolonisation mentale* (Brussels: Remarques Africaines, 1967).

educational system, which was entirely in the hands of Christian missionary societies, paid very little attention to the teaching of the French language: the medium of instruction was one of the African languages during the first two or three years of the child's schooling, with the study of French optional at best; during the following school years, a smattering of French was taught for purely practical purposes. It was not until 1948 that the colonial authorities made any serious progress in the teaching of French; while this development enabled many children to learn the elements of the language, and the brightest pupils to use it with some fluency, it never reached the high level that prevailed in Belgium. This is why a new curriculum was introduced in 1958 (and confirmed after independence) through an ordinance of 1962 imposing French—which had meanwhile become the country's official language—as the medium of instruction from the first year of primary school thus giving Zaïrian children a better knowledge of the language.

The foundation of two universities, at Kimwenza, near Kinshasa (1954) and at Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi, 1956) contributed greatly to the establishment of a Zaïrian élite fully aware of the main currents of modern thought. Furthermore, the creation of a Centre des Littératures Romanes d'Inspiration Africaine (CELRIA) at the University of Kinshasa in 1962, the gradual introduction of African writers into the school curriculum, the spreading of their works among students in universities and other institutions of higher learning, all this led to serious reflections on African literature and gave useful encouragement to creative writing itself, by offering to the younger generation living literary models such as Senghor, Césaire or Rabemananjara, poets who were actively involved in the cultural and political reassessment of Africa.

Finally, there occurred an outburst of creative activity fostered by literary clubs, literary periodicals and other literary publications, whose modest aspirations often received official support. The foundation of *Documents pour l'action* (1960), whose name was later changed to *Congo-Afrique* and then to *Zaïre-Afrique*, and of *Etudes congolaises* (1961) was followed by the emergence of several literary clubs, the most important of which was *"La Pléiade du Congo"*: although it was of brief duration (1964–1966), it nevertheless offered a forum for the talents of several truly gifted poets.[99] The Department of Cultural Affairs supplied material help towards the publication of a number of works which appeared in mimeographed form under the imprint "Les Belles-lettres" (1966), after which the Office National de la Recherche et du Développement (O. N. R. D.) helped to finance the publication of "Lettres Congolaises" (1967–69). At the end of the sixties, private enterprise took over with such publishing houses as Okapi (1969) and Mont Noir (1971).[100]

[99] More detailed information about this early stage of creative writing in independent Zaïre can be obtained from: Jean Allary, "Clémentine Nzuji et la Pléiade du Congo," *Congo-Afrique*, 6 (1966), 28–33; Valentin Y. Mudimbe, "La littérature de la République Démocratique du Congo," *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 11 (1970), 14–16; Gabriel Sumaili, "Le cercle littéraire Balise: une contribution positive à la littérature en R. D. C.," *Congo-Afrique*, 11 (1971), 221–222; Ngandu Nkashama, "La littérature au Zaïre depuis l'indépendance," *Zaïre-Afrique*, 12 (1972), 545–564 and 621–632, and "Naissance de l'édition littéraire au Zaïre," *Culture Française*, 21, 3 (1972), 34–39; Mineke Schipper-de Leeuw, "Littérature zaïroise et société décolonisée," *Kroniek van Afrika*, 12, 4 (1972), 187–194.

[100] To the above-mentioned essays should be added the various informative contributions of Dr. Kadima-Nzuji himself: "Regard sur la jeune poésie congolaise, de 1966 à 1970," *Afrique Chrétienne*, No. 16 (1970), 28–29; "Evolution littéraire en République du Zaïre depuis l'indépendance", *Zaïre-Afrique*, 13 (1973),

By 1965, the combination of these three central trends had inspired a new generation of creative writers, whose output was quite distinct from that of their elders in its form, themes and tone. Admittedly, its chief characteristics were the proliferation of poetic pamphlets of very uneven value, and the almost complete absence of prose fiction of any length.

The first poet of real significance to have emerged in the late sixties is also Zaire's first woman writer, Clémentine Nzuji (b. 1944, now known as Faïk-Nzuji Madiya), who became the founder of the Pléiade du Congo after publishing several poems in Belgian, Swiss and French journals. A bilingual writer, equally at ease in French and in her native Ciluba, her poems in various collections[101] are mainly love poems dedicated to her husband and children. They display a highly original mixture of exquisite sensitiveness and restrained, though unconcealed, sensuality. Besides these personal, intimate pieces, a few poems express the writer's sorrow at the sufferings of her own people since independence. The title of her third collection, *Kasala* (1969), refers to a type of praise poem widely practised and highly esteemed among the Luba. It is of special interest, because it contains three types of poems. Some, in French, express the writer's nostalgia for ancient times, her pride in her identity as a black woman, or else her anguished view of life which seeks an escape in a somewhat romantic *Todeslust*. Others are original compositions in Ciluba, with the author's own translations; one of these voices the poet's puzzlement that the Lord, who created happiness, should also have created sorrow. Finally, there are three *kasala* poems which belong to the Luba oral tradition; these have not been translated, presumably because allusions to Luba cosmogony and customs make them unsuitable for poetic rendering into French; while the first two celebrate motherly love, the last one is again a lyrical-philosophical piece, in which a village drummer questions God's benevolence and the justice of the ancestors; convinced of the absurdity of life he gives up his art, which has been emptied of its meaning.

By the time the Office National de la Recherche et du Développement issued Clémentine Nzuji's first collection, *Murmures*, in 1968, one of the members of the Pléiade, Emile Witahnkenge (b. 1937), a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Culture,

369–386; "La littérature zaïroise de langue française en 1973: éléments bibliographiques," ibid., 14 (1974), 431–440; "Littérature zaïroise contemporaine d'expression française," ibid., 15 (1975), 365–372; "La littérature zaïroise contemporaine d'expression française," *Culture Française*, 24, 2 (1975), 23–31; "Approche de la littérature de langue française au Zaïre," *Afrique Contemporaine*, 16 (1977), No. 91, 13–18; of special interest is his *Bibliographie littéraire de la République du Zaïre, 1931–1972* (Lubumbashi, CELRIA, 1973). See also "Avant-propos pour une lecture plurielle de la poésie zaïroise," *Présence Africaine*, No. 104 (1977), 86–93; "Approche de la littérature de langue française au Zaïre," *Afrique Contemporaine*, No. 19 (1977), 13–18; and *La littérature zaïroise*, ed. M. Kadima-Nzuji a special issue of *Notre Librairie*, No. 44 (1978), a bimonthly periodical issued by the Club des Lecteurs d'Expression Française in Paris [Ed.].

[101] *Murmures* (Kinshasa: Office National de la Recherche et du Développement, n.d. [1968]), *Le Temps des amants* (Kinshasa: Mandore, 1969), *Kasala* (Ibid., 1969), *Lianes*, (Kinshasa: Mont Noir, 1971), *Gestes interrompus* (Lubumbashi: Mandore, 1976). Clémentine Nzuji is also well known in scholarly circles for her works on Luba oral art especially on proverbs, riddles and the heroic poetry known as *Kasala: Enigmes Lubas (nshinga)* (Kinshasa: Université Lovanium, 1970), and *Kasala: Chant héroïque luba* (Kinshasa: Presses Universitaires du Zaïre, 1974). On her poetry see: Théophile Ayimpan, "*Kasala* et *Le temps des amants:* deux nouveaux recueils de Clémentine Nzuji," *Congo-Afrique*, No. 37 (1969), 368–371; Interview: "Poétique congolaise," *Congolia*, No. 2 (1969), 45–48; Beya Ngindu Goby and Nyembwe Tshikumambila, "Deux nouvelles publications de C. Nzuji-Faïk Madiya," *Zaïre-Afrique*, No. 111 (1977), 55–58.

had launched a collection of cheap mimeographed pamphlets under the imprint "Les Belles Lettres"; his strikingly unusual policy was to publish almost everything that was submitted to him, in the hope that this would encourage writers endowed with genuine, though unrealized gifts, to strive to improve their work. Although much of this production was bound to be of no value whatsoever, Witahnkenge, besides issuing several collections of his own verse, may claim the credit for discovering a few promising poets such as Gabriel Sumaili (b. 1939) who later reached print with his *Testament* (1971). Not until 1968 did "Les Belles Lettres" issue their first and, as far as is known, only printed volume: this was *Le Journal d'un revenant*, a novel by Gabriel Ilunga-Kabulu (b. 1940), which spelled the end of Witahnkenge's venture into the publishing business.

In 1968, official sponsorship of creative writing was taken over by the Office National de la Recherche et du Développement, whose publications department was directed for a while by a young poet of considerable promise, Philippe Masegabio (b. 1944). Whereas the poems of Clémentine Nzuji were primarily personal, Masegabio's *Somme première* (1968)[102] returned to the mainstream of African lyrical poetry in French. Private emotion is far from absent, but the majority of the poems in the collection are a redefinition in powerful, sometimes frantic, terms, of the poet's puzzlement and indecision, his expectations and his anguish, as he wavers between the two —obviously symbolic—women whom he loves, and as he tries to gauge the promise and the threat, his gains and his inevitable losses. Masegabio's rhetoric gives the impression of a man fighting against the forces of his inner self, which he vainly tries to master, or rather to curb to fit the demands of his chosen form, with its rhytmical songs and epic movements, its rhythmical diversity and baroque metaphors. But above all *Somme première* formulates the poet's enthusiastic quest for inner harmony and his obsessive hankering after authenticity.[103]

Writing in *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique* in 1970, Dr. Valentin Y. Mudimbe (b. 1941), one of the most prominent members of the country's new élite, complained that "la vie littéraire congolaise, comparée à celle des anciennes colonies françaises est d'une stérilité remarquable." Actually, during the late sixties, one or two Congolese poets had succeeded in emulating their elder Bolamba and in achieving publication in Paris. In *Marche, pays des espoirs* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1967), Etienne Tshinday Lukumbi had displayed a pervasive obsession with doubt and death, a constant mingling of personal drama with the tragedies of the Black Continent, which seem to give the lie to the sentiment implicit in the title. Of similar inspiration, although exhibiting greater

[102] Dieudonné Kadima-Nzuji, "*Somme première* de Philippe Masegabio," *Congo-Afrique*, 10 (1970), 49–53; Joseph Boguo, "Explication de *Somme première* de Philippe Masegabio," *Cahiers de littérature et de linguistique appliquée* (Kinshasa), 1 (June 1970), 61–69.

[103] The following year saw the publication of *Les ressacs* (Kinshasa: Office National de la Recherche et du Développement, 1969), the first printed collection of Dieudonné (now Mukala) Kadima-Nzuji (b. 1947), who was strongly influenced by Césaire, Senghor and Eluard's brand of surrealism. After *Préludes à la terre* (Kinshasa: Mont Noir, 1971), Kadima-Nzuji achieved publication in Europe with *Redire les mots anciens* (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 1977); this is certainly one of the most poignant volumes of poetry to have been written in French by an African: in striking images and with cautious obliqueness, the poet manages to convey most forcefully his torturing awareness that the new Africa is following a course that runs counter both to the ancestral wisdom which is now shamelessly discarded, and to man's natural yearning for a modicum of harmony, honesty and happiness. See notably Clémentine Faïk-Nzuji and Théophile Ayimpan, "*Les Ressacs*, recueil de poèmes de Dieudonné Kadima-Nzuji," *Congo-Afrique*, 9 (1969), 527–32 [Ed.].

command of the medium was *Réveil dans un nid de flammes* (Paris: Seghers, 1969) by Matala Mukadi Tshiakatumba (b. 1942): here again, beneath the influence of negritude poetry, the main source of inspiration is an immense disillusionment which seems to characterize the generation of Zaïrian poets born in the early forties. Mukadi commands an uncommonly wide range of emotional intensity. His obscure, breathless syntax recalls both Bolamba and Tchicaya UTam'si. He uses recondite geographical names with almost Miltonic effect. He can write of love with infinite tenderness and freshness. But his main theme is the African continent, which he often views as a paradigm for exploited peoples and oppressed individuals everywhere. While resentment at the colonial past is not absent from his poetry, he is often carried away by his vociferous indignation at the internecine fighting that has afflicted his and most other new African countries since they have taken their own fates into their hands. His poetry is a long "cri amer," a bitter outcry uttered by the poet who takes the sufferings of his people upon himself and shares in the anguish of the whole Black Continent, left to fight its own battles.

But publication abroad was rare, and it was in the hope of providing an outlet for the best poetry that was written in the country that Mudimbe, together with Georges Ngal (b. 1933; now Ngal Mbwil a Mpaang), founded the Editions du Mont Noir in 1971.[104] The first published works were *Testament* by Gabriel Sumaili, (now Sumaili N'Gayé-Lussa), *Prélude à la terre* by Dieudonné Kadima-Nzuji, *Lianes* by Clémentine Nzuji, and especially *Déchirures* by Mudimbe himself. During the ensuing years, the latter was to prove one of the most prolific and talented of all Zaïrian writers. His most decisive contribution to the growth of creative writing is his novels, but he also produced several collections of poetry which were published in France;[105] their main themes have been described by Mambo-Mbili Ntamunoza in these words: "dénoncer la misère du monde, l'assumer, et laisser se pointer à l'horizon lointain une vision extatique de la liberté."[106] But while Mudimbe exhibits, in common with a number of other Zaïrian poets, a genuine sense of rebellion and anguish, his poetry is also in some respects a collection of brillant exercises whose often chaotic disconnectedness and extravagant metaphors provide the author with a means both to convey and to escape from, his deep-felt anxiety.

In the early seventies, the Mont Noir publications also issued *Rythmes* (1972), a slender collection by Philippe Elébé (b. 1937; now Elébé Lisembé), a writer of some experience.[107] His poetry does not have the esoteric quality and the often cryptic symbolism of his contemporaries. A Mongo like Bolamba, he often tries to render into French the peculiar musicality of oral art, but in the main the essence of his poetry does not lie in the skill and originality with which he exploits the resources of his chosen linguistic medium: rather, it rests in the concrete, simple expression of the author's

[104] M. M. N., "Les éditions du Mont-Noir au Zaïre," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 44. 69–72.

[105] *Entretailles, précédées de Fulgurances d'une lézarde* (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 1973) and *Les Fuseaux parfois...* (Ibid., 1974).

[106] M. M. Ntamunoza, "Quelques aspects de la poésie zaïroise moderne," *West African Journal of Modern Languages*, 2 (1976), 75–86.

[107] Elébé's first volumes of poetry are *Mélodie Africaine* (Laon: L'Etrave, 1970) and *Uhuru* (Paris: Debresse, n.d. [1970]). After *Rythmes*, the only one of his works to appear in Zaïre, he published several other collections: *Solitude* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1972), *Orphée rebelle* (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 1972) and *La Joconde d'ébène* (Ibid., 1977).

emotions, his dreams, his melancholy; this lyrical preoccupation with his own emotional life, his family, his friendships, his disappointed loves, can hardly be expected to produce great or deep poetry. The second trend in Elébé's inspiration, which first came to the fore in *Uhuru* (1970), and to which he returned in *Orphée rebelle* (1972), voices a "revolutionary" protest (which has by now become somewhat conventional) against Africa's colonial past and against the vestigial remnants of colonialism in Southern Africa and the Portuguese colonies.

The very simplicity of his poetry is responsible for much of Elébé's popularity among some of his younger contemporaries such as Tito Yisuku Gafudzi (b. 1941) who coined the phrase "Zaïrian concretism" in 1972, in a special issue of *L'Ecrivain africain*, a little magazine which had been printed in Kitwe (Zambia) before it moved its headquarters to Kinshasa. Here, concretism was defined in negative terms as the writer's refusal to comply with European models in his thought as well as in his art, and his rejection of any literary doctrine not of African origin. More positively, "concretism" was defined as the African writer's apprehension of his own world, not in abstract terms but in its concrete, everyday, experiential reality: this meant that the African author was to remain firmly rooted in the realities and the traditions, including the ancestral modes of literary expression, of the village society from which he came; it also meant that the modern writer was to seek inspiration in fearless observation and questioning of contemporary Zaïrian society. In practical terms, concretism was exmplified in Yisuku's own poetry: *Cœur Enflammé* (Kinshasa: Author, 1973), *Tam-tams crépitants* (Kinshasa: Centre Africain de Littérature, 1974), and especially *Cendres et Lumière* (Kinshasa: Propoza, 1977), with its author's postface. Meanwhile, concretism had attracted other budding poets; their works were collected in an anthology entitled *Promesses* (Kinshasa: Presses Africaines, 1975); in a substantial introduction Olivier Dubuis, the author of *L'Afrique reconnue: Panorama de la littérature négro-africaine* (Kinshasa: LECO, 1969), further explained the nature and aims of the movement, which is obviously the literary aspect of a more general nationalistic trend directed towards the recovery and rehabilitation of African "authenticity" in all fields.

The lively poetic activity that had been launched by the Pléiade du Congo thus continued unabated in Zaïre of the seventies, where the Centre Africain de Littérature issued a number of slim collections such as *Rêves du soir* by Bokamba Bouka Epotou (b. 1953), providing younger poets with much encouragement and a welcome opportunity to test their skills.[108]

The evolution of Zaïrian poetry in the seventies confirmed a general impression which had been created on the occasion of Senghor's state visit to the country in 1968. The recently appointed Minister of Culture, Paul Mahamwe Mushiete (b. 1934), had organized a literary competition which was immensely successful, especially so in view of Zaïre's educational backwardness. The average quality of the 200-odd contributions sent in was perhaps not of the highest order, but the best of them were gathered into an *Anthologie des écrivains congolais* (Kinshasa: Ministère de la Culture, 1969), which

[108] For further details, see P. Ngandu Nkashama, "La poésie," *Notre Librairie*, No. 44 (1978), 57–69.

contains original work as well as traditional tales, proverbs and riddles. This anthology shows that two types of inspiration—illustrated in an earlier generation by Bolamba and Lomami-Tshibamba—still appealed to younger writers: lyrical poetry, personal or nationalistic in inspiration, and the recording and adaptation of oral art. A couple of years later it became clear that Zaïrian poetry in French had reached a degree of autonomy and full command of the language. Mushiete himself tried to stimulate an interest in prose writing by issuing a collection of tales, songs and proverbs designed for school use.[109]

But Mushiete's most original contribution was in the field of drama. In Zaïre as in other parts of black Africa, there has always been intense (though perhaps not quite conventional) theatrical activity.[110] But during the colonial period only one native play had reached publication in mimeographed form: *Mangengenge* (1956) by Albert Mongita (b. 1916; now Mongita Likeke); an extremely prolific and popular playwright, Mongita seldom appeared in print: apart from *Mangengenge*, only his *Ngombe* was published serially in the Kinshasa daily *Présence congolaise* (1964). Although Mongita should probably be regarded as the most important pioneer of modern Zaïrian drama, it was Mushiete who provided the idea for the very first Zaïrian play to achieve publication, *Pas de feu pour les antilopes* (Kinshasa: Congolia, 1969) in the writing of which he collaborated with Norbert L. Mikanza (b. 1944; now Mobyem M. K. Mikanza); the almost blatantly didactic plot is based on a crude antithesis between Kipwala, the village of Chief Manga, where antiquated agricultural methods and the systematic slaughter of game have led to impoverishment, famine and the migration of some of the population to the cities, and Benga, the village of Chief Mukoko who promotes agriculture, handicrafts and trade, and sees to the conservation of natural resources. The obvious message is to encourage improvements in village life so as to check the urban overpopulation which plagues Zaïre as it does other African countries.

Mikanza had founded and administered the "Théâtre du petit nègre" in Kikwit (1967–1969) before Mushiete appointed him director of the newly created "Théâtre National du Zaïre," where he remained from 1969 to 1972. Later he devoted part of his time to adapting comedies by Gogol and by Molière before publishing two works of his own: *La bataille de Kamanyola* and *Procès à Makala* (Kinshasa: Presses Africaines, 1975 and 1977). The former, significantly subtitled "bataille de la peur et de l'espoir," deals with the victory of government troops over the rebel forces in 1964. While this conflict is presented as a psychological drama attempting to portray the unstable mood of the loyalist soldiers, who try by humour and laughter to overcome their fear of the enemy and are almost driven to flight, the action of the play develops in two phases: after the soldiers have almost yielded to fear and despair, the arrival of their commander-in-chief

[109] Paul Mahamwe Mushiete, *Quand les nuages avaient soif* (Kinshasa: Editions du Léopard, [1968]).

[110] Zaïrian drama is more often studied from the point of view of stagecraft and theatrical production than for its literary interest. See: Robert Cornevin, *Le Théâtre en Afrique noire et à Madagascar* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1970), pp. 249–257; Unionmwan Edibiri, "Le théâtre zaïrois à la recherche de son authenticité," *Afrique Littéraire Artistique*, No. 40 (1976), 70–76; *Le Théâtre zaïrois: Dossier du premier Festival de théâtre* (Kinshasa: Lokole, 1977); Mobyem M. K. Mikanza, "La création théâtrale" in M. Kadima-Nzuji (ed.), *Notre Librairie*, No. 44 (1978), 101–117. On the role of Mongita, see R. F. Esposito, "Albert Mungita [*sic*], persona illustre," *Nigrizia*, 87 (1969), iii, 27–9.

with substantial reinforcements brings them renewed hope. The gradual transition from fear to hope is shown very skilfully through the dialogue; it serves of course to bring out the bravery and prestige of the general and the galvanizing effect of his charismatic presence.

In *Procès à Makala,* Mikanza turned to social criticism and the theme of juvenile delinquency: the play consists essentially of a discussion involving three adult prisoners and an adolescent boy who has just been gaoled and proclaims his innocence. His presence seems to turn the prison into a tribunal, when through his presence the grown-ups are gradually made aware of their own responsibility for the spread of juvenile delinquency which plagues most of the country's cities.

Since the late sixties, theatrical activity has continued to flourish in Zaïre. Besides Mikanza's achievements as a company director, mention should be made of the "Mwondo Théâtre" which was created in Shaba some time around 1970 by an expatriate of mixed French and Italian ancestry, Denis Franco; this company which had based its productions on careful research into local traditions such as folktales, legends, proverbs and rituals, gained a considerable reputation in the mid-seventies, performing in other African countries and also in Europe.[111] Such vitality is of great interest for the historical study of stagecraft rather than literature. As in the Yoruba opera, song and dance are essential to many Zaïrian performances and the texts are, as it were, *libretti* which seldom reach print.

By the late seventies, more writers had had their plays published locally. One was Nghenzi Lonta with *La Fille du forgeron* (Kinshasa: Bobiso, n.d. [1974?]: this play, which had been rewarded with a prize at the Senghor competition of 1968, focuses on the incestuous relationship between a father and his daughter, thus illustrating the everlasting conflict between the law (the ancestors' or God's) and love, a conflict which can only be resolved if left to the working of the characters' moral conscience. In contrast with such psychological considerations, Latere Ama Bulie's *Pitié pour les mineurs* (Kinshasa: Bobiso, 1976) is a social play on the predicament of the working class in present-day Zaïre. Another social play is *L'Ironie de la vie* (Kinshasa: Ngongi, 1978), by Buabua wa Kayembe Mubadiate, whose next work, *Les Flammes de Soweto* (Kinshasa: Grue couronnée, 1979), brings to the stage the death of South African leader Steve Biko, the founder of the Black Consciousness movement. In *Muzang* (Kinshasa: Ngongi, n.d.), Mwamb'a Musas Mangol (1947–1984) exploits the inherent theatricality of traditional rituals and dramatizes the ceremonies that take place when the intercession of the ancestors is invoked to put an end to some communal calamity such as famine, war, drought or an epidemic.

Alongside the two distinct trends of local stage performance and local publication, the vitality of Zaïrian drama in the seventies is also illustrated by the fact that a number of plays reached print in France. Elébé Lisembé's *Simon Kimbangu ou le messie noir* (Paris: Debresse, 1972) is not only a biographical chronicle of the Kongo syncretic leader who had been persecuted during the colonial period: its main purpose is to equate the

[111] See notably: John Povey, "The Mwondo Theatre of Zaïre," *Yale Theatre,* 8, 1 (1976), 49–54; Jean-François Lanteri, "Le Mwondo théâtre à Lubumbashi," *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture,* No. 27 (1977), 46–50; Denyse de Saivre, "Le Mwondo théâtre à Paris," ibid., No. 31 (1977), 77.

hero's determination to provide a truly African form of Christianity with the people's revolutionary struggle against colonial alienation. Unfortunately, Elébé's other plays were rather mediocre adaptations of such novels as Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* in *Le sang des Noirs pour un sou* (Paris: Debresse, 1972) and of Haitian writer Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée* in *Chant de la terre, chant de l'eau* (Paris: Oswald, 1973).[112]

In retrospect, it appears that Elébé's *Kimbangu* displayed one of the characteristic features that give Zaïrian literature a distinct personality of its own within the larger framework of francophone writing in Africa: a deep concern with religion and with the moral and spiritual problems raised by the deep, lasting influence of the Catholic church. It is significant that *La dérive, ou la chute des points cardinaux* (Paris: O. R. T. F., 1973) by Sangu Sonsa (b. 1946) takes place in a convent situated on an island where young nuns, black and white, find themselves isolated when the area is flooded during the rainy season. What little action there is—conceivably, the writer may have been influenced by Bernanos' *Dialogues des Carmélites* (1949)—results from the arrival in the convent of a monk, Frère Chrysostome; his presence and his behaviour kindle many discussions and problems in this hitherto sheltered milieu: the problems of sacred against profane love, of course, and of how to reconcile genuine spirituality with the demands of the flesh, but also the question whether Catholic orthodoxy can be preserved or whether it will be overwhelmed by syncretic ideas, and finally, whether the Western ways of life, thought and worship, on which the nuns had built their lives, are not in fact a symptom of decay. As Friar Chrysostome despairingly exclaims at the end of the play:

> J'ai perdu et le nord et l'ouest et l'est et le sud. Oh! si vous saviez ce que c'est que la dérive. Se laisser traîner au fil de l'eau. Sans boussole. Sans points de repère. Sans points cardinaux. Etre l'éternel Irresponsable. L'éternel Inessentiel. (p. 145)

With *La délivrance d'Ilunga* (Paris: Oswald, 1977) by P. Ngandu Nkashama (b. 1946), Zaïrian drama produced a political play which is in stark contrast with Mikanza's *La bataille de Kamanyola*. The setting is once again the bloody confrontation between government and opposition. But Ngandu's hero, Ilunga, symbolizes the revulsion against an authoritarian, repressive and bloodthirsty government. While encouraging the village people to rise up in arms against tyranny, he is betrayed by the son of the late local chief, who rallies to the government side in order to inherit the chieftainship. Once in power, Ntambwe starts eliminating his opponents, including the village witch-doctor and Ilunga's pregnant wife. But Ilunga manages to kill him before the arrival of the government troops. Yet this is not the liberation announced by the title: the protagonist is aware that he has not been able to rouse the population out of their apathy, and this failure has given the victory to the government troops. Conscious of his failure, Ilunga attains the ultimate personal freedom when he deliberately lets himself be killed by the

[112] Elébé's conceptions of the function of literature were expounded in his paper "La mission de l'écrivain zaïrois dans l'éducation des masses," *Comptes rendus trimestriels des séances de l'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-mer*, 36 (1976), 245–254. See also Wolfgang Zimmer, "L'authenticité n'est pas un cloisonnement: Entretien avec le poète et dramaturge zaïrois Elébé Lisembé," *Afrique littéraire et artistique*, No. 45 (1977), 2–15.

soldiers. The central message of the play is of course that individual rebellion without popular support is doomed to failure.

