CONSTRAINTS ON THE GLOBALIZATION OF AFRICAN LITERATURE

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A few years ago, Nigeria celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in 1952. In the half-century since that historic first splash of a Nigerian narrative on the international literary scene, much has happened to bring outstanding works of African verbal art to the attention of the world community. Major literary prizes such as the Nobel, the Booker, the Neustadt, the Caine, and the Commonwealth have been won by African authors, earning them widespread recognition, substantial rewards and a vastly expanded leadership. One of the earliest classics - Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* - has been translated into many languages and in English language editions alone has sold in the millions. The Africanization of the literature curriculum in African schools and universities and the concomitant canon-busting internationalization of literature studies in the West have put more African literary works into the hands of more students worldwide. So in less than a single lifetime Africa has been converted from a mute bystander in the global literary marketplace to one of its noisiest members with products for sale everywhere.

But before we celebrate too enthusiastically the achievement of this remarkable transformation, we may do well to remind ourselves of some of the lingering constraints on the globalization of African literature for there has been a noticeable shrinkage of opportunities for African authors running concurrently with expanded exposure of a limited number of their masterpieces. African literature appears to be headed in the direction of greater cosmopolitanism and greater insularity at the same time. Both trends are discernible in publishing, in scholarship and in the reception abroad of new works by African writers. There may be local and foreign constraints on the extent to which African literature can be globalized.

Let's look at publishing first. When books by African writers first became available in the West, they were brought out by European and American publishers, some of whom had little or no foothold in the African continent. At that time, with the possible exception of South Africa, there were no local publishing outlets of any international standing, so there were no indigenous competitors for the early works of such pioneers as Abrahams, Tutuola, Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi and Armah. British firms with a longstanding stake in African educational publishing therefore stepped into the vacuum and established series that could feed into the new curriculum in schools and universities. The major players were Oxford University Press, Longman and Macmillan, but the giant among the majors was Heinemann Educational Books with its enormously successful African Writers Series all decked out in orange and white covers. With Achebe as its principal adviser, Heinemann cornered much of the best writing and became the equivalent of an imperialistic oil, mining or agricultural corporation, extracting raw materials from the Third World, processing and refining them somewhere else, and then selling them back to the Third World as finished products, all the while becoming the arbiter of what was fit to be marketed to consumers in a culture decidedly different from their own.

Contrast that with the situation today where local publishing is booming and the multinational companies have been forced to set up indigenous branches to market their wares. Meanwhile the foreign-based series - even the venerable Heinemann one - have gone defunct, depriving African writers of the international and transcontinental audiences they used to enjoy. Few local publishers in Africa have the means to market their books extensively abroad except through the African Books Collective in Oxford, and those books don't usually make their way back into other parts of Africa because they must be paid for in dollars or pounds or euros and at First World prices. The writer is thus cut off from readers elsewhere in Africa, even if they happen to live in a nation next-door.

The famous writers of the first generation who made a name for themselves in the heyday of the multinational publishers usually have no difficulty in maintaining their relationship with their original house or in switching to another foreign firm if they wish to do so, but new and younger African writers seldom get a chance to sign a contract with a publisher overseas unless they have had the good fortune to win a major international award. These neophytes and middle-aged lesser lights can still address their own people, but it is unlikely that they would be able to support themselves, much less a family, on their domestic earnings. So, while the older established fat cats are getting fatter off their foreign feed, the undernourished kittens back home who must rely on local sources of sustenance are getting visibly thinner.

A similar problem exists in the scholarship published on African literature. African writers used to complain that much of the critical commentary on their works was being produced by foreigners who did not understand them and who tended to judge them by alien and irrelevant criteria. In an essay entitled "Counting Caliban's Curses: A Statistical Inventory" I described the situation this way:

> The complaint everywhere seems to be that there are still too many Prosperos and Mirandas calling the critical shots, that the little islanders are being crowded out of their own domain by uncouth continentals, that careerist Northerners with easier access to money, machines, and magazines are monopolizing discussion of literary works by Southerners, that First Worlders and Third Worlders are not engaged in any sort of dialogue but are speaking only to their own kind, the First Worlders through electronically amplified megaphones, the Third Worlders through baffles and mufflers.
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> Furthermore, in the West the language of literary criticism has itself changed, moving toward higher and higher levels of abstraction and self-reflexivity, leaving many non-Westerners speaking in a quaint, old-fashioned hermeneutic dialect, if they are allowed to speak at all. In short, Africa, a silent partner in its own intellectual marginalization, may be losing control of its own anglophone literature. (106-107) The conclusion I came to, based on bibliographical data, was that African critic, nowadays busier

