

INTRODUCTION

FRANCOPHONE AND LUSOPHONE LITERATURES IN AFRICA

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Westerners' interest in African literatures in European languages has in the past depended more on their political and social convictions than on their true admiration for African belles-lettres. As a consequence, this interest subsided greatly when most African nations became independent and when colonialism was officially abandoned. Yet each year African authors continue to publish books written in European languages. Since many of these works are printed and distributed solely in Africa, reviews of them rarely appear in Western journals. This special situation makes it difficult for the curious reader or the researcher to gather primary material and to keep abreast of the latest trends. In an effort to promote these literatures and at the same time to contribute to their study, the editorial board of *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* has devoted this issue to francophone and lusophone literatures—while anglophone literature also deserves more scholarly attention, it is not included within this journal's purview.

Of these two literatures, francophone literature is the richest and the most well known. Based on the history and cultures of the countries from which it originated, French African literature is divided into two groups: the Maghreb in North Africa and black African in West and Central Africa. The older of the two, Maghreb literature started during the twenties with authors such as Caïd Ben Cherif and Abdelkader Hadj-Hamou. A little later, black African writers René Maran and Ousmane Socé also initiated a new

literature. Despite their obvious racial, historical, cultural, and religious differences, the two branches of African literature in French followed parallel evolutions.

Initially African authors had to appreciate the possibilities of the French language and to explore how European literary genres and styles could fit their special needs. Imitation of European models thus characterized this first phase. Subsequently, after a pause during the Second World War, the literatures began to develop more fully. Anti-colonialism, their first cause and inspiration, seemed at the time to be their only reason for existence. Influenced by the style as well as the ideas of writers such as Zola and Sartre, African authors attacked the French colonial administration. This *litterature engagée* revealed to European public how colonialism had in fact limited freedom and promoted social inequities while pretending to bring civilization to the «dark continent.» It exposed the racism of the white people and also dealt with the problems, acculturation and uprooting for example, that confronted those natives who wanted a new way of life. Experiencing these difficulties themselves, some authors attempted to find by contrast a new pride in their past (the *négritude* movement of Senghor and Césaire), whereas still others preferred to destroy old tradition altogether. When independence came to the various colonies, however, intellectuals realized that they could not return to former times, nor could they eliminate all traces of colonialism. Hence, writers resolutely confronted their times. Abandoning the theme of white imperialism and political struggle, they became interested in other aspects of life as well. Everyday situations provided a fecund source of subjects and themes, while traditional literature and the emerging middle class inspired new characters. In their treatment of problems such as polygamy, dowry-based marriages, tribal and religious animosities, difficulties of the educated in finding an appropriate job, and the corruption and tyranny of some governments, writers created works relevant to the literate African. No longer concerned with pleasing or engaging a white audience, they adapted the French language to their own artistic needs, and while one can not yet speak of an African French, their works are, despite their European genres and language, truly African in form and content.

Whereas francophone literature has evolved from an artistic endeavour aimed at the educated few to a popular literature intended to appeal to the largest possible public, lusophone literature ap-

pears, at least for the moment, mired in ideology—the promotion of class struggle and the demand for freedom for every one (e.g. Castro Soromenho)—. Political events, the brand of colonialism imposed by the Portuguese, and censorship (Agostinho Neto for example was jailed several times for his controversial publications) have contributed to the general neglect that this body of literature has suffered. Difficulties in obtaining material and scarcity of information force the critic to assess this literature with some prudence. Yet, it does appear to share some characteristics with francophone books. Like their French counterparts, these writers have sought inspiration in ancestral literature such as proverbs and songs. While imitating traditional types of characters and modes of narrative, they too adapt the European language to their needs with the same lack of respect that some francophone writers have at times shown for the French Academy (e.g. Francisco-José Terreiro).

Evidently it will take some time before the Western reader can fully appreciate what has been done in Portuguese in the meantime this issue of *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* attempts to give to non specialists a kind of *état present* of the critical methods used in the study of African literatures, and it seeks also to provide specialists with information on a number of subjects. The variety of approaches and of subjects represented in this special issue underscores the richness of the African literatures in European languages and the wealth of criticism and discussion that they have generated.

The first two articles of this issue employ a historical and descriptive method, whereas the others are organized around a central theme. The first one, by Eric Sellin, «Literary Aftershocks of the Revolution: Recent Development in Algerian Literature,» serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it describes how the Algerian novel has evolved, on the other it gives a survey of the most recent publications. It is followed by Albert Gérard and Jeannine Laurent's «Sembène's Progeny: A New Trend in Senegalese Novel,» an article that also sheds light on the latest generation, but in black Africa. The juxtaposition of these articles will help the reader to discern the differences and similarities between the two branches of francophone literature. Richard Bjornson's study, «Evebe's *Sur la terre en passant* and the Poetic of Shame,» Curtis Schade's «Politics and the New African Novel: A Study of Francis Bebey,» and Kenneth Harrow's «Sembene's *Xala*: The Use of Film

and Novel as Revolutionary Weapon» reveal the different ways in which some African authors have disguised their political and social thoughts in order to avoid possible censorship or persecution, but most of all in order to create what they conceive of as genuine work of art. Expressing their discontent with African society and encouraging a new revolution aimed no longer at colonialism but at the evil which exists in every man, they demonstrate that engagement does not preclude devotion to art. Emil Magel's article, «Theme and Imagery in Tchicaya U Tam'si *A Triche Coeur*,» shows how a poet, anxious to appeal not only to his countrymen but also to a much larger public, has elegantly interwoven his social concerns with universal themes. Next, Ingeborg M. Kohn's «Satire in Francophone African Literature: Black Appraisal of White Ethnologists» elaborates on an essential aspect of African literatures: humor, the best weapon against man's sad destiny. Finally, the two concluding articles examine processes by which African artists have imitated European art forms. «Luandino Vieira's Short Fiction: Decolonization in the Third Register,» by Irwin Stern, explains some of the techniques used in appropriating Portuguese. «Kafka's Influence on Camara Laye *Le Regard du roi*,» by Patricia A. Deduck, describes what a specific author has found of interest in a particular European novel and how he has integrated his borrowings into his own writings.

As these articles demonstrate, African authors have borrowed eclectically, and their styles vary according to their personalities and their origins (Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal). Spanning the years 1954 to 1979, the works discussed here moreover reveal the emergence of certain patterns. The geographical and temporal distances covered in this issue therefore assure the reader that, while it is impossible to do justice to every deserving work or author, efforts have been made to present a general view and to reveal particular as well as representative qualities of the literatures concerned.