Zaïrian prose fiction made little progress during the sixties. The "Bibliothèque de l'Etoile" issued Timothée Malembe's *Le mystère de l'enfant disparu* (Léopoldville, 1962), an inconsequential little story which told the adventures of a youthful protagonist on the eve of the colonial conquest, and was itself a latter-day resurgence of the interest in folklore during the colonial period. Mention has already been made of Thomas Kanza's *Sans rancune* allegedly published in London in 1965: as an autobiographical narrative, this, too, was inevitably concerned with colonial society. The post-colonial society did not appear in fiction until the end of the decade, when Gabriel Ilunga-Kabulu (b. 1940) published the first "been-to" novel in the country, *Journal d'un revenant* (Kinshasa: Belles Lettres, 1968).[113] The style of the book is rather clumsy, but there is an interesting strain of social criticism, aimed at the first governments of the young republic before Mobutu seized power in 1965: as Nigerian and East African writers had been doing for years with considerably greater literary skill, Ilunga-Kabulu gives a disturbing picture of the real state of affairs in the new Africa, where major economic interests are still in the hands of foreign capitalism, and where the uncontrolled growth of unmanageably large towns leads to general demoralization, misery and delinquency.

In a way, then, *Journal d'un revenant* anticipated the doctrine that was to become known as "Zaïrian concretism" in the early seventies. While the phrase was coined by a poet, its meaning was first illustrated in a short novel by Zamenga Batukezanga (b. 1933), *Les hauts et les bas* (Kinshasa: Editions Saint-Paul-Afrique, 1971).[114] Although the story is once more set in the colonial era, the author's purpose is to denounce the African's habit of aping European ideas and manners and of embracing whole-heartedly the doubtful attractions of a money economy and the consumer society. The rehabilitation of African tradition and the questioning of contemporary Zaïrian society, soon to become the central tenets of the concretist credo, were already present in this "Jim-goes-to-Jo'burg" tale, which, in spite of its rudimentary novelistic technique, imperfect mastery of the French language, and reductionist view of creative writing as a mere rendering of immediate experience, turned Zamenga into the most popular writer in Zaïre and the nearest equivalent to a professional novelist. In his later novels—*Souvenirs du village* (Kinshasa: Okapi, 1971), *Bandoki* (Kinshasa: Saint-Paul-Afrique, 1972)—Zamenga turned to traditional village life, where he obviously finds the essential roots of African culture; while the former tale aimed at clarifying the rationale behind family initiation, the latter focused on the medical problem often discussed under the labels "witchcraft" or "sorcery": whereas many modernizing spirits in black Africa consider it necessary to eradicate such superstitious practices completely, Zamenga is one of the few authors who have tried to define the empirical value of traditional medicine for the patient's psychological well-being.

[113] Théophile Ayimpan, "*Journal d'un revenant* de Gabriel Ilunga-Kabulu," *Congo-Afrique*, No. 39 (1969), 471–475.

[114] Mukala Kadima-Nzuji, "Quelques réflexions autour du livre *Les hauts et les bas*," *Lectures Africaines*, 1, 2 (1972–1973), 129–133.

In *Terre des ancêtres* (Kinshasa: Basenzi, 1974), Zamenga set out to relate in the form of a myth the story of his own people, the Bakongo, describing how, after the centuries of humiliation that began when the Portuguese reached the Kongo kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century, they fought to regain their freedom under the leadership of their prophet Simon Kimbangu. In the same year Zamenga published *Carte postale,* in which he returned to the motif of the culture clash which had inspired his first novel, emphasizing the African's obsession with the problem of reconciliation of the opposing values of the West and of his own tradition. The same theme is handled from a more historical view-point in *Sept frères et une sœur* (Kinshasa: Saint-Paul-Afrique, 1975), which relates the tragic events attending the gradual disintegration and disappearance of a whole clan.

Zamenga's preoccupation with the problems raised by Africa's fast urbanization and with the process of impoverishment that is eating away the very life of traditional village society was apparent in "Le village qui disparaît", a short story which was published in the "concretist" anthology *Promesse* (1975). The same anthology introduced another promising prose writer, Tuyinamo-Wumba (b. 1942), who evinced greater command than Zamenga, both of the French language and of the modern story-teller's narrative techniques. His collection *Pour une noix de palme* (Yaoundé: C. L. E., 1974) is intended as a faithful depiction of everyday life in the poorer districts of Kinshasa; but this does not preclude critical interpretation, for while relating such anecdotal incidents as a quarrel between neighbours, a drunken father's indifference to his children, a woman's infidelity, the death of a child, Tuyinamo explores and denounces the mentality of the new breed of urban dwellers who are unable to shake off the power of ancestral tradition in the midst of the new relationships imposed by modern city life.

"Concretism" can be regarded as a recently developed Zaïrian form of the realistic trend that had dominated European fiction throughout the nineteenth century. But at the other end of the literary spectrum, Zaïre has also produced a group of more sophisticated novelists who prefer to avail themselves of their full mastery of the French language in order to discuss the collective problems of present-day African society through the minute analysis of highly individualized characters. The most prominent of these is V. Y. Mudimbe[115]. His early poetry has already been mentioned, but he has also authored a number of philosophical essays, the most important of which is *L'autre face du royaume* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1973). It is through his novels, however, all of which were issued in Paris by Présence Africaine, that he has become Zaïre's only writer of truly international reputation.

Significantly, the central character of *Entre les eaux* (1973)[116] is an African priest, Pierre Landu, torn between the two sides of his divided personality as a Western-educated intellectual who tries to identify with the predicament of his own people, with their needs and their demands, both material and spiritual, at a time of great upheaval, when

[115] See Marc Rombaut, "Entretiens avec V. Y. Mudimbe," *Clés pour le spectacle,* No. 34 (1973), 21–22.

[116] Pius Ngandu, "*Entre les eaux* de V. Y. Mudimbe," *Forum Universitaire* (Lubumbashi), No. 4 (1973), 45–69; Jean-Pierre Jacquemin, "*Entre les eaux* de V. Y. Mudimbe," *Zaïre-Afrique,* No. 81 (1973), 55–58; Ntamunoza Mambo-Mbili, "Note de lecture sur *Entre les eaux* de V. Y. Mudimbe," *Présence Francophone,* No. 12 (1976), 47–52.

opposing political forces are fighting for power. With *Le bel immonde* (1976), Mudimbe delved deeper into the murky complexities of power rivalries. The action takes place in an unnamed African country and the "filthy" protagonist is a successful professional politician, member of the government, whose equally "unclean" mistress is the daughter of a rebel leader. In the eyes of the authorities, the young woman arouses suspicion, not because she is a whore, but because of her ethnic affiliation: she belongs to the wrong tribe. She is therefore arrested and tortured: she does not recover her freedom until her lover has himself been "liquidated" in a car accident because he is suspected of passing confidential state information to the rebels. The unnamed characters of *Le bel immonde* (they appear simply as he, she, I and you) introduce the reader with disturbing force to the unspeakable corruption of the political power game, which is played in Africa with greater crudeness, cynicism and, in a way, naïveté (involving the use of witchcraft) than in the Western world, even though it is fundamentally the same in all essentials. Indeed, part of the significance of this important novel is that it shows Africa as the victim of the "democratic" structures and procedures bequeathed by the colonizers.

In *L'écart* (1979), Mudimbe gave fictional substance to a problem he had tackled in *L'autre face du royaume*: the changes the humanities and the social sciences must undergo if they are to play a useful role in African history. His central idea had been that science must be divested of its Western ethnocentricity, but that it was for Africans themselves to "vivre cette reconversion et réconcilier, dans leurs pays, pratique de la connaissance et praxis révolutionnaire par l'exercice de leurs regards et en fonction de la singularité de leurs expériences concrètes dans leurs sociétés". *L'écart* purports to be the diary of a brilliant young scholar, Ahmed Nara, a foreign historian, who was doing field research into the history of a Zaïrian tribe when he died in mysterious circumstances. The diary covers a period of two weeks and minutely records the young man's experiences and reflexions on a variety of levels: his relationships with other people, his love affairs, his disillusionments, his reading (Nietzsche, Sartre, and above all Cioran), and the progress, significance and implications of his research. While his ambition as a historian is to overcome the limitations of Western-oriented historiography, which is unable to recapture the reality of the African past, he is faced with the insoluble epistemological problem of reconstructing the history of a non-literate society. At a deeper level, his impossible dream of studying African history from within ("J'aimerais être un historien nègre," p. 69) soon gives way to the depressing realization that he could not "le devenir en vérité sans être méchant à mon tour"; not only is it impossible to prevent the scholar's subjective personality from impressing itself upon his findings, but it is also impossible to prevent non-scientific forces from using scientific discoveries for their own unholy purposes.

Whereas few francophone writers have so far expressed the perplexities of the modern African intellectual with equal psychological refinement, Mudimbe's very outlook was soon questioned by Ngal Mbwil a Mpaang (formerly Georges Ngal), who was already well known as a student of Aimé Césaire and of francophone African writing,[117]

[117] See notably his *Tendances actuelles de la littérature africaine d'expression française* (Kinshasa: Mont Noir, 1972) and *Aimé Césaire, un homme à la recherche d'une patrie* (Dakar-Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1975).

in a curious little novel strangely entitled *Giambatista Viko ou le Viol du discours africain* (Lubumbashi: Alpha-Oméga, 1975). A teacher, poet and thinker, Ngal's hero—like the Italian philosopher of the early eighteenth century after whom he has been named, Giambattista Vico—dreams of a *scienza nuova,* a new science which he wants to shape into a novel structured on the model of the traditional folktale. In order to achieve this purely personal ambition Viko, a thoroughly westernized intellectual who has rejected the culture of his ancestors, does not hesitate to make use of various African customs —witchcraft, initiation rites and the like—in which he himself does not believe. For having thus sacrilegiously turned time-honoured practices into a tool of his own pride, he is judged and condemned by a gathering of elders helped by young university graduates who remain loyal to their ancestral traditions. The title of the book makes it quite clear that Ngal's intention is to indict his protagonist's approach to literature altogether: that this should be done in a work of fiction written on the Western model is indicative of the overwhelming contradictions in the African mind.

In the late seventies, the religious theme which had been handled with the seriousness it deserves by Sangu Sonsa on the stage and by V. Y. Mudimbe in prose fiction, was treated with regrettable awkwardness in *L'Ecclésiastique* (Paris: La Pensée universelle, 1978), by N.-K. Luamba (b. 1945). This melodramatic, rancorous story of a lecherous and hypocritical parish priest—who seduces a young girl whose fiancé is away at the university; who arranges for her to seduce and marry the young man's brother when she becomes pregnant; who is thus responsible when the latter commits suicide after realizing that he has betrayed his brother; and who is ultimately rewarded with a bishopric—is as badly written as it is badly pieced together. Although there may be genuine indignation in the writer's denunciation of the manner in which some sinful priests are able to make use of their spiritual authority in order to gratify their lower urges, Luamba's novel contributes little to the growth of Zaïrian prose fiction.

On the whole, however, in spite of the mediocrity of some of its products, it can be said that by the end of the 1970s, Zaïrian literature had at last made a good start, creating a corpus of imaginative writing which was entirely different from the feeble attempts that had been made before independence. It is significant that of the pre-independence authors, only Paul Lomami-Tshibamba went on writing, though in complete solitude and in the face of official indifference.[118] New generations of writers have come to the fore: from the imitative versifying of Bolamba's early poems, they have turned to forms of lyricism that are of universal interest while seeking their inspiration in Zaïrian social, cultural and psychological realities. Prose fiction, which had been almost uniformly childish, designed as it was for the edification of schoolchildren, has now produced several novels containing in-depth discussions of some of Africa's major problems. Drama and stage production, too, have made considerable progress since the

[118] See the short stories in his *La récompense de la cruauté* (Kinshasa: Mont Noir, 1972). In 1974, two more of his stories were printed in the O. N. R. D. journal, *Culture au Zaïre et en Afrique:* "Faire médicament" No. 4, pp. 137–167 and "Légende de Londema, suzeraine de Mitsoua-ba-Ngomi" No. 5, pp. 137–161. Lomami-Tshibamba later published the first chapter of an unpublished novel, *Ah Mbongo,* in *Culture et Authenticité,* No. 3 (September–October 1976), pp. 21–31.

colonial days, when only slight comic sketches larded with praise for the virtues of the colonizer were allowed to appear on the stage. Although Zaïre's literature inevitably has much in common with the other francophone literatures of black Africa, and although reaching print in Paris is almost always the Zaïrian writer's highest ambition, it is clear that the country has its own national individuality which is expressed in definite themes. These are partly the result of the particular nature of Belgian colonization, especially in so far as they manifest both the lasting influence of the Catholic church, and the revulsion against its power. At the present moment in the history of Zaïrian and African literatures, however, it is perhaps more apposite to emphasize the exceptional spirit of self-reliance which distinguishes Zaïre from most former French colonies and brings it closer to Nigeria. This is exemplified in the many imaginative works that are printed locally, sometimes with official support, but often, too, by the private publishing firms that have been mushrooming since 1971, when the "Editions du Mont Noir" were launched. The year 1973, for example, saw the foundation of the Centre Africain de Littérature, the Editions Ngongi, and Les Presses Africaines. Such ventures are sometimes ephemeral: quite a few have vanished but others have replaced them. This peculiar phenomenon testifies to a vitality that is both intellectual and economic; its rewards should become apparent during the next few decades.

(Translated from the French by Bongasu Tanla-Kishani)

FERNANDO LAMBERT

CAMEROON

After already contributing substantially to African writing during the early post-war period, Cameroonian literature in French went through a phase of exceptional development following the proclamation of national independence on January 1st, 1960. The source of this new creative "outburst" was the establishment of a local publishing firm, the Centre de Littérature Evangélique (C.L.E.) at Yaunde in 1963.

C.L.E. owes its existence to the Protestant churches of Cameroon, Togo, Gabon, Zaïre and the Ivory Coast, to the assistance of German and Dutch churches, and to the help of several ecumenical organizations. As its name clearly implies, the *Centre de Littérature Evangélique* was intended to serve religious purposes, but from its inception, it has had other aims in view as well, as Philip Noss indicated: "The purpose of the new publishing house was to encourage young African writers to publish their works and to make that literature available to African readers."[119] Of the two levels of publishing

[119] Philip Noss, "CLE: a Francophone Publishing House," *Ba Shiru*, VI, 2 (1975) 82–84. For further information, see Jean Dihang, "Publishing and Book Distribution in Francophone Africa," in *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*, ed. E. Oluwasanmi *et al.* (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1975), pp. 128–133; M. Leconte, "La C.L.E. de Yaoundé et la diffusion de ses livres en France," *Culture française* 24, 3/4 (1975), 51–53; and Philippe Leymarie, "CLE: La première maison d'édition en Afrique francophone," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 44 (1977), 64–65. See also Curtis Schade, "The New Popular Fiction in French-Language Literature: The Case of Les Editions CLE," in *When the Drumbeat Changes*, ed. Carolyn Parker and Stephen Arnold (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980) pp. 46–66.

activity, religious and secular, it is the latter which has become most important. After thirteen years of existence, the C.L.E.'s total production comprises 175 titles, 169 of which are in French, 1 in English and 5 in African languages. Of the 169 books published in French, 42 are concerned with religious topics, while the remaining 127 are secular in nature, and of this 127, eighty belong to the area of creative literature.[120] The C.L.E. creative output thus deserves special attention in order to bring out its varied nature and rapid development, underlining the dynamic function of the C.L.E. in Cameroon and the spreading influence it has exerted in Black Africa, and also in order to point out the new directions this creative literature is taking.

The foundation in Cameroon of the first publishing house in former French Africa could not but benefit black African literature. It gave to the Africans an instrument indispensable to the spread and development of their culture. Access to publication was thus offered to a greater number of writers. The major obstacle of competition, which those who tried to publish in Europe encountered, was thus removed. Moreover, the mere presence of the C.L.E. constituted a powerful stimulus to the growth of a new generation of African writers.

Two other factors exerted important influence. The fact that the new publishing house aimed its production at an African public entailed a fundamental change in perspective among African writers. The selection of manuscripts and the success of works no longer depended on readers with an essentially European background. This first decision of the C.L.E. was accompanied by a policy of publishing books appropriate to African conditions. With an economically weak readership in view, the C.L.E. made every possible effort to keep the price of its books within reach of the greatest number of prospective buyers. Until the mid-seventies the C.L.E. succeeded in keeping its selling prices within astonishingly reasonable limits, from 150 to 500 CFA francs, that is from 3 to 10 French francs.

The overall production of C.L.E. Editions, year after year has demonstrated the realism of its objectives and the success of its undertaking. The following table shows the part played by creative literature in the number of titles published annually. It is on this creative literature that attention will be centred in the following pages.

The best years were between 1970 and 1973. The comparative decline in production during the following years was not due to a reduction in the number of manuscripts submitted, but rather—according to statements made by C.L.E.'s present director, Mr. Gerard Markhoff—to more exacting criteria and to world economic problems, particularly severe in Africa.

Until 1973, the C.L.E. had been the only publishing house to contribute, as a matter of priority and in such a massive way, to the development of francophone literature inside Black Africa. There existed, of course, a few small printing houses such as the Imprimerie St-Paul of Yaunde, which published a few works at authors' cost. Among these works, mention must be made of *Les contes et légendes du Bamileké* (1968–1969),

[120] From its outset in 1964 to December 31st, 1976, C.L.E. has printed a total of 1,012,650 books. The total production includes 23 titles which have been republished, 12 of them in 2nd edition, 3 in 3rd, 5 in 4th edition, 2 in 5th edition and 1 in 8th edition (information from the *C.L.E. Publishing House Report* of January 1977).

Years	Total Titles Published	Creative Literature
1964	3	3
1965	10	3
1966	6	3
1967	5	1
1968	16	5
1969	8	5
1970	13	7
1971	25	18
1972	27	15
1973	26	7
1974	11	6
1975	17	2
1976	8	5
13 years	175[121]	80[122]

a two-volume collection by Martin Nkamgang (b. 1933),[123] because it indicates the usual orientation of such publications, some of which were in African languages: they are essentially records of oral tradition (tales, legends, proverbs, riddles, etc.). L'Association des Poètes et Ecrivains Camerounais (A.P.E.C.) likewise published works by several young poet members. Only the C.L.E., however, has exercised a decisive influence on creative literature and its growth beyond the borders of Cameroon, as shown in the table below:

Country	Number of African authors having published at least one book	Total number of titles
Cameroon	26	51
Congo	6	11
Ivory Coast	4	4
Benin	3	5
Central African Republic	1	1
Gabon	1	1
Guinea	1	1
Upper Volta	1	1
Nigeria	1	1
Togo	1	2
Zaïre	1	1
11 countries	46	79

[121] *C.L.E. Publishing House Report* January 1977. As of June 1979 C.L.E. was headed by an African, Jean Dihang. Six more novels were issued during the late seventies. These included *La Brise du jour* (1977), a bulky novel on woman's condition by Lydie Dooh-Bunya (b. 1933), the first woman writer on the firm's list. [Ed.]

[122] Total number of titles: republications are not included.

[123] Martin Nkamgang has a Ph. D. in social sciences; he is a graduate from the Institut français de Presse de l'Université de Paris. A writer and a poet, he is also a journalist. In addition to this collection of tales and to studies on *Le mariage coutumier en pays bamileke* and on *La polygamie dans la mentalité africaine*, he has published two collections of poetry: *Symboles et chants d'unité* and *O toi qui ne dors*, both privately printed in 1969.

Obviously, it is above all in Cameroon, and to a lesser degree in the countries closest to it, that C.L.E.'s influence is most strongly felt. But its list also includes writers whose works have been published in Europe. Most prominent among these is Bernard Dadié who, after gaining considerable fame as a novelist, reverted to his early inclination towards drama with a tragedy of power, *Les voix dans le vent* (1970) which was published by C.L.E. Several younger writers on the C.L.E. list also gained recognition in Europe: in 1969, the French broadcasting company (O.R.T.F.) issued two plays by Guy Menga (b. 1935) from the Congo, and one play by Jean Pliya (b. 1931) from Benin, all of which had gained prizes at the "Concours théâtral interafricain" organized by the O.R.T.F. in 1967–1968; while the other C.L.E. authors were not always equal to these in scope, quality and originality, the range of their writings embraced all the well-known forms and literary genres.

Country	Novels Short Stories	Tales Short narratives	Poetry	Plays	Anthologies	Total
Cameroon	26	9	11	5		51
Congo	5	3	1	1	1	11
Ivory Coast	1	1		2		4
Benin	1		3	1		5
Central African Republic		1				1
Gabon		1				1
Guinea		1				1
Upper Volta		1				1
Nigeria				1		1
Togo		2				2
Zaïre		1				1
France				1		1
	33	20	15	11	1	80

Out of 80 titles, 53 belong to prose-fiction, which thus constitutes the major part of the literature published by the C.L.E. How does one account for the predominance of narrative over other genres, in particular over drama? One might have thought that drama would have inspired a greater number of writers, because it offers a medium much closer to their traditional modes of expression, gratifying the taste for gesture and show, allowing song and dance a privileged role, and fostering audience participation. But although literary composition in French had to all intents and purposes started with William-Ponty drama in the thirties, it was only in the early seventies that drama became a truly important genre. In the meantime, the literary scene was monopolized—with the exception of a few highly gifted lyrical poets—by the novel and other forms of narrative prose, the vogue for which was undoubtedly bolstered by two cultural factors. One was the school curriculum, which alongside classical and romantic poetry and drama included nineteenth-century novelists such as Balzac, Stendhal and Zola, and some of Maupassant's short stories. But the black writers were also influenced by narrative forms with which they had been familiar from childhood: tales, legends, etc. As a result,

African prose fiction exhibits many of the characteristics belonging to the oral narrative tradition.

It has also been an important feature of C.L.E. policy to attract the largest possible African readership, including not only intellectuals and students, but also those who have had but little schooling. As narrative prose in its manifold forms is capable of interesting a larger audience than poetry or written drama, C.L.E. has launched, for the benefit of readers who have just emerged from illiteracy, collections which are essentially narrative such as the series "Novels, Short Stories, and Narratives," and the series "For All," which include traditional tales and legends, chronicles and short narratives.

From the beginning, the creative works published by the C.L.E. have manifested a radical change in perspective. Here indeed, the black African is no longer seen in his relation to the white man. At the centre of these works, in the imagined universe, is black African society, as it has been since independence with its colonial aftermath. The effects of colonialism are still obviously present, for they could not be completely erased by the mere rituals of political independence; but they are deliberately reduced to marginal importance. The interest focuses on the problems which face contemporary Africa and to which individual Africans must address themselves in order to find such solutions as they may judge satisfactory in compliance with models that seem acceptable to them.

One of the major themes of prose fiction and of drama, is marriage. In African society, the institution of marriage is of paramount importance because it involves not only the individuals directly concerned, and their immediate families, but the whole community. It is one of the traditional institutions most profoundly affected by the economic changes and the individualistic attitudes which the colonial system brought in its wake. In literature, it becomes the occasion, if not the pretext, which allows an author to paint a large social backdrop for his action. Foremost among the problems raised is the classic conflict of generations, the old wishing to gain maximum financial and social advantage from the union, and the young aspiring to a new concept of personal responsibility and individual freedom to help them escape from the constraints entrenched in traditional marriage.

All the plays of Guillaume Oyônô-Mbia (b. 1939), beginning with *Trois prétendants ...un mari* (1964) have marriage as their central theme. After attending the local College Evangélique where his first play was performed in 1960, Oyônô-Mbia studied in England from 1964 to 1969 and graduated at the University of Keele. There it was that he started writing in English as well. Not only did he adapt his first play into English, but his second play, *Until Further Notice* (1968) was directly composed in English and was awarded a prize by the B.B.C.; it was later translated into French under the title *Jusqu'à nouvel avis* (1970). Next came *Notre fille ne se mariera pas* (1969), which won first prize in the O.R.T.F. International Drama Competition, and a one-act radio play in English, *His Excellency's Special Train*, which appeared in the third issue of a local little magazine, *Ozila* (1970).

Besides illustrating the linguistic versatility which is characteristic of Cameroon, Oyônô-Mbia's first three plays emphasize a new sociological phenomenon: the marriage of young girls trained and educated in the European tradition. Juliette in *Trois prétendants...un mari* is a college graduate, Matalina in *Until Further Notice* studied in Europe

to be a midwife, Charlotte in *Notre fille ne se mariera pas* finished college and works in a ministry in the capital city.

For Juliette, the marriage is to be arranged and the family holds a kind of auction among the suitors who present themselves: the first, a farmer, is rapidly supplanted by a civil servant whose financial situation is more impressive and whose more generous bride-price would allow them to return the sum already paid by the farmer and to consolidate their financial condition; when the civil servant defaults, they try to entice a third suitor, a Bamileke businessman, who, the family believes, is rich enough to repay the dowries given by the first suitors, but the businessman refuses to enter the "lists of love". The family's blatant greed traps them finally. All their calculations, all their hopes, are brought to nothing when all the money paid by the first two suitors is stolen. Juliette and Oko, a student whom she loves, take charge of the marriage arrangements, and, in a scene that greatly resembles the climax in Molière's *L'Avare,* the two lovers achieve their purpose by playing her parents' game: Oko, disguised as a rich man, offers the stolen money as bride-price, which allows the family to extricate themselves from the financial trap which has been created by the "waltz of the suitors." Matalina has married an African doctor, a stranger to her tribe, during her stay in Europe. In the village all the members of her family silently wait for their part of the dowry. Everyone protests loudly when it appears that the son-in-law prefers the dream of his youth—to direct a bush-hospital where he could better serve the people—to the post of secretary-general which is offered to him and which would make him "a great man." The play ends as they learn that the son-in-law is determined to follow his own bent, so that all expectations are postponed "until further notice." As to Charlotte, who has married an agricultural engineer without her family's consent, she faces the uphill task of convincing them that their son-in-law is not a mere farmer. They are also angry and disappointed because the delivery of the long-awaited manna of the bride-price depends entirely upon Charlotte. Peace is finally restored after many complications.

Guillaume Oyônô-Mbia makes the best possible use of his cultural theme. Through the marriage conflict, he succeeds in bringing alive not only highly individualized and attractive protagonists, but the whole of the village population. All his characters are remarkable for their spontaneity and their naivety. He convincingly portrays the network of inter-relationships which binds the villagers to one another, and the illusions which each individual nourishes without too much thought for the final outcome. His plays contain a pungent, yet good-humored, satire of tribal marriage customs in present-day villages, where the introduction of a money economy has grossly distorted the traditional meaning of the bride-price, turning marriageable girls into saleable commodities. With enjoyable liveliness they puncture the empty pretensions of both the old witch-doctors and the new civil servants and vindicate the freeing of the educated young from the authority of their ignorant, greedy parents. But alongside this satirical trend, the author also shows the villagers' keen sense that what ultimately matters is that which welds them together into a strong community. He clearly prefers the village world to that of the city, which he pictured in only one work, *Notre fille ne se mariera pas,* where he points out the evils and the ridiculous aspects of assimilation. He uses laughter through-

out to denounce excesses which lead to the ludicrous and to call for greater wisdom in reshaping the morality of the people.[124]

Many C.L.E. novels are also organized around this central theme of marriage. Of course, the composition of a novel allows for the creation of a larger, more detailed social milieu than is possible on stage: the novel can spread in time and space. A number of locally printed Cameroonian novels, although written after independence, return to the past to reveal little-known aspects of traditional African society, while others focus on marriage problems in present-day society.

