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THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND AFRICAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

1. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

I would like to introduce this discussion with some questions as asked by some critics—namely Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse. They wanted to know why and how African writers write; and why they (African writers) insistently write about particular themes, topics and events. These questions are very relevant and pertinent and my intention is to show that the use of a foreign language as a means of communication does not impede upon the message the writer wants to transmit to his audience.

Even if this topic has become a too commonplace subject in criticism, it is nonetheless worthwhile asking to know whether when using a foreign language, African writers really render the reality of African soul, tradition and culture. Very often, I am tempted to answer that these are nonsense questions, in so far as the notions of soul, tradition and culture are so vague terms which should be disregarded when dealing with literature, and this simply because of the way the criticism of archetypes conceives them.

As a matter of fact, the Jungian theory of the archetypes—latter extended to archetypal criticism—coins these notions with a most broad term he has called the collective unconscious. And, to use his own words, he asserts among other things that:

The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere. Mythological research calls them "motifs"; in the psychology of primitives they correspond to Lévy-Bruhl's concept of "représentations collectives" and in the field of comparative religion they have been defined by Hubert and Mauss as "categories of the imagination." Adolf Bastian long ago called them "elementary" or "primordial thoughts." [...] My thesis, then, is as follows: [...] there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent

forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.¹

Simply, Jung assumes that all the individuals at any time and everywhere are linked among themselves by the collective unconscious, which is the source of collective and personal unconscious and conscious activities, the collective unconscious is the supplier of archetypal or primordial images the artist uses accordingly. That is why we can add with Jung that there is only one soul, one culture and one tradition. From then on, what seems to be or what is commonly called different souls, different traditions and cultures are, in my view, only unconscious and/or conscious categorisations of the same reality. It is a taking of conscience by a given group as a matter of adaptation, actualisation in time and space.

What I assume here may be proved by the fact, that each group, being ethnic, tribal or racial, has always felt the need to give, for instance, a name to every thing, and this, without having concerted prealably. Thus, each man had to be given a name, plants and birds were labelled etc... This need to give a name is, to a larger extent, the expression of having one primordial and inherent soul, culture and tradition. This what Jung seems to say:

The man of the past is alive in us today to a degree undreamt of before the war, and in the last analysis what is the fate of great nations but a summation of the psychic changes in the individuals?²

In addition, recent comparative studies of myths, legends and folktales (cfr. Claude Lévy-Strauss's *Du miel aux cendres* and *L'origine des manières à table*; or Denise Paulme's *La mère dévorante*; or else M. L. Von Franz's *L'interprétation des contes de fées*) have proved that throughout the world myths, legends and folktales have essentially the same motifs and that the differences, which may occur are only the result of deliberate or unconscious transformations. V. Propp puts it clearly as follows:

On peut observer que les personnages des contes fantastiques, tout en restant très différents dans leur apparence, âge, sexe, genre de préoccupation, état civil et autres traits statiques et attributifs, accomplissent, tout au cours de l'action, les mêmes actes. Ceci détermine le rapport des constantes avec les variables. Les fonctions des personnages représentent des constantes, tout le reste peut varier.³

So, when assuming that "motifs", "actions" and "actes" may remain akin, even if other items are interchanged, Propp proves in his own way what we are trying to support: tradition, culture and soul are in their primarily conception, one and single, despite the fact that some willed differences may be noticed at the superficial level.

Coming thus back to my hypothesis, we can assume that in depth there is

¹ C.G. Jung *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious*, [in:] *The Portable Jung*, ed., Joseph Cambell, Trans., R. F. C. Hull, Reprint, 1982, Tennessee 1982, p. 60.