> than ever before, were gradually gaining better interpretive control of their literature but that they seemed to prefer to speak to their countrymen or to audiences in the West rather than to fellow Africans on their own continent. Few of them published in media aimed at their immediate national neighbours. This led me to surmise that they were suffering from an interiority complex. The Westerners were even worse, for they overwhelmingly preferred to publish their works in the West rather than engage with African colleagues by publishing in African media. They were interested in African writers but not in African readers. This lack of reciprocity on their part, and the lack of any significant transcontinental dialogue within Africa among indigenous critics was leading to a situation perhaps best characterized as heedless homegrown hermeneutics, in which each interpretive culture, spinning on its own axis, follows its own narrow trajectory without acknowledging or interacting with other self-contained planets revolving in the same galaxy of critical concerns. This is not globalization but only an exaggerated form of exegetical chauvinism. To document my third point about the reception of African cultural artifacts abroad, allow me to comment at length on three concrete examples of the transportation of African dramatic productions to the West by the playwrights themselves. In an interesting recent article entitled "Whose Theatre, Whose Africa? Wole Soyinka's The Road on the Road" Biodun Jeyifo asserts that like the dramatic and literary texts of every cultural region of the world, African literary and dramatic texts necessarily and inevitably change when they travel. Like people, commodities, services, and the forces of nature—the winds and the waters of the oceans--texts, when they travel, are subject to the contingencies of travel.

In new contexts, they have to adapt to the exigencies of "local conditions," such as hospitable and inhospitable norms and customs, and they are brushed against the grain of both fervently desired and quite unanticipated transformative encounters. (449-50)

To illustrate this point, Jeyifo examines the staging of one of Soyinka's most challenging plays, *The Road*, in three venues outside Africa:

namely, Port of Spain in Trinidad, as staged by the Trinidad Theatre Workshop Company in 1966 under the direction of its resident playwright and artistic director, Derek Walcott; a production in 1980 in Mysore, India, in a Kan[n]ada translation directed by Professor Anniah Gowda, who was also responsible for the translation; and, finally, a production in London in 1992 by the Talawa Theatre Company under the direction of its artistic director, Yvonne Brewster. (450)

In each of these productions there was a creative "misreading" of the text in the sense of that term as elaborated in Harold Bloam's *A Map of Misreading*: that is, "by imposing her or his own strong

creative sensibilities and predispositions on the original work, the appropriating [director] 'miserads' the original work but, paradoxically, brings out features and qualities that either were latent or were obscured by 'weaker' readings" (453). What was strategically "misread" in all three of these foreign productions, Jeyifo argues, were "the indices and markers of the 'Africanness' of *The Road*, "specifically "the strong embeddedness of its action, language, and central symbols and tropes in the myths and ritual traditions of the Yoruba god of war, metallurgy, and lyric poetry, Ogun, together with the popular religious cults associated with this deity" (453-54). In other words, each director was faced with the daunting challenge of making an esoteric Yoruba theological concept comprehensible to a non-Yoruba audience, and this led to productive and unproductive "misreadings" or detours from *The Road* as laid out by Soyinka.

But what happens to a play deeply embedded in an African culture when its performance before a foreign audience is directed by its own author? What kind of compromises are deemed necessary to translate the indices and markers of its Africanness to non-Africans? Placed in an altogether different world, must the author/director modify, mutilate or in some other way deliberately misread his own text? One way to address such questions is to look at a few examples, beginning with a production of *The Road* that Soyinka himself directed at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 1984.

This was not the first time that he had been associated with a production of this play abroad. Nearly twenty years earlier he had served as an "adviser" (Gibbs 1982: 184) to David Thompson who had directed it at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, during the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London in September 1965. According to James Gibbs, who has studied British and African responses to this production, the play "bewildered many of the critics," though "some recognised its vitality" (1986: 85). For instance, Penelope Gilliat, writing enthusiastically for the Observer, went so far as to praise Soyinka for having "done for our napping language what brigand dramatists from Ireland have done for centuries: booted it awake, rifled its pockets and scattered the loot into the middle of next week," but she had to admit that "The Road in performance is tough work for local hearing" and only became clearer for her after she had had a chance to read the script (23).