The first group of novels clearly bear witness to a change in perspective in regard to Africa. They no longer focus on the evils of the colonial system, even if these still make up part of the backdrop. The settings chosen by the novelists who emerged at Yaunde in the sixties are significant: the action usually takes place in the villages, where the way of life, the social functioning and the systems of inter-relationships keep their original African character, in spite of the impact of social change, which the community attempts to control and to assimilate.

Le Fils d'Agatha Moudio (1967), by Francis Bebey (b. 1929), was the first and is probably still the most popular of these works which brought to the African novel in French a new tone and a new emphasis on the dynamic role that Africans have to play in the solving of their problems. In a spirit of tolerance and humorous understanding which is far from the bitter irony of earlier Cameroonian writers, Bebey describes the predicament of a young fisherman, Mbenda, whose uncomfortable married life illustrates not merely the contradictions between custom and inclination but also the flexibility and humaneness of tradition. In compliance with the last wish of his father and the advice of the wise old men of the village, Mbenda marries Fanny in spite of his love for Agatha. But the tradition is shown to make more allowance for a young man's catholicity of taste than is usually believed: it provides a convenient solution to the fisherman's frustration by permitting him to take Agatha as his second wife. This, however, is not the end of his problem, for Fanny's baby is the son of one of Mbenda's friends, and Agatha gives birth to a mulatto son—the eponymous character in the story. Faced with this puzzling situation, Mbenda is shown the right way by a wise elder known as King Solomon: "Whether it comes from heaven or from hell, a child is still a child...because all children...come from the same tree of life."[125] This absolute respect for life, a necessary pre-requisite for survival in traditional African society, is the core of the system of values which guides the community and the individual.

Several years later, another Cameroonian novelist, Samuel Mvolo (b. 1939),[126]

[124] Guillaume Oyônô-Mbia, who currently teaches in the Department of English at Cameroon's Federal University also authored three volumes of mildly satirical narrative vignettes about life in his native village, Mvoutessi. His play *Le train spécial de Son Excellence* is a dramatized version of one of the stories, "La petite gare," in these *Chroniques de Mvoutessi* (Yaunde: C.L.E. 1971–1972).

[125] Francis Bebey, *Le fils d'Agatha Moudio* (Yaunde: C.L.E. 1967), pp. 204–205. For a more detailed discussion, see Fernando Lambert, "Une voix nouvelle de la littérature camerounaise: *Le Fils d'Agatha Moudio* de Francis Bebey," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 9 (1975), 503–510, and Norman Stokle, "Entretien avec Francis Bebey," *Présence francophone*, No. 16 (1978), 175–190.

[126] Samuel Mvolo was born in Akonolinga, on the banks of the Nyong River, into a family of farmers and fishermen. After a few years in a secondary school, he enlisted in the *gendarmerie* in 1960 and, in 1966, he was promoted to non-commissioned officer. He is currently working for the "Office National des Sports" in Yaunde.

published *Les Fiancés du grand fleuve* (1973), which is set in the same period and deals with the same theme; but while Bebey provides a delightful portrayal of everyday life, the situations in Mvolo's novel are of a highly unusual character; his constant resorting to the marvellous is often responsible for an unwilling suspension of belief on the part of the reader.

The greater part of Cameroonian prose fiction is concerned with the specific problems that face the young who wish to marry in the new conditions prevailing in Africa. These are in the main of an economic nature. They are concretely expressed in a new conception of the bride-price. In customary law, the bride-price was the material and legal symbol of the union of two families; the intrusion of the individualistic greed characteristic of a money economy has turned it into a procedure enabling those who wield power in the family group to increase their wealth by thwarting the legitimate emotional aspirations of the powerless young. The situation has not improved after independence. Those who suffer most are the young, who are the least protected economically. Several novels illustrate two basic patterns: old versus young, and rich men or high-ranking civil servants versus moneyless young men. In *Sola ma chérie* (1966) by René Philombe (b. 1930), it is a rich planter who wins Sola rather than young Tsanga whom Sola loves; after some years of unhappiness in the village, Sola, a city woman, runs away with Tsanga, whom she has never stopped loving. In *La Nasse* (1972) Patrice Ndedi-Penda (b. 1945) portrays two young people, Charles Dindé and Colette, who, though deeply attached to each other, cannot marry; despite their efforts, the trap set by parental greed, closes in upon them: the *sous-préfet* Ekandé, though old and already married, offers a large bride-price and hands out expensive gifts in order to obtain Colette for his second wife.

Along with the bride-price problem, the marriage theme offers some novelists a welcome opportunity to underscore a variety of undesirable situations which seem to be a frequent feature in the new African society: forced marriage, prostitution, alcoholism, etc. The difficulties resulting from mixed marriages are handled in *Mon amour en noir et blanc* (1971) by Rémy Medou Mvomo (b. 1938), whereas *Ramitou, mon étrangère* (1971) by Joseph-Jules Mokto (b. 1945) centres on inter-tribal marriage. The important place occupied by these questions in the creative literature of the post-colonial period is highly significant. It must not be forgotten that the writers belong to almost the same generation as their young characters and are themselves victims of the same new realities. The denunciation of such situations and the desire to heal these wounds which distress the new Africa are everywhere present: the didactic function of traditional narrative has been taken over by the novel and by drama.

The second central theme of much C.L.E. prose fiction is the conflict of tradition and modernism, a frequent topic in anti-colonial writing of the fifties, but which is given a new twist by novelists emerging after independence. René Philombe's *Un sorcier blanc à Zangali* (1969) recounts the efforts of a white missionary to integrate himself into the life of an African village and the failure caused by the interference of the colonial administrator, who opposes such undertakings because in his view they tend to upset the colonial system as a whole. The focal point, however, is the African people, who

initiate all of the action in the novel: such dynamic participation represents something of a new departure in African prose fiction.

The theme of tradition v. innovation was completely readjusted in accordance with new conditions in independent Africa in Rémy Médou Mvomo's first novel, *Afrika ba'a*. The adventures of Kambara, the central figure in the novel, resemble in many respects those of any typical young African. The misery of the African villages, all more or less like the fictional village called Afrika Ba'a, discourages the young because they see no hope of development. The only solution seems to be to try and carve a place for oneself in the city, in order to obtain a share of happiness in life by working shorter hours for higher wages. Thus begins the individual struggle for success, which is often achieved at high cost to pride and self-esteem. The criticism of urban society—tribalism, the inefficiency of public servants, incompetency rewarded, merciless competition, widespread social parasitism, etc.—is expressed in Médou Mvomo's latest novel, *Le journal de Faliou* (1972), where the nepotism, greed, and opportunism are fully exposed. The young people launched into this cruel system hope to succeed where others failed. Kambara, for his part, wishes to succeed honestly. Having found a job as a house boy after many visits to the employment agencies, he decides to prepare himself for a competition to recruit assistant instructors. This twofold "career" becomes, for him, an excuse to keep his distance from those with whom he has to live, as well as from the dehumanizing conditions to which they are submitted. At the very moment he passes his examinations, he decides to return to his village to enter into a new struggle, that of development. Kambara's behaviour is set up as an example for all young Africans. Like many of them he waits for others to take the first step, until he decides to shoulder his responsibility, to convince other young people to work with him and to rely on their own strength: "to build their country, they must begin by building themselves then by building their own villages."[127] They must give up the long-winded discussions about a return to the land and take concrete action. There is no hope for them in the cities, so they must go where they can find an opportunity to achieve something. They must return to the villages, change their mentality, and learn new methods—those of community planning—in order to revitalize the villages and to allow their inhabitants to rediscover their dignity and love of life.

A few novels offer a different treatment of the theme of tradition in conflict with new cultural elements. In *L'homme-dieu de Bisso* (1974), by Etienne Yanou (b. 1939), little-known aspects of traditional African village life are described in great detail, showing that this small community possesses its own social system and a strong ideological structure which provides appropriate answers for its problems. The core of this structure is traditional religion, still deeply entrenched in all the inhabitants, and even in the black priest, Abbé Voulana, who has not totally escaped its influence. As the problems of Bisso derive from the black African world view, their solutions cannot come from outside, from European models, but from the inhabitants themselves. The unhappiness which the village suffers is believed to have originated when a white forester cut down a sacred tree, which had been the temple of the guardian-god of the country. Only

[127] Rémy Médou Mvomo, *Afrika ba'a* (Yaunde: C.L.E., 1969), p. 145.

observance of custom and a return to the ancestral religion can remedy this evil. The author thus creates a society which respects its own ways of doing things: the naming of a man-god, public confessions, ceremonies of purification, etc. Although the village enters a period of unprecedented prosperity as a result, all its problems have not disappeared: the community must face new phenomena, such as the emergence of a generation of young hippies, whom it must seek how best to integrate; there are also individual problems, such as those of the new man-god, a vital young fellow, weighed down by the obligations of his new function. As depicted by Yanou, traditional society appears to be much more liberal than is usually believed: it does not ignore the need for innovation, personal maturation and community development.

Side by side with this reappraisal of tradition, there can also be found, among the young writers, a bitter conflict over certain traditional values which are considered too demanding. *Le Fruit défendu* (1975) by Honoré-Godefroy Ahanda Essomba (b. 1938), stresses the harsh control exercised by family ties which extend their systems of relationships and taboos too far, at least in some ethnic groups. They exert pressures on the individual which, in the eyes of the young, seem inhuman. Guillaume Alima, Ahanda Essomba's protagonist, rapes his distant cousin, Rose Mengue, a beautiful girl who has consistently rejected the young man's advances in the name of the sacred taboo on sexual relations between kin. The consequences of the rape and the breaking of the taboo have repercussions all through the narrative as calamity piles upon calamity: Rose's marriage with a student is broken off; her beauty is destroyed forever by her husband when, in a fit of rage, he blinds her in one eye; she brings a legal action against him; and to top it all Alima has an accident and loses a leg. Only a ritual of purification can atone for the crime. The purpose of the novel is to demonstrate the cruelty of irrational beliefs and taboos by showing to what horrible consequences unnatural interdiction of feelings that are perfectly acceptable elsewhere is liable to lead. In the mind of Cameroon's new writers, the encounter of tradition and innovation thus entails both a reappraisal and a critical questioning of the former.

A third major theme, which has given birth to the very best C.L.E. works of prose fiction, is the condition of African womanhood in modern times. This is a frequent topic in African literature. It has obvious links with the marriage theme and the bride-price motif. On the eve of independence, the victimizing of women as mere commodities for commercial transactions had prompted Joseph Owono (b. 1921) to write his *Tante Bella* (1959). But while a number of francophone writers, including Mongo Beti in *Perpétue*, followed in Owono's wake by presenting the African woman as an object of lachrymose pity, anglophone novelists, such as Cyprian Ekwensi in *Jagua Nana* (1961), had put forward an entirely different view, emphasizing a phenomenon that has long been wide-spread along the whole of the Guinea coast: the important role played by women in the African market trade. In his determination to outgrow the obsession with anti-colonialism—a determination that was already apparent in *Le fils d'Agatha Moudio* —Francis Bebey introduced this motif into Cameroonian literature with *La poupée Ashanti* (1973), in which he brings out the social function of women, their dynamic contribution to the economic development of the country.

The action of the novel is located in Ghana, although Togo, Benin, Nigeria and

other countries could have provided an equally favourable setting. In these countries commercial activities in the local markets are in the hands of women. Even if they are, for the most part, illiterate, they are adept at counting and some have accumulated fortunes which allow them to undertake other profitable activities, such as public transport. Moreover, they have succeeded where men have often failed, for example, in uniting into strong corporations which effectively protect their members. Because of the economic power which they wield women also represent a social force, and they are very conscious of this. Bebey is careful to point out that their strength and efficiency enabled them to play a decisive role in the election of the first African statesman, Kwame Nkrumah, who can easily be recognized in the character called the Doctor. The Association of Market Women is also a pressure group and, because of their close solidarity, these women intervene courageously, expressing their disagreement with the actions of some of the politicians to whose election they have contributed.

The condition of women is also central to what is probably the most significant novel to have been issued by C.L.E. so far: *La nouvelle romance* (1976) by Henri Lopès (b. 1937) from the Congo,[128] who had already gained a measure of fame with a collection of short stories, *Tribaliques* (1972). The protagonist of *La nouvelle romance*, Wali, is faced with a situation which is not uncommon at the present transitional stage in the evolution of African societies: she has received a bare modicum of education, but skilful use of nepotism has launched her husband on a meteoric political career. This is an adventure for which neither is prepared. While the husband demands blind obedience from his wife, he indulges in a number of experiences with a variety of European women; she, however, is intelligent enough not only to become aware of the unfairness of the condition to which he seeks to confine her, but also to forge the spiritual weapons for her own liberation. In spite of her husband's status, wealth and prestige, she is able to break with him and decides to devote herself to helping the women of her country.

The difficulties which young women meet as they attempt to find a place for themselves in a society that is still male-controlled are also evinced in *La secrétaire particulière* (1971) by Jean Pliya (b. 1931), a playwright from Benin, whose first play, *Kondo le requin* had already gone through three editions: in Porto Novo (1966), Cotonou (1966) and Paris (1969). The dramatic structure of *La secrétaire particulière* rests on the familiar didactic device of the parallel lives: of the two female protagonists in search of preferment, one, Nathalie, relies more on her charms than on her college education, while the other, Virginie, tries to make her way through her competence and refuses to sacrifice her self-esteem even though she is aware of the traps which are set for her.

It was the chief merit and main achievement of C.L.E. to stimulate the writing of many novels and a few plays that were no longer obsessively concerned with outdated

[128] Although Henri Lopès was born in Kinshasa, he started his career in 1965 as a teacher of history at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Brazzaville. After working for a time at the Direction générale de l'enseignement, he was appointed Minister of Education. From 1973 to 1975, he held office as Prime Minister. He then went back to teaching history until 1977, when the new government asked him to serve as Minister of Finance. On his novel, see Fame Ndongo, "*La nouvelle romance* d'Henri Lopes, fleuron du nouveau roman nègre," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 41 (1976), 42–47.

anti-colonialism or romantic negritude, but which concentrated on concrete problems of everyday life. Inevitably, many of those works did not reach the fairly high standards characteristic of black writing published in Paris during the fifties. Several of the C.L.E. writers used the French language and/or the techniques of the novel in somewhat clumsy fashion. Nor were they shy of imitating their more successful forerunners or even contemporaries: for instance, René Philombe's second novel, *Un sorcier blanc à Zangali* (1969) is reminiscent of Mongo Beti's *Le roi miraculé* in its depiction of the antagonism between a colonial administrator and a Catholic missionary; Médou Mvomo's *Afrika ba'a* calls to mind Sembène Ousmane's *O pays, mon beau peuple!*; and the plot of Yanou's *L'Homme-dieu de Bisso* is not unrelated to the title story in Jean Pliya's collection *L'Arbre fétiche* (1971). All things considered, however, C.L.E.'s deliberate policy of allowing young writers to practise their craft and gain experience has proved truly fruitful, were it only in the emergence of such novelists as Francis Bebey and Henri Lopes, whose stature is by no means negligible.

But C.L.E.'s. enterprising spirit has had welcome results in other fields as well. Admittedly, such poetry as was printed in Yaunde drew most of its inspiration from sources that had been tapped abundantly before: the revulsion against the colonial system and the lot it imposed on the black man, and the glorification of Africa along the lines set by Senghor and the other negritude poets. The link is symbolized by the re-issue, in 1971, of François Sengat-Kuo's *Fleurs de latérite* together with a new collection, *Heures rouges*. Here indeed, "la voix de toute une race martyre" was once more claiming for recognition. The greater part of Africa being independent, Valère Epée (b. 1938) reached out to the black brothers overseas in his *Transatlantic Blues* (1972), while Richard Dogbeh (b. 1932) from Benin had celebrated the liberating function of poetry in *Cap Liberté* (1969). On the other hand, the imprint of negritude was manifest on such works as *Masques nègres* (1972), *Balafon* (1972) by Engelbert Mveng (b. 1930), or again in the various collections which Samuel-Martin Eno Belinga (b. 1935), a geologist and a musicologist who had already done much to investigate the oral art of Cameroon,[129] produced in the early seventies: *Masques nègres* (1969), *Equinoxes* (1970), and especially a volume with a tell-tale title, *La Prophétie de Joal* (1974).

Eno Belinga's *Ballades et chansons camerounaises* (1974) is not only an illustration of the writer's personal interest in traditional poetry and music: it is also one of the latest samples of C.L.E.'s concern with the preservation of oral art, a preoccupation which first appeared with the publication of *Le Souffle des ancêtres* (1965) by Jacques-Mariel Nzouankeu (b. 1938); following in a vein that had been exemplified by Paul Hazoumé and Olympe Bhêly-Quénum, this collection illustrates a strain of cruelty and weird irrationality that is as much a part of the traditional inheritance as are the idyllic virtues emphasized by the negritude school. Carefully preserving the tempo, the simplicity and the dry objectivity of oral narrative, Nzouankeu's book contains hair-raising tales about the ruthless punishments inflicted by the ancestor-gods on those who dare infringe even

[129] Of special interest in this respect are his *Littérature et musique populaire en Afrique noire* (Paris: Cujas, 1965) and *Découverte des chantefables béti, bulu, fang du Sud-Cameroun* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970).

the most minor of their commandments. There is less originality and imaginative intensity in the three stories collected by Jacques Bengono (b. 1938) in *La Perdrix blanche* (1966); insofar as they are based on genuine Beti traditions, they provide an interesting example of the integration of the Christian outlook into the techniques, motifs and narrative procedures of oral art.

Writing for a local audience well-acquainted with this oral art, other Cameroonian writers have tried to render into French the rhythm and the musical quality of *mvet* stories and poems by resorting to blank verse. The example was set by Gaspard and Françoise Towo-Atangana in *Nden-Bobo, l'araignée toilière* (1966). This is just a fragment from the Beti spider-cycle, but it is of special interest because it illustrates, with greater art than Bengono's collection, the intrusion of Christian concepts into the oral tradition. The story tells how, on the occasion of the boy Jesus' communion, the spider rejected God's invitation (conveyed by telegram) to attend the festive banquet, claiming that He is responsible for the ills and sufferings of the world that He created. A kind of African *Book of Job,* it shows the African's awareness of the perennial theological problem involved in reconciling the Christian notion of God's omnipotence and benevolence with the facts of evil and suffering. Yet this blasphemous fragment cautiously ends with the triumph of God: in punishment for his insolence, the spider is condemned never to be buried: after death it will remain on its web in the air. At the same time, through this piece of poetic justice, the tale fulfils its aetiological, pseudo-scientific function of providing an explanation for an observable natural phenomenon. Further, the story claims, at Holy Communion Christians receive the food which had been originally prepared for the spider!

Likewise in blank verse was *Contes et berceuses Beti* (1968) by Leon-Marie Ayissi. Besides several animal tales, it contains nursery rhymes and a long love story about a young man who roams through the world of the dead in search of his beloved. Nor was Beti lore the only field explored by C.L.E. writers. The firm also published samples of Fulani traditional art in *Contes et poèmes Foulbé de la Bénoué* (1965) by Mohammadou Eldridge. Many tales of the Bamiléké of Western Cameroon were recorded, though without much effort at providing a worthy literary equivalent of oral narrative techniques, by Martin Sop Nkamgang in his *Contes et légendes du Bamiléké*. A number of stories from the Lake Tchad area were recorded in *Autour du Lac Tchad* (1969) by another writer of Bamiléké origin, Isaac Tchoumba Ngouankeu (b. 1918), who spent some ten years of his life in jail, both before and after independence, as a political prisoner; a school teacher and a court clerk, he collected traditional tales which he translated into French so as to contribute, as he unassumingly put it, "to safeguarding a small segment of the oral lore and wisdom which are part of the national inheritance."

This praiseworthy attempt to maintain a literary trend that had been launched by Ousmane Socé and especially Birago Diop in earlier days was accompanied by yet another innovation which could hardly have been conceived in any other African country, namely the publication of a literary work in a second European language, English. This was *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer* (1968), the second play of 'Sankie Maimo (b. 1930), a Cameroonian who had been living and teaching in Nigeria. Although there

was a growing number of budding writers who experimented with imaginative writing in English during the seventies, C.L.E. apparently gave up publishing in the country's other official language. On the other hand, they tried to remedy the ignorance of francophone Africans with regard to anglophone writing. Whereas a great many significant French works have been translated into English, the reverse is far from true. Apart from a few select novels by Peter Abrahams, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ayi Kwei Armah, little of the vast corpus of English literature produced on the Black continent is accessible to the French-speaking African. It was therefore a welcome novelty when C.L.E. issued a French version of Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1968).

The firm's concern with widening its range and scope was more successful in the publishing of imaginative works by non-Cameroonian authors, attracting a number of would-be writers from the former federation of French Equatorial Africa. It would seem that the most momentous consequence of this commendably international approach has been the constitution of a truly national literature in the Congo, which, until the late sixties, had produced only two writers of any significance, Malonga and Tchicaya.[130] C.L.E. offered several Congolese writers a golden opportunity for testing their talents and reaching a larger audience. In 1968, C.L.E. published *La palabre stérile* by Guy Menga (b. 1935), who had already gained a measure of fame as the author of *La marmite de Koka-Mbala* (1966), a drama on the Congo past, printed in Monaco and performed at the 1966 Festival des Arts Nègres in Dakar. In the novel, as in John Pepper Clark's considerably better tragedy, *Song of a Goat*, the mainspring of the action is the curse of male sterility in African society; but the story soon turns to the hero's seeking compensation in the nationalistic-syncretic sect founded in Congo-Brazzaville by André Matswa on the eve of World War II, and to his subsequent persecution by colonial authorities. *La palabre stérile* suffers from badly organized plot structure and egregious weakness in character depiction. Guy Menga was obviously more at ease in narrative techniques more consonant with traditional forms of expression, as exemplified in his three collections of tales recounting *Les aventures de Moni-Mambou* (1971).

Also in 1968 C.L.E. published *Poèmes de la mer* by Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard (b. 1938), who was to become the best exponent of a new African poetry in French. This was followed in 1969 by *Soleils neufs* in which Maxime N'débéka (b. 1944) expressed genuine despair and wrath at what the historical evolution of African society has made of him as a black man. Two years later, Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou (b. 1929) appeared on the C.L.E. list with two pieces of narrative fiction: *Les initiés* (1971) centres on the experiences of a Malagasy student in Paris, showing how ill-prepared he has been by his education, both traditional and Christian, to behave responsibly in the freedom awarded by his new environment; *En quête de la liberté, ou une vie d'espoir* (1971), which

[130] Awareness of the existence of a national Congolese literature appeared in the mid-seventies with Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou, "La littérature congolaise d'expression française. Bilan et perspectives," *Comptes rendus trimestriels de l'Académie des Siences d'Outre-mer*, 34 (1974), 793–809, and R. and A. Chemain, "Regards sur les tendances nouvelles de la littérature congolaise," *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*, 5 No. 25 (1976) 56–60. Some of the writers who were first published by C.L.E. later succeeded in having their works printed in France. The most prolific of them was Makouta-Mboukou, one of whose novels is analysed in Peter Igbonekwu Okeh, "Signes culturels dans *Les exilés de la forêt vierge ou le grand complot*, roman de Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou," *Présence Francophone*, No. 18 (1979), 63–93.

exhibits subversive awareness of the continuity between the evils of colonial rule and the disorders and oppression of the independent regimes, was banned in the Congo and the writer found it safer to stay in exile. Although Makouta-Mboukou's other works—with the exception of his essay, *Introduction à la littérature africaine* (1970)—were not printed in Yaunde but in France, neither his novels, nor the "tragicomedy" of Sylvain Bemba (b. 1934)—*L'homme qui tua le crocodile* (1972)—come anywhere near the standard that was to be achieved in 1976 by Henri Lopes.

While it remains true that no francophone writer can expect ultimate recognition except in Paris, the Cameroonian Centre de Littérature Evangélique, created after a decision taken at a conference of evangelical churches in Kampala in 1962, can boast no slight achievement in the field of creative writing: it showed that it was possible to have imaginative works in French printed, sold and read on African soil; it thus encouraged budding writers to deal with topics that were of real interest to the African readership of the present day instead of addressing chiefly European intellectuals; it stimulated literary production to the extent of consolidating a genuine national literature not only in Cameroon but also in the Congo.

(Translated from the French by John C. Stockdale)

More research will be needed before it is possible to ascertain how far the C.L.E. example exerted its influence in the various stray attempts that were made in other parts of former French Africa in order to shed the monopoly of Paris as a printing centre for the whole of the French-speaking world. Other factors may have intervened, such as governmental determination to gain independence in this field as well.

In 1965, the Librairie Nationale in Porto Novo, Benin, published *Kondo le requin*, the first play of Jean Pliya. While the technique of this historical drama does not differ significantly from that of the William-Ponty plays, the author has tried with some success to counteract the usual image of Behanzin, the last king of Abomey, as a barbaric, blood-thirsty tyrant: the hero of the play is a dignified legitimate ruler seeking the right path for his people against overwhelming odds. A monarch by divine right, he cherishes no illusions as to the real power of ancestors and fetishes. His tragic dilemma is whether to sacrifice the honour and independence of his nation, or its very existence: a similar problem had been faced by Toucouleur society in Hamidou Kane's novel, *L'Aventure ambiguë*.

In 1967, the Editions de la Lagune in Lomé, Togo, brought out *Kétéyouli, l'étudiant noir*, by Modeste d'Almeida (b. 1949) and Gilbert Laclé (b. 1950), a play which focuses on three problems of topical urgency for many educated young Africans: Kétéyouli's desire to acquire university training must first overcome the determination of his family to reap the benefits of his high school diploma without any further delay. After graduating in France, he is strongly tempted to stay in Europe and enjoy the material comforts of the Western way of life instead of using his knowledge in the service of his own country. And after his return to Africa, Kétéyouli's love for an educated girl is thwarted by the greed of her parents, who want to trade her off to a wealthy polygamous old man.

In Upper Volta, the Presses Africaines at Ouagadougou issued a novel by Roger Nikièma (b. 1935), *Dessein contraire* (1967), which had been published serially in a local weekly in 1960–1961. Like most African writers reared in their own countries, Nikièma has little use for negritude. A love tragedy, his novel is also an outspoken indictment of the ills wrought by tribal customs and superstitions among the Mossi of Upper Volta (now Burkina). The hero's old father, Chief Nebmi takes for himself the young woman who was intended to become the wife of his son Katin. Katin then falls in love with another girl called Gueda; the seventh child of her parents, she was married at birth to a repulsive old witch-doctor, whose magic had allegedly enabled them to have a daughter at last. The story ends in murder and suicides. A few subplots refer to the large-scale migration of able-bodied young men from Upper Volta into Ghana, but this is ascribed to the difficulty of acquiring wives, without any mention of the main cause, the apalling poverty of the country. Nikièma's concern is genuine, but his French is uncertain, and he gives no sign of knowing how to construct a plot coherently.

Also in 1967 the Editions Populaires in Bamako, Mali, issued a collection of folktales, *Si le feu s'éteignait...* by Massa Makan Diabaté (b. 1938). This publishing venture had arisen from the educational reform of 1962, when the local authorities realized (as a journalist in *Le Monde* put it) "plus vite qu'ailleurs que les ancêtres des petits Maliens n'étaient pas les Gaulois"![131] But this textbook publisher in time launched into general literature. Fredric Michelman noted in 1978 that the firm "receives no state subsidies. The operation is held together by the persistence and optimism of its director, Barthélemy Koné and his staff, and by the fact that it possesses its own (albeit worn-out) printing presses. The 35 titles presently available represent fiction, monographs and essays; most popular by far are tales and legends from the oral tradition brought together in the 'Collection Hier' series."[132] As for Massa Makan Diabaté, who was born into a family of Bambara *griots*, he drew on the oral traditions inherited from his ancestors for another work published in Bamako, *Kala Jata* (1970), before he managed to have several books issued in France.