² C. G. Jung, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³ V. Propp, *Les transformations des contes de fées*, [in:] *Théorie d'ensemble*, ed. and trans. Tzvetan Todorov, Paris 1975, p. 235.

not essentially different African soul, African tradition and African culture from universal ones. Nonetheless, it should be admitted that because of the need—a conventional one—of putting labels on matters, we can speak of an essentially African culture, tradition and soul and, I repeat it, this is not my conviction. For, paradoxically enough, the so-called African tradition and so on are so subdivided in different subgroups that it is — we currently speak of Arabic culture as opposed to Bantu culture and so on.

Without contradicting myself, from these considerations, we can thus assume that there is an essentially African writer and African literature; and that this African literature is only a small parcel of what is called universal art; while the writers themselves can be considered as members of what is commonly called artist. Art and artist are belonging to the genetic term: collective unconscious. To this extent, the attempt by African writers to produce a typically African literature can be seen as a conscious willingness of giving a special coloration to what is belived universal literature.

It follows that the question we asked at the beginning of this *exposé* is partially answered, i.e. if African writers recurrently write about the same things, it is another way of showing that they want to give a specific stamp to this literature as to mean that it is dealing with a specific reality within universal reality. Being artists, African writers feel that it is their duty to acknowledge this reality indistinctively to who ever wants to know it, and for this they have to use a means of communication.

2. LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGES

The greatest dilemma of modern African literature is the means of communication or the language to be used. Should writers use local languages as a way of vulgarizing the African thought and social reality; or should they use a lingua franca as to achieve universality? In addition, another preoccupying question is to know whether really to master foreign languages in order to be understood by everybody. The case of Amos Totuola, for instance, raised many controversies in this respect. I may stand by answering the last question and assume with Jonathan Culler that:

The English language is not exhausted by its manifestations. It contains potential sentences which have never been uttered but to which it would assign meaning and grammatical structure; someone who has learned English possesses, in his ability to understand sentences that will never encounter, a competence that outstrips his performance. Moreover, performance may deviate from competence: one may, either accidently as one's thought changes or deliberately for special effects, utter sentences whose ungrammaticality one would recognize if they were played back. Competence is reflected in the judgement passed on the utterance or in the fact that the rule violated is partly responsible for the effect achieved.⁴

⁴ J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism linguistics and the Study of Literature*, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London 1975, p. 9

Simply, Culler wants to stress the primacy of the message the writer wants to transmit to his audience. In other words, when dealing with literature as a message, one has to differentiate the two things. Note that I do not assume that writers should misuse the language they are using—for this would be full opposition with the claim that form and content should be in full agreement (cfr. the formalists).

This primacy of the message upon the competence of the writer has perhaps been well expressed by Hugo when he says that "tout dit dans l'infini quelque chose à quelqu'un". And as a matter of fact Tutuola's *Palm Wine Drinkard* came to be considered as the first novel written in English despite of its ungrammaticality and the blending of local phrases with typically English idioms. We shall deal more particularly with this problem when speaking of the impact of mother tongues on foreign languages; our preoccupation being, for the time being, the-why-African-writers-use-foreign-languages.

Objectively speaking, it can be said that the use of a foreign language is not an attribute of African writers. The history of literary movements proves that many writers used a foreign language as a means of expression while living in their own countries. To take an example, some of the greatest English writers—Aldhelm, Venerable Bede, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Milton, Alexander Pope—those prominent classics of English literature are not less English writers for all that because they wrote either in Latin or Greek. Still, one may retort that these writers stopped using Greek and Latin at one moment; and my answer would simply be that Africans, too, will one day or another stop using foreign languages. The use of foreign languages by African writers, as in the case of the English classics, is thus a situational matter. I mean English writers like African writers wrote in foreign languages only because they were undergoing a *de facto* situation, the writer is a man of his time, and he writes for his time first of all, yet with the futuristic prospective, and he writes primarily from the need to be appreciated and understood by his contemporaries.