The Road is a difficult play for any audience to follow not only because it is strikingly original in language and action but also because it shares many of the baffling nonsequiturs of theatre of the absurd. The main character, called Professor, is a half-mad proprietor of a "Aksident Store" selling spare parts in a run-down car park inhabited by illiterate lorry drivers, touts and layabouts. To earn a living Professor uproots road signs so that there will be more motor accidents and forges drivers' licenses, but his main occupation is a Faust-like quest for forbidden knowledge. He seeks to understand the mystery of death by deciphering secrets buried in "the Word," a cabalistic concept that he defines ambiguously as "companion not to life, but Death" (11), "a golden nugget on the tongue" (44), "that elusive kernel...the Key, the moment of my rehabilitation" (63), and "a terrible fire" (68). It is not difficult to see why this giddy kind of wordplay left audiences scratching their heads. Even an awareness that the god Ogun lurked somewhere in the epistemological backdrop of the play didn't help informed theatregoers very much.

The Chicago production was, in Soyinka's words, "a traumatic experience" (Mike 25), "a harrowing, painful experience" for him (Mike 49), due largely to the incompetence of the lead actor who had been cast as Professor. Soyinka nicknamed him "the black hole from [outer] space" because "all he did was suck in energy, everybody's energies including his fellow actors[1], but gave forth no light whatever, thereby creating a huge hole right in the middle of the play" (Mike 25). Because this actor didn't understand his role and "could not enter the language of the play" (Mike 25), Soyinka felt it necessary to cut more and more of his lines:

And of course the more you chop the Professor, the more you have to chop the others because it becomes totally unbalanced...I hadn't realized how lopsided it had become...I had to take the play and slash all over again...I think we got down to about ninety-five minutes nonstop to mixed reactions, general bafflement and so on. (Mike 50-51)

Despite these draconian cuts, or perhaps because of them, a reviewer for Chicago's Sunday Times described The Road as "a long, bumpy ride" (Saunders).

In this production Soyinka was working with African-American actors, many of whom had adopted a style of rhetoric he thought had been influenced either by black preaching or by the fiery slang of the Black Power Movement. Soyinka tried to train them to speak in a different register, a playful poetic idiom more akin to vernacular expression in Nigerian lorry parks, but the result was far from satisfactory. Alisa Solomon reported that "it didn't help that the audience resisted the play's abundant humor" (14). Apparently, they, like the actor playing Professor, couldn't comprehend the indigenous markers in Soyinka's theatrical language. Colin Taylor believes that in North America

Soyinka's dense and poetic language...is of a kind seldom heard in our theatres. Outside of Nigeria, Soyinka's work has been most popular in England, where poetry with a capital "P" still has something of a fighting chance on the stage. The notorious difficulty of Soyinka's works derives principally from the kind of language found in these...plays - a language of mordant music and concrete cadences, of rolling verbal thunder and chiseled imagery, that demands to be met halfway by an audience sensitive to verbal nuances and word pictures, if the core of mystery at the center of each work is to be fully unravelled. (36) Taylor goes on to argue that one consequence of such stylistic brilliance is that:

> Soyinka, more than other playwrights, suffers dreadfully from an indifferent production. Any production that fails to appreciate, in equal measure, Soyinka's profundity, humour, vivid characterization, roughness, and willingness to entertain runs the risk of being, at best "masterpiecey," and at worst, a crashing bore.... To paraphrase Peter Brook, if a play is a violin awaiting its violinist for its expression, then a Soyinka text requires a Rostropovich or a Menuhin to make it sing upon the stage. The problem for Soyinka so far has been a string of Jack Bennys playing his music. There are those who believe that Soyinka, who frequently directs both his and other people's plays, may be one of them. (37-38)

What this last remark fails to take adequately into account is that Soyinka has occasionally directed successful productions abroad of some of his plays, the most notable example being the equally "difficult" Death and the King's Horseman, which got generally good reviews when performed at the Goodman Theater in Chicago and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC in 1979 but which was received less favourably when revived at Lincoln Center in New York City in 1987. (For Soyinka's reaction to bad press reviews of the latter, see the interview he gave to L. Jones and Gates.) Several of his satirical plays and farces have also appealed to international audiences, in particular his latest published play, King Baabu, which toured Europe, America, Southern Africa and Australia. However, Taylor may be right about North American audiences being turned off by the rich verbal texture of Soyinka's more philosophical plays. Such audiences may not go to the theatre expecting to hear poetry.