The Editions Populaires has also printed some modern-type fiction as exemplified in *Une main amie* (1969), an ambitious but slightly lengthy novel by a Malian army officer, Yoro Diakité (1932–1973). It tells the austerely edifying story of a Malian girl who is disappointed in her life as a barmaid in France. She finds happiness when she returns to Africa to help the underprivileged workers and peasants solve their problems. Diakité writes in the vein of an African socialism tinged with the strong moralizing trend characteristic of Islam. He shows genuine and well-informed concern for the quandary of the common people in present-day Africa. He was arrested in 1971 for allegedly plotting against Mali's president Moussa Traoré.

In his survey of francophone publishing in black Africa, Michelman also mentioned a more recent phenomenon which, characteristically, appeared in Cameroon:

[131] Paul-Jean Franceschini, "'Monsieur Barthélemy' l'un des (trop rares) éditeurs africains," *Le Monde*, 18–19 March 1977.

[132] Fredric Michelman, "New Life for Francophone Publishing in Africa," *African Book Publishing Record*, 4, 3 (1978) 163–167.

the emergence of the one-man "shoe-string" press, somewhat similar to those found in certain English-speaking countries. This parallel cannot be carried too far, however, for the output of these francophone entrepreneurs (generally writers themselves) bears little resemblance, for example, to the often lurid popular pamphlets of Onitsha which are characterized by the inimitable "New English." Uneven in quality, mimeographed or typeset, the majority of their plays, poetry or prose fiction in French differ little outwardly from the production of the more established publishing houses. The latter do, however, reject manuscripts for various reasons, not all of which are related to poor literary quality or simple material limitations on publishing capacity. These tiny fledgling presses thus provide the means for unknown authors, or others whose works may be politically or otherwise sensitive, to see their manuscripts in print. One such publisher is Timothée Nkzaagap, a young Cameroonian teacher, journalist and poet, who, working out of a tiny cubbyhole of a bookstore in the provincial city of Bafoussam has, since 1976, brought out four books (two from his own pen) under the imprint of "Librairie Populaire." One which includes samples of the folk wisdom of the Bamiléké people, has gone into a second edition.

Yet the most significant of these experiments in private book-publishing in Cameroon in recent years is a firm which was founded by René Philombe in 1972.[133] Philombe is probably the nearest approximation to a professional writer in francophone Africa, as can be perceived from his biography in Jahn's *Who's Who*. Eloise A. Brière observed in an illuminating essay, that, "up until November of 1978, there was little to distinguish [his] career from that of other writers living in Cameroon." His traditional tales—*La passerelle divine* (1959)—his collections of short stories dealing with urban—*Lettres de ma cambuse* (1964)—or village life—*Histoires queue-de-chat*—(1971), his two novels—*Sola ma chérie* (1966) and *Un sorcier blanc à Zangali* (1969)—his only published play—*Les époux célibataires* (1971)—all of them printed locally, mostly by C.L.E., were cast in the same matrix as the major part of Cameroonian writing: "religious conflict, the oppression of women (bride-price), and tradition or superstititon." But Philombe's life story shows that though he may not share the radically rebellious opinions of Mongo Beti, he has not always been in complete agreement with the government of President Ahmadou Ahidjo to whom such writers as Sengat-Kuo and Eno Belinga were dedicating praise-poems. During several stays in prison, especially in 1960 and 1963, and in "what is euphemistically called a 'Centre de rééducation civique'", he composed many poems and a play which no publisher was willing to issue. A man of boundless energy, who had founded two weeklies, one in French and the other in Ewondo (1959), the Association des Poètes et Ecrivains du Cameroun (1960), two literary journals, *Le Cameroun littéraire* (1964) and *Ozila* (1970), and a theatre company, "Les Compagnons de la Comédie" (1969), Philombe launched his own publishing house, "Semences Africaines" in 1972. The main purpose of this was to produce his own protest poems, beginning with *N'Krumah n'est pas mort* (1972), which was followed by *Petites gouttes de chant pour créer l'homme* (1977). But it was in 1978 that Philombe at last printed *Choc Anti-choc*, containing some of the poems that he had written nearly twenty years earlier, at the same

[133] For a detailed discussion of Philombe, see Eloise A, Brière, "Littérature camerounaise: Nouvelles tendances ou faux espoirs?" *Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains*, No. 9 (1979), 69–80.

time as a play, *Africapolis*, which had been performed in Bafoussam in 1974. This drama takes place in an imaginary African capital. It is an outspoken indictment of many African regimes, which are overtly despotic and have no regard for either traditional or modern liberal values.

The publishing activities of "Semences Africaines" are of considerable political, rather than commercial or perhaps even literary, significance. In spite of his touching zeal and impressive resilience, in spite of the uncontrovertible authenticity of his inspiration, in spite of his tireless activity and fertile imagination, René Philombe can hardly be regarded as a good writer. But the publication of his latest works, which are by local standards highly unconventional to say the least, is in itself an invitation to re-assess the relationship that is supposed to exist between literature and political authority. In his preface to *Africapolis*, Philombe blames not only the local directors who refused to produce the play for fear of reprisals, but also the French broadcasting agency (O.R.T.F), which rejected the play on the grounds that it might be objectionable to the Cameroonian authorities! The fact that he did print it and was nevertheless allowed to travel to Germany to attend the Janheinz Jahn seminar in Mainz in May 1979, suggests that a new mood may be spreading in Cameroon: while simple fear may have prompted local writers, publishers and producers to exercise an undue amount of self-censorship, it is to be hoped that fewer obstacles will henceforth remain on the way of serious, sincere criticism by Cameroonian writers, for it is their most useful function in Africa today to act as the moral conscience of society. [Ed.]

ALBERT S. GÉRARD[134]

THE "NOUVELLES EDITIONS AFRICAINES"

Although many desultory efforts at local publishing were made in francophone Africa during the first post-colonial decade, the Centre de Littérature Evangélique remained the only significant achievement for nearly ten years. A private undertaking, working with foreign capital, it played a by no means inconsiderable part in promoting the literature of Cameroon and of several neighbouring countries, which had been part of the former A.E.F. federation. But in March 1972 the Senegalese government, soon joined by the Ivory Coast authorities, founded in Dakar "Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines", in association with a group of prominent French publishers including Hachette, Armand Colin, Présence Africaine, Fernand Nathan and Les Editions du Seuil.[135] Part of the purpose of the new firm, 52 per cent of whose shares belonged to the two founding states, was to promote the development of creative writing. At the time, Paris publishing houses had begun to show renewed interest in African literature, bringing out the work of such

[134] I am most grateful to Jeannine Laurent, Alain Fresco and Curtis Schade for collecting and as it were pre-digesting much of the material for this section.

[135] See Philippe Touzard, "Panorama de l'édition au Sénégal," *African Book Publishing Record*, I (1975), 301–305; Frederic Michelman, "New Life for Francophone Publishing in Africa," Ibid., 4 (1978), 163–167; Renée Pelletier, "L'Edition et l'Afrique noire," *Africa*, No. 119 (March 1980), 73–78, 158.

writers as Kourouma, Ouologuem, Fantouré and Dongala. But the example set by C.L.E. demonstrated the potentialities, literary and commercial, of an indigenous production which was necessarily denied an outlet in Paris, either because the authors' language and style did not quite meet the exacting standards of the French readership or because they dealt with specific African problems to which the average European audience was quite indifferent.

From the first, N.E.A.'s achievements were remarkable. It was of course a courtesy on the part of President Senghor that part of the Paris edition of his *Lettres d'hivernage* (1973) appeared under the N.E.A. imprint. And it was probably as a token of the influence of the Ivory Coast that a collection of folktales and legends by an older writer, Amon d'Aby (b. 1913), *La Mare aux crocodiles,* was issued in the same year. More significant, however, was the publication of two novels by two new Senegalese writers, Amar Samb (b. 1937) and Amadou Ndiaye (b. 1923): while the latter's *Assoka ou les derniers jours de Koumbi* (1973) was a historical novel purporting to combine cinematic techniques with the traditional narrative devices of the local *griots,* the former's *Matraqué par le destin, ou la vie d'un talibé* (1973) offered a realistic (and rather negative) picture of Islamic dogmatism in the education of a young scholar; this apparently autobiographical story by a noted student of his country's Arabic writing[136] was perhaps intended as a counterweight to the sublime idealizations in Hamidou Kane's *Aventure ambiguë.*

Although N.E.A. was a joint venture with independent branches in Dakar and Abidjan, it must be admitted that the Ivory Coast, despite her reported economic prosperity and advanced stage of development, failed to contribute significantly to their list. *Quand les bêtes parlaient aux hommes* (1974) by Léon Maurice Anoma Kanié (b. 1920) was a collection of folk tales, followed by some of La Fontaine's fables translated into Ivoirian creole. The stories in *Les bannis du village* (1974) by Timite Bassori (b. 1933) read like a rehash of the village life anecdotes already abundantly exploited by C.L.E. authors. Bernard Dadié's *Papassidi, maître-escroc* (1975) was a revised version of a comedy that had first appeared under the C.L.E. imprint in 1968. *Jusqu'au seuil de l'irréel* (1976) by Amadou Kone (b. 1953) contained tales dealing with witchcraft in traditional society, while Pascal Kofi Yeya's stories in *Une victoire indésirable* (1976) combined the marvellous and the humorous. Two Ivoirian novels were printed in 1977: Tidiane Dem's *Masséni* might be described as a gnomic, edifying novel designed to expose envy and greed and to recommend the practice of Islamic wisdom and virtues; on the other hand, *Wazzi* by Jean Dodo (b. 1919) focuses on a woman's struggle to escape the burden of obsolete customs. Anoma Kanie next tried his hand at historical drama with *La grande Samoko* (1978). And the mawkish poetry in *Pleurs et fleurs pour Méliane* (1974) by Mamadou Diallo (1920–1974) does little to detract from the fact that no outstanding work—of the calibre of Dadié's, or of Kourouma's only novel—was added to the abundant, yet generally mediocre, corpus of Ivoirian creative writing.

The eclecticism of N.E.A.'s policy cannot be doubted: they may claim responsibility for encouraging potential writers in several countries of the former A.O.F. Admittely, Djibril Tamsir Niane (b. 1932), a Senegalese citizen of Guinean origin, was already well

[136] Amar Samb, *Essai sur la contribution du Sénégal à la littérature d'expression arabe* (Dakar: Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, 1973).

known when the Dakar house published his short stories in *Méry* (1975), but Guinea was further represented by Biram Sacko's novel *Dalanda, ou la fin d'un amour* (1976), which still exploits the inexhaustible generation-cum-culture clash. With *Vingt-cinq ans d'escalier, ou la vie d'un planton* (1975) Seydou Traore from Mali continued the important trend inaugurated by Amar Samb and provided an unvarnished picture of the ordinary African's experience. The most striking event was probably the simultaneous publication in 1975 of three titles by the first Mauritanian who might be described as a professional writer, Youssouf Gueye (b. 1928): these were the short stories of *A l'orée du Sahel,* a slender collection of poetry, *Sahéliennes,* and a play, *Les exilés du Goumel,* which deals with the confrontation between the traditional animistic outlook and the values of Islam. He was later joined by his fellow-countryman Djibril Sall (b. 1940) with a slim volume of poetry, *Les yeux nus* (1978). Niger first appeared on the N.E.A. list with Ide Oumarou's *Gros Plan* (1976), a novel criticizing contemporary politics in a way which the blurb rashly and unwisely compared to Chinua Achebe's dry irony. In *Abboki* (1978) another Nigerian, Halilou Sabbo Mahamadou, offered a brief narrative report of the corruption and the misery that await the migrant villager in the huge coastal cities of independent Africa. As to Upper Volta, it was represented by the poems of Ye vinu Muntu and Jacques Boureima Guegane in *Poèmes voltaïques* (1978).

N.E.A.'s area of recruitment extended beyond the borders of West Africa, printing as it did poems by such writers as Edouard Maunick from Mauritius (*Ensoleillé vif,* 1976), William Syad from Jibuti (*Harmoniques* and *Cantiques,* 1976) and Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard from the Congo (*Les feux de la planète,* 1978). The literary vitality of this country and the outspokenness of her writers were further exemplified in the first novel of Guy Menga (b. 1935), already known as a playwright and story-teller: his *Kotawali* (1976) is a virulent exposé of the injustice, intolerance and cruelty of many new African regimes, anticipating an uncommonly dismaying semi-fictional report by his fellow-countryman Pierre Biniakounou (b. 1944), *Chômeur à Brazzaville* (1978). It should be added that N.E.A. printed a number of works by Haitian writers, most of whom live in Senegal, such as *Poèmes du village de Toubab Dyalaw* (1974) by Gérard Chenet (b. 1929), *Kasamansa* (1977), a collection of poems in which Félix Morisseau-Leroy (b. 1912) makes use of oral praise-poem devices to lament the death of Allende or celebrate the dam at Akosombo, and *Images d'argile et d'or* (1978) by Jean-François Brierre (b. 1909). Alongside this poetry, only one Haitian work of prose fiction appeared in Senegal during the seventies: *Gens de Dakar* (1978) by the vice-president of N.E.A., Roger Dorsinville (b. 1911), is a collection of short stories the title of which reveals the publishers' topical bias. Likewise, the first translation to be issued under N.E.A.'s imprint was, significantly, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People,* translated as *Le démagogue* (1978).

Clearly, then, there was no trace of chauvinism in N.E.A. policy: indeed, the writers' national origin was seldom even mentioned either on the blurbs or in the catalogues. Nevertheless, Senegalese literature was bound to profit most by the existence of a publishing house destined to become more fully indigenous as European interests are gradually withdrawn. President Senghor's involvement with creative writing was of course an important element, even though writers from many other countries did receive

a friendly welcome. But more decisive was the fact that Senegal, or at least its coastal towns, had been in constant and increasingly close contact with France since the seventeenth century.

Statistics are not reliable and no percentage figures should be suggested, but it is likely that Senegal is the African country where French is most widely spoken. At any rate, N.E.A. readers seem to have been more exacting than their C.L.E. counterparts with regard to correctness in language use and in style. Although literary prizes do not mean much except in terms of sales, it is, interesting to note that N.E.A. writers were awarded the Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique Noire in 1978, 1979 and 1980 and the Noma Award for 1980.

In the first half-dozen years of its existence, besides publishing or co-publishing several of Senghor's own works and offering hospitality to Lamine Diakhaté (*Nigérianes*, 1974), who could by no means be regarded as a beginner, N.E.A. provided opportunities for appearing in print to several new, generally young, Senegalese poets. In 1985 their publications included *Dieu est noir* by Mamadou Traoré Diop (b. 1944), *La génération spontanée* by Ibrahima Sall (b. 1949), *Ebéniques* by Mbaya Gana Kebe (b. 1936), and *Chants de la rivière fraîche* by Kiné Kirama Fall, one of Senegal's first women writers. These were followed by *Kohaténor* (1977) by Adam Loga Coly (b. 1942), and *L'épée et la fleur* (1978) by Sada Weïndé Ndiaye (b. 1939). Most of these usually slim verse collections were issued in the "Woï" series. Although they have hitherto received scant critical attention, they enjoy considerable popularity, and are soon out of print.

In spite of the general revival of francophone African drama in the course of the seventies, N.E.A.'s contribution to the genre was of the slightest. Like Dadié's *Papassidi*, the Senegalese plays they issued were by no means new: *L'os de Mor Lam* (1976) was a stage version of Birago Diop's "L'Os", which had first appeared in *Les Nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba* (1958). Ibrahima Seck's *Jean le fou* (1976) had first been performed in Paris in 1966. The first truly original drama was *Cous rompus* (1978), in which Moustapha Diaïté rather peevishly takes to task the black planners and civilizers who try to bring the marvels of "development" within the scope of illiterate villagers.

During the same period, however, more than twelve Senegalese novels and collections of short stories were issued and the country, whose literary history could already boast a fairly long and brilliant past, could add about ten new names to its list of prose writers, in addition to the publication of new collections of short stories by Abdou Anta Ka (*Mal*, 1975) and Lamine Diakhaté (*Prisonnier du regard*, 1975). The indigenous publishing house fulfilled the same function as C.L.E. had done during the previous decade for Cameroon and the neighbouring countries: it helped Mali, Guinea, Niger and Mauritania lay the foundations for a French-language literature of their own; it contributed, though less than might have been expected, to the improvement of Ivoirian writing; and for Senegal's national literature it represented a decisive new development in more ways than one.

Until the early seventies, most Senegalese writers had seen print in Paris. They were highly educated members of the country's intellectual élite. Some were quite skilful

stylists. They addressed a European or thoroughly europeanized readership. They dealt with their themes at a lofty level of intellectual generalization. Exceptions were few: they included Ousmane Socé's *Karim* and most of Sembène Ousmane's work in spite of the latter's too obvious ideological stance. In contrast, the majority of N.E.A. writers, irrespective of their national origin, came from a working-class background. Their academic training was limited, as most of them might be described as high-school drop-outs.[137] Further, they wrote with an African, or even a specifically local readership in mind: at the other extreme from Camara Laye's *Le Regard du roi,* they often set their stories in real places, using real names, a procedure which captured the interest of the local reader. In handling the French language, they often displayed a kind of touching humility: they were seldom masters of style as some of their elders had been; yet they were more familiar with standard French than some of their colleagues from Cameroon; and, curiously, they did not seem to have any desire to africanize the language along the path shown by Ahmadou Kourouma. The result, as Alain Fresco cogently observed is that although their works can seldom boast high literary merit, "they are important because they constitute a sociological document that reflects the life and concerns of the people of independent Africa." A signal exception is Lamine Diakhaté's first novel, *Charlys d'Harlem* (1979), which deals with the puzzling experience of a man from Rufisque who returns to his changed native town after spending forty years in New York.

As a rule, Dakar fiction therefore focuses on the twofold experience of the modern African: the old and the new, tradition and innovation. By the time N.E.A. was founded, this dichotomy with its inherent problematic had become fairly commonplace to the readers of the founding fathers of African prose fiction in French. But it had lost nothing of its poignant cogency in the life experience of the semi-literate African whom most of the N.E.A. writers address.

The didactic determination to make known and appreciated Africa's unchronicled past found its most popular expression in the "Grandes Figures Africaines" series which illustrated the greatness of more than twenty important characters in Africa's history, ranging from Chaka to Lat-Dior and from King Affonso of the Congo to Othman Dan Fodio, founder of the Sokoto empire. The same impulse was also at work in such historical novels as *Assoka* (1973) by Amadou Ndiaye (b. 1923) or *Le Royaume de sable* (1976), an epic story of Senegalese resistance to French conquest, by Mamadou Seyini Mbengué (b. 1925), at the time his country's ambassador in the Soviet Union. It is noteworthy that a favourite genre in the oral tradition, the folktale, followed different paths in N.E.A.'s programme: it represented a significant share of the Ivoirian contribution thanks to Amon d'Aby and Anoma Kanié, but animal stories from Senegal were relegated to a series for juvenile readers. Only one Senegalese writer, Ibrahima Sall, appeared to be attracted to the supernatural, a curious fact when one remembers the negritude notion of the black man's allegedly ontological familiarity with the supernatural; furthermore, as Philip Noss shrewdly observed, whereas the question asked by a Cameroonian writer like J.-M. Nzouankeu in *Le Souffle des ancêtres* (1965, repr. 1971)

[137] See Alain Fresco, "'Les Vies Africaines': An Example of Popular Literature," *African Literature Today,* 12 (1982), 174–180.

was "What is man's relationship to the supernatural to be?", the structure of Sall's stories in *Crépuscules Invraisemblables* (1977) shows that the Senegalese writer is not concerned with the truth or untruth of African beliefs but with what they reveal about the African's identity in the twentieth century.[138]

On the whole, however, the major preoccupation of N.E.A. imaginative writing is not the revaluation of Africa's past, but a lucid appraisal of her present. There is often little perceptible difference between straight novels and the documentary narratives issued in the "Vies Africaines" series. In contrast to Seydou Traoré's best-selling account of his experiences as a servant to Europeans, which inaugurated the series, the white man is conspicuously absent, as Alain Fresco noted, from most of those works: their purpose is to reflect the ordinary African's daily life in a simple style that even a semi-literate audience will understand. The prospective reader is likely to be a town-dweller whose parents or even grandparents have fled the austerity of life in the bush for the alluring glitter of the city. It is his or her experience which the story recounts. The protagonist's problem is not to reconcile tradition and innovation, to choose and syncretize what is best in both. He *is* in the modern world. His problem is to survive it. The first Senegalese work in the "Vies Africaines" series, *De Tilène au Plateau* (1976) by Nafissatou Diallo (b. 1941) still offered a reassuring view: it is probably significant that as a midwife belonging to a middle-class family the author could plausibly claim to have successfully resolved the conflict between tradition and modernity. In the course of the late seventies, however, a number of semi-autobiographical novels by other Senegalese writers, two of them women, contradicted such rose-coloured prospects, emphasizing as Sembène Ousmane and Mongo Beti had done the plight of the underprivileged in the pitiless world of the megalopolis.[139]

The trend was inaugurated by Aminata Sow Fall, with a novel whose title, *Le Revenant* (1977), refers to a young man who comes back from jail after serving his sentence. Like Ousmane Socé's Karim, he was punished because in his eagerness to display his importance in the tradition of ostentatious lavishness, he had procured the necessary money in ways which a modern society can hardly condone. The comparison with the elder writer unfortunately brings out Aminata Sow Fall's inferiority in style and plot handling. This was not remedied in her second novel, *La grève des Battù* (1979). Meanwhile, however, the tendency she had heralded was strengthened by the publication of *Sourd-muet, je demande la parole* (1978), an autobiographical story by Moussa Ly Sangaré (b. 1940). This terrifying description of life in the Dakar *medina* is a remarkable example of clinical realism. The writer portrays the brutish and brutal world into which he was born without hatred or rancour: he is even capable of introducing a touch of occasional humour into his account of otherwise unrelieved misery. He allows the facts to speak for themselves. He does not indulge in libertarian rhetoric or mawkish sermonizing. He refrains from the hasty generalizations of the "ethnographical" novel.

Though not quite as lurid as Sangaré's story, the epistolary novel *Une si longue lettre*

[138] Philip Noss, "Where, oh where have the Gods gone? The Theme of the Gods in Contemporary Francophone Short Stories," African Literature Association, Bloomington, 1978.

[139] For a more detailed discussion, see Albert Gérard and Jeannine Laurent, "Sembène's Progeny: A New Trend in the Senegalese Novel," *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, 14 (1980), 133–145.

by Mariama Bâ (1929–1981),[140] does not hold out much hope for the near future either. It focuses on the quandary of a modern woman who married the man she loved in the face of stiff opposition from her family, only to be deserted after she had given birth to their twelfth child. The narrator is steeped in the contradictions of a society emerging from a subsistence economy (where polygamy and limitless fecundity make sound sense) into a modern-type system which offers women openings for more rewarding work than the daily household chores, while comparative affluence encourages and enables men to indulge their sexual whims in utter disregard of the obligations built into genuine Muslim law.

The Senegalese novels of the late seventies may lack the artistry and polish that characterized many works, of the earlier generations of African writers. Nevertheless, they are interesting not solely as sociological documents. They are a genuine milestone in the history of French writing in the country. The Dakar novelists did not offer the first descriptions of African town life: Mongo Beti's *Ville cruelle*, and before that their compatriot Ousmane Socé's *Karim* had shown the way. But whereas the white man's absence from *Karim* may have been due to the writer's unwillingness to give offence to the then authorities, in today's novels his absence shows that the artists have assimilated their country's independence as well as the responsibilities that go with it. They are no longer in search of some Pale Face scapegoat. They do not even appear to have a political axe to grind. They entertain no childish fancies about maintaining cherished but obsolete traditions. Nor do they confidently expect the advent of some unlikely "civilisation de l'universel." This disillusioned awareness, this recognition of the unpalatable facts of Africa's collective life at the present stage in her eventful history may not imply quiet acceptance by all or forever: they certainly signify a decisive step in a literary coming of age.

[140] See Hanz M. Zell, "The First Noma Award for Publishing in Africa," *African Book Publishing Record*, 6 (1980), 199–201, and Barbara Harrel-Bond, "Interview with Mariama Bâ," ibid., 209–214.

4. THE SEVENTIES

Diminishing interest in African literature among Paris publishers provided an opportunity for a few local firms to start issuing creative works in French on the black continent. The Nouvelles Editions Africaines, started in 1972, represented a second major step in the direction inaugurated by the Centre de Littérature Evangélique. However, as the first decade of independence was reaching its end several new writers had managed to reach print in France. This may have been a sign that a lull in imaginative power was coming to its close, or that there was a revival of interest in Africa in the metropolis. Whatever the reasons, which future research will undoubtedly elucidate, francophone writing gathered increasing momentum as publishing firms and various organizations undertook to encourage and stimulate African literary production in French. At the same time new themes were tackled and new attitudes became perceptible: a decade of independence had awakened many writers to a clearer sense of the realities and responsibilities of self-government. In this connection the writers of British Africa, as later chapters will make clear, had shown a quicker understanding and a more mature outlook. Whereas francophone writing had been in the vanguard during the fifties, a gap had opened later which was well on the way to being closed by the late seventies. Although the poetry of the decade was, with few exceptions, rather undistinguished, there was a remarkable rise in the amount and quality of dramatic writing. But it was in the novel that the new trends made themselves felt in all their depth and variety. Perhaps the most significant feature of the seventies was the building up of "national literatures" in the sense that creative writing in some of the French-speaking states reached sufficient volume to appear as the expression of a specific national identity rather than of some undifferentiated African whole. Senegal, the home country of the founding fathers, of Léopold Senghor, Ousmane Socé and Birago Diop, had truly been the flag-bearer of this movement. Her example was now being followed by Cameroon, Zaïre, the Congo, and to a smaller extent, the Ivory Coast—a development which was bound to influence the literary historiography of Africa in the decades to come.

POETRY

Quantity rather than quality has been the chief characteristic of African poetry in French since the late sixties. The publication by Tchicaya U Tam'si of his latest volume of poems (*La Veste d'intérieur*, 1977) provides a yardstick by which to measure the generally poor average achievement of the younger post-colonial generation; even if it is perhaps unfair to take the mature work of an established writer as the standard of measurement, one need only think back to the creative vigour of his earliest volumes to recognize the comparative dullness of much present-day poetry in French. This period has not produced a poet of his stature, although his compatriot Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard stands out quite clearly as a major talent.

Speculation about the reasons for this situation is bound to be inconclusive, since it must inevitably take into account the unmeasurable factor of talent. However, it is probably true that even talent needs the stimulus of dynamic social and political forces which, directly or indirectly, in concurrence or in opposition, provoke the poet's creative activity. Would Senghor have become the poet of stature we know had he not come to maturity at a crucial moment in the history of Africa, which enabled him to find his voice through the dynamic concept of negritude, giving his thought and his writing a creative framework in which to work? The same question could be asked about Tchicaya U Tam'si and Rabéarivelo. Would the latter have written poetry of the quality and imaginative insight of *Presque-songes* and *Traduit de la Nuit* if he had not been trapped within the suffocating intellectual and emotional prison of colonized Madagascar? Indeed, it is probably true to say that the work of these poets, and of a number of minor poets during the pre-independence period, owed its quality to the challenge of a very clear and intensely experienced social and political environment. It was a situation common to them all which provoked what was in effect a collective and mutually sustaining reaction (except in the case of the isolated Rabéarivelo, whose very loneliness must largely account for the negative act of suicide in which his life culminated).