What is implied here is the problem of the writer-work-reader relationships, and the problem of making the literature of the time available to as many readers as possible. Joseph Conrad, the Polish born writer, used the English language, yet he did not master it very well—at the beginning at least—this because he felt that it was through this medium the society wherein he lived could better understand him. But does this mean that a writer writes for everybody? It is my opinion that the writer writes for a specific category of people, the class of those who are capable to decode the written speech and, again, this is not specific to Africa. Throughout the history of mankind, the written literary matter has always been the matter of a given class: the intellect.

It goes without saying that the problem of literary production is conditioned by that of the reading public. It is thus a fact that it is only the reading public which determines what should be written and how it should be written, I mean what language is to be used, enabling the work to be welcome. It follows that the righteous question to be asked is to know whether Africa has enough

educated people to welcome a literary work even if it is produced in local languages.

If we place this situation in historical development of education in Africa, we realize that the colonial policy was to restrain the alphabetization of African masses. The French and the British tendency was to form a small group of the so-called elite; the Belgians formed what was called "the évolués" whose level never overwent further than the elementary one in most of the cases. In addition to this deplorable situation was also the paradox of the colonial system so far the language of education was concerned. Indeed, except perhaps for the British who encouraged—for unknown reasons—the teaching in the mother tongue at the level of primary school, and this, only in their Southern colonies, the language of education in most of the colonies was forceably the language of the colonizer, France eventually edicted the law of assimilation prohibiting the use of mother tongue in her schools.

One understands that in such conditions, the writer was impelled already to write for a special category of people, and as such had to use the language spoken and understood by this category of the reading public. Admittedly, the dilemma of the language to be used by African writers goes back to the beginning of this literature. In other words, African writers have always been confronted with the question: writing for whom? Nonetheless, assuming that there have never been some pieces of literature produced in local languages would be distorting the reality of this literature. R. Prietze wrote a tremendous poetical work in Hausa in 1904; Mukaya bin Haji used Swahili for his poetry, Thomas Mofolo published his first novel *Moeti oa Bocabela (The Pilgrim to the East)* 1906) in Sotho; in 1933, John L. Dube wrote *Insila ka Shaka*, a novel dealing with the deeds of Chaka, in the Zulu language.

Still, these few examples do not solve the problem of the reading public for African writers, they induce me, in the contrary, to wonder why this tradition has never been followed by other generations of African writers. The answer to this question can be found in Nigeria. F. D. Sakiliba reports, that one of the most conclusive experiments in the field of writing in local languages was carried out by the Nigerian political leader Azikiwe in 1937, when he founded a chain of newspapers in both English and the vernacular. He soon discovered that a press in the vernacular was useless for one simple reason: we quote him:

with the educational system of the day, people capable of reading and writing their own language would read and write primarily, and often far better, in English.⁵

This constatation brings in another problem: are African writers of the day capable of writing properly in their mother tongues? The question is worth while asking in so far as it meeting with the reoccupations of Léon Gontran Damas, who defended the use of the French language at a conference in Brazzaville in these terms:

⁵ F. D. Sakiliba, *Présent et future des langues africaines*, [in:] *PA*, XII and XIII, p. 140.

French seemed an admirable vehicle for Negro expression, allowing for communication between all Negroes, Africans, West Indians and Malagasies, who all have different languages, complicated still further by an abundance of dialects and characterized by an almost absence of written literature.⁶

This difficulty should not be situated only at the level of communication among Negroes, it is to also seen as the problem of use by the young generation of African writers, who, in most of the cases, are brought in foreign languages, with the result that they are really incapable of writing with mastership in their vernacular languages and dialects. However, one should not understand by this that I am backing the exclusive use of foreign languages as a medium of expression in literature. I strongly agree with David Diop who once said that

if Africa were freed by compulsion, no African writer would even consider expression of his feelings and those of his people in anything other than his own, rediscovered, language.⁷

But, in spite of all the efforts made by political authorities nowadays; and in spite of the willingness of the writers themselves to use the mother tongue, the "rediscovered language", the situation is still as akin as during the colonial period. Foreign languages' role is for African writers what Latin was for Occidental writers during the Middle Ages: the role of lingua franca.