African playwrights who have attempted to speak more directly to foreign audiences have had other obstacles to overcome. A case in point is Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer whose dramatic works never leave any doubt about what he wants to say. His most famous plays are didactic agit-prop musicals espousing Marxist ideas about imperialism and neocolonialism. One of these, Ngaahika Ndeenda I Will Marry When I Want, written and performed in Kenya in the Gikuyu language, led to his detention for a year in a maximum-security prison. Another, Maui Nyugira [Mother, Sing for Me], composed after his release, was banned by the Kenya Government a few days before it was due to open at the National Theatre in Nairobi in February 1982. Ngugi was expressing blunt political ideas that the authorities evidently didn't want people to hear.

A few months later, while he was in London for the launch of a novel he had written in prison, an attempted coup was suppressed in Kenya, and Ngugi could not return home without being vulnerable to arrest. During his early years in exile, he attempted to resume his theatrical activities by mounting a London production of Mother, Sing for Me in English translation, but he couldn't find adequate funding to support a proposed cast of thirty-five people. The Arts Council England was interested in the project but wanted to assume a measure of artistic control, including selection of a veteran director (Owusu 152).

The company that had been assembled and was already busy rehearsing the show decided to abandon their plans to stage Mother, Sing for Me, but, wishing to continue their collaboration with Ngugi, they agreed to attempt to revive another play that Ngugi had co-authored in English with Micere Mugo and had published in 1976 under the title The Trial of Dedan Kimathi. Dealing with the trial and execution of a heroic Mau Mau general who had led the struggle against British colonial rule in Kenya, this anti-imperialist melodrama had been performed at a Nigerian cultural festival and in other venues at home and abroad by groups working from the printed text, but for the London production by the Wazalendo [Progressive] Players, a troupe of mostly amateur performers drawn from fifteen different nations, "new songs, dances, and whole scenes and sequences were introduced by cast members or generated in rehearsals.

This new material reflected the diverse cultural backgrounds of Wazalendo players and the vibrant aesthetic influences which ultimately transformed the original production" (Owusu 153). A similar collaborative technique had served Ngugi well when he directed, I Will Marry When I Want and Mother, Sing for Me in Kenya, and he had continued using a version of it with the group that had been rehearsing with him earlier in London. It was a style of direction that demanded and capitalized upon input from the performers, who were frequently called upon to contribute in other ways as well. Members of the cast doubled as secretaries, advance booking agents, publicists, creche workers, finance people, tour organisers and negotiators, blurring the distinctions between "actors" and "administrators," "foot soldiers" and "generals." Everyone in the cast, including those who had scripted the original production, shared in these tasks. Sub-committees were formed to co-ordinate the new structure of work and to establish a system of information and accountability. (Owusu 152).

This style of communal collaboration made the Wazalendo Players less dependent on state funding and actually brought in a greater number of small donations from community groups, organizations and individuals who sympathized with what the troupe was trying to achieve.

The play was staged in small venues, first at the Africa Centre in London and then in community halls in provincial cities and towns. The entire run in London, Oxford, Manchester and Leeds was sold out (Owusu 158). One review spoke of the performers

taking the play out into the community, both in rehearsal and in final production. They aim, by going to "politically targeted" communities - areas with high concentrations of industrial workers, unemployed or black people-to allow those who do not usually have access to theatre a chance to take part....The play calls for discussion of Britain's historical and contemporary role in Kenya and performances will be accompanied by discussion papers and a photo exhibition designed to promote debate. (Kitchener)

The play also encouraged various forms of audience participation, including dialogue with the performers. The basic strategy was to get people thinking and talking about issues that were related to their own lives. Unlike Soyinka's *The Road*, Ngugi's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* had a clear message, and Ngugi wanted audiences to grasp its wider implications. In an interview he said:

> What the play is really about is imperialist domination and imperialist systems. We have the imperialist system led by the U.S. and the antiimperialist movement worldwide, and the play is really about those contending forces. It would be wrong to see it merely as something from the past because the same struggles are still going on in Nicaragua, South Africa and, indeed, here on the miners' picket lines. (Green)

The story of Dedan Kimathi was thus envisioned as part of a much larger drama that was being played out all over the globe.