It is usual to look to the universality of a poet's ideas as one of the chief criteria of success, but there is another factor, both more complex and more crucial, which must surely precede this one: the poet's consciousness of his immediate reality (what Paul Eluard called "la vie immédiate"). The poet must be deeply, sensitively aware of the physical and emotional work inside and around him, as revealed in psychological, social or political terms. In this way he recognizes that he belongs to the making of history, to the here and now of collective experience in which the universal is incarnated. (Even the nineteenth-century Europan poets' sense of isolation and alienation from the fellowship of men was the expression of a genuine awareness of the collective experience of alienation occurring in Western culture at the time and continuing up to the present day; the African poets' own awareness of this phenomenon within European society is seen in their frequent insistence on the communal nature of African traditional society.) But there is a second aspect of the poet's awareness of the here and now which is absolutely crucial: he must speak in a poetic language relevant to his own times. It is no use

borrowing the rhetoric of an earlier period (in the case of the African poet, of an earlier period of an alien culture); he must express himself in the living poetic language of his own day, creating it if necessary for himself as poets are constantly compelled to do. Nothing dies more quickly than language, and in literature this death is sooner upon you and more speedily consummated than in the spoken language. One need only read the earliest work of Rabéarivelo such as *Sylves* and compare it with his mature poetry to recognize the full significance of this truth. It is the failure to realize the importance of language that considerably weakens the impact of the poetry of Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou, for example.

The prefaces to some of the volumes published in recent years may give us some essential clues to what has gone wrong. Senghor, introducing the poetry of Lamine Niang (b. 1923; *Négristique,* 1968), sees it as an individual expression of negritude; but the fact of the matter is that Niang's poetry only lives to the extent that it has escaped from negritude, whose style is no longer relevant. Henri Lopès and Simon Ntary, in their presentation of separate volumes of Maxime Ndébéka's poetry, stress his personal commitment to post-colonial Africa and the importance of commitment in African poetry even after the departure of political colonialism. Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou and Tati-Loutard write their own prefaces or postfaces and insist on the poet's privilege to write about what he pleases, whether it is committed or not. What in fact has happened is that with the achievement of political independence the poets no longer have a clear, unambiguous focus for their writing. The common cause which stimulated creative activity in the colonial period has not been replaced by anything similar to it since independence; or, rather, the majority of poets have not identified—because either they cannot or dare not—the human issues that preoccupy the collective consciousness in the here and now of the Africa of the late sixties and the seventies. Without this awareness of the fundamental issues, there can be no language either (one is reminded of Flaubert's dictum that there can be no style without clarity of thought), and no universality of experience. It seems very instructive in this context to reflect on the fact that in recent years the most vital and the most vigorous poetry in Africa has been written by black South Africans: it is to southern Africa that the struggle for independence has now been transferred, but it will be interesting to see whether the same crisis of poetic creation occurs there too after the achievement of independence or majority rule.

It is also interesting to reflect that, whereas it was the poets who set the pace in the pre-independence period by their identification of the issues and their expression of the will to overcome them, since independence it has been the novelists who have, so far, dominated the scene by recognizing some of the major problems of the new Africa. Is this because poetry was a more satisfactory medium for the expression of the collective hope that characterized the struggle for independence, and that the novel is better suited, because it is more realistic, to the expression of disillusionment and even despair, which often characterize the writers' response to the post-colonial situation? There is a sense in which the independence movement brought writers and the people together in a common endeavour (this has nothing to do with whether or not the masses read the works of the poets and intellectuals), whereas the post-colonial atmosphere is one of isolation, divi-

sion and deep-rooted mistrust between writers, rulers and the people. The African poet has been accustomed to an atmosphere of common protest and has perhaps been unable to adjust, as the novelists have done, to the loneliness of social and political satire.

Whatever the causes of the decline in achievement in the sphere of poetry, and whether or not the above speculations really explain it, there is little doubt that it has occurred. We shall now briefly examine some of the poetry that has risen above the general level of mediocrity. In the first instance we cannot fail to notice the concentration of better than average poets in one country: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville).[141] In addition to the major talent of the established poet Tchicaya U Tam'si, this country is the home of the most outstanding poet of the younger generation, Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard (b. 1938), who, alone among his contemporaries, has given evidence of a truly creative poetic imagination. Two other poets from the Congo are Maxime Ndébéka (b. 1944) and Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou (b. 1929).

Tati-Loutard argues that "aujourd'hui une crise d'originalité sévit parmi les jeunes écrivains africains et paralyse les vocations littéraires" (Postface to *Poèmes de la mer*), arising specifically, as he sees it, from a rejection of European cultural domination through the cultivation of difference for its own sake. Tati-Loutard is in fact criticizing negritude, and one would be inclined to argue in return that negritude and the pre-independence protest tradition in French-speaking Africa grew directly from and in response to the French poetic tradition of the twentieth century.

Be this as it may, it is very striking, certainly, as one reads Tati-Loutard's poetry[142] that, while one has a sense of having been there before, his imaginative world is nevertheless an original construction. In other words, there is in his poetry the combination of the familiar (the so-called universal, in fact) and the individual, typical of good poetry. Essentially, Tati-Loutard makes use of a universal nature imagery while at the same time endowing it, through his style and his particular insight, with all the freshness of rediscovery; it is not unlike what we experience when reading modern French poets like Paul Eluard and René Char, and the Malagasy poet Rabéarivelo (whom he has clearly read and enjoyed since there are echoes of his rhythms and imagery in Tati-Loutard's poetry). The particular characteristic of Tati-Loutard's imagery, which is one of the most striking features of his work, is the way it is derived from the poet's acute and

[141] The sense of a national Congolese literature endowed with distinctive characteristics and a history of its own was manifested for the first time in a paper by Jean-Pierre Makouta-Mboukou, "La littérature congolaise d'expression française. Bilan et perspectives." *Comptes rendus trimestriels des séances de l'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer*, 34 (1974), 793–809. It was further substantiated in *Anthologie de la littérature congolaise d'expression française*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Tati-Loutard (Yaoundé: C.L.E., 1976; 2nd ed. 1977), and in a special issue of the magazine *Notre Librairie*, No. 38 (1977), which is published by the Cercle des Lecteurs d'Expression Française (C.L.E.F.). For a detailed account, see Roger Chemain, and Arlette Chemain-Degrange, *Panorama critique de la littérature congolaise contemporaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1979).

[142] This includes: *Poèmes de la mer* (Yaoundé: C.L.E., 1968); *Les Racines congolaises* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1968); *L'Envers du soleil* (Ibid., 1970); *Les Normes du temps* (Kinshasa: Mont Noir, 1974), and *Les feux de la planète* (Dakar-Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977). Apart from the *Anthologie* of which he was the editor, Tati-Loutard also authored the short stories collected in *Chroniques congolaises* (Paris: Oswald, 1974). On his poetry, see Arlette Chemain, "La poésie de la mer dans l'œuvre de J. B. Tati-Loutard," *Présence Francophone*, No. 14 (1977), 43–50.

detailed perception of the physical world around him, specifically the landscape and the people of his native Congo, and transformed into the symbolic language of poetry. One or two examples will illustrate this quality, although it is evident everywhere in his poetry:

> Si j'étais faiseur de pluies comme feu mon grand-père,
> Je pousserais dans l'ombre ce scarabée de jour
> Qui roule déjà sa grosse boule de soleil
> Par tous monts et vaux de mon âme.
>
> ("Impuissance", *Poèmes de la mer*)

> Les paroles marchent devant toi
> Et l'hiver les couvre de fumée
> Le ciel descend et les lave de sa pluie.
>
> ("Les Amours mortes", *Les Racines congolaises*)

> ... ô Mère énorme dans mon cœur
> Comme un soleil pris dans les épines.
>
> *(L'Envers du soleil)*

Through his imagery, Tati-Loutard expresses, in the first instance, "mon amour pour cette terre," the Congo as a reality present to his senses, which is the fundamental act of commitment by a poet who denies his obligation to be committed in the commonly accepted sense. Through his observation of the landscape and the people who inhabit it he finds expression for his conception of his race's history, epitomized by the appalling horror of the slave trade, and through it or, rather, through the same landscape and human imagery and symbolism, for the more universal drama of the conflict between good and evil, joy and pain, on the one hand, and the eternal tension between self and the community on the other.

There are, in fact, three levels on which Tati-Loutard's poetry functions, or four, if we include, as we ought, his remarkably vivid depiction of the physical world in its own right. The poet's imagery and symbolism fall roughly into two opposing sets, reflecting the drama of life as he sees it, and as other poets have done. On one side there is the sea (ambiguously linked with the river), shadow (*l'ombre*, associated with night and darkness) and, finally, death *(la mort)*. On the other side there is the life-giving rain, the earth (with the associated symbols of the tree, birds, the wind) and above all the sun (and its associated imagery of light, especially the stars and moon which prevent the night's total domination). These opposing images and symbols are reconciled in the symbol of woman: the beloved and especially the mother. The mother gives life out of the darkness and it is essentially this movement away from the darkness to the light that dominates Tati-Loutard's poetry, not the opposite, which has for so long been the prevailing tendency in European literature. In two poems, the poet allows the woman to speak directly to him; in one, from *Poèmes de la mer*, it is the mother, and in the other it is the more general image of woman. The latter poem "Une Femme parle," from *Les Racines congolaises*, brings together many of the elements mentioned above and effective-

ly illustrates their relationship. It is too long to quote in full here, but it may be useful to give the opening and closing lines by way of illustration:

—En moi se résument terre ciel et mer
Oiseaux fleuves et fleurs que tu aimes;
Dans la lumière pure du jour, tu vois,
Je resplendis!
Je marche vers toi, écartant cette pieuvre
De la nuit qui t'enserre;(...)

—Femme tu es ma lampe! en toi je me réfléchis:
Dans la nuit tu m'éclaires ou tu m'éblouis:
Tu viens à moi comme l'étoile descend
Sur la mer.

The negative symbols of the sea (in which so many slaves were drowned during the centuries of the middle passage), of night and death are contrasted in their disturbing, impenetrable and threatening depths with the openness, the candidness, the clarity of life on the surface, of the world of light represented by the sun and the earth. There are poems which very clearly illustrate this antithesis between depth and surface, between the mystery and obscurity of the threatening, destructive aspects of life and the clarity of a totally knowable, visible world. Here, for example, is a poem entitled "La Mort" from *Poèmes de la mer,* contrasting *fleuve* and *savane:*

Depuis longtemps je quête:
La mort ne débuche pas;
Quel fleuve obscur—qui ne tarit pas,
Alimente son réservoir d'ombres?
Immense, la savane brûlante des jours
S'étend fort au-delà de moi;
Immobile un instant, mon regard s'éloigne
S'allonge et
S'achève en brouillard.

At another level, the poet associates the sea and its related images with his introspective self, and feels the need to turn away from his fascination for it, towards a healthier identification with the light (the closing lines of the poem "Une Femme parle," quoted above, illustrate this). This turning away from the sea, from introspection, and the danger of spiritual death with it represents, is a turning towards his fellow men, towards his fellow Congolese, a commitment to the community of men. Similarly, in turning away from the sea, the sarcophagus of the drowned slaves (see the first poem of *Poèmes de la mer*), the poet and his people turn their backs on the destructive preoccupation with history; one is reminded here of Fanon's views on history and slavery in *Peau noire, masques blancs,* but Tati-Loutard is in part at least criticizing the backward-looking temptation of negritude. Thus, *Poèmes de la mer* opens with poems evoking the middle passage and establishing the symbolism of the sea, but then the poet resolves to leave this past behind him:

La chute du sable se voûte vers les terres;
C'est par là que soufflent le soleil et le vent;
Donc je remonterai la grève.
("Orientation," *Poèmes de la mer*)

The underlying impulse of Tati-Loutard's poetry is an escape from the negative, towards a personal and a collective freedom, which is achieved essentially through an attitude of mind. The last poem of *Poèmes de la mer*, entitled "Liberté," evokes this desire for freedom and the poet's caution about the possibility of actually attaining it, for the ultimate paradox is that man's "voyage au soleil" must end in death; there is no chance of total freedom from the inherent ambiguity of existence.

La tornade libère une myriade d'insectes
Clos dans le ventre de la terre;
Ils croient l'heure venue d'entreprendre
L'ascension du Mont-Soleil
Et leur rêve étouffe dans le bec des hirondelles.

The remaining poets of this period are almost exclusively concerned with protest, although it is sometimes blended with love poetry. The one noticeable exception has already been mentioned: J.-P. Makouta-Mboukou[143] insists on the African poet's right to treat other than committed themes. His own poems tend to be modelled visually on classical verse, without rhyme, with only the appearance of conventional metre, and with an excessive use of syntactical inversion, as if that were enough to produce a poetic effect. As a result, emotion comes across as rhetoric, and it is, significantly enough, only in the last section of *L'Ame bleue* that he breaks free from his creative strait-jacket to write some competent protest poems. Most of the poems included in this volume were written before or just after independence, and the fact that they have been published so late may reflect the truth of some of the speculations voiced in the first part of this section.

Makouta-Mboukou's compatriot, Maxime Ndébéka[144] offers perhaps the best illustration of a more realistic and positive approach to the new Africa. Ndébéka quickly abandoned conventional verse forms (with which he is not at all at home, either technically or psychologically), to write some very effective protest poems, especially in his more recent volume *L'Oseille—Les Citrons* (1975). The reader readily senses the poet's involvement in the actualities of post-colonial African life, due no doubt to his having worked at the heart of his country's politics and spent some time in prison under a death sentence as a result of the aborted coup in 1972. Although he is unable to get away from the over-used techniques of repetition and enumeration, the longer poems

[143] Makouta-Mboukou appeared on the literary scene with two works of prose fiction: a story, "Les initiés," and a novel, *En quête de la liberté*, both of which were printed in Cameroon (Yaoundé: C.L.E., 1970). These were followed by *L'Ame bleue* (Ibid., 1971), a collection of poetry. After a few years, Makouta-Mboukou issued two more books simultaneously: *Cantate de l'ouvrier (poème)* and another novel, *Les Exilés de la forêt vierge ou Le grand complot* (Paris: Oswald, 1974). See José Ndamba, "L'œuvre littéraire de J. P. Makouta-Mboukou, écrivain congolais, ou la conspiration du silence," *Présence francophone*, No. 12 (1976), 37–46.

[144] The poetry of Ndébéka is to be found in two collections: *Soleils neufs* (Yaoundé: C.L.E., 1969) and *L'Oseille—Les Citrons* (Paris: Oswald, 1975). A committed writer, he also composed a satirical play, *Le Président* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1970).

are well sustained and the language has a strength derived from the poet's ability to choose a precise and expressive vocabulary.

It must be admitted, however, that many francophone poets remain content to combine the celebration of African tradition with the conventional rhetoric of protest. Examples are Lamine Niang from Senegal, Jean-Baptiste Tiémélé (b. 1933) from the Ivory Coast,[145] both of whom remained silent throughout the seventies, or more recently, Pacéré Titinga (b. 1943) from Upper Volta.[146] There is a pleasant lyrical quality about many of Tiémélé's poems, and a good sense of verbal and rhythmic control in some of Niang's poems, but they really belong to the pre-independence period. The combination works most successfully in the case of Titinga, perhaps because he very precisely localizes the setting of his poems in his own home village and its history. But if a revival is to occur in African poetry in French, it will have to come from the new generation of younger poets, some of whose works, published mostly in little magazines, exhibit a promising vigour and sense of actuality. It is perhaps significant that one of those who stand out, Jean-Blaise Bilombo-Samba, is also a Congolese.[147]

MINEKE SCHIPPER-DE LEEUW

DRAMA

One of the first truly significant episodes in the history of African writing in French had been the growth of William-Ponty drama in the thirties. But contrary to what might have been expected, drama became a very minor genre during the quarter century that followed the end of the war. The Ponty tradition, it is true, was preserved locally in several areas of West Africa, as can be seen from Amon d'Aby's anthology of 1965. But among the writers whose talent and fame were demonstrated by their achieving publication in Paris, only a very few—chief among them, Amadou Cissé Dia from Sénégal, a William-Ponty alumnus, and Seydou Badian from Mali—seemed to be attracted to the theatre as a suitable medium for expressing the experiences and needs of the new Africa. This fading out of dramatic writing is probably to be ascribed to a variety of causes: as far as the rehabilitation of African culture was concerned, William-Ponty drama had been a conspicuous failure, most of its writers—with the significant exception of Bernard Dadié—slavishly trying to gratify what they imagined to be the expectations of their French teachers; furthermore, drama needs an audience, and drama in French could only address the happy few who had truly mastered the demanding rules of the language. At a time when Nigeria was producing Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark, and when the Yoruba opera was acquiring international fame, it is likely that a modicum of

[145] Jean-Baptiste Tiémélé, *Chansons païennes* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1969).

[146] Titinga's three collections—*Refrains sous le Sahel*, *Ça tire sous le Sahel* and *Quand s'envolent les grues*—were all published by Oswald in 1976.

[147] Jean-Blaise Bilombo-Samba, *Témoignages* (Paris: Oswald, 1976) and *La Fraternité différentielle* (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 1977).

theatrical activity was taking place in France's former colonies, but as far as actual publication was concerned, they lagged behind sadly.

In 1967, however, the French broadcasting system (O.R.T.F.) launched its Concours Théâtral Interafricain. As Alain Ricard was to put it five years later, "The response to this competition has been overwhelming. More than 1600 texts, have been sent to Paris by the various national radio networks."[148] This success prompted the French Office de Coopération Radiophonique (OCORA), set up in 1965 and already known as "the producer of a most remarkable collection of African music," to start publishing its series "Répertoire Théâtral Africain," which was inaugurated by Guy Menga's *L'Oracle* in 1969. During the years immediately following, three other important drama series were launched: by Présence Africaine in Paris, by the Centre de Littérature Evangélique (C.L.E.) in Cameroon, and by the French publisher Pierre-Jean Oswald, who had already published much African poetry in French, albeit generally at the authors' expense.

The opening of such new outlets for the printing of dramatic works led to the publication of a considerable amount of theatrical writing in French throughout the seventies. But the most important single event was undoubtedly Bernard Dadié's return to the stage. As a Ponty student in the thirties, he had written *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi,* which dramatized an episode in the history of the Agni people; this play, which was performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris as part of the cultural events of the 1937 Colonial Exhibition, is perhaps the only one of the Ponty plays to have shown any real pride in the African past and culture; first printed locally in 1935, it was to be re-issued in Paris thirty years later.[149]

During the intervening decades, Dadié had achieved fame by experimenting with poetry, prose fiction and the journalistic chronicle. Then, in 1966, he wrote *Monsieur Thôgô-Gnini,* which was first performed at the Panafrican Cultural Festival held in Algiers in 1967, although it was not printed until 1970.[150] The play emphasizes the consequences of assimilation. The main character's Malinke name refers to somebody who wants to become famous at any price. The action takes place somewhere on the Guinea Coast. Thôgô-Gnini is a freed slave who has returned from America to his country, where he becomes a middleman between the white merchants and the local inhabitants. While the majority of the latter are compelled to earn their miserable wages on plantations owned by white settlers, Thôgô-Gnini becomes rich in a short time. He rejects everything African and, in his boundless admiration for the white man, he exerts himself ceaselessly to become more and more thoroughly westernized. His efforts reach truly comic proportions when he tries to have a French street named after him and to

[148] Alain Ricard, "The ORTF and African Literature", *Research in African Literatures,* 4 (1973), 189–191.

[149] See *Education Africaine,* 24 (1935), No. 90–91, 188–193, and *L'Avant-Scène,* No. 343 (15 Oct. 1969), 37–43.

[150] On this particular play, see Joseph Okpaku, "*Monsieur Thôgô-Gnini,* comedy by Bernard B. Dadié," *Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts,* 7/8 (1969), 102–107, and Richard Bonneau, "Un Tournant dans l'œuvre de Bernard Dadié: *Monsieur Thôgô-Gnini,*" *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan,* série D, 5 (1972), 127–144.

have a mass read in Europe for his dead father. The purpose of the play is of course to illustrate how, already in the mid-nineteenth century, a handful of assimilated Africans conspired with the Europeans in order to exploit and despoil the common people. At the end, however, Thôgô-Gnini is assaulted by some of his victims who bind him hand and foot, paint his hands and face white and his lips red, put jewels around his neck and earrings in his ears, after which they force him to do a grotesque dance, and ultimately compel him to smell his own money before they take it away with them, leaving him behind bearing a placard with the inscription "Chacun pour soi", a French saying which, Dadié undoubtedly feels, is of increasingly topical relevance among the new African bourgeoisie.

Between the writing and the publication of *Monsieur Thôgô-Gnini,* Dadié had written several other plays. While *Sidi, Maître escroc* (1969) is little more than a farce,[151] *Les Voix dans le vent* (1970), which he has described as "a tragedy," handles the theme of the moral decay brought about by the exercise of power. It tells the story of one Nahoubou, who is tracked down and humiliated by the local king's civil servants; in his fury, he manages to organize a rebellion and to usurp the throne. The play begins as Nahoubou's authority is already on the wane: he had dreamed of a reign of peace and prosperity, but—and this is recorded in the rest of the play as flashback—he soon finds himself intoxicated by his own ambition and the temptations of power: he thus goes the same way as his predecessor until, alone and powerless, he is called to account by "the voices in the wind", the phantom voices of his victims and the stern voice of his own bad conscience.

Dadié's most ambitious attempt on the stage is a historical play, *Béatrice du Congo* (1970),[152] the action of which is located in the Kongo kingdom in the early decades of the eighteenth century, when a 22-year old local girl was converted and baptized by the missionaries. Under her Christian name of Béatrice, she teaches the new religion and calls upon the native population to give up their traditional pagan beliefs and customs, to turn to the new faith and practise the virtues taught by the Gospel. But as she proclaims that a new kingdom is about to come to Africa, that Kongo is the new holy land, that Jesus Christ was black, she comes into conflict with Portuguese interests: she is burnt at the stake, an African Joan of Arc, less than two years after her baptism. The story of Béatrice is only the core of a chronicle play or dramatic epic which ranges widely in time. It enables Dadié to illustrate the excesses of Western colonialism, which plunders the conquered countries and subjugates their traditional authorities. Beatrice stands for the conscience of the king, the Manikongo, who finally realizes that the decorations and jingling medals the Portuguese have given him are just a cheap way to corrupt him. But the realization comes too late: as soon as the king begins to protest, he is killed on the spot.

[151] For a brief discussion see Gérard Lézou, *"Papa Sidi, maître escroc," Eburnéa,* No. 97 (1976), 36–37.

[152] The play has been discussed locally in Richard Bonneau, *"Béatrice du Congo,* de Bernard Dadié," *Eburnéa,* No. 47 (1971), 22–24, and Bienvenu Néba, *"Béatrice du Congo,"* ibid., No. 95 (1975), 29–31; see especially M. Mudimbe-Mboyi, *"Béatrice du Congo* de Bernard Dadié, signe du temps ou pièce à clé?", *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* No. 35 (1975), 19–26. On Dadié's drama in general, see B. Kotchky-N'Guessan, "Sémiologie du temps et de l'espace dans le théâtre de Bernard B. Dadié," *Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan,* série D,9 (1976), 427–434.

In a couple of years, Dadié had thus established himself as the foremost African dramatist in French. *Monsieur Thôgô-Gnini* and *Béatrice du Congo* also set a pattern of a sort, which the younger playwrights who came to the fore at the turn of the seventies seem to have found congenial: in compliance with the precepts of French classical theory, most of this dramatic output falls neatly into the two main categories of the tragic (or at any rate the serious), and the comic. While African comedies are usually devoted to the humorous criticism of the new, hybrid, society that is taking shape on the continent, a considerable proportion of serious drama turns for inspiration to Africa's past and thus consists of historical or chronicle plays.

The most popular theme in Africa's contemporary drama in French derives from the writers' determination to re-assess the continent's historical past by bringing on stage the heroic figures whose memory had so far been preserved in the oral tradition and in French narrative prose. This orientation, represented by *Béatrice du Congo,* was bound to run counter to the usual Ponty trend, whose Euro-centred outlook consistently presented black leaders as barbarous and/or cowardly rascals. The dramatic reaction, initiated in the mid-sixties by Amadou Cissé Dia, soon gathered considerable momentum as other, younger writers from a variety of African countries began to emerge. One of the first plays was *L'Exil d'Albouri* (Paris, 1967) in which Sheikh Aliou Ndao (b. 1933) from Senegal, drawing on characters and situations from nineteenth-century history, dramatizes the problems with which local leaders were faced as the French, led by Faidherbe, were swiftly conquering their share of West Africa. In spite of the historical background, the author admits that he has fused "reality and imagination," even some of the main characters being of his own invention: "Qu'importe? Une pièce historique n'est pas une thèse d'histoire. Mon but est d'aider à la création de mythes qui galvanisent le peuple et [le] portent en avant."[153] Albouri himself is no longer the barbarian chieftain usually described by colonial historians. It is Ndao's purpose to extol his noble qualities, especially his courageous refusal to bow to the superior power of the European invaders.

Like many of the historical folk tales published in French in the fifties, such plays are intended to glorify the past, transcending reality and giving their African heroes mythical dimensions. They testify to a strong reaction against the mentality with which William-Ponty students had been imbued; as Christophe Dailly put it, "l'homme noir ne sort plus du *néant historique*. La découverte et la reconstruction du passé deviennent l'histoire du peuple, sa confiance en l'avenir, jadis ébranlée par le néant historique consciemment créé et entretenu par la colonisation."[154]

Ndao had many followers, one of the first being Eugène Dervain (b. 1928), a Martinican lawyer who is now an Ivoirian citizen; his first two plays *La Reine scélérate* and *La Langue et le scorpion* (1968) recount episodes from the semi-historical epic of Da Monzon, the ruler of the Bambara kingdom of Ségou, which was destroyed by al-Hajj

[153] Cheik A. Ndao, *L'Exil d'Albouri, suivi de la décision* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1967), "Prologue," p. 17.
[154] Christophe Dailly, "L'Histoire et la politique comme sources d'inspiration: l'Histoire," in *Le Théâtre Négro-africain. Actes du Colloque d'Abidjan, 1970,* ed. Bernard Mouralis (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971), pp. 87–93.

Umar in 1861.[155] Charles Nokan (b. 1936), a genuine Ivoirian whose poetic-prose narratives of the sixties had not received the attention they deserved, also turned to the stage with a dramatization of an extremely popular Baule legend which had first been retold in *Légendes africaines: Côte d'Ivoire, Soudan, Dahomey* (1946) by Maximilien B. Quenum (b. 1911) from Benin under the title "La Légende des Baoulés." This was the story of Queen Abra Pokou who was supposed to have led her people to their present territory by crossing the Comoé river; as the gods had demanded the sacrifice of a male child for the salvation of the tribe, the heroic queen did not hesitate to sacrifice her own son.[156] Bernard Dadié, in his own *Légendes Africaines* (1953), was later to record the additional detail that after the crossing Abra exclaimed "Baouli"—"The child is dead"—thus giving the tribe the name it was to keep during the ensuing centuries. Obviously an aetiological tale designed to account for the name of a society, the story also inspired a one-act play by Dervain, *Abra Pokou,* which is little more than a stage adaptation of the Dadié version. But Charles Nokan tried to actualize the story by investing it with topical significance for present-day Africa. In *Abraha Pokou, ou une grande africaine* (1970), the heroine is simply only the queen who is willing to sacrifice even her own child to ensure the survival of her people: she also stands for the ideal future of a democratic Africa, where there will be no exploitation or oppression, and where women will have the same rights as men. Instead of concentrating on the heroic sacrifice and the mythical miracle, Nokan gives a series of scenes which takes the story to the death of the queen and the subsequent establishment of democratic elections in compliance with her own will. In this play, as in his earlier works, Nokan obviously sets out to change the new African society that is being born in the midst of suffering and corruption. It is dedicated to the women of Africa, who should be, he pronounces, "like their sisters in Vietnam"; he quotes Mao Tse-Tung to the effect that "La littérature et l'art doivent aider les masses à faire avancer l'histoire"; and he asserts that "les sociétés africaines n'ignorent pas l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme. Leurs cultures, comme celle de l'Occident, sont réactionnaires. Il faut détruire le vieil ordre."[157] While thus confirming Nokan's earlier dictum that it is the task and the fundamental duty of the visionary mind to "mener le combat jusqu'à ce que la théorie saisisse et influence la pratique,"[158] *Abraha Pokou* was not likely to prove more efficient than the earlier works in promoting the laudable democratic views of Nokan, who was living in exile after having been imprisoned for a while in 1964: the political sloganizing that marks the style of the play hardly fits in with the context of the Baule characters, who are supposed to be the bearers of the writer's message.