Several factors, along with some already mentioned, however, combine to make African languages unpopular for younger generation of African writers: Firstly, only among the largest groups can one hope to command a reasonable reading public—the case of the experience in East Africa has proved it—and for this reason alone; writer from the smaller groups must write either in lingua franca if they are to achieve publication. Secondly, the use of African languages is generally restricted to lower levels of education and this encourages the view that they have no part to play beyond this level. Thirdly, the use of lingua franca at the higher levels of education, with its aura of prestige and sophistication, together with its offer of vast reading public, all contribute to its popularity for the writer. Along with educational reason, there are other more psychological and economical.

The use of foreign language during the colonial period, for instance, is psychologically self-explanatory, it denotes first of all a specific attitude undergone and assumed by the writer: that of mental and cultural assimilation. It is nowadays claimed that the first novel ever written in English by an African is Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, 1954. This is to be accepted only if we consider it as the first work which has attempted to conciliate both modernism and tradition in the rendering of the psycho-metaphysical realities of his Ibo society. Its merit consists of having tried to break with what Jahn has called "apprentice literature" which, he writes

in style follows European models, and in its content adopts the ideology and special forms of

⁶ Quoted by C. Wauthier, *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa, A Survey*, New York 1967, p. 37.

⁷ Quoted by C. Wauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 39

colonialism or approves them without argument and reflection. Everything European is from the outset assumed "superior", "progressive", and better than the "bad", "bloodthirsty", "savage", "heathen", African traditions.⁸

African writers of the earlier period were set before a psychological reality, how should they react against such attitude as adopted by the colonizer? Two possible reactions were left to their choice, either they conform themselves to the master's thought in order to become "superior" and "progressive"; or they refuse to accept such argument and they remain consequently "inferior" and "savage". So, the adoption by them to write in a foreign language may be interpreted either as a mere conformism or as a kind of psychological protest. In the first case it copes with J. Jahn's assertion; in the second place, it denotes a willingness to prove to the colonizer that they were not as inferior as they believed. The proof was that they could write as adequately as possible their own language.

As a matter of fact, Solomon Plaatje's *Mhundi* (which is really the first novel written in English about 1918) is said to be matching the prose of the Victorian period in style. J. Jahn puts it in this way:

This way *Mhundi*, a heroic semi-historical idyll, written about 1918, which did not come out till 1930, when the padded "Victorian" style was already remote and antiquated.⁹

In other words, Plaatje could write like any other Victorian writer implicitly, he could use the English language in a more adequate and masterful way. The use of the English language can be seen an *a contrario* argument whose objective is to tell the colonizer that they all writers, neither less, nor more.

The only thing to deplore perhaps is the outcome of this quest for equaling the colonizer: it resulted in a sort of negative neurotic preoccupation.

In fact, this willingness to compete with the colonizer came to embody what is commonly called mental and cultural assimilation. The consequence of this assimilation was the restraint of a germinating tradition, say, the use of "the savage, inferior language". We are thus before a historical behaviour stemmed by need of self-affirmation by African writers. That is why I prefer not to emit any value-judgement criticism. I mean, one should not say either the reaction is good or bad, the situation is to be accepted as a psycho-historical protest, and the use of foreign languages becomes in my eyes a kind of psychological revolt and revolution, in this that the African writers has said "no" to the colonizer.