In speaking of his working methods, Ngugi stated that he didn't see himself in the traditional role of director: “It is a struggle between two different forms of theatre. One assumes that the director knows everything, the other that some people know, and that others who don't know exchange knowledge through discussion and debate.” (Green)

Ngugi wanted his cast as well as his audience to shape the final message. Performances were merely works in progress directed toward a common goal of fuller understanding of ongoing political struggles.

Though this collaborative amateur production of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* was criticized for various shortcomings, reviews in the African press in London were generally favourable (see, e.g., Perry, Kitchener and Green), and the play managed to run for four months in Britain, albeit sporadically and in small venues. There came a point, however, when it had to stop because, as one participant put it:

it was impossible to sustain a cast of more than 35 people over a long period of time. Our financial position made it impossible to pay each member more than £20per week. Sometimes a week included a number of ten-hour days. In very simple terms, Wazalenda was starved out. (Owusu 158)

One wonders, of course, if such a play, performed in such a manner, would have been successful in larger theatres. Perhaps it was a more engaging theatrical experience in smaller spaces.

By way of contrast to the cerebral Soyinka and the communal Ngugi, it may be instructive to examine the extraordinary commercial success of another African director who communicates with Western audiences in an entirely different way.

Mbongeni Ngema, the South African impresario who directed the smash-hit Sarafina! and other musical blockbusters on Broadway and in the West End, started out as a guitarist who accidentally became an actor in popular township plays written and directed by the legendary Gibson Kente. He and a fellow actor, Percy Miwa, eventually broke off from Kente and in collaboration with a white director, Barney Simon, created a rollicking two-hander called Waza Albert! which told of the second coming of Jesus Christ, this time to apartheid South Africa. This broad, bold satire, created initially for domestic consumption, was an instant success not only in South Africa but also during nearly three years on tour in Britain, Germany and America where it won many awards.

In the intervals between tours Ngema returned to South Africa and formed his own small theatre company. He has said

In 1983 I established Committed Artists with the sole aim of training young, disadvantaged South Africans. My methodology entailed a combination of western and African theatrical techniques. Grotowsky, Stanislavsky and Peter Brook were the main western influences on my method, particularly with their experimental theatre (what Peter Brook called the immediate theatre). The

African sphere was the most accented, especially the Zulu culture. This is what made this method unique, for African life and movement has a rhythm of its own. (Ngema vii)

In 1985 Committed Artists launched their first production, Asinamali! (We have no money!), in a cinema in Soweto, then moved it downtown to the Market Theatre before embarking on very successful national and international tours. Asinamali! had the same kind of intense energy that distinguished Waza Albert! but it made much greater use of song, dance and tightly organized ensemble work. It also dealt in an unusual manner with the tragic lives of five men imprisoned after the assassination of a prominent strike leader. Peter Brook saw the production in Harlem and was struck by its dynamism, noting that "this horrifying situation was being presented, pitilessly, through a joie de vivre. The events were not softened by it, but heightened to the last degree because they were presented, not through a sentimentality, but through a vitality" (L. Jones 115).

Ngema was not one of the performers in this play, but he had trained all the actors, written the script, composed the songs, and choreographed the dances. Asinamali! was his first great success as a director-producer, and he often traveled with the company when they performed in America, Europe, Japan and Australia, a tour that lasted more than two years.