Throughout West Africa, dramatic interest in the reassessment of local rulers of the

[155] François Xavier Cuche, "Un dramaturge ivoirien: Eugène Dervain" in *Négritude africaine, Négritude caraïbe*, ed. Jeanne-Lydie Goré (Paris: Centre d'Études Francophones, 1973), pp. 62–66. For a French version of the original chronicle with an important discussion of Da Monzon's significance in history and legend, see Lilyan Kesteloot *et al., Da Monzon de Ségou, épopée bambara* (Paris: Nathan, 1972), 3 vols.

[156] See Robert Cornevin, *Histoire des peuples de l'Afrique noire* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1960), p. 444.

[157] Charles Nokan, *Abraha Pokou ou une grande Africaine, suivi de la voix grave d'Ophimoï* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1970), pp. 11–13.

[158] Charles Nokan, *Les Malheurs de Tchakô* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1968), p. 68.

past was given impetus by Amadou Cissé Dia's plays about Wolof history: after twenty years *La Mort du Damel* (1947) was reprinted with his next play, *Les Derniers jours de Lat-Dior* (1965). The Wolof ruler also inspired a younger Senegalese writer, Mamadou Seyni Mbengue (b. 1925) to write his *Le Procès de Lat Dior,* which was printed in Dakar in 1971 before being reissued by the O.R.T.F. in 1972. The great religious warrior-leader of the late nineteenth century, al-Hajj Umar Tall is the hero of *El Hadj Omar* (1969) by a Haitian writer living in Senegal, Gérard Chenet (b. 1929). The rivalries that set Sudanic rulers against each other at the end of the nineteenth century and proved so helpful to European conquest have also provided the subjects for a number of dramatic works. One of these is *Sikasso ou la dernière citadelle* (1976), by the Guinean historian Djibril Tamsir Niane (b. 1932), who had reached fame at an early date with his historical work, *Soundjata ou l'Epopée mandingue* (1960), and had since become a Senegalese citizen. In *Une si belle leçon de patience* (1972), Massa M. Diabate (b. 1938) from Mali, already well known for his traditional stories, dramatized an episode connected with the Samory cycle. So did Sheikh Ndao in his second play, *Le Fils de l'Almamy* (1973), which contrasts most favourably with the majority of historical plays because, as Dorothy Blair puts it, "it has classic concision, a disturbing complexity of personalities caught in a critical moment of history, which makes them victims of circumstance, of interested well-wishers, and of the clash of their own inflexible characters."[159]

In Benin, the historical inspiration which had prompted one of the first African novels in French, Hazoumé's *Doguicimi,* also provided Jean Pliya (b. 1931) with suitable material for his first play, *Kondo le Requin,* which was first printed locally (1966) before winning a prize from and being reissued by, the O.R.T.F. (1969): the shark of the title is the famous king of Abomey, Behanzin who surrendered to the French in 1893. In Cameroon, the hero of *Les Dieux trancheront* (1971) by Frank Kayor (b. 1945) is the historical leader of the Bamum, Sultan Njoya Moluh, at the time of his quarrels with the neighbouring Bamileke and the conquering Germans. It must be admitted that almost every one of these chronicle plays is little more than a slice of history, in which the majority of the characters are just schematic *dramatis personae* utterly lacking in depth. The only characters that are at all memorable are the central heroes, who usually appear as new embodiments of their traditional selves as preserved in the oral tales and ancient chronicles. Unlike their William-Ponty predecessors, these heroes of the seventies are uniformly dignified and wise; they stir their people to resistance with lofty oratory; their defeat is not the righteous triumph of modern civilization: it simply seals their tragic fate, albeit only temporarily.

A large number of plays take place in the late nineteenth century, at the time of the bloodiest clashes between Africa and the West. This is not specific to French-language drama but is also exemplified in such English works as *Kinjeketile* (1970) by Ebrahim N. Hussein from Tanzania, *My Son for My Freedom* (1973) by Kenneth Watene from Kenya, *The Rendez-vous* and *Revolution* (1972) by Bob Leshoai from Lesotho, and many others. Nor were francophone writers concerned with the past experiences of their nation or of their region only. Indeed, it can be said that the most popular hero among

[159] Dorothy B. Blair, *African Literature in French* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), p. 113.

francophone playwrights had no connection whatever with French colonization: Chaka, the Zulu monarch of the early nineteenth century, had entered the field of literature in 1925, when Thomas Mofolo's masterly narrative in Southern Sotho, composed around 1910, was printed in Lesotho, which was then known as Basutoland. It was soon translated into English (1931), but was brought to the attention of francophone writers through the French version by Victor Ellenberger (1940). The Zulu warrior first appeared in a dramatic poem which Senghor included in *Ethiopiques* (1956). While this very free adaptation turned Chaka into a Cornelian hero trapped between his love for a woman and his duty to his nation, Seydou Badian's *La Mort de Chaka* (1962) concentrated on the death of the protagonist, who was presented on the stage as a militant black leader and fighter. In *Amazoulou* (1970) by the Guinean poet Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara (1930–1972) the Zulu king was extolled for his skill in forging his people into a unified nation: the writer's main purpose may have been to flatter the president of Guinea, Ahmed Sékou Touré, to whom the play is dedicated, by somewhat departing from the tradition, idealizing Chaka's character, obliterating some of his mistakes and vices, and providing a positive ending which was certainly absent from Mofolo's original story. After leaving Guinea, Djibril Tamsir Niane composed his own *Chaka* (1971): although it does not exhibit any great dramatic talent, this play nevertheless provides further evidence of the truth in Mphahlele's statement that the "Tshaka-figure has always excited the most heroic instincts in the African, in spite of the array of white historians who have always represented Tshaka, the Zulu King, as nothing more than a barbarian; a sadistic savage without a drop of mercy."[160] The following year, a collection of plays by Abdou Anta Ka (b. 1931) from Senegal contained *Les Amazoulous* (1972), in which Chaka is praised for his visionary powers, which enabled him to foresee the arrival of the white Boers.

While the importance of the Chaka motif in French writing is a token of the persistence of the Panafrican strain among many black intellectuals and artists, the general purpose of these plays, most of which are of mediocre quality, is to restore the African audience and readership to a sense of pride in their own history, their own values, their own customs and way of life. In this respect, it is probably significant that little attention was paid in the former French colonies to a phenomenon of paramount importance throughout black Africa: the emergence of religious leaders and syncretic cults providing an African interpretation of Christianity. Indeed, only one significant work in French deals with this: *Simon Kimbangu ou le messie noir* (1973) by the Zaïrian author Elébé Lisembe (b. 1937). Kimbangu (1889–1951) was one of the many "prophets" that arose in Black Africa as the European missionaries intensified their efforts to eradicate customs and beliefs dear to African hearts: the need was felt for a reinterpretation, indeed an africanization, of the Christian message. A pupil of the Protestant

[160] Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image* (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 169. On some of these French Chaka plays, see Barthélémy Kotchy, "Le personnage de Chaka chez Mofolo, S. Badian et Senghor" and Mario de Andrade, "Antar et Chaka ou vers un théâtre épique pour les peuples africains," both in *Le Théâtre négro-africain*, ed B. Mouralis, pp. 113–121. For a more detailed discussion of Badian, Niane and Nénékhaly, see Donald Burgess, *Shaka, King of the Zulus, in African Literature* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1976), pp. 71–90.

mission established near the estuary of the Congo river, Kimbangu availed himself of the Bakongo People's indignant reaction to the missionaries' ban on traditional dances and to the wholesale destruction of so-called pagan fetishes. He gained authority as a healer, and was believed to be able to resuscitate the dead. As he was gathering a quite impressive following, often echoing the life of Jesus in his words and behaviour, he kindled fear and incurred hostility among the trinity that ruled over the Belgian Congo —whom Elébé accuses of conspiring to have Kimbangu arrested. In the early 1920s, Kimbangu was sentenced to life deportation in faraway Katanga; many of his followers were likewise persecuted on the grounds that they were a danger to law and order.

It is probably a result of their authors' academic education that the vast majority of the chronicle plays that have been dealt with so far centre round "historical" characters, men and, in a few cases women, who can be claimed to have played an important role in Black Africa's resistance to the superior power of the Western conquerors, or again, who had left a lasting impression, because of their warlike prowess or their political wisdom, in folk memories of the pre-colonial past. It is interesting to note that religious myths, which figure so prominently in Yoruba drama, whether in English or in Yoruba, are conspicuously absent from the themes of francophone drama. Another element is also missing: the common man, even though an attempt had been made to remedy this by Keita Fodeba (1921–1969) from Guinea in his musical play, *Aube Africaine* (1965), an extended stage version of an earlier prose poem printed in *Présence Africaine* (1951). The central character is just an ordinary villager, Naman, who is called upon to serve in the French colonial army. In his innocent pride, he is determined to show his white officers how courageous a black African can be: his praiseworthy conduct earns him first a medal, and then capture and detention in a German P.O.W. camp. Only then does Naman realize that he will never become free by fighting the white man's wars. It is this *prise de conscience* which justifies the title of the play: although Naman is killed before his country has achieved freedom, it has dawned upon the African soldier that it is only by releasing his own people from colonial bondage that he will truly earn the privilege of dancing the traditional heroes' dance. *Aube Africaine* was approvingly mentioned by Frantz Fanon as an outstanding example of the kind of *littérature engagée* which Africa needed during those pre-independence years, a work characterized by "un constant souci de préciser le moment historique de la lutte, de délimiter le champ où se déroulera l'action, les idées autour desquelles se cristallisera la volonté populaire."[161]

If there was little follow-up in francophone drama to this type of work, this was so presumably because by the time Fodeba's work became available in book form, most African countries had gained their independence. They had also acquired authoritarian regimes and it was advisable for writers to exert considerable caution in their choice of subject. Fodeba himself, after occupying high office in Guinea for a number of years, was accused of plotting against President Sékou Touré and was executed in prison in 1969. In its concentration on the past, serious francophone drama of the seventies is not

[161] See Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1961; 2nd ed., 1968), pp. 157–162.

without ambiguity: while it undoubtedly seeks to restore the African's pride in his culture and his history, it also has a definitely escapist function. Whereas several plays do not focus on specific historical figures, it is quite obvious that, as was stated as early as 1968 in a report from the French Office de Coopération Radiophonique (OCORA), listeners "semblent opter résolument pour le théâtre-tribune au détriment du théâtre-fiction".[162] Although the same report adds that "à l'intérieur de cette option, la plupart des auditeurs demeurent très sensible à la valeur intrinsèque de l'œuvre et en particulier à la construction dramatique et à la limpidité du texte", the theatrical output of the following years shows that many playwrights chose to fulfil their audience's apparent expectations by means of hollow but flamboyant rhetoric directed against the cruder forms of colonialism that had almost totally vanished to make room for the more subtle methods of neocolonialism. During the half-dozen years that led to the Portuguese revolution of 1974, Portuguese colonialism was a favourite target of several francophone authors such as Sylvain Bemba (b. 1934) from the Congo Republic, who wrote *L'enfer, c'est Orfeo* (1970) under the pseudonym of Martial Malinda, or Jean-Baptiste Obama (b. 1925) from Cameroon, with his *Assimilados* (1972), or Malian writer Kaba Alkaly, whose *Nègres, qu'avez vous fait?* (1972) was published in Bamako. Simultaneously, *Sansoa* (1969) by Pierre Dabiré (b. 1935) from Upper Volta was still exploiting the moving but sligthly outdated theme of the young African who is compelled to enlist in a European army and meets his death on an alien battlefield. And Antoine Letembet-Ambily (b. 1929) from Congo succeeded in having the O.R.T.F. publish *L'Europe inculpée* (1970), a rather bewildering biblical and allegorical morality play in utterly irregular alexandrines. Although Albert Gérard probably went a little too far when he asserted in 1974 that such series as the O.R.T.F.'s "Théâtre africain" had chiefly made it possible to print "un nombre affligeant de 'navets',"[163] it must be admitted, with Dorothy Blair, that none of these plays "has very great merit if judged by objective literary standards; some are frankly simplistic in subject and elementary in structure... The aspiring playwrights doubtless felt that an anti-colonial subject was a sure formula for success among their compatriots."[164]

The various trends in serious African drama in French may perhaps best be traced in the works of a prolific Cameroonian author who writes in French and in German, Alexandre Kum'a N'dumbe III (b. 1938): his *Amilcar Cabral, ou la tempête en Guinée-Bissao* (1976), which he describes as a "pièce-document" is of course a denunciation of Portuguese colonialism; *Kafra-Biatanga* (1973), originally written in German, is an attack on Western neocolonialism and its black puppets; *Le Soleil de l'aurore* (1976) is significantly reminiscent of Fodeba's *Aube africaine*, not only in its title, but also in its theme, since it deals with a twofold awakening and revolution: of an imaginary African people first against their European masters, and then against the African exploiters who have seized power.

The disillusionment that followed upon independence may perhaps give a new twist

[162] OCORA report, 8 October 1968, quoted in Robert Cornevin, *Le Théâtre en Afrique noire et à Madagascar* (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1970), p. 159.

[163] Albert Gérard, "La Francophonie dans les lettres africaines," *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 48, 3/4 (1974), 372–386, reprinted in his *Etudes de littérature africaine francophone* (Dakar, 1977), p. 74.

[164] Dorothy B. Blair, op. cit., p. 124.

to the dramatic presentation of African history as younger writers start searching the continent's past for characters and situations that can be used as *exempla,* not in the service of some obsolete anti-colonialist obsession, but in order to teach necessary lessons to the African ruling class of the present day. It is in this new, mildly unorthodox spirit that André Salifou (b. 1942) from Niger wrote *Tanimoune* (1973), which deals with Damagaram, a flourishing kingdom in nineteenth-century Sudan, and its ruler Tanimoune, whose story is still told and whose name is still praised by traditional *griots* in the Niger republic. While this is one more chronicle play in the conventional manner, it is noteworthy that Salifou should have emphasized his desire to "faire entendre la voix sage des anciens aux fantaisistes rois nègres du XXe siècle. Des questions aussi fondamentales que la notion des droits et de la liberté d'un peuple y sont abordées, en même temps d'ailleurs que la question de la légitimité du pouvoir que détiennent, aujourd'hui encore, les grands de ce monde et dont ils abusent."[165]

The very youth and enthusiasm of these writers may perhaps account, at least in part, for the obvious fact that nothing in francophone drama corresponds in depth and subtlety and sheer poetic power to the English plays of Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, or even Ngugi wa Thiong'o. While it is natural that the many historical plays that keep on being produced should put vehement rhetoric in the service of clear-cut issues, even though some of these may have become obsolete and irrelevant, it is a pity that in their laudable endeavour to reassess and rehabilitate the values and events of the African past, even younger dramatists should slavishly follow the academic models with which the school system has imbued them. A recent example is *Les Sofas* (1975) by Bernard Zadi Zaourou (b. 1938) from the Ivory Coast. The title does not refer to drawing-room furniture but to the terrible soldiers of the Mandingo emperor Samory, who managed to hold the French army in check for many years, until he was finally captured and deported in 1898. The play broaches the old problem of the antinomy between honour and destruction on the one hand, compromise and survival on the other—a problem which had been discussed with greater depth and acumen in Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* some fifteen years earlier. In Zadi's play, it takes a concrete form in the opposing views of Samory, the indomitable warrior, and of his son Karamoko, who has acquired some first-hand knowledge of France: could there be a difference between the French at home and the French in Africa? To Samory's anguished question, "Comment peux-tu croire un seul instant à la bonne foi de nos plus mortels ennemis?," the young prince is made to reply: "J'ai compris depuis qu'un monde sépare les vrais Français de ces égorgeurs qui nous arrivent ici sur les ailes du diable."[166]

If the exploration of the continent's past has obviously presented African playwrights with plenty of material for an abundance of eloquent, well-meant sermonizing, humorous observation of the present has provided them with many opportunities for exercising their sense of comedy. Comic writing in French chiefly aims at social, moral and political criticism fed by the frequently ludicrous situations that are bound to arise

[165] André Salifou, *Tanimoune* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973), p. 13.
[166] Bernard Zadi Zaourou, *Les Sofas, suivi de l'œil* (Paris: Oswald, 1975), p. 29.

in a society whose traditional criteria have been shattered, though not entirely destroyed, by the impact of a different world-view that is uncontrovertibly more powerful and, for many, more attractive. Already during the first World War, *The Blinkards* (1915) by Kobina Sekyi from the then Gold Coast, had poked fun at the *parvenu* middle class that was arising as a result of economic development. Not until half a century later did francophone drama follow suit, first with Guillaume Oyônô-Mbia (b. 1939) from Cameroon, who received part of his education in Britain, graduating from the University of Keele in 1969. A native speaker of Bulu, he writes both in French and in English. Whereas historical drama is usually intended to re-appraise and glorify the African past, Oyônô-Mbia's plays make fun of traditional customs, especially in the degraded forms which they have acquired under the impact of the West.[167]

His very first play, *Trois prétendants... un mari* which he wrote in the late fifties did not reach print until 1964; the English version, *Three Suitors: One Husband* (1968), prepared by the author himself, was hugely successful in English-speaking West Cameroon. It deals with the time-honoured African custom of the bride-price. Like the European dowry, the African custom of having the bridegroom's family offer an allegedly symbolic gift to the bride's family, is open to a great variety of exercises in rapaciousness, of which both novelists and playwrights have abundantly availed themselves. Oyônô-Mbia's heroine, Juliette, is especially valuable because she had a secondary education; the motif of the young people's rebellion against parental authoritarianism is grafted on to the main plot; and the fact that Juliette's boy-friend comes from a quite different part of the country is of course an aggravating circumstance. There was nothing new about the bride-price motif and the preoccupation it implies concerning the condition of woman in modern African society: it had been the mainspring of the William-Ponty comedy *Les Prétendants rivaux* in the thirties, and it had inspired the angry pathos of Joseph Owono's lengthy novel, *Tante Bella,* at the time when the younger playright was composing his comedy. Oyônô-Mbia insists in his introduction that he has no intention to moralize: this makes for excellent comedy and there is little doubt that this hilarious play has done more for the emancipation of women than the thunderous or lachrymose sermonizing in Owono's novel.

With *Until Further Notice* (1968), originally composed, performed and printed in English and then turned into French as *Jusqu'à nouvel avis* (1970), Oyônô-Mbia gave himself ampler scope although the plot itself is a mere thread on which to string several comic episodes. There is some similarity between this and the ironic poetry which Okot p'Bitek had been writing recently in Uganda, for the Cameroonian playwright is also adept at double-barrelled satire, ridiculing both the village yokels who have no understanding or even knowledge of civilized ways, and the city snobs intent on slavishly aping Western manners. But the laughing audience may not be quite aware of the underlying pessimism: obeying the greedy requests of his wife and her family, the physician who

[167] See Jacques Bédé, "Le théâtre de Guillaume Oyônô-Mbia," *Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines,* 9 (1975), 531–536, and "L'œuvre dramatique de Guillaume Oyônô-Mbia," *Etudes Anglaises,* No. 65 (1976), 343–352. More information can be found in "Conversation with African Writer Oyônô-Mbia," (Washington, D.C.: African Field Service, tape No. 22.)

is the protagonist of this play agrees to give up his profession in exchange for a much better paid but completely useless job as a civil servant.

Likewise in the radio play *Notre fille ne se mariera pas* (1969), Charlotte is forbidden to marry because her family eagerly expect hefty returns on the expenses they have incurred for her university education; she does marry, however, but if she gets away with it, it is only because her husband is a wealthy civil servant. And in *His Excellency's Special Train,* which appeared in the local literary journal *Ozila* in 1970 and does not seem to have reached print in French, the comic element lies in the idea of a rural stationmaster making extensive preparations for the departure of a high official's special train, only to discover that the departing man is just a common traveller, whereas His Excellency's train will pass nonstop through his station: but again, there are sinister undertones in the gullibility and the servility of the plebeian African and in the ease with which he is duped by anyone who is, or seems to be, or claims to be, in authority.

In substance, this little play appeared also in prose form as a short story entitled "La petite gare" in the first volume of Oyônô-Mbia's *Chroniques de Mvoutessi* (1971), a work of peculiar interest and importance because in spite of the hectic growth of large cities in black Africa, most people still live in villages and it is important that the realities of rural life should be reflected in literature. That African authors do realize this is further exemplified in *Le Fusil* (1970), a comedy by another Cameroonian, Patrice Ndedi-Penda (b. 1945): here as in Oyônô-Mbia's plays we find ambivalent satire as both village fools and city tricksters become targets of blame and ridicule when a prosperous cocoa farmer is relieved of his money as he comes to the city with the futile ambition of buying a gun.

Whether it is treated in a comic or a tragic vein, the indictment of traditional beliefs and customs is as frequent a theme in francophone drama as the condemnation of their degradation under European influence. In his two-act play, *La Marmite de Koka-Mbala,* which was first published in Monaco (1966) before being reissued by the O.R.T.F. (1969), a gifted Congolese writer, Guy Menga (b. 1935), brings on stage an imaginary but prototypical kingdom, Koka-Mbala, which is the quintessence of what younger people fight against most strenuously in modern Africa: power is entirely in the hands of the elders, a privileged gerontocratic class which exercises rigorous control over the whole society and especially over the younger generation through a variety of superstitious devices such as the pot of the title, which is supposed to contain the spirits of the ancestors. It is a harsh society, where even slight misbehaviour can lead to the passing of a death sentence by the fetish priest. In this play the latter's authority is shattered after the king has had a dream which makes him realize that such bloodshed is not quite necessary, or even agreeable to the ancestral spirits. As a result, a young man who has committed the frightful crime of looking at a bathing woman is mercifully sent into exile instead of being condemned to death. During his stay abroad he becomes aware that different societies have different beliefs and different laws, and this destroys the blind faith with which he had been inoculated. When he returns to Koka-Mbala, he enlightens other youngsters and together they organize a rebellious conspiracy which reaches its climax in the smashing of the pot, thus ushering in an era of tolerance and humaneness, or so they hope.

It is symptomatic of the living dialectics of African literature that while the historical plays extol the wisdom of elders and ancestors, other plays, many of them comic, should expose the superstitious conservatism of traditional societies where the individual remains oppressed by gerontocratic control. The extreme harshness which in many cases characterizes judicial punishment is only one example of what is at stake in the conflict of generations that is raging throughout Africa. But on the other hand, a number of customs which did have their own rationale in the traditional, pre-urban, pre-industrial society, are now completely distorted under the influence of the new economic system and the new world-views which the West has imposed upon Africa in the course of recent history. In his next play, *L'Oracle* (1969),[168] Menga turned to Oyônô-Mbia's favourite motif: the alteration of the traditional meaning of the bride-price and the ugly emergence of a real marriage market, a form of business in which woman is a mere commodity. Menga's heroine wants to marry the local school-teacher; her father's preference is for a rich suitor who will pay him a handsome bride-price; the corrupt witch-doctor sides with the father; but the girl's grandfather, who has preserved the original meaning of marriage customs, helps the girl have her own way. In a different, yet not entirely unrelated, field, Abdou Anta Ka's *Pinthioum Fann* (1972) attempts to show that the Western approach to mental illness regardless of the African's own psychology more often than not hinders the full recovery of the patient; it is of some interest to know that Ka himself underwent treatment in a psychiatric hospital in Dakar.

While the bride-price question is certainly one of the most pressing, perhaps even tragic, problems for the younger generations in Black Africa, giving rise to an extraordinary number of plays, novels and short stories, several francophone playwrights have chosen to follow in the wake of Dadié's *Monsieur Thôgô-Gnini*, concentrating on the unavoidable evil aspects of assimilation and on the disruption that modernization has inflicted on the fabric of African society, as the redistribution of power attendant upon independence created enormous political corruption, which itself goes hand in hand with the most repellent manifestations of overt lust for power and money. In fact, *L'Homme qui tua le crocodile* (1972), a "tragi-comedy" by Sylvain Bemba, depicts a Congolese Thôgô-Gnini named N'Gandou, a wealthy businessman who tyrannically controls and exploits a whole township before he gets his due. Two characters play important parts in the struggle against N'Gandou: one is the *amuseur-public*, a well-known figure in the Congolese community, something between a traditional story-teller, a clown and a town-crier; he is the man who astutely calls public attention to N'Gandou's exactions by telling the story of the crocodile who wanted to have the whole river for himself; he also performs the part of a chorus as he comments on the struggle that pits N'Gandou against the other main character; the latter is the local school-teacher, who appears as a symbol of the duty of the educated to be aware of corruption, fight against it, and maintain moral standards in the life of the community.

One peculiar form of corruption is the target of Jean Pliya's *La Secrétaire particulière* (1972) which exposes the by no means surprising fact that the "africanisation des

[168] Yves-Marie Choupaut, "*L'Oracle*, une farce représentative du théâtre africain contemporain," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 3 (1969), 73–77.

cadres," the emergence of a powerful and moneyed class of indigenous civil servants, has introduced abuses which were presumably unknown in traditional Africa, the new bosses regarding their female secretaries as natural and even legitimate outlets for their personal basic urges.[169] Many other plays also denounce the shameless exploitation of women's physical weaknesses and social subjugation, but Bernard Zadi Zaourou has given it a new, symbolic dimension in *L'Oeil* (1975), the story of Djédjé, who compels his wife Amani to give her eye for a transplant to a powerful politician's wife who has lost hers in a car accident. Amani dies as a result and Djédjé is richly rewarded, being appointed to the chairmanship of an important company. But the eye is a symbol. As the author says in one of the few clear sentences of his wordy preface, "il s'agit d'y voir clair"[170] and as the story of the eye gets around, students and workers begin to *see* how blind they have been, how meekly they have played into the hands of the men in power. Significantly, in Zadi's play as in Sembène's *Xala,* the budding rebellion is crushed by the army, so that "law and order", established for the benefit of the wealthy, are duly restored.