3. THE USE OF ENGLISH IN LITERATURE BY AFRICAN WRITERS

The question I would like to ask is to know whether when using foreign languages, African writers have totally forgotten their own languages. Answering by an affirmation would, in my sense, be an intellectual dishonesty. For,

⁸ J. Jahn, *Neo-African Literature: A History of Black Writing*, New York 1968, p. 89.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 105.

the reading of any piece of literature written in English (by an African writer) proves that there is strong impact of African languages upon the used foreign languages. The following excerpt is quite illustrative. It reads as follows:

My father told me that a true son of our land must know how to sleep and keep one eye open. I never forget it. Or I played and laughed with everyone and they shouted „Jolly Ben! Jolly Ben!” but I knew what I was doing. The women of Umru are very sharp; before you count A they count B. So I had to be very careful. I never ate the food they cooked for fear of love medicines. I had seen many young men kill themselves with women in those days, so I remembered my father’s word: Never let a handshake pass the elbow.¹⁰

This text is by Chinua Achebe, one of the best African writers, and the only thing to be said about it is that even if written in English, this English is only the translation of the Ibo language, the Ibo tradition.

To begin with, let us look at the style used by the writer in this text. The diction, for instance, is too verbose, colloquial, familiar and oratory, which according to the principle of word-economy in art writing is not acceptable, as Herbert Spencer puts it:

When we condemn writing that is wordy, or confused, or intricate — when we praise this style as easy, and blame that as fatiguing, we consciously or unconsciously assume this desideratum as our standard of judgement. Regarding language as an apparatus of symbols for the conveyance of thought, we may say that, as in mechanical apparatus, the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced.¹¹

In the case we are concerned with, Achebe has gone against this rule, if we consider only the recurrence of some words, which produces a kind of monotony which may cause inattention from the reader. Nonetheless, the question is to know whether Achebe has conceived this text to the reader’s attention. The syntactical and lexical structures prove that we are before an oral text, one would say, and what is right. Then the question would be why did he use an oratory system in a written text. I would simply answer that it is a recreation, a transposition of the oral fact into the written one. What I want to say is that in order to convey the protagonist’s inner speech, Achebe has used an appropriate style, a typically African one. In other words, an Englishman would not utter such an internal monolog the whole matter could be reduced to telling us that Uncle Ben—the protagonist—wants to apply his father’s advice, which consists in being suspicious with women.

In addition to this, the insertion of translated proverbs confirms what Claude Wauthier once said: “the traditional channels have always been a source of literary inspiration for black writers.”¹²

To mean that it is almost, if not impossible, to dissociate the oral (traditional) fact from the written one for African writers. What Claude Wauthier asserts here finds perhaps its better expression in Jung’s saying that:

¹⁰ Ch. Achebe, *Uncle Ben’s Choice*, [in:] *Girls at War and Other Stories*, London 1972, p. 85,

¹¹ H. Spencer, *Force in Words*, [in:] *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Expository Prose*. Ed. Arthur M. E. Eastman et al., New York, 1967, p. 91.

¹² Cl. Wauthier, *op. cit.*

The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure — be it a demon, a human figure, or a process — that constantly reoccurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is mythological figure. When we examine these images more closely, we find that they give form to countless experiences of our ancestors. They are, so to speak, the psychic residua of innumerable experiences of the same type. They present a picture of psychic life in the average, divided up and projected into manifold figures of mythological pantheon. But mythological figures are themselves the products of creative fantasy and still have to be translated into conceptual languages.¹³

If we look more closely at Achebe's passage, we can realize that he has indeed translated the so-called "traditional channels" into a "conceptual language" as preconised by Jung. And for Achebe, the only "conceptual language", for the time being is the English language. Achebe's case is not the only one, modern African literature is full of examples. These "traditional channels" are so omnipresent in the literature of the younger generation of African writers to the extent that they become finally the property of this literature. Conceptually, this literature is to be looked at as a kind of re-telling, reconstructing of the tradition of traditional Africa. In *A Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi tells for instance that:

Mumbi's father, Mbungua, was a well-known elder in the ridge. His home consisted of three huts and two granaries where crops were stored after harvests. A bush—a dense mass of creepers, brambles, thorn tress, nettles, and other stinging plants — formed a natural hedge around the home. Old Thabai, in fact, was a village of such grass—thatched huts thinly scattered along the ridge. The hedges were hardly ever trimmed; wild animals used to make their lairs there. Mbungua had earned his standing in the village through his own achievements as a warrior and a farmer. His name alone, so it is said, sent fear quivering among the enemy tribes.¹⁴