Whenever he returned to South Africa, he went out and searched for fresh talent, simultaneously recruiting experienced theatre professionals to help him with his next show, which he decided would celebrate South Africa's black schoolchildren who were then leading the struggle against apartheid. After auditioning "some 750 kids, all Zulus from the Durban area" (W. Jones), he rounded up twenty teenagers, "moved them into a four-room house in Daveytown, near Johannesburg, lived with them, and trained them vocally, mentally and physically" (L. Jones 124). At the same time he developed a script, composing music in the popular mbaqanga style and writing lyrics as he went along. After fourteen months of hard work and fine tuning, the result was Sarafina! his most ambitious undertaking and by far his most remunerative. After opening to great applause at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, Ngema in 1987 took his cast of twenty-three youngsters to Lincoln Center in New York where their engagement was extended repeatedly until they moved to Broadway and played to capacity audiences at the Cort Theatre for the next eighteen months (L. Jones 129). "Sarafina! was probably the highlight of my career," Ngema has said, adding, "Ironically, it was the least sophisticated of all my work" (Lee 34). The story-line, he admitted, "is not strong. It's very simplistic...[But] I did it deliberately. I was telling it through the eyes of the kids. And those kids, wearing those uniforms...people just loved them. It's easier to love young people than adults on stage...For the first time in South Africa, we saw a young professional cast. We saw a Broadway musical played by kids, who, even though they were young, were highly professional. You, see, it's not so much the story but how it's done!" (Berman 32)

It could be said that at that point in his career, Ngema seemed to be doing everything right - at least commercially. He was offered recording contracts, an Academy-Award winning director made a full-length documentary about Sarafina! and then came the Hollywood version of the musical with megastar Whoopi Goldberg in a leading role. This feature film, shot in the environs of Soweto,

employed about 100 actors and up to 5000 extras (Makgabutlane 1992: 40). By the time it hit the big screen in 1992, Sarafina! had been running continuously on the stage for five years.

Not everyone was entirely pleased with what Ngema had managed to achieve. Some critics in South Africa regarded him as a sellout to commercial interests in the West. Jeanne Colleran pointed out that:

> "*Sarafina!* drew on no specific, historical incident, in the fashion of Asinamali, nor was it intended, like *Woza Albert!,* for a township audience...As a pseudo-township musical...Sarafina! grafts some features of a theatrical form born in resistance and struggle to one born of profit and apolitically, and becomes in the process the worst-case scenario of cultural syncretism (232-33).

Mark Gevisser expressed a similar opinion, claiming that Sarafina's spectacular success had left a negative legacy:

Its pastiche of political anger and Broadway-style musical fused into a form of struggle-minstrelsy that has proven to be immensely lucrative and has become the almost inescapable model for how black South African theatre should be made. (11, quoted by Colleran 229)

Ngema may have been right to single out Sarafina! as the highlight of his career. His later musicals have been less successful, and a 1995 sequel called Sarafina 2, which was meant to address the AIDS crisis in South Africa, turned out to be a fiasco as well as a major political embarrassment to the ANC-led Government that had lavishly sponsored it with funds donated by the European Union to the South African Health Department to improve public health (Lindfors).

Since that time - indeed, since the demise of apartheid - few of Ngema's musicals have traveled abroad, and not one has been made into a Hollywood film. Yet Ngema's earlier commercial successes suggest that he knew how to adapt his works so that they would strike a chord - a rich chord - with Western audiences. He once said:

I think it is because I am a musician that I tend to have the kind of approach I have. When theatre does not have a beat, it does not have a rhythm, then theatre tends to bore. Theatre must be like a piece of music which has a beat that people can sit and listen to...or dance to. (Makgabutlane 1990: 20)

In another interview he reiterated this self-assessment, stating:

First and foremost, I'm an entertainer...I direct as a musician. I see my theatre pieces as one song, as a whole, as a piece of jazz which changes beat, changes colours....What excites me is when the

script and music become one, when a performance comes together....People must walk out and say "WOW!" (Mendel 19)

Soyinka and Ngugi have not been able to WOW! their Western audiences to the same degree, even though they too have included songs and dances in their productions. Perhaps in the West myth and militancy do not sell as well as mbaqanga music. To bridge the cultural divide between Africa and the rest of the Anglophone world, sheer entertainment may speak much louder than words, words, words.

So there are limits to the globalization of African literature. The publishers, the scholars and the writers themselves have had to come to terms with constraints on their activities and ambitions. Though African literature has earned a place of honor in the pantheon of world literature in the past half-century, it is not yet and may never be wholly assimilable internationally. But this is not necessarily a bad thing. It happens to every literature, young and old, that has a distinctive identity of its own, a personality that makes it unique. African literature appears destined to remain obdurately and spectacularly African.

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