The innumerable abuses and misuses of power by the various crooks, self-promoted generals, life-presidents and emperors that seized power in many African countries after independence are also the theme of *Le Président* (1970), a fierce, many-faceted satirical comedy by the Congolese writer Maxime N' Debeka (b. 1944) which appeared almost at the same time as Dadié's tragedy, *Les Voix dans le vent.* Here, too, the story is cautiously set in a fictional African state, but recent history abounds in evidence that it could have happened in any of about a dozen actual countries plagued by fake elections, dictatorships, military coups and the emergence of new, equally vicious potentates, much to the detriment of the common population. Observing in his preface that the population is conspicuously absent from the play, Henri Lopès, himself a noted Congolese novelist, shrewdly seeks the reason for this apparent lack in the fact "dans la plupart des Etats africains, le peuple reste effectivement dans les coulisses. Même quand il est mécontent, il attend qu'un colonel Ossé vienne, tel le Messie, changer la situation. Parfois le colonel Ossé est un progressiste. Plus souvent un réactionnaire, ou pour le moins un conservateur, partisan de l'ordre. Dans tous les cas la foule se satisfait. Elle demandait le changement. Quelqu'un l'a opéré à sa place. Tout effort lui a été épargné.... La foule peut ainsi se reposer. Mais se reposera-t-elle toujours?"[171] This is of course the fundamental question. In the late seventies, the eviction of a few among the more bloodthirsty dictators seemed to suggest that the intellectuals' and especially the creative writers' struggle for a modicum of political honesty and social justice was at last beginning to bear fruit.

André Gide used to say: "ce n'est pas avec les bons sentiments qu'on fait de la bonne littérature." The limitations of francophone drama must be recognized. First, it has a

[169] On this writer, see Alain Ricard, "Jean Pliya, écrivain dahoméen," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* No. 27 (1973), 2–9, and Unionmwan Edebiri, "L'espérance tacite de Jean Pliya, écrivain dahoméen," ibid., No. 37 (1975), 9–13.

[170] Bernard Zadi Zaourou, *Les Sofas, suivi de L'œil,* p. 68.

[171] Maxime N' Debeka, *Le Président* (Honfleur: Oswald, 1970), p. 9.

rather narrow spectrum of motifs: chronicle plays try to counteract the usual Eurocentred view of Africa as a savage land deprived of any history and historical figures. On the other hand, present-day African society is portrayed in farcical comedies or bourgeois dramas focusing on the same range of problems as are discussed in prose fiction: the bride-price and parental authoritarianism in marriage matters, the parallel dangers of irrational superstitions and hasty westernization, the emancipation of women, the corruption of businessmen, civil servants and politicians, the career problems of the students. Such topics have not made for great drama and, in their concentration on the anecdotal, such plays do little to probe, preserve or actualize the deeper layers of African culture and the African mind. It may well be that French-educated dramatists feel it to be beneath their dignity and harmful to their intellectual reputation to handle the great myths that once gave meaning and colour to their own cultures. It is disquietingly significant that the only play based on the story of a mythical god-king of Africa is *Shango* (1968), by the Nigerian author Ola Balogun (b. 1945) whose writings in French testify chiefly to the incomparable versatility of Yoruba culture.

Adapted from the Dutch by
Albert S. Gérard

NICOLE MEDJIGBODO

THE NOVEL

While Sembène's *L'Harmattan* was the only novel of any significance to reach publication in Paris between Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961) and the late sixties, a revival of the African novel in French was in the offing. It was first heralded by the appearance of *La plaie* (1967) by the Senegalese poet Malick Fall (b. 1920). Next came *Le Devoir de violence* (1968) by a much younger writer from Mali, Yambo Ouologuem (b. 1940), who was awarded the much coveted Prix Théophraste-Renaudot. In the same year, a Malinke novelist from the Ivory Coast, Ahmadou Kourouma (b. 1938) won the Prix de la Francité for *Les Soleils des indépendances*, which was first published in Montreal and was re-issued in Paris in 1970. By 1980, none of them had produced another novel. But the seventies had been marked by two interesting phenomena. After Mongo Beti had made his come-back in 1974 with the two novels mentioned earlier, his near-contemporary Seydou Badian from Mali, who had become a minister under Modibo Keita after writing a political pamphlet, *Les Dirigeants africains face à leur peuple* (Paris, 1964), also published two novels in quick succession: *Le Sang des masques* (1976) and *Noces sacrées* (1977). Meanwhile, several talented younger writers had emerged, showing that the novel was alive again in former French Africa: Mohamed-Alioum Fantouré (b. 1938) from Guinea issued *Le Cercle des tropiques* (1972) and *Le Récit du cirque... de la vallée des morts* (1975), while his fellow-countryman Williams Sassine (b. 1944) reached print with *Saint Monsieur Baly* (1973) and *Wirriyamu* (1976). Two Congolese novelists made their names at the same time: Emmanuel Dongala (b. 1941) with *Un fusil dans la main un poème dans la poche* (1973) and Henri Lopès (b. 1937), the short-story writer of *Tribaliques*, whose two important novels, *La Nouvelle romance* (1976) and *Sans tam-tam* (1977), were published in Yaunde. [Ed.]

Many critics of African novels published in French after the lull of the mid-sixties agree that they signal an era of disillusionment expressing the disenchantment and frustration of African novelists. Sunday Anozie considers that a too close collaboration between writers, nationalist leaders and politicians has "gravement compromis leur rôle d'individus créateurs."[172] Jacques Chevrier has made these novels the fourth group in a classification which includes protest writing, *Bildungsromane* and novels of anxiety: the novel of disillusionment, he says, illustrates "la satire sociale et politique" which "s'exerce désormais aux dépens des nouveaux maîtres de l'Afrique." This literature, he adds, is going through a period of crisis, "une crise de croissance, une mutation" which ought to bring it to a point at which it can rid itself of its "faux problèmes", especially the "débats anachroniques" about negritude and "les multiples discussions consacrées à l'engagement de l'écrivain". He denounces that "espèce de carcan dans lequel la littérature africaine s'est enfermée au départ: ces notions d'engagement, de contestation, tout cet aspect politique."[173] What such critics decry is in fact the overly close liaison between literature and politics and even the subordination of the former to the latter, which might account for the disillusionment.

If there is disillusionment, are these its root causes? Can the remedy be found in a breach between literature and politics? On the contrary, in the novels issued in Paris or Yaunde since the late sixties we note a tendency to analyse the inherent contradictions in contemporary African societies, and the emergence of literary types embodying the social conflicts of the period. Far from being pessimistic or cynical, they manifest their authors' attempt to express a political vision through the most representative types of our contemporary societies, to understand the meaning of the events which are taking place around them, echoing a preoccupation expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in 1966:

> It is not enough for the African, standing aloof, to view society and highlight its weaknesses. He must try to go beyond this, to seek out the sources, the causes and the trends of a revolutionary struggle which has already destroyed the traditional power-map drawn up by the colonial nations.... By driving into its sources, he can give moral direction and vision to a struggle which, though suffering temporary reaction, is continuous and is changing the face of the twentieth century.[174]

Apart from such exotic novels ("littérature rose pour l'Afrique noire") as Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir*, the major African novelists of the fifties had always integrated political circumstances into their works. Sembène Ousmane or Mongo Beti did not only denounce colonialism: they also identified the problems to be faced by the nascent societies once they gained a status of independence which was granted rather than won by force of arms. This they did by pointing to the class conflict underlying the traditional political structures as well as the conditions brought about by capitalist penetration. In this way these writers, engaged at the time in the struggle for true independence em-

[172] Sunday Anozie, *Sociologie du roman africain* (Paris: Aubier 1970), p. 241.

[173] See Jacques Chevrier, "L'âge de raison," *Jeune Afrique*, 16 August 1978, 108–113 and "Roman et Société en Afrique Noire," *Notre Librairie*, 22 (1974), 15–34.

[174] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming* (London: Heinemann Educational 1972), pp. 65–66. The quotation comes from an essay entitled "Soyinka, Aluko and the Satirical Voice," which was first printed in 1966.

phasized that the era of illusion was past and that there were harsh times ahead. But their essential problem was that their warnings either reached only a limited readership, or reflected only the political awareness of militants, students or unionized employees and workers. For the nation as a whole the era of illusion was still to come.

If later African writers had followed the path cut out for them by some of their predecessors, the works published after the so-called "independence" had been won might have been written in a spirit of embattled protest. This was seldom the case. It is often claimed in general terms that in the neocolonial system the intellectuals were subjected to a vast operation of *"récupération."* Such accusations are facile and too general. As the Congolese writers Lopès or Tati-Loutard were to show later, it was the middle class of junior clerks and executives which benefited most from accelerated promotion, gradually establishing a bourgeoisie of bureaucrats and businessmen which is the pillar of many contemporary African societies.

Writers have also been blamed for almost a decade of inactivity: some critics have spoken of a "silence inquiétant." This too is a simplistic view: *L'Harmattan* (1964) shows that there was a time when Sembène Ousmane believed in the Guinean experiment. Mongo Beti, living in exile in France, followed closely the struggle of the Union des Populations du Cameroun, and compiled a thick file which was to generate *Remember Ruben* and *Perpétue* in 1974 and, more recently, *La Ruine presque cocasse d'un polichinelle* (1979). Problems of publication did exist however. Many writers experienced difficulties in this respect, either because they failed to win the kind of press support which was awarded to later liberation movements, especially in Africa under Portuguese domination or because, unlike Vietnamese writers, their role in the struggle was not clearly defined. One may well wonder which French publishing house would have been prepared to publish the epic of Ruben Um Nyobe, had it been written in 1960, when official propaganda remained silent on the U.P.C. issue, on the assassination of its leaders and on the massacres in Cameroon.

During the ten years from 1967, two essential trends appeared: on one hand, there was a majority of works where the emphasis was placed on the thwarted hopes of independence; the usual result was either a blindly idealistic conception of Africa's future (Williams Sassine) or a condemnation, implicit or overt, of socialism (Fantouré, Ouologuem, Kourouma). On the other hand, some novels reflected a significant movement which was adopting the political ideals defined in France from 1960 to 1965 by student organizations such as the Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (F.E.A.N.F.): they called on the intellectuals to join the workers and peasants and learn from them (Dongala, Lopès). A third movement, of apparently slight importance, but linked to the first, was characterized either by intimistic reflections in narrative form (Malick Fall) or by a passive nostalgia for the past (Seydou Badian).

In *Saint Monsieur Baly* Williams Sassine tells the story of a teacher who fights a long battle to promote new teaching methods and a new curriculum including African languages. Because of his opposition to the views of a French educational adviser—to whom he had said: "l'Afrique... n'est pas un terrain d'essai, même pour vos élucubra-

tions pédagogiques: le Sahara devrait vous suffire"[175]—the authorities force him to resign. He then addresses himself to those who are too poor to attend school, but he finds no real support except from those whom society has already rejected: beggars, cripples, François the leper, blind Mohammed. A victim of petty jealousies, he goes from disappointment to disappointment in his attempts to recreate the family he never had. When M. Baly's experiment is on the verge of failure, François offers to sacrifice himself to save it. But everything proves useless in the face of the conspiracy against M. Baly. Through the help of a doctor friend M. Baly is cured of the leprosy he had contracted and is able to rebuild his school, but he dies prematurely before his lifework is completed.

The allegory is plain: this chain of catastrophes which overcomes M. Baly resembles the disasters which have befallen so many African societies where numerous projects (educational, economic, etc.) have come to nothing through shortage of funds, lack of goodwill, or simply through lack of resolution or through sabotage. But by limiting his novel to the personal drama of an individual Sassine failed to integrate into his story the concrete problems of a particular society. The metaphysical dimension introduced by François' sacrifice cannot hide the fact that the novel recounts an individual's adventure in a distant, isolated village: society will not be transformed in this way. Aside from the beggars, who are accurately described and whose feelings and emotions are analysed at length, the people of the village play no part in the book except when they stone M. Baly and his companions. The notion that an individual's sacrifice is the essential requisite for general salvation echoes the Christian ethic, which runs contrary to any historical vision of the battle to be waged if society (and consequently its individual members) is to be transformed.

This mystical approach plays an even more important part in Williams Sassine's second novel, *Wirriyamu*. The historical background is sketched out in more concrete terms than in the earlier one. The story takes place in a country struggling against Portuguese colonialism; some details are reminiscent of Mozambique or Angola, others of Guinea-Bissau. Against a background of brutality and torture a lonely man, Kabalango, weakened by tuberculosis, tries to return to his native village to die there. He is obliged to stay at Wirriyamu, where a motley collection of social outcasts has gathered: Amigo, a Portuguese sadist and homosexual, Captain David, an exiled collaborationist, Kelani, an old drug addict, Ondo, the hysterical preacher, Maria, a deaf unmarried mother, the owners of the hotel, poor whites who fled France after collaborating with the Nazis during the war. This ghostly place, all of whose able men had been taken away to work in the diamond mines, is the scene of a hunt for a sacrificial albino. Although he is helped by Kabalango, who sees him as "son frère...par la malédiction commune de leur sang,"[176] the albino is ultimately captured and crucified by the Portuguese, but not before the entire African population of the village, made up of old people and children, is massacred in an orgy of torture. This insane wholesale killing is the work of a Portuguese soldier whose son, while a student, had been captured by the guerrillas,

[175] Williams Sassine, *Saint Monsieur Baly* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973), p. 28.
[176] Williams Sassine, *Wirriyamu* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1976) p. 115. Further page references are to this edition.

"gardiens du droit de tout le peuple à se libérer tant de l'exploitation indigène, des superstitions, des préjugés que de l'exploitation colonialiste" (p. 163). Here again the author is exploiting the idea of sacrifice: one of the guerrillas sacrifices himself to save the commander's son from a snake bite; the albino sacrifices himself by allowing the Portuguese troops to capture him; and Kabalango is sacrificed when, after joining the guerrillas, he is shot down in an attempt to save one of the fighters. All this basks in a religious light: even the guerrillas want to "sauver Dieu et l'Homme." But, in the final analysis, these sacrifices prove to have been fruitless: the commander's son is killed when the liberation fighters set out to avenge the martyrs of Wirriyamu; the blood of the albino flows in vain since all the villagers have already been killed; and although the guerrilla leader does not die he anticipates a bleak future once the country is free: "les Portugais ne sont pas encore partis que déjà on commence à s'entre-déchirer pour le pouvoir" (p. 199).

In this atmosphere of heavy melancholy, where tragedy prevails, only two rays of hope remain: Kabalongo has, after all, "redonné la vie" since his wife is with child; he also leaves as a legacy his poems and the manuscript of a novel which has been rejected by European and African publishing houses alike! Are these things not insignificant compared with the horrific vision of Wirriyamu, the crimes and the torture? If, as it seems, there is to be no salvation for Africa, it would also seem that the efforts of the fighters themselves are bound to end in failure. This, in my opinion, is the political meaning of the novel: because of the overly universalist and pessimistic message it conveys, it cannot generate anything but discouragement. Wole Soyinka had expressed a similar view in 1967:

> What we are observing in our own time is the total collapse of ideals, the collapse of humanity itself. Action therefore becomes meaningless, the writer is pushed deeper and deeper into self-insulation and withdrawal.[177]

The denunciation of such evils as corruption, nepotism and terrorism is likewise the main theme in Alioum Fantouré's *Le Cercle des Tropiques*, whose narrator, a peasant named Bo-Dihi, relates his experiences in a town to which he has come to look for work and which might well be Conakry. Here again reminiscences of the colonial period are evoked: the difficulties faced by the population, the heavy burden of taxes, compulsory military service, urban unemployment. The involved narrative, in which the chain of events is often far from clear, shows the rise of a dictator, Baré Koulé, who likes to be addressed as "Messie-Koï," because he is supposed to be "le sauveur que tout le pays attendait."[178] In fact, he is a sort of *mafioso*, the leader of a gang of individuals ready to throw themselves into "un combat acharné contre tous les opposants indigènes à la veille de l'indépendance" (p. 70). Baré Koulé becomes President and inaugurates an era

[177] Wole Soyinka, "The Writer in a Modern African State," in *The Writer in Modern Africa. African Scandinavian Writers' Conference, Stockholm 1967*, ed. Per Wästberg, (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968), p. 19.

[178] Alioum Fantouré, *Le Cercle des Tropiques* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972), p. 69. Page references are to this edition.

of "complots préfabriqués..., un procédé comme un autre pour supprimer les gêneurs" (p. 131). A group of trade unionists and intellectuals are opposed to a situation which Bo-Dihi describes as "hellish." A physician, Doctor Malékê, with the help of young army officers, organizes a resistance movement followed by a sabotage campaign. Baré Koulé is stripped of his power by the military, who take over and form a coalition with the intellectuals. But not for long. In an ominous epilogue the author writes: "Quelques mois plus tard, le docteur Malékê, Melle Houré qui venait de rentrer d'exil, le colonel Fof, le lieutenant Beau-Temps, Salimatou étaient mystérieusement assassinés" (p. 253).

It is Fantouré's obvious intention to protest against "l'univers concentrationnaire" and more particularly against the Guinean regime, which betrayed socialism and established what is a truly fascist system. But this denunciation in the name of "liberty" offers no positive prospects: the novelist uncovers evils which either stupefy the people or else rouse them to blind power madness. The intellectuals seem islolated. Bo-Dihi, one-time peasant turned proletarian, is a meek, resigned individualist: "De nouveau j'étais sur les rails, mais je n'étais plus libre de mes actes; on me condamnait à mourir pour la liberté. C'était le dernier de mes soucis" (p. 103). This worker who speaks in terms reminiscent of Sartrian existentialism appears unmoved by events to which he must submit. In a way the author equates Baré Koulé with those who risk torture to fight against him. Barely organized, the revolutionaries themselves are portrayed in a messianic light; it is not very clear what they are fighting for or what they want exactly, unless it is to put an end to the unbearable sight of a dulled population which "se préparait à vivre un dimanche pareil aux autres, un jour sans repos, sans loisirs, sans travail, sans santé, sans instruction, sans liberté, sans pain, sans riz, sans espoir" (p. 215). Alain Ricard has described this novel as a "vaste fresque épique."[179] But an epic requires some noble cause capable of inspiring to dedication, struggle and sacrifice; it must teach a lesson which will remain engraved in the history of a nation. Fantouré's description of society lacks clarity. Nor can his novel boast the richness that results from the creation of sympathetic and realistic characters. Treating Baré Koulé's regime in exactly the same way as his opponents' boils down to refusing to discuss the future of the African peoples. This defeatist attitude is not supported by any matter-of-fact analysis of the living conditions, the problems, anxieties or hopes of the workers of the vast peasant majority. On the political level it echoes the world-wide attempt at spreading confusion which was the major element in all discussions of the African political scene in the seventies.

This is even clearer in Alioum Fantouré's second novel, *Le Récit du cirque*, in which it is difficult to discern any coherent meaning. The novel's deliberate abstruseness and the pedantic formalism of its construction, which is inspired by the French *nouveau roman*, seem designed to mystify and bore the reader. Although it is easy to understand the author's protest against political assassinations in Guinea—"On a l'impression que pour quelques êtres diriger un pays, c'est d'abord organiser l'assassinat d'un peuple,"[180]—the reader is soon lost in a theatrical maze, presumably intended to emphasize

[179] Alain Ricard; "Le Cercle des Tropiques," *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, No. 28 (April 1973), 32–33.

[180] Alioum Fantouré, *Le Récit du cirque* (Paris: Buchet-Chatel, 1975) p. 97.

the artificiality and absurdity of the situation. Significantly, the title comes from a phrase used in the preceding novel: "la plaisanterie était terminée, le cirque Messie-Koï ferme ses portes."

Surely, it is not enough to condemn violence, intolerance and corruption, and to see them everywhere as if there could be no hope for mankind. This is a pastime for ivory-tower intellectuals who are unable to control the events they are discussing and who impartially reject both capitalism and socialism in the name of bourgeois illusions such as "Freedom" or "Justice", that have already gone bankrupt.

It is fruitless to concentrate on such "disillusionment of idealistic intellectuals," to use Mbelolo ya Mpiku's phrase about Yambo Ouologuem,[181] whose *Le Devoir de violence* has caused much ink to flow: while Robert Cornevin was carried away and exclaimed that a "souffle d'une rare puissance traverse ce roman",[182] O. R. Dathorne found it unconvincing and lacking in continuity[183] and Pharao Sossou Dzezer, stressing the chronological confusion, described the work as a "supercherie" smacking of neo-colonialism.[184] The same generalized picture of an Africa of unrelieved horror had indeed been a favourite motif of colonial literature. Yet demystifying the romantic image of an idyllic Africa need not lead to an imaginary history of undiluted barbarism where cannibalism, orgies and murders reign supreme. There is nothing to inspire rapture in the incredible course of events in the Malian novelist's alleged masterpiece with its errors in historical and political analysis, its pseudo-philosophical digressions and, above all, its irritating, pointless verbosity. More significant, however, is the role given to the masses, whose impoverished members are portrayed as passive simpletons. Ouologuem's narrative remains in the tradition of those writers for whom the African past was nothing but an endless struggle between feudal lords, while resistance to colonial penetration was simply negligible, the latter allegedly having had—as Zaïrian scholar Mbelolo ya Mpiku cogently pointed out—very little impact on African societies.[185] Likewise, present-day

[181] J. Mbelolo ya Mpiku, "From one mystification to another: 'Négritude' and 'négraille' in *Le Devoir de violence*," *Review of National Literatures*, 2, 2 (1971), p. 143.

[182] Robert Cornevin, *Littératures d'Afrique Noire de langue française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), p. 191.

[183] O. R. Dathorne, *African Literature in the Twentieth Century* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1976) p. 305.

[184] Pharao Sossou Dzezer, "Les divagations déclamatoires d'un prix Renaudot," *L'Etudiant d'Afrique Noire*, January 1969, quoted in J. Achiriga, *La Révolte des romanciers noirs* (Sherbrooke: Naaman, 1973), p. 211.

[185] Loc. cit. See further Jacques Lanotte, "Un Renaudot africain: *Le Devoir de violence*," *Cultures et Développement*, 1, 3 (1968), 670–676; Sully Faïk, "Yambo Ouologuem, *Le Devoir de violence:* Prix Renaudot 1968," *Congo-Afrique*, 9, No. 32, (1969), 91–101; Yves Benot, "*Le Devoir de violence* de Yambo Ouologuem est-il un chef-d'œuvre ou une mystification?," *La Pensée*, 149 (1970), 127–131; L. Kuchl, "Yambo Ouologuem on Violence, Truth and Black History," *Commonweal*, 11 (1971), 311–314; Gilles Charpentier, "Pour un nouveau réalisme africain: *Le Devoir de violence* de Yambo Ouologuem," *Présence Francophone*, 7 (1973), 31–39; Eric Sellin, "The Unknown Voice of Yambo Ouologuem," *Yale French Studies*, 53 (1976), 137–162; Ntongela Masilela, "Theory and History of Marxist Poetics in Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence*. A Monologue by Caliban on Prospero," *Ufahamu*, 7, 3 (1977), 92–108; Patrice Kayo, "*Le Devoir de violence:* Problématique de l'Afrique actuelle," *Présence francophone*, 16 (1978), 19–26; A. E. Ohaegbu, "An approach to Ouologuem's *Le Devoir de violence*," *African Literature Today*, 10 (1979), 124–133; Aliko Songolo, "The Writer, the Audience and the Critic's Responsibility: The case of *Bound to Violence*," in *Artist and Audience*, ed. Richard Priebe and Thomas A. Hale (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1979), pp. 126–140; Yusufu Miangwa, "The Duty of Violence in Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence*" in *New West African Literature*, ed. K. Ogungbesan (London: Heinemann Educational, 1979), pp. 71–79.

Africa is seen as a battle-field on which ambitious bureaucrats and intellectuals wage their own power struggle. Ten years later, Yambo Ouologuem confirmed his condemnation of all intellectuals, incidentally attacking such student movements in Europe as were known for their hostility to pro-imperialist regimes; a sample of his rhetoric:

> Aussi devait-on, et de partout, assister à ce fait nouveau: ne pouvant faire la révolution, les ambitieux déçus qu'étaient les universitaires se déclarèrent contestataires. Et ils contestèrent en effet à partir des rues d'Europe et à partir de leur journal: "La Fédération des ambitieux afro-asiatiques à l'étranger". Voici comment ils s'y prirent: la dernière année de ses études (nul risque é! é! de suppression de bourse d'études), quiconque visait un poste où se vautrait au tiers-monde son rival analphabète, écrivait, pompier et pleurard, dans quelque revue progressiste: "Mort à la clique impérialiste et à ses suppôts! Vive Mao, il faut dépasser le marxisme!"[186]

This might have been written by some vociferous latter-day colonialist!

More to the point, what remains unsaid is the author's anti-socialist orientation, which he refuses to admit openly. It is easy to satirize illiterate presidents, ignorant officials and power-seeking university graduates on the assumption that this is the "nature africaine", that history does not result from class conflict but from clashes between individual interests, recurring in a never-ending cycle. In contemporary Africa, Ouologuem writes, echoing neo-colonialist views,

> on ne peut s'empêcher de songer que Saif, pleuré trois millions de fois, renaît sans cesse à l'histoire, sous les cendres chaudes de plus de trente républiques africaines.[187]

What is at issue is not, as Obiechina[188] thinks, merely the author's personal pessimism, but a particular concept of history which, through the medium of the imagination, tries to reaffirm the notion that the common people are unfit to fight to change their way of life. In this sense, *Le Devoir de violence* brings nothing new to either the form or the themes of the African novel: it represents the ideological aspect of a rear-guard action.

Far from rousing the critics as did Ouologuem's novel, Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances* had a quiet reception. The reason for this, as Maurice Houis suggested, may perhaps be found in the style:

> L'auteur a certes écrit en français mais a laissé affleurer son langage propre. Celui-ci, la langue Malinke, se projette sur le discours français.[189]

[186] Yambo Ouologuem, "La mésaventure africaine," *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 41 (1976), p. 10.
[187] Yambo Ouologuem, *Le Devoir de violence* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), p. 207.
[188] E. Obiechina, "Perception of colonialism in West African Literature" in D. I. Nwoga (ed.), *Literature and Modern West African Culture* (Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1978), pp. 51–6.
[189] M. Houis, "Les niveaux de signification dans *Les Soleils des indépendances*," *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*, 28 (1977), p. 68.

The novel's originality doubtlessly derives from its style more than from its theme. Fama is heir to the kingdom of Horodougou which has been divided between two separate colonies. After being involved for a time in anticolonialist agitation, he finds himself one of the urban unemployed. He lives with his wife, who is distressed by her childlessness. Upon the death of his cousin, the ruler of Horodougou, he returns to his native place which he finds in a state of evident decay; he then goes back to town with his second wife, but is arrested, allegedly for taking part in some conspiracy. Sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment, he is interned in a camp. After his release he undertakes to return to his village for the last time, a sick man abandoned by his wives, but he dies while attempting to cross the border which had been closed because of political differences between the two independent states which succeeded the colonial entities.

Some see Fama as a fatalist, others as a revolutionary, but most critics agree in viewing him as the symbol of a fallen aristocracy:

> Fama prêche en fait un retour aux sources, une certaine authenticité. Il défend avec acharnement et contre le modernisme, les valeurs ancestrales.[190]

Actually, Fama is no longer a feudal lord: he has been proletarianized. He belongs to the semi-proletariat that was born not of independence, but of the capitalist or semi-capitalist development of the type that began in the fifties under the influence of Europe's capitalist nations and was preserved by the African states in the sixties. All this rhetoric about "modernism" and "ancestral values" serves only to conceal the true economic and political motives underlying the emergence of new social strata or classes: it makes it possible to eschew the real problems in favour of a general condemnation of all political regimes. For example Horodougou is situated in the state of Nikinai (Mali or Guinea) where "c'était le socialisme"; all the reader learns about this socialism is that it was a "désagréable surprise" to Fama. Socialism and capitalism (Ivory Coast) are subjected to the same accusations—they are both linked with the "Indépendances" and they are responsible for Fama's troubles:

> On l'avait bien prévenu. Les gens de l'indépendance ne connaissaient ni la vérité, ni l'honneur, ils sont capables de tout, même de fermer l'œil sur une abeille.... Il s'est engagé, il a voulu terrasser les soleils des Indépendances, il a été vaincu.[191]

[190] M. M'Lanhoro, "Fama" in Id., *Essai sur "Les Soleils des indépendances"* (Dakar-Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977), p. 51.