What Achebe has done here is to tell his reader three important things. First there is the story of Mumbi's father, Mbungua; then the story or better the history of the old Thabai village; and finally, the possibility there was in the remote past for men and animals to co-exist. A careless reader may let this pass unnoticed, while in depth, it is the writer's intention to tell his audience modern Africa does not change as such, in rural milieux, this Africa remains alike. And it is here that I would like to tell those who believe that tradition is dead in Africa that they are making a wrong value-judgement. This tradition is still alive, but under a modern form, and using a conceptual language, a language which can enable the writer to reach a big, large audience among the modern generation of African and foreign pupils. The writer's job, it is to be said, is to teach through recalling the old history of his Africa, yet in a modern form. In other words, the language can be modern, but the story may be very old, as in this case.

The impact of mother tongues upon foreign languages can be so strong that the writer does not hesitate to use typically African expressions as in the case of the following passage by Ama Ata Aidoo:

[...] my little sister, are you asking me a question? Oh! you want to know whether I found Mansa? I do not know. Our uncles have asked me to tell everything that happened there,

¹³ C. G. Jung *The Spirit of Man, Art and Literature*, [in:] *op. cit.* pp. 319—320.

¹⁴ wa Thiong'o Ngugi, *A Grain of Wheat*, London 1978, p. 66.

and you too! I am cooking the whole meal for you, why do you want to lisk the laddle now? [...] My brother, cut me another drink.¹⁵

What is worthwhile mentioning here is obviously the use of the English language. Not only that Aidoo has used typically African images; but also that she perhaps voluntarily distorted this language, as to adapt it to African story-telling, which cannot be grasped by a native speaker. For instance, an African reader would reconstruct the setting of this story; it is that of African palaver: we have thus the teller's sister, brother and uncles. They are listening to him, their messenger to the city. As in such circumstances, there is a calabash of plam-wine. And as the story goes on, people—the audience are drinking. So, in order to give to story a typically African dimension, Aidoo disregards the most appropriate use of English. In fact, in English, we never say "cut me a drink", but "offer me a drink". The question is thus, why such a distortion of the language she perfectly masters?

We said earlier that Amos Tutuola is nowadays considered as the father of a new tradition in the use of the English language, yet his bad English is due to fact that he got very little education. The truth is that since the publication of his famous *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, which in full reads as *Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead's Town*, the writers of the younger generation have adopted for what can be called Tutuolaian tradition: to make violence to the English language.

The use of African English may be seen as writers' willingness to produce a literature which could be available for less educated people. It may be righteously be assumed that little by little writers become convinced that a literary work is a means of education, and those to be educated are in fact the very despised masses. There is nowadays a clear and early indication that the influence of Ngugi, for instance, is great among the villagers. And this influence is due to the fact that he has finally turned back to writing in English. The proof is that his last unpublished play is in his mother tongue, Kikuyu. This work is entitled *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (lit. *I Will Marry When I Want*), which, as Senkoro puts is "aimed at educating and mobilizing the illiterate villagers".¹⁶

This choice of drama as a means of "educating and mobilizing" the "illiterate villagers" is very judicious, in so far as it gives to African literature its primordial function as found in oral literature: to teach through recreation. Samuel-Martin Eno Belinga puts it in a more elaborate way, he writes:

La littérature orale est vivante pour plusieurs raisons parmi lesquelles il y a la récréation constante qu'en font les traditionalistes et les usagers, et aussi le fait qu'elle est un courant d'échanges et de communication, un mouvement dialectique.¹⁷

¹⁵ A. A. Aidoo, *Cut Me a Drink*, [in:] *No Sweetness Here and Other Stories: A Collection of Short Stories*, London 1970, p. 35.

¹⁶ F. E. M. K. Senkoro, *The Prostitute in African Literature*, Dar'es-Salam 1982, p. 64.

¹⁷ Eno Belinga, S. M., *La littérature orale africaine*, Les Classiques Africains, Yaounde 1982, p. 18.

A new trend is thus taking place in the conception of African literature, a trend which to a larger extent recalls the time of Greek Drama. Literature is no longer the only claim of the educated people, everybody has the right to have his own share. Should African writers write for a category of people, it is their right to use a foreign language; but this does not mean that they have to forget those who are not familiar with this language, I mean they have to follow the example given by Ngugi, who did not only write a play in his Kikuyu language; but who also has most of his works translated in Swahili and Kikuyu. And as a matter of fact *Ngaahika Ndeenda* delivers the same messages contained in such complex novels as *Petals of Blood* and *A Grain of Wheat*.

It is happy to establish that this example as given by Ngugi, is followed by many other young writers in East Africa. The list of novels, poems and plays written in Swahili is now too long to be produced here. However, I feel, it is interesting to mention some of them:

- *Asali Chungu* (1977) by Ahmed Said MOHAMED
- *Kicheko cha Ushindi* (1978) by Mohamed Said MOHAMED
- *Al Inkishafi* (1972) by Sayidd A. A. NASSIR
- *Shida* (1975) by Ndyanao BALISUDYA
- *Mwisho wa Mapenzi* (1971) by J. M. SIMBAMWENE¹⁸

We can really say with David Diop that African writers have come to realize that they have to express their feelings and those of their people "in anything other than (their) own, rediscovered language". (*op. cit.*). Irremediably, African literature is at a new turning point: bilingualism.

JĘZYK ANGIELSKI A LITERATURA AFRYKAŃSKA W JĘZYKU ANGIELSKIM

STRESZCZENIE

Celem, który stawia sobie autor niniejszego artykułu, jest obrona przekonania, iż środek komunikacji nie jest w stanie zniweczyć przesłania, które pisarz pragnie, za jego pośrednictwem, przekazać własnym czytelnikom. Środkiem komunikacji jest, w analizowanym przez autora przypadku, język angielski a przesłaniem — „tradycja afrykańska”, „duch”, „kultura”. Autor artykułu nie ukrywa niechęci wobec tych terminów i uznaje je za mało klarowne i pozbawione sensu — w przypadku badań nad literaturą afrykańską. Chętnie natomiast przyjmuje Jungowską teorię zbiorowej podświadomości: jako uniwersalnego źródła twórczej wyobraźni — niezależnie od przynależności narodowej. Autor dopuszcza istnienie kategorii „specyficznie afrykańskiego pisarza”, „afrykańskiej literatury” o tyle tylko, o ile dany pisarz stara się, świadomie, przydać swoim tekstom afrykańskiego kolorytu.

Nie ma więc, zdaniem autora, problemu „afrykańskości”. Pisarzem „afrykańskim” może być nazwany afrykanin piszący swe utwory w języku angielskim (jako lingua franca) na tej samej zasadzie co angielscy klasycy, piszący po łacinie, uznawani są za pisarzy angielskich. Istnieje natomiast problem języka, rozumiany jako problem adresata, do którego pisarz się zwraca. Ma on więc do

¹⁸ Most of this information are from Senkoro's *The Prostitute in African Literature*, *op. cit.*

wyboru albo język kolonizatora i czytającą w tym języku nieliczną część własnego społeczeństwa oraz szeroką publiczność światową, albo też język ojczysty i bliską jemu, z racji pobratymstwa, szeroką, własną publiczność, lecz zarazem ograniczenie się do tej tylko publiczności. Dylemat ten współcześni pisarze afrykańscy rozwiązują poprzez dwujęzyczność. Jest to nowy etap rozwoju, w który wkracza aktualnie literatura afrykańska.

Przełożył *Kazimierz Sobotka*