[191] Ahmadou Kourouma, *Les Soleils des indépendances* (Paris, Seuil, 1970), p. 175. On the writer, see also Jean-Cléo Godin, *„Les Soleils des indépendances", Etudes Françaises*, 4, 2 (1968), 208–215; Moncef S. Badday, "Ahmadou Kourouma, écrivain," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 10 (1970), 2–8; Anita Kern, "Ahmadou Kourouma: *Les Soleils des indépendances*," *Le Français au Nigéria*, 7, 3 (1972), 39–43; Emile Langlois, "*Les Soleils des indépendances*, roman de la stérilité?," *Présence Francophone*, 8 (1974), 95–102; Aloysius U. Ohaeghu, "*Les soleils des indépendances* ou le drame de l'homme écrasé par le destin," *Présence Africaine*, 90 (1974), 253–260;Adrien Huannou, "La technique du récit et le style dans *Les soleils des indépendances*," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 38 (1975), 31–38; Kester Echenim, "La structure narrative des *Soleils des indépendances*," *Présence Africaine*, 107 (1978), 139–161; Evelyne Lavergne, "*Les Soleils des indépendances* et l'authenticité romanesque," *Ethiopiques*, 16 (1978), 55–64; Kwabena Britwum, "Tradition and Social Criticism in Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances*," in *New West African Literature*, ed. K. Ogungbesan (London: Heinemann Educational, 1979), pp. 80—90. For comparative discussions of Ouol-

Not only is Fama himself unaware of the real reasons for his predicament, but he still entertains the delusion that a return to the past is possible: all this reveals the mentality of a class which is disappearing, a phenomenon already illustrated by Sembène Ousmane in *Véhi-Ciosane*. But in the structure of Kourouma's novel, because of the importance given to the character of Fama, the other social classes which constitute the nation play no part; one would like to know what these people think of both regimes, that of the Ebony Republic and that of Nikinai, but they simply do not appear in the book. So, despite the interest of the novel insofar as style and imagery are concerned, it is harmed by the same ideological limitations as those of Sassine, Fantouré and Ouologuem:

> Ce roman ne permet d'entrevoir aucune perspective de lutte libératrice, car Kourouma non seulement ne laisse percer aucune réaction positive au niveau du peuple, à cette ère où avec l'implantation des petites industries il se forme une classe ouvrière, mais ce peuple est représenté comme une foule de gueux, inorganisée, qui au lieu de s'attaquer à la bourgeoisie exploiteuse, s'insurge contre la femme de Fama.[192]

A second tendency which might appear to be different, but which seems to me to have a very similar ideological meaning consists of self-absorption and nostalgia for the past. A year before the publication of Kourouma's novel, his linguistic innovations and his africanization of the French language had already featured in Malick Fall's *La Plaie*. The theme of this Senegalese novel had been dealt with, earlier in the fifties, by such writers as Mongo Beti or Seydou Badian. Fall's protagonist, Magamou, has left his village against his mother's will to look for work in the town:

> Et Yaye Aida, les mains de son petit dans les siennes, expliquait, folle de désespoir, comment la fausse richesse des villes avait, dans une progression implacable, insidieusement tué, en ceux de la tribu, la simplicité des mœurs, la modération des besoins.[193]

The work contains the usual satire on European imperialists and europeanized Africans. Magamou has managed to board a lorry which has an accident on the way and he is left with a foul-smelling, purulent wound in his leg. This wound is symbolic, representing not only his sorry fate, but also his link with the others and, to some extent, the very means of his existence as he becomes an object of both repulsion and attraction for the traders and customers at the market where he finds shelter. He feels no bitterness towards those who maltreat him: "Il fut tendre pour ce peuple qui, lui aussi, lui surtout,

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oguem and Kourouma, see Christine Manning, "*Le Devoir de violence* et *Les Soleils des indépendances:* Une étude comparative," *Les Bonnes Feuilles*, 2, 2 (1973), 17—25; Anita Kern, "On *Les Soleils des indépendances* and *Le Devoir de violence*," *Présence Africaine*, 85 (1973), 209—230; and Eric Sellin, "Ouologuem, Kourouma et le nouveau roman africain" in *Littératures ultramarines de langue française: Genèse et jeunesse*, ed. Thomas H. Geno and Roy Julow (Sherbrooke: Naaman, 1974) pp. 37—50.

[192] Berthélemy Kotchy, "Signification de l'œuvre" in M'Lanhoro (ed.), op. cit., p. 92.

[193] Malick Fall, *La Plaie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1967), p. 29. Page references are to this edition.

dressait sur son chemin de pauvre malheureux, les embûches les plus sordides" (p. 57). After his wound has healed, he returns to the market, and is treated with utter indifference: "Quel cimetière! Moi, naguère la coqueluche du marché, me trouver proprement ignoré!" (p. 166). After being badly beaten up in a fight he is taken to the mortuary, but survives, although he loses an eye. On leaving hospital, he deliberately wounds his leg in the hope of returning to the familiar market surroundings and of capturing again the attention and pity of the market people.

Magamou's personal esperience relegates to the background all the social and political considerations which loom so large in the fiction of Mongo Beti or Sembène Ousmane. Like Sassine's outcast in *Saint Monsieur Baly*, Fall's hero derives a kind of superiority from his exceptional situation. Having thus set his hero apart from the people, the author feels obliged to concentrate on his feelings. This is what might be called an "intimist" work, highly original in its introduction of Wolof and Toucouleur turns of speech into French. It emphasizes the fundamental egoism of individuals who have to be confronted with squalor and misery if they are to be shaken out of their indifference. All this is abstract and anti-historical speculation, and can only give rise to a sense of resignation. Magamou and all these men and women who lead a hard life in the town as well as in the villages have no future. They seem content to live out their miserable existence in the present. Physical suffering, which arouses either pity or curiosity, seems to be Magamou's only means of establishing contact with other people. Fall can offer nothing but a depressing, hopeless, forlorn view of mankind.

Seydou Badian, who returned to imaginative writing in the late seventies, recognizes that his novels deal basically with the problem of "l'Afrique traditionnelle face au modernisme. Les drames, les difficultés d'adaptation, les erreurs et puis aussi les réussites. Comment apprendre à s'intégrer dans le modernisme sans se renier, c'est un thème fondamental."[194] This Malian novelist, who has been living in Dakar after his release from political imprisonment, follows a trend which has been running through African literature in French since the 1950s. The fact that this "fundamental theme" he speaks of is only thinly connected with the real problems that face Africa today probably accounts for its popularity; it is also exemplified in many of the novels published in Cameroon by the Centre de Littérature Evangélique.

Badian's *Le Sang des masques* takes up the most popular motifs of the colonial period: the persistence of peer-group solidarity, the power of the witch-doctors, colonial exactions in the background (abusive taxes, the compulsory labour system, torture), and the dangers of the city and of women. A blend of André Gide's *Voyage au Congo*, Ousmane Socé Diop's *Karim*, Abdoulaye Sadji's *Maïmouna* and Eza Boto's *Ville cruelle*, it opens with a description of misery. According to the author the main reason for the crisis which disturbs traditional society is "l'argent du Blanc qui a tué le vieux monde":

> La misère étranglait les familles, les rognait, les disloquait. Le village se décomposait. Les chèvres vendues. Les appels angoissés aux parents émigrés. Les filles

[194] Interview with Seydou Badian in *Bingo*, No. 309 (Oct. 1978), 57.

placées en gage chez les riches des villes. On n'arrivait quand même pas au compte. L'argent! L'argent![195]

Despite these difficulties, the village paradoxically remains a storehouse of the moral elements of social cohesion. The novel reaches its climax with the urge to return to the village—

> Le village demeurait fort de ses vérités qui, un matin, surgiraient au cœur de la ville, bouleverseraient les esprits, anéantiraient le mensonge et les fausses idoles avant de se muer en suc dans la chair secrète de cette terre souillée,—

and in the glorification of the novel's hero, Bakari, who remains faithful to the role expected of him in the traditional structure and kills himself to save the girl for whom he is responsible:

> Plus grand que les grands d'hier et d'aujourd'hui. Guerrier anonyme. Guerrier méconnu, couvert de haillons, cheminant sans tam-tam et sans maître. (pp. 249–250)

Similar attitudes recur in *Noces sacrées,* where the main theme however is the tragedy of a European who has dared to attack the power of the masks of a secret society. The story takes place during the colonial period and recalls in many respects European "colonial literature" as represented, for example, by some of the works of Robert Randau. Badian is presumably intent on showing the risks run by all those—be they Africans or Europeans—who oppose the secret societies or, if they are initiates (the "noces sacrées" of the title are the initiation rites), reveal what they have seen:

> Tu seras le véritable jouet d'un destin capricieux, déroutant et cruel. Tu porteras dans ton esprit une poignée de fourmis et de termites.[196]

There is nothing really new here, and the book recalls Camara Laye's mythical vision of a "mystérieuse et éternelle" Africa. The only original element is perhaps the suggestion of a link between these secret societies and the political parties: had this point been developed, it might have helped to light up various dark corners of contemporary Africa's political life; as it stands, it offers no more than a hint.

These two novels deal with a theme that Badian had already handled in *Sous l'orage* (1963): the opposition between town and country. In confronting the two life styles without analysing their altogether divergent economic and social structures, Badian joins the ranks of those populist authors whose works stress the misery of the disintegration of old-established mores in traditional society, but offer no other prospect than some utopian, back-to-the-village project, which is as likely to prove futile in Africa as it has done in other parts of the world.

[195] Seydou Badian, *Le Sang des masques* (Paris: Laffont, 1976), pp. 199, 229. Further page references are to this edition.

[196] Seydou Badian, *Noces sacrées* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1977), p. 14.

The two tendencies discussed so far have something in common: whether the author uses mockery and caricature, whether he vociferates like Ouologuem, or whether he describes the process of disintegration in some individual (who represents in fact, a social class), the result is the same—despondency or despair. The main reason for this attitude is that the majority of these writers are intellectuals, cut off from the anxieties and struggles of their people, and lacking the tools of political analysis which might enable them to identify with the people and to understand their real problems. This is also why they seem unable to grasp the real nature of the conflicts that are present in characters like Kouroúma's Fama. Hence the facile solution of turning independence itself into some sort of general scapegoat. It may be legitimately argued that the descriptions of contemporary African life offered by some of those novelists are based on a perceptive observation of their surroundings. But in present-day Africa, where the very existence of so many human beings is endangered, such clear-sighted observation provides little help, especially if it drives writer and reader alike to cynicism. This irrelevance was emphasized by Femi Osofisan while discussing some recent works of Wole Soyinka and Mongo Beti:

> I am saying that lucidity is inadequate, may even be fraudulent, if its consequence is mere "intoxication", and if finally, it only results in perpetuating a philosophy of defeat.[197]

In some cases (Sassine, Fantouré, Ouologuem) violence is perceived as an end in itself; terror gives way to a sense of absurdity; there is no room for hope any longer. These are pessimistic works which, under the cover of realism, strive to keep alive the alienating myth of the alleged inability of the African peoples to grasp the underlying causes of their ills and to fight for the transformation of their society. As Mao Tse Tung once put it, if one needs to know what must be denounced, one also needs to know what must be praised, otherwise what good is literature?[198] This is where the novelist's ideological orientation comes in, so that literature can play its part as social criticism, so that the novelist himself can become the critical conscience of his time; to quote Osofisan again:

> There must be other answers, some distinct possibility of wedding organized violence with a lucid political ideology.

It is precisely this ideological commitment which seems to find utterance in the work of two novelists from the Congo: Emmanuel Bounzaki Dongala and Henri Lopès.

Although Dongala is the author of a number of short stories and essays, by 1980 he had published only one novel: *Un fusil dans la main, un poème dans la poche*. As the

[197] Femi Osofisan, "Anubis resurgent: chaos and political vision in recent literature," *Le Français au Nigeria*, 10, 2 (1975), 13–23.

[198] See Mao Tse Tung, *Interventions aux causeries sur la littérature et l'art à Yenan* (Editions de Pékin, 1965), p. 119.

title of the German translation makes clear,[199] the whole story takes place on the morning of the execution of Mayéla dia Mayéla, former president of the Republic of Anzika, who has been overthrown by a military coup, and remembers in prison the incidents which brought him to his present quandary. As a student in France, preparing for a doctorate in physical sciences, he held important functions in the F.E.A.N.F. He was banished from France and decided to join a revolutionary group that we may identify with the Zimbabwe Revolutionary Army. He met guerrillas from countries like Senegal, South Africa and the United States, every one of whom brought with him memories of the battles he fought in his own country, whether as a member of the "Black Proletarian Party" in the States, or in anti-apartheid riots which recall Sharpeville in South Africa. For a brief while, the guerrillas capture the capital city, but imperialist powers intervene on behalf of the white ruling class. Mayéla escapes and finds himself in a country easily recognized as Malawi (with a President called Hatha Bastings). He is suspected of helping the regime's opponents and is consequently tortured. With the help of a doctor he manages to escape from the hospital and returns to his own village in Anzika. He is still there when Independence is proclaimed; but later, after he has been lecturing all over the country and trying to form an opposition party, a successful "coup d'état" takes him to the presidency. It is at this point that contradictions and misunderstandings begin, especially with students, who denounce his rather confused concept of "Anzikan socialism". The peasants are molested by his militia and torture is common in the prisons. He escapes an attempt on his life, but is later deposed and sentenced to death following another successful army coup.

A foremost feature of Dongala's novel is the balanced integration into the narrative of contemporary political events in Africa and the USA. Yet the author is not content with a recital of facts alone. Everything is told from experience, whether it is Mayéla and the battle of Litamu, Meeks and the struggle of the American blacks or old Marobi and the humiliations and massacres perpetrated by the racist regime in South Africa.

A second feature is that the characters come not only from different countries, but also from different social classes. In a short story entitled "Les Paysans,"[200] Dongala had already pointed to the blunders and errors which a revolutionary government is liable to commit if it relies primarily on slogans rather than on a concrete analysis of the living conditions and expectations of the peasants. In *Un fusil dans la main, un poème dans la poche,* old Marobi tells Meeks, the American, why he joined the fighting:

> Dans nos tribus—je ne sais pas comment cela se passe chez toi, là-bas, en Amérique,—lorsqu'un ennemi occupe tes terres, te prend ton troupeau et, en plus, massacre ta femme et tes enfants, tu es obligé de le tuer. (pp. 22–23)

Dongala's peasants are no mere cardboard figures: some of them like Foueti, never wanted to fight, and though they find themselves enrolled in the guerrilla forces, admit frankly that they were better off under white control. Like Meeks, Mayéla belongs to

[199] E. B. Dongala, *Der Morgen vor der Hinrichtung* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1976). Page references are to the original French version, *Un fusil dans la main, un poème dans la poche* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1973).
[200] Printed in *Présence Africaine,* 88 (1973), 166–177.

the intellectual lower middle class; but, as he tells the American, the latter came to Africa because he was attracted by a mythical vision of the continent:

> L'Afrique est une réalité pour moi qui suis Africain, mais un mythe pour toi qui es Noir américain.

Yet both are far from knowledgeable about the actual conditions and problems of the African people: they are.

> deux hommes noirs venus de deux continents séparés par plus de trois cent années et par une culture, chacun essayant de protéger ses illusions au plus profond de lui-même. (p. 24)

A common determination unites them, however, even though

> à la différence du père Marobi, nous sommes venus avec une certaine idée dans la tête, un fusil dans la main et un poème dans la poche. (p. 26)

Factory workers, usually ignored by French-writing African authors, are represented here by Kaugammo:

> il bougeait très peu les mains en parlant, des mains fortes, rongées par le cambouis et les durs boulons de l'usine de montage d'automobiles où il travaillait. (p. 18)

Kaugammo recognizes the difficulties (political struggle, mobilization) faced by both peasants and urban workers:

> Les débuts de notre campagne politique ont été très difficiles car la majorité de la population avait fini par accepter passivement la présence des Blancs en tant que maîtres.

As to the peasants,

> ils sont très compliqués à comprendre. C'est la couche la plus apolitique qui soit, et, cependant ils sont les premiers à donner de l'aide si l'un des nôtres est traqué. En gros, nous pouvons les placer pour le moment parmi les "neutralistes positifs". (pp. 18–19)

Thirdly, all of Dongala's work is a reflection on the concept of revolution, its application and, indirectly, on Marxism which, since the 1950s, has done much to stir anti-imperialist consciousness and militancy. As a result, especially after 1965, attempts have been made either by those in power (army or civilians), or by certain political movements, to subvert and take over Marxism and the revolution. In the late seventies, Dongala clarified his own definition of the revolution:

> La révolution n'a pas que le côté répressif et dur qu'elle a montré jusqu'ici, mais la révolution a aussi un côté généreux, fraternel, joyeux qu'il est temps de montrer.[201]

He adds, however, that too many individuals, especially intellectuals, but also those in power, try to take the place of the people. The danger lies in the seductive power of rhetoric at the expense of positive action. As the narrator recalls in the novel:

> Ils étaient venus l'entendre, lui Mayéla dia Mayéla, l'écouter. Il croyait à la parole. D'ailleurs la grande épopée africaine ne s'était-elle pas transmise de génération en génération par la parole? (p. 13)

The people finally break away from Mayéla, who becomes increasingly isolated, protected by his militia of tribesmen who exploit the peasantry. The weakness in Mayéla's policies is the absence of ideology, the lack of a party with strong popular roots and politically aware elements. This weakness seems to originate in his own training:

> Meeks n'avait jamais rencontré quelqu'un d'une intelligence aussi vive que celle de Mayéla, mais l'intelligence de Mayéla était, semblait-il, purement analytique; il voyait très bien les rouages d'un système, les décomposait, les décortiquait, mais il était incapable de synthèse. (p. 34)

Just before his execution, Mayéla admits that "mon règne a été celui du confusionisme". His meditation on political power and revolution enables Dongala to denounce the new propertied bourgeoisie, the opportunists who survive every government, the profiteers, all those who take advantage of slogans which have become meaningless.

Finally it is also important to mention the position of women in Dongala's novel. Mayéla himself becomes aware of the problem:

> Et il se mit à penser aux femmes, comme ça. L'Afrique contemporaine avait trop tendance à négliger les femmes, pensa-t-il. (p. 150)

Two women have been fighting side by side with Meeks. The first, in the United States, is Muriel:

> issue d'une famille de la moyenne bourgeoisie noire d'une ville moyenne du Middle West, elle avait renié les valeurs traditionnelles de sa famille pour embrasser la révolution. (p. 31)

The second, in Africa, is Yamaya, who can neither read nor write. She is one of a group of guerrillas besieged in Litamu. As they meet their death, Meeks, the last one of her comrades to die, celebrates her heroism:

[201] B. Dongala, "Littérature et Société: ce que je crois," *Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains*, 9 (1979), 58–64.

> Et enfin toi, Yamaya! Les deux seins dressés, la tête levée, l'arme haute et les deux pieds bien plantés dans la terre vive de ton pays, tu défies. (p. 92)

And she, who had humbly said that she was worthless, "prit le drapeau déchiqueté du Mouvement de libération, l'attacha tant bien que mal à un bout de bois et monta sur le plus haut bloc de ruines" (p. 94) from where, before being killed, she shoots down General Espinola, an excellent specimen of the imperialist soldier.

Although Dongala's themes are not entirely original since they had been handled by Sembène Ousmane, they are successfully integrated into a work of fiction that provides a comprehensive survey of the problems facing contemporary African societies. Danièle Steward reproaches Dongala for "pécher souvent par trop de dogmatisme"[202] and Maryse Condé deplores the fact that as a novelist he is "prisonnier de la notion d'engagement."[203] Similar accusations are made whenever a work of creative fiction appears which is designed to stimulate reflection, especially when the characters' individual experiences are rooted in the socio-political realities of their time. Though Dongala may have fully intended to write a didactic work, he did so neither at the expense of in-depth characterization, nor in a spirit of contempt for poetry as is shown in the very first paragraph of the book:

> Le soleil dans toute sa munificence! Eclate soleil, explose donc! Et nous, forts de la vérité bue par nos paupières ouvertes, éblouis, nous aurons marché et marcherons encore sur le dos des non-initiés couleur de terre. (p. 11)

Of Henri Lopès' collection of short stories, *Tribaliques* (1971), Arlette and Roger Chemain say that it

> résonne comme une réplique à *Ethiopiques* (Senghor, 1956). A la vision idéalisée, à l'académisme sénégalais, répond une volonté de démystification et de regard incisif.[204]

Tribaliques paved the way for the author's later novels, both printed in Cameroon: *La Nouvelle romance* (1976) and *Sans Tam-tam* (1977). *La Nouvelle romance* is a novel about three women-friends, Wali, Awi and Elise. The tale is skilfully structured, the characters' reflections on their own lives being interspersed with letters. Awa has found a form of freedom in her studies; Elise has chosen to lead a life of pleasure and preaches the virtues of polygamy. In an apt analysis of Wali's career Arlette Chemain comments:

> L'histoire de *La Nouvelle romance* est celle d'un arrachement à l'esclavage quotidien, à la routine et à la fatalité. Wali est enlisée dans le mariage, contrairement à Elise et à Awa. Elle est le contraire de Perpétue, l'héroïne de Mongo Beti que le

[202] Danièle Steward, "Bilan de quelques récents romans francophones", *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique*, 33 (1974), 29–31.

[203] Maryse Condé in *Notre Librairie*, No. 35–36 (1977).

[204] A. and R. Chemain, "Regards sur les tendances nouvelles de la littérature congolaise," *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*, 25 (1976), 56–60.

même enchaînement d'événements: retrait de l'école, mariage (dans l'ordre inverse), vie conjugale infernale et asservissement au mari tyrannique, rivalités avec les concubines, détruiront. Perpétue en mourra, brisée—victime aussi de structures néo-coloniales hostiles à l'épanouissement des humbles—Wali lutte et gagne.[205]

Wali's struggle begins in Africa where she becomes aware of the miserable life led by the women, especially those of the peasantry:

> Aux champs, les femmes du village avaient les reins courbés toute la journée. Binant, sarclant, elles arrosaient de leur sueur la terre rouge d'où germerait ce qu'elles auraient encore à traiter, seules, avant de le préparer en repas.[206]

She too has suffered in her own person:

> La femme mariée s'est fanée aux lendemains des noces. Elle n'est plus ce sourire et cet esprit agile qui fascinaient les garçons du village. Elle est cuisinière. Elle est travailleuse de force. (p. 14)

Moreover, she is childless and thus lives under what is still a curse in many African societies. She thinks about life, talks to her friends, but it is during a stay in Belgium that she meets new ideas (thanks mainly to a couple of Communist militants), different life-styles and human relations; in this way she becomes more acutely aware of the problems of her own society:

> Ici j'ai beaucoup appris... J'ai compris que la vie que je menais avec Bienvenu, et qui m'apparaissait normale et comme la marque du destin, était anachronique au regard du monde qui se fait et encore plus de celui où va l'humanité. (p. 192)

The epistolary form, which constitutes the structural originality of *La Nouvelle romance,* is used to the full in *Sans Tam-Tam,* which consists of a collection of letters sent by a teacher, Gatse, to a friend in high office. In these letters, Gatse meditates on the new Congolese society and on the confusion that followed independence: "Tout ce gâchis a-t-il été utile aux masses dont nous nous réclamons tous?"[207] He feels that since independence those in power, instead of emphasizing the necessity of hard work, have allowed political power te degenerate: "nous rions trop, sommes trop peu soucieux de la tâche historique dont nous nous réclamons" (p. 58). Easy, happy-go-lucky carelessness is the rule; totally unfit persons reach high office; corruption reigns supreme. Demagogic speeches reveal a lack of selflessness and clear-sightedness. The revolutionary language itself, used mechanically, has become the jargon of official speechifying and hollow orations:

[205] A. Chemain, "*La Nouvelle romance* d'Henri Lopès," *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture,* 27 (1977), 55–58. See also Fame Ndongo, "*La Nouvelle romance* d'Henri Lopès, fleuron du nouveau roman nègre," *Afrique Littéraire et Artistique,* 41 (1976), 41–47.

[206] Henri Lopès, *La Nouvelle romance* (Yaoundé: C.L.E., 1976), p. 15. Page references are to this edition.

[207] Henri Lopès, *Sans Tam-Tam* (Yaoundé: C.L.E., 1977), p. 28. Further references are to this edition.

> Servis à toutes les sauces ils finissent par anesthésier les capacités de réflexion de ceux qui s'en servent.... Pourquoi ne pas parler aux masses leur langue? Dire avec les termes qui leur sont familiers la vision révolutionnaire du monde. La dire même—ce qui sera mieux—avec les langues vernaculaires du peuple. (p. 106)

Gatse dies of cancer, and his friend, aware of the fact that his messages are significant, sends them to a publisher:

> Elles m'intimident trop. Je me contente de les recevoir comme ces chants populaires dont nul ne connaît l'auteur et que chaque peuple se transmet de génération en génération et de siècle en siècle. (p. 116)

These two novels seem to have benefited from the writer's experience as one of the leaders of the F.E.A.N.F. and later as a minister in the Congo government. It enabled him to exploit his genuine personal knowledge of reality in order to create his fully rounded characters. In his work, as in Dongala's, the main thing is to talk to the people, without however, offering any hard and fast solutions:

> Le peuple peut se tromper et préférer la servitude dans l'opulence. La morale est qu'il ne faut jamais parler en son nom. Il faut l'amener à voir soi-même son intérêt (p. 88).

Both these Congolese novelists are aware of the problems of their time and society. They denounce present evils, but they also feel great affection towards all those who, in different ways and to varying degrees, are their victims. Lopès, like Dongala, has been adversely criticized for writing "œuvres à thèse." But as Arlette Chemain shrewdly put it:

> N'est-ce pas là le reproche que l'on adresse aux œuvres dont on désapprouve le contenu? On formule cette objection lorsque l'on condamne les idées que véhicule le texte. Si la thèse ne plaît pas, et dérange, on cherche les défauts de l'œuvre.[208]

And while Maryse Condé may claim that this literature "se stéréotype, qu'elle ne sait pas parler de l'humain,"[209] it should be evident that these Congolese novelists have produced genuinely original and significant works, peopled with characters of real interest, who are no mere puppets but despite their limitations and faults make a serious and valuable effort to think out their lives and give them meaning.

As Lopès' title, *La Nouvelle romance,* borrowed from Aragon, seems to indicate, this is the beginning of a new trend in African literature in French. Its outlook is entirely different from that of the earlier works with the signal exception of Sembène Ousmane. It deliberately refuses to ignore and wash its hands of, social and political reality with all the problems which it brings; it refuses to be taken in by well-polished phrases to founder in the murky depths of allegedly metaphysical speculations; however shyly, it

[208] A. Chemain, op. cit., p. 56.
[209] Maryse Condé, loc. cit., p. 112.

gives a voice to those who, in the African novel, normally remain silent; in a way, it begins at last to see the truth and follow the advice in Ngugi wa Thiong'o 's utterance of 1967:

> The one basic reality in Africa ... is the fact that 80% of the people are living below the bread-line standard.... When we, the black intellectuals, the black bourgeoisie, got the power, we never tried to bring about those policies which would be in harmony with the needs of 80% of the peasants and workers. I think it time that the African writers also started to talk in the terms of these workers and peasants.[210]

(Translated from the French by Anne-Marie Roffi)

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MAGYAR TUDOMÁNYOS AKADÉMIA KÖNYVTÁRA

[210] In P. Wästberg (ed.), op. cit., p. 23